

Afrocentricity and its Critics

A Quick Reading of Rhetorical Jingoism: Anthony Appiah and His Fallacies

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The critics of Afrocentricity, running away from Africa-centeredness, tend to commit the most serious flaws in scholarship. Indeed, they are so eager to support the eurocentric foundation of their knowledge base that they disregard facts and run quickly to empty flourishes. One of the latest attempts to tackle the international Afrocentric movement is Kwame Anthony Appiah, a half Ghanaian and half British commentator, a fact which tends to be concealed because he has recently begun to use an African first name more than Anthony which he used most of his life and has adopted the telling habit of reminding the reader that he is "black", something he needs to do because he often writes and speaks like he is white. This is very much like Dinesh D'Souza's tactic of insisting that he is colored, in order to be able to more "objectively" bash blacks. Appiah teaches philosophy at Harvard University and is a member of the Department of Afro-American Studies headed by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

I believe that Marcus Garvey and Chancellor Williams were correct in their analyses of those Africans who harbored so much self hatred that they spoke out violently against other Africans. Just as it is sometimes important to point out if a writer is white or black, it is also very important to know the psychological and cultural location of a writer who is assumed to be black by the public but who sees himself as neither black nor white, which means he has refused to deal with his own identity in any definite terms. All humans live in some culture, that of their fathers or that of their mothers, or somebody else's mother or father. I am certainly not of the opinion that one should deny someone place because he or she is the child of an interracial or intercultural union. On the other hand, a person who claims not to be black should be questioned from the angle of his or her cultural location, not as a black person. In the United States one is forced to choose because the cultures are so vastly different in their projects and in their histories, something Appiah may not be adequately aware of since he seems such a poor student of African American history.

Appiah establishes himself squarely in the anti-African camp while

parading as an African scholar. He uses the claim of being African in much the same way as Clarence Thomas seemed to use the fact of his blackness as a shield to attack Africans. Both must be viewed as white in their orientations, selections, attitudes, purposes, and interests, however you look at their orientations, because they are both engaged in an attempt to destroy and cut the heart out of the African liberation movement. This is not an attack on whites who escape the burden of their brutal history vis-à-vis Africans but on the African-descended individuals who take on the burden of the whites who have victimized blacks.

In an obscure article called "Europe Upside Down: Fallacies of the New Afrocentrism" in an obscure journal called Sapina Journal (January-June, 1993, Vol 5, No. 3) Appiah argues that the Afrocentric movement is so established that it may now be called a paradigm. He is correct in this observation insofar as a paradigm suggests that an entirely new perspective on data is necessary. However, Appiah's purpose is not to praise this new paradigm but to distort the idea.

Appiah has a problem with this Afrocentric "paradigm," indeed, he has a problem with any Africa-centered approach to knowledge, preferring what he sees as the "universal" approach to knowledge. One only has to read "white" or hear "European" where he writes or claims "universal" as an approach. By taking the position he takes he is only delaying the moment of Afrocentric realization. Nevertheless, Appiah has waded into the shallowest parts of the Afrocentric ocean which is itself something of value. And even here he is out of his depths. Appiah claims that Afrocentricity has two basic elements, one critical (negative) and the other positive. The critical or negative thesis, he says, argues that Western scholarship is hopelessly Eurocentric. The positive thesis argues that African civilization was at the beginning of human civilization.

From this construction, an incorrect and limited construction to be sure, of the Afrocentric orientation, Appiah goes on to discuss what he sees as problematic in the construction. But he has started from a false point, an inadequate understanding of what it is he is criticizing.

The "two" elements, critical and negative, are not central components of Afrocentric theory. Appiah's attempt to put words in the text that do not have any basis in fact is cute but not the aim of my Afrocentric project or that of others I know. Indeed, he appears to be the worst type of anti-African, a black who hates the African part of himself and who consequently underestimates the intellectual scholarship of Africans. The only African scholar that Appiah seems to like is the one who hired him, Henry Gates. In both of their locations, as determined by language, attitude, and direction, they

are often off-center as far as the African and African American intellectual project is concerned. My work probably represents the worst nightmare of Anthony Appiah. I am centered, cultured, and a devotee of my own traditions. Of course it is nonsense to imply, as Appiah seems to want to imply, that this means that I am antagonistic toward other cultures.

