1. I would like to begin by thanking the organizers of this conference. My special thanks go to Professor Kofi Anyidoho for personally extending to me the invitation to participate.

2. I have been asked to contribute to the theme of “Foundation Works in African Philosophy”. I cannot thank the organizers enough for leaving it to me “to define the entry point I wish to pursue.” I do intend, however, to meet the hope that this piece “will capture the critical debating points arising from my topic.” Within the broader context of the theme of the symposium on “Canonical Works and Continuing Innovation in African Arts and Humanities” an invitation to dilate on foundation works in African Philosophy might be construed in two or more ways. (1) One might focus on identifying the canonical works that form the foundation for African Philosophy. Such an approach is apt to be more taxonomic than discursive. Precisely for that reason, however informative it may turn out to be, it will fail the requirement of capturing the critical debating points in the discourse. (2) One might add to the taxonomy a discussion of the debates that have arisen around the works thus identified as foundational taking care to report as meticulously as possible the divergent positions represented therein without one taking a position on the relative superiority of some works to others within the discourse. (3) A third option would be to do (1) and (2) while engaging in some inquiry into the criteria for selecting some works as canonical and excluding others with a view to reconfiguring the foundation that such works presume to supply for the discourse of African Philosophy. I have decided to adopt the third alternative in this presentation.

3. Only the foolhardy now deny the existence of African Philosophy or its philosophical pedigree. But if one were to peruse some of the recent works, textbooks and anthologies, published in the discipline, especially in the United States, one would be ill-served by the narrowness of the focus and the limited works that are marked as foundational. Indeed the thrust of my discussion in this paper came from reflections about a few recent books in African philosophy; African Philosophy as Cultural Inquiry edited by Ivan Karp and Dismas Masolo and Richard Bell’s Understanding African Philosophy, to be specific. In perusing those books one is likely to come away with the impression that the discipline is a conversation among Kwasi Wiredu, Paulin Hountondji, Kwame Gyekye, Odera Oruka, and Anthony Appiah, in the first book, with Barry Hallen and J. Olubi Sodipo, and Wole Soyinka thrown in. I must point, though, that Barry Hallen’s latest book, A Short History of African Philosophy, is a welcome exception that stands out as one of the few places where one who is desirous of knowing what the many dimensions of recent African philosophy are is likely to find other, especially contemporary, African thinkers discussed even if in extremely brief details.
I do not wish to be misunderstood. One cannot state too much the importance of acknowledging, nay celebrating the accomplishments of those who, starting in the early nineteen-seventies, established African philosophy as an academic discipline. Working mostly out of Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Cameroon, Benin, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, and Cote d’Ivoire, the philosophers concerned were motivated by a nationalist problematic. A good deal of what are now regarded as foundation works owe their origins to a racist disposition dating back to the nineteenth century that denied that Africans are capable of reason, not to talk of philosophy. If Africans lack the capacity for reason, and philosophy, on that acceptation, is wholly constructed from reason’s broadcloth, it follows that to put Africa and philosophy together in the same sentence is to fail to make a statement. This is why much of the debate regarding African philosophy took the form of (1) Is there African Philosophy? (2) Is African Philosophy ‘philosophy’? (3) What are the conditions for there to be an African Philosophy? (4) If there is African Philosophy what are its methods? And so on. Some of the first anthologies of African philosophy were dominated by the preceding questions. [Cite texts.]

The fact that African philosophy no longer has an oxymoronic ring to it is the ultimate testament to the labours of those who founded the discipline. But that the themes, methods, and even the controversies that they inaugurated or that arose in the wake of their philosophical exertions have continued to dominate the discourse of African philosophy is, in my opinion, evidence of a creeping ossification that warrants some critical attention. I am suggesting that the nationalist problematic that framed the initial discourse of academic African philosophy in the 1970s is now having a sclerotic effect on the discipline and should now be retired.

Let us consider an analogy from other disciplines. There is hardly any area of intellectual endeavour where African capacity or genius has not been denied or denigrated. For a long time Africans were adjudged bereft of History except insofar as they were part of the history of their conquerors; Literature because, it was said, they lacked writing, and so on. Starting in the 1950s Africans controverted the claims about History and the 1960s saw us refuting the claims about Literature. Philosophy was not the only area where Africans did intellectual battle in the 1970s. They also fought to create the discipline of African Traditional Religion. The problem is that whereas in History, Literature and Religion our scholars did not spend much time on the types of questions we identified above, philosophers have devoted much of their time to metatheoretical questions concerning pedigree and ontological questions regarding the conditions for and methods of African philosophy. Although I am aware that there is now much that is being done at the level of dissertations and theses that replicate in philosophy the proliferation of substantive works in African Literature, History and Religion, we cannot yet say that the situation in our discipline is comparable. Even as we speak much of the output in African philosophy as evidenced in published works is (1) very general, tackling somewhat nebulously ‘african’ themes on this or that idea; (2) mainly contained within the trajectory charted by the foundational works of the discipline. If the task of renewing the foundations is to be meaningful and successfully executed, we must begin to show that African philosophy is much more than a conversation with, among or about Hallen-Sodipo, Hountondji, Wiredu, Oruka, Towa, Mbiti, Gyekye, Appiah, Tempels, and Senghor. These are the usual suspects.