Appiah seeks to cast his attacks on Afrocentricity in a philosophical vein, hiding behind the respectability he believes he finds in his method. But the truth will always out. He has a problem with African people viewing themselves as agents. Consequently, he seeks to turn the rightside wrong. There are several inaccuracies that he parades in Sapina that are enough to make the journal and his attack on Afrocentricity suspect. He is either ignorant of the movement he is criticizing or a very devious writer. In either case what he has written bears little resemblance to Afrocentric theory.

Here are just a few of the inaccurate statements he makes in his article:

1. "These values are often now taught in the version developed by Maulana Karenga <../karenga/karenga.htm> and associated with the invention of a feast called "Kwanzaa <../kwanzaa/kwanzaa_official.htm>", designed to provide an African celebration to go with Christmas and Hanukkah."

This is a deliberate trivialization of the Kwanzaa holiday as a feast and the elevation of Christmas and Hanukkah as somehow of a different order. Is it because he has a problem with the African creation of Kwanzaa, after all both Christmas and Hanukkah represent human creations. All celebrations are made by human beings. A derogatory reference to the most important African American holiday as a "feast" shows the disdain that Appiah holds for African people.

2. "There is something of an irony in the use of Swahili as an Afrocentric language, since hardly any of the slaves brought to the New World can have known it."

Afrocentricity is not a theory just for the African diaspora. In fact, Afrocentricity is fundamentally rooted on the continent of Africa where it has its largest following. Furthermore, Swahili was not been proposed as a Diasporan African language but as a language to unite Africans. It is a very logical choice and the 1977 FESTAC colloquium held in Lagos, Nigeria, concluded that it would make an excellent choice for the international African world since it was least attached to a large ethnic group such as Yoruba or Hausa. At any

rate, no African slaves were brought to the Americas, only African people were brought here.

3. "Afrocentrists have challenged the old priority of the white Greeks by replacing them with black Egyptians."

It is not true that Afrocentrists have replaced white Greeks with black Egyptians; we do not mind everyone standing in his or her own ground. The Greeks can remain firmly in control of whatever cultural legacy they bring the world. We simply believe that it is important to demonstrate that ancient Egyptians must be seen in the correct light. Egypt is prior to Greece as Greece is prior to Rome. We have not simply replaced the Greeks we have left them in their place and unveiled the Egyptians in theirs.

4. "Martin Bernal is a hero of the Afrocentrists"

Martin Bernal is a hero of the Afrocentrists is inaccurate. This is not to say that Bernal has not made a significant contribution to historical knowledge. But the heroes of the Afrocentric movement are numerous: Cheikh Anta Diop, Herbert Ekwe-Ekwe, Chinweizu, Marimba Ani, John Henrik Clarke, Kariamu Welsh-Asante, Theophile Obenga, Yosef Ben-Jochannan, Maulana Karenga, Wade Nobles, Herbert Viliakazi, Asa Hilliard, Na'im Akbar, and hundreds of others. And any one of these scholars could stand their ground with anyone. Bernal's work, fortunately, and without Bernal intending to, supports the arguments that have been made by African scholars since 1916.

5. "Choosing to talk about Egypt and to ignore the rest of Africa and African history, Afrocentrism shares the European prejudice against cultures without writing."

This is an inaccurate conclusion and it misses the point of the discussion about Nile Valley Civilizations. Egypt is to Africa, as Diop said, as Greece is to Europe. This means that it is anterior in many concepts and constructs. To concentrate on cultures that are derived from Egypt without discussing Egypt would be like putting the cart before the horse. If Appiah has a problem with the Afrocentric concentration on cultures with writing then he should initiate a discussion of cultures without writing, this is quite acceptable to Afrocentrists. Of course it is not true that Afrocentrism "shares the European prejudice" because Afrocentrism recognizes language as starting on the continent of Africa. Writing is not first European, it is African first. Why should not Africans be engaged in examining all aspects of the African world.? And in the end, Appiah's objections show that he is unfamiliar with the work on African oral traditions and orature by the outstanding Ghanaian Afrocentrist, Dr. Abu Abarry.

6. "Afrocentrism persists in unanimism, the view that there is an African culture to which to appeal."

It is true that the Temple Circle of Afrocentricity accepts the idea that Africans in Cuba, in Haiti, in Puerto Rico, in Guadeloupe, in South Africa, in Ghana, and in Nigeria. But Appiah is wrong to speak of Afrocentrists persisting in unanimism. Most of us believe that African cultures represent different micro-responses to the environment but are similar in their broad outlines. To use the bug-a-boo essentialism to describe the process of self-affirmation is to mislead the reader. The term essentialism is often used as a term of opprobrium by Appiah and others, and the adjective "mere" has often been applied to essentialism when the critics fear any discussion of ontological bases for culture. In some ways they believe that this might endanger humanity. Essentialism should not be confused with nativism however for essentialism refers to the empirical fact that we are connected to our ancestors, have a certain life story, and can be identified by the stories in which we have participated. On the other hand, nativism believes that biology is the basis of a special dispensation. Appiah, being part white and part black, has found a nativistic analysis of his own in which to attack what he sees as African essentialism. What he really attacks is the right of Africans to speak as Africans because he feels that if Africans choose that right, fundamental to our existence, we then take something away from others but that is not an African way of thinking, that is precisely what we are criticizing. On the other hand, he does not attack "British essentialism" or "European essentialism" in any form.

7. "Afrocentrism has ignored the writing of African scholars other than Cheikh Anta Diop."

What Appiah means is that Afrocentrists have ignored other continental African writers, but this, too, is wrong because most of our sources are African. This conceptual slip shows that Appiah seeks, while sitting in an African American Studies department, to demonstrate that Africans are different from African Americans. He is trapped by false logic. There are continental Africans and diasporan Africans. Both are equally African as Jews are Jews and Chinese are Chinese and Europeans are Europeans. Show us other African writers who have written as Diop has written and they will become a part of our school. It is a fact that we are a particular school of scholarship and there are African writers that we refer to other than Diop but they too are Afrocentric. If we refer to Marxists like Claude Ake or Samir Amin, it is to critique them in the light of their intellectual and cultural location. If we refer to the works of Ogot, Houtoundji, and Appiah, it is to critique them for being off-centered. V. Y. Mudimbe, whom Appiah does not mention, is a significant

scholar in his own right and Afrocentrists do find much that is useful in Mudimbe although, to be sure, Mudimbe has much to learn from the agency of Africans demonstrated in the works of the Afrocentrists.

8. "Molefi Asante has written whole books about Akan culture without referring to the major works of such Akan philosophers as J.B. Danquah, Willie Abraham, Kwasi Wiredu, and Kwame Gyekye."

I wish it were true that I had written whole books on Akan culture. He got me confused with some other Asante, an indication that he has not read my works. Nevertheless, Willie Abraham is one of the sources I use in my own works, particularly his book *The Mind of Africa* and I count Kwame Gyekye as a personal friend and have benefited from his analysis. But Kwame Gyekye could have told him that I have never written a book on Akan culture. As a member of the same ethnic group as Kwame Gyekye and as the traditional Kyidomhene of Tafo, Nana Okru Asante Peasah, I would never undertake to write a book about Akan culture without the proper sources. I find it unbelievable that Appiah would make a statement about my research without examining my work or sources. Appiah confuses Afrocentric theory with Afrocentric practice and discusses Karenga and other Afrocentric scholars in the same contexts as rap artists in an attempt to dismiss the content of Karenga's ideas. Furthermore, Appiah argues that Afrocentrists seek to give children "a diet of celebratory African history" such as the blackness of ancient Egyptians.

I am appalled at the level of ignorance, particularly historical ignorance, that often sits at the very door of the minds of critics like Appiah. The ancient Egyptians were African and black-skinned people, full stop. The evidence for this claim is overwhelming and one has to have accepted the entire corpus of Eurocentric writing without question to dispute it. But alas, to debate Appiah on this question is rather useless since he is not interested in the area of scholarship that would enlighten him on this subject. Let it be said simply, that the evidence of the blackness of the ancient Egyptians has been proven by science, linguistics, and literature.

The fact that Appiah likes Clinton Jean's *Behind the Eurocentric Veils: The Search for African Realities*, a book that I read and recommended for publication because it was in the Afrocentric school is troubling to me. It means that he clearly has no understanding of the Afrocentric project because Jean, if anything, was squarely in the Afrocentric project in the same way as other Afrocentrist theorists. Prior to his death we talked and discussed the Afrocentric project and if anything, he claimed Afrocentricity as his

theoretical orientation. I wrote in support of his work because I believed in his project, which was the same project as mine.

Now that I have gone through the short piece Appiah wrote for the Sapina, let me give you my classification of critics of Afrocentricity.

There are three distinct types of critics:

1. Capitulationists: These critics must condemn Afrocentricity because they are uncomfortable with themselves and do not believe that Africans should be considered agents. They believe that to project their agency is to intrude on European grounds. The operative element is self hatred, that is, the belief that Africans are really nothing but whites in black skin.

2. Europeanized Loyalists: These critics are strictly into Europe; blacks can do no good. Many Marxists and many integrationists might be seen as Europeanized loyalists. For them, any theory has to be developed by Europeans or else it does not have validity. They are strangers to the Afrocentric idea because they have immersed themselves in alien philosophies without knowing African philosophies. They follow their own system of commandments.

Thou shalt not accept an African origin
Thou shalt not mock the white man
Thou shalt not threaten the cultural imperialist
Thou shalt not identify with any Africans
Thou shalt not despise the legacy of the white slave owner
Thou shalt not speak evil of Thomas Jefferson and George Washington
Thou shalt not speak evil of Vladimir Lenin or Karl Marx
Thou shalt not praise other African men and women
Thou shalt not seek to create values for African survival
Thou shalt not work to develop and maintain African identity
Thou shalt not allow anyone to call you African
Thou shalt not quote any African theorists

3. Maskers: These are the critics who are embarrassed by Afrocentrists because we do not seem to honor whites the same way as they do and therefore they do all they can to conceal their identities. Their tragedy is that they seek to please the master, and ultimately they are disappointed or isolated. So the maskers attack Afrocentrists to prove to whites that they are like them. They may not harbor self-hatred but they harbor fear. Frighten that they may lose their careers they are used to attack Afrocentricity. In the end the entire cabal of attackers simply delays the moment of ultimate consciousness that the Afrocentric orientation to data is not only normal but essential to African sanity.

Race in Antiquity: Truly Out of Africa

Africa's influence on ancient Greece, the oldest European civilization, was profound and significant in art, architecture, astronomy, medicine, geometry, mathematics, law, politics, and religion. Yet there has been a furious campaign to discredit African influence and to claim a miraculous birth for Western civilization. A number of books and articles by white and some black conservatives seek to disprove the Egyptian influence on Greece.

One of the most recent works in this genre is a book by Wellesley professor Mary Lefkowitz, *Not Out of Africa*. It continues what Martin Bernal calls in *Black Athena* the Aryanist tradition of attacking African agency in regard to Greece by raising strawpeople arguments and then knocking them over. This is unfortunate but to be expected by an intellectual tradition that supports the dominant mythologies of race in the history of the West by diverting attention to marginal issues in the public domain.

Afrocentricity seeks to discover African agency in every situation. Who are we? What did we do? Where did we travel? What is our role in geometry? How do we as a people function in this or that contemporary situation? But the Afrocentrist does not advance African particularity as universal. This is its essential difference from Eurocentricity which is advanced in the United States and other places as if the particular experiences of Europeans is universal. This imposition is ethnocentric and often racist. Afrocentricity advances the view that it is possible for a pluralism of cultures to exist without hierarchy but this demands cultural equality and respect.

Mary Lefkowitz' book has sought to re-assert the idea that Greece did not receive substantial contributions from Kemet, the original name of Egypt, which is the Greek name for the ancient land. Professor Lefkowitz has offered the public a pabulum history which ignores or distorts the substantial evidence of African influence on Greece in the ancient writings of Aetius, Strabo, Plato, Homer, Herodotus, Diogenes, Plutarch, and Diodorus Siculus. A reader of Lefkowitz' book must decide if she or he is going to believe those who wrote during the period or someone who writes today. History teaches us that a person is more likely to distort an event the farther away from it she happens to be. If you have a choice, go with the people who saw the ancient Egyptians and wrote about what they saw.

CONSERVATIVE WHITE COLUMNISTS HAVE FELT A TREMENDOUS NEED TO RESPOND IN THE MOST VIGOROUS FASHION WITH THEIR APPLAUSE TO SHORE UP THEIR RACIAL MYTHOLOGIES. AND NOW GEORGE WILL (NEWSWEEK,

FEBRUARY 12, 1996) AND ROGER KIMBALL (WALL STREET JOURNAL, FEBRUARY 14, 1996) HAVE SEEN FIT TO BLESS PROFESSOR MARY LEFKOWITZ' NOT OUT OF AFRICA AS A SORT OF DEFINITIVE MOMENT IN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY. IT IS NO SUCH MOMENT. IT IS A RACIAL ARGUMENT CLEARLY FAST BACK-STEPPING. AS IS TOO OFTEN THE CASE THESE DAYS, HOWEVER, LEFKOWITZ RECEIVED THE GO-AHEAD TO ATTACK AFROCENTRICITY BY WRITING THIS BOOK OF BLACKS SUCH AS ANTHONY APPIAH AND HENRY GATES. THEY HAVE, OF COURSE, HAD A REAL PROBLEM WITH THE AFROCENTRIC IDEA.

What this indicates is that we have gone full circle from the Hegelian "Let us forget Africa" to a late 20th century attack on African scholarship by declaring, in the face of the evidence, that major influences on Greece were not out of Africa. And as such it will simply confirm the inability of some scholars to get beyond the imposition of their particularism of Europe. No one can remove the gifts of Europe nor should that ever be the aim of scholarship but Greece cannot impose itself as some universal culture that developed full-blown out of nothing, without the foundations it received from Africa.

The aim of Professor Lefkowitz is to support the unsupportable idea of a miraculous Greece and thus to enhance a white supremacist myth of the ancient world. Perhaps George Will and Roger Kimball believe that that they have found a savior of the pure white thesis. They are wrong. The thesis cannot be supported with facts although Professor Lefkowitz goes to great length to confuse the picture by concentrating on irrelevancies.

Professor Mary Lefkowitz' work pales besides the research done by Cornell professor Martin Bernal, *Black Athena*, the late Cheikh Anta Diop, author of *Civilization or Barbarism*, and Temple professor Theophile Obenga, author of the important *La Philosophie Africaine de la période Pharonique*, (African Philosophy in the Age of the Pharaohs) or the forthcoming work by Professor Maulana Karenga on ancient Egyptian ethics.

The press fanfare granted *Not out of Africa*, however, does demonstrate how noise can be confused with music. But what is more worrisome is that it demonstrates a glee, although misinformed, of those who feel some sense of relief that a white scholar has taken on the Afrocentrists, a kind of white hope idea. This stems, as I believe George Will has shown in his essay on the subject, from what is viewed as white salvation from the irrationality of Afrocentrists. It originates in an historical anti-African bias and

Roger Kimball nearly gloated that readers would "savor" Lefkowitz' "definitive dissection of Afrocentrism." Contrary to any definitive dissection of Afrocentrism what Professor Lefkowitz offered was a definitive exposure of the principal assumptions of a racial structure of classical knowledge.

Professor Lefkowitz is conversant with many Greek sources but as she admits this is the first time that she has ventured into these waters. This is unfortunate because she has created a false security among those who believe that Greece sprung like a miracle unborn and untaught. Bringing Frank Snowden in the discussion of the ancient world does not help because Professor Snowden's book Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Graeco-Roman Experience is fatally flawed as a Eurocentric interpretation of the African past. His objective was to demonstrate that Africans existed in the imaginations and experience of Greece and Rome. He succeeded in stripping all agency from Africans. The problem is that Ethiopia in the form of Nubia and Kemet (Egypt) existed thousands of years before there was a Greece or Rome. To start a discussion of the ancient world with 800 B.C. is certainly poor scholarship. But Professor Lefkowitz reliance on Snowden is the least of her problems.

The book is badly written and terribly redundant as if she is in a hurry to enlarge a relatively poor argument. How many times can you really say that George G. M. James should not have used the term "stolen legacy" when he claimed that the Africans influenced the Greeks? Professor James certainly had just as much rhetorical justification as Professor Lefkowitz who chose the unsubtle title "Not Out of Africa" probably for the same reason as Professor James called his book Stolen Legacy.

Ruling classes always seek to promote and to maintain their ruling mythologies. Professor Lefkowitz' passion in trying to walk a tight rope between support of the false mythology of a Greek miracle and the facts of Egyptian influence on the early Greeks is telling. She seeks to minimize the role Egypt played in civilizing Greece by claiming that only in art and architecture was there real influence. This flies in the face of the ancient observers and beneficiaries of the largesse of the Africans.

MARY LEFKOWITZ'S NOT OUT OF AFRICA, HAS DEMONSTRATED THE TREMENDOUS POWER OF A FALSE IDEA ESPECIALLY WHEN IT IS ADVANCED IN THE HALLS OF THE ACADEMY. I HAVE COME TO BELIEVE THAT IT IS A PART OF A LARGER FALSIFICATION THAT ENCOMPASSES THE VARIOUS RIGHT-WING IDEOLOGIES THAT PARADE AS TRUTH. THEY ARE ROOTED IN THE SAME DOGMA: REASON IS THE

GIFT OF THE GREEKS. THE GREEKS ARE EUROPEANS, EUROPEANS ARE WHITE, WHITE PEOPLE GAVE THE WORLD REASON AND PHILOSOPHY. THIS IS NOT ONLY A BAD IDEA IT IS A FALSE IDEA. IT IS A BAD IDEA BECAUSE IT PREACHES A EUROPEAN TRIUMPHALISM AND IT IS A FALSE IDEA BECAUSE THE HISTORICAL RECORD IS CONTRARY. TRAGICALLY THE IDEA THAT EUROPEANS HAVE SOME DIFFERENT INTELLECTUAL OR SCIENTIFIC ABILITY IS ACCEPTED DOCTRINE AND SOME SCHOLARS WILL GO TO ANY LENGTH TO TRY TO UPHOLD IT. USUALLY, AS LEFKOWITZ DOES, THEY COMMIT FOUR FUNDAMENTAL FLAWS:

1) THEY ATTACK INSIGNIFICANT OR TRIVIAL ISSUES TO OBSCURE THE MAIN POINTS.

PROFESSOR LEFKOWITZ HAS THREE MAIN AXES TO GRIND IN HER BOOK. THE FIRST IS THAT A STUDENT TOLD HER THAT SHE BELIEVED SOCRATES WAS BLACK. THE SECOND IS THAT THE GREEK GODS CAME FROM AFRICA WHICH SHE ATTRIBUTES TO MARTIN BERNAL, THE AUTHOR OF BLACK ATHENA, AND TO CHEIKH ANTA DIOP, THE AUTHOR OF THE AFRICAN ORIGIN OF CIVILIZATION. THE THIRD IS THAT FREEMASONRY IS THE SOURCE OF GEORGE JAMES' CLAIM IN HIS BOOK STOLEN LEGACY THAT THE GREEKS GOT MANY OF THEIR MAJOR IDEAS FROM THE EGYPTIANS.

The main point made by Afrocentrists is that Greece owes a substantial debt to Egypt and that Egypt was anterior to Greece and should be considered a major contributor to our current knowledge. I think I can say without a doubt that Afrocentrists do not spend time arguing that either Socrates or Cleopatra were black. I have never seen these ideas written by an Afrocentrist nor have I heard them discussed in any Afrocentric intellectual forums. Professor Lefkowitz provides us with a hearsay incident which she probably reports accurately. It is not an Afrocentric argument.

I believe that both Bernal and Diop have done admirable jobs making their own cases on the legendary origins of the Greeks and I believe that readers should go to the sources themselves to see whose case, theirs or Professor Lefkowitz', is most plausible. I am convinced from my reading that the relationship between ancient Greece and Africa was closer and more familiar than Greece's relationship to Northern Europe.

2) They will make assertion and offer their own interpretations as evidence.

Professor Lefkowitz makes a statement on page 1 of her book that "In American universities today not everyone knows what extreme Afrocentrists are doing in their classrooms. Or even if they do know, they choose not to ask questions." We are off to a bad start. Who are these extreme Afrocentrists? She does not provide us with one example of something that an extreme Afrocentrist is teaching in a classroom. Not one. But already the reader is inclined to believe that something exists where nothing exists. No matter how passionate, assertion is not evidence. What Afrocentrists do teach is that you cannot begin the discussion of world history with the Greeks. Creating clouds of suspicion about scholarly colleagues in order to support a racial mythology developed over the past centuries to accompany European enslavement of Africans, imperialism, and exploitation will not dissipate the fact of Greece's debt to Africa.

3) They will undermine writers they previously supported in order to maintain the fiction of a Greek miracle.

Professor Lefkowitz and others who once considered Herodotus to be the Father of History now find fault with Herodotus because as Afrocentrists read Book Two of Histories we find that Herodotus glorifies the achievements of Egypt in relationship to Greece. But Herodotus is not the only ancient Greek writer to be dismissed by classicists who accept what Bernal rightly calls an Aryan interpretation of the ancient world.

Aristotle reported that the Egyptians gave the world the study of geometry and mathematics and the Aryanists argue that Aristotle made mistakes in what he observed. Professor Lefkowitz carries the denial of the ancient Greeks to a new level saying essentially that you cannot trust Homer, Diogenes Laertius, Plutarch, or Strabo. Her position is that Strabo, like Herodotus, depended too much on what the Egyptian priests told him. Every Greek who wrote on the overwhelming impact of Egypt (Africa) on Greece (Europe) is discredited or set up to be discredited by the Aryanists. The idea to abandon the Greek authors rests on the belief that these ancient Greek writers cannot be counted upon to support the theories of white supremacy.

4) THEY WILL ANNOUNCE BOTH SIDES OF AN ISSUE ARE CORRECT, THEN MOVE TO UPHOLD ONLY THE SIDE THAT SUPPORTS EUROPEAN TRIUMPHALISM.

Professor Lefkowitz could have admitted that Egypt during the times of the Pharaohs, whatever interpretation you have of that ancient society, for example, as ornamented with Mystery Schools or simply filled with keepers of mysteries at the temples of Ipet sut, Edfu, Kom

Ombo, Philae, Esna, Abydos, and other cities, was the source of much of Greek knowledge. Rather she claims that the only real impact of Egypt on Greece was in art and architecture. This is to state an obvious fact in order to obscure the deeper influences in science, astronomy, geometry, literature, religion, mathematics, law, government, music, medicine, and philosophy.

Professor Lefkowitz' major points are not only flawed but her reasoning is faulty and cannot be sustained by any inquiry into the Greek or Egyptian languages or into ancient history. She wonders why the Afrocentric perspective is plausible to so many intelligent people. Clearly it is plausible to intelligent people because they do not believe that there was some unique brand of intelligence that struck the Greeks and created a Greek miracle willy-nilly without contact with the civilized world. In most cases knowledge builds upon knowledge. In the case of the ancient Greeks they tell us that they built upon the Egyptians. Should we believe them or should we believe the modern Aryanist interpreters who want to dismiss the ancient Greek observers?

What are the substantial arguments advanced by Afrocentrists, not the hearsay comments of a student or some rhetorical repartee between public debaters? What Afrocentrists articulate (see Asante, Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1990; Theophile Obenga, A Lost Tradition: African Philosophy in World History, Philadelphia: Source, 1995) is that the Greeks were students of the Egyptians. Readers should see the works of Yosef Ben-Jochannan and George G. M. James for themselves rather than rely on the misinterpretations and distortions of others.

On these facts we stand: *Ancient Egyptians were black people.
*Egyptian civilization precedes Greece by several thousand years
*The pyramids are completed (2500 BC) long before Homer appears (800 BC) *Philosophy originates in Africa and the first Greek philosophers (Thales, Isocrates) studied in Egypt * A discussion of the wise, wisdom, (sb) appears on tomb of Antef in 2052 BC *Thales of Miletus is not a philosopher until 600 BC

Among Greek historians and others who wrote about what the Greeks learned from Egypt are Homer, Herodotus, Iamblicus, Aetius, Diodorus Siculus, Diogenes Laertius, Plutarch, and Plato. Who were some of the Greek students of Africans, according to the ancient records? They were Plato, Solon, Lycurgus, Democritus, Anaxamander, Anaxagoras, Herodotus, Homer, Thales, Pythagoras, Eudoxus, and Isocrates and many others. Some of these students even wrote of their studies in Egypt as well.

There are many other points that are debatable in Lefkowitz' book but I do not have space to discuss all of them in this essay. However, I do want to point out that she is also wrong on the issue of Alexandria. The City of Alexandria built in honor of Alexander of Macedonia was not a new city, the Greeks simply expanded an existing city and changed its name. The ancient Egyptian city of Rhacôtis, which probably had an even older name, was the original African city upon which Alexandria was built much like Kinshasa under the Belgians was expanded and changed to Leopoldville. Triumphalism has a way of insinuating itself into everything and then claiming that it is original.

In the end I have asked myself, what is Professor Lefkowitz' point, why does she see the need to challenge Bernal, James, Diop, or to question my integrity? She states very clearly that her project is about sustaining the American myth of European triumphalism. In her own words:

"Any attempt to question the authenticity of ancient Greek civilization is of direct concern even to people who ordinarily have little interest in the remote past. Since the founding of this country, ancient Greece has been intimately connected with the ideals of American democracy."

No one could have given a better reason than that for Professor Lefkowitz' spirited but misguided attempt to defend a falsification of history in the name of attacking Afrocentricity. When all is said and done a more perfect union of this nation can only be based on facts.

Critics argue that some Afrocentric historical research is grounded in identity politics and myth rather than scholarship. Philosophy professor Robert Todd Carroll labeled Afrocentrism "pseudohistorical".¹ widely known for his writings on Afrocentricity. Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change in 1980. "I chose the term Afrocentricity to emphasize the fact that African people had been moved off of terms for the past five hundred years."² Afrocentrism has its origins in the work of African and African diaspora intellectuals in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, following social changes in the United States and Africa due both to the end of slavery and the decline of colonialism. Afrocentricity And Its Critics. As could be expected, however, Afrocentricity's growing paradigmatic ascendancy over African-American studies also prompted serious critiques, which fall within five broad categories. First, critics have disagreed with some of Afrocentricity's premises, in particular the notion of an African essence that undergirds the notion of center. This criticism is often heard in poststructuralist circles, since the very idea of a center is antithetical to the poststructuralist paradigm. Often associated with this criticism is the additional claim that in its search for Af Afrocentrism (also Afrocentricity; occasionally Africentrism^[1]) is cultural ideology mostly limited to the United States, dedicated to the history of Black people a response to global racist (Eurocentric/Orientalist) attitudes about African people and their historical contributions by revisiting this history with an African cultural and ideological center.³ Afrocentrism has its origins in the work of African and African diaspora intellectuals in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, following social changes in the United States and Africa due both to the end of slavery and the decline of colonialism.⁴ â€ Other critics contend that some Afrocentric historical research is grounded in identity politics