To go beyond the usual suspects is not to diminish the stature of the pioneers, it is to expand the gallery of pioneers and simultaneously expand the inventory of concepts, themes,
schools of thought and philosophical traditions that are readily available for African philosophy but are rarely, if ever, tapped into. It is to remind us that if we think that what we now celebrate as African philosophy is rich, what is available but uncharted is richer still. Finally, going beyond the usual suspects will allow us to begin the work of substantive philosophizing taking off from regional philosophical traditions as well as subdisciplinary themes such as are reflected in the locution ‘philosophy of …’, ranging from history to law, geography to politics, sociology to religion, food to the body. Instead of the continuing fascination with African views of this and that, we shall begin to accept beyond mere lip service the complexity of life and thought in the African world, not to talk of the multiplicity of tradition to be found therein.

4. The denial of the African’s capacity for philosophy or any other rational endeavour arose from a basic philosophical anthropology that came to the fore in the third quarter of the 19th century and has continued to dominate much of what passes for conversation between the West, so-called, and the Rest of Us. Because much of our discourse is dominated by the nationalist problematic that emanated from our response to those denials, we continue to waste precious time on this problematic. Unbeknownst to us we operate within the same framework that fails to recognize the complexity of the African situation and, more importantly, its historicity.

Let us rewind to the 19th century. How did Africans at that time react to the denial of their humanity? This is not a rhetorical question. Nor is the answer of merely antiquarian interest. For, in different ways, most, if not all of us who make up the professional discipline of African philosophy are inheritors of a schizoid and conflicted legacy made up of our indigenous cultures, whatever those may be and however vestigial they are, in our individual make-ups; and the extraneous matrices furnished by the multiplex alien historical movements that have ravaged Africa in unequal measures for several centuries: Islam, Christianity, the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade, the Atlantic Slave Trade, Modernity, Colonialism and Neocolonialism. To speak as if the inheritance I have just described is neither complex nor conflicted is to misdescribe our situation.

Yet, the earliest efforts to deal with that heritage by our earlier legatees remain absent in most censuses of the foundation works in African philosophy. We end up with a situation whereby African philosophy comes to be identified with the near amnesiac rehash of the ‘Africa has no philosophy’ debate that had a longer genealogy going back to the 19th century.

5. It is only if we persist in this amnesiac behaviour that we can continue to hold as foundation works those that are currently held up as such. Let us examine some earlier disquisitions of our 19th century precursors. They did not merely conduct metatheoretical debates concerning African intellectual achievements. Yes, they did that and it is a sign of our collective amnesia that we do not dialogue with them. For illustration, we are familiar with ongoing debates about Afrocenrtism. A fundamental claim of Afrocentrists of whatever stripe is that Africa has not always been prostrate in relation to the rest of humanity. Hence the attempts to restore to common consciousness the africanity of ancient Egyptian civilization. But I am amazed at the absence of recognition that some 19th and early 20th century African thinkers had foreshadowed this strand of argumentation. Consider the following:

Africa, in ages past, was the nursery of science and literature, from thence they were taught in Greece and Rome, so that it was said that the ancient Greeks represented their favourite goddess of wisdom—Minerva—as an African princess.
Pilgrimages were made to Africa in search of knowledge by such eminent men as Solon, Plato, Pythagoras; and several came to listen to the instructions of the African Euclid, who was at the head of the most celebrated mathematical school in the world and who flourished 300 years before the birth of Christ. [Horton, p. 18]

The Reverend S. R. B. Attoh Ahuma would expound on the same theme in the opening decade of the 20th century. He referred to a time when “Europe looked to Africa for new ideas, for fresh inspirations, and the saying was perpetuated and handed down from generation to generation, Semper aliquid novi ex Africa—There is always something new from Africa.” [Ahuma, p. 8] I have presented only their conclusions regarding the place of Africa in the intellectual history of humankind. There is a wealth of ideas waiting to be harvested in their substantive discussions of Africa’s place in the history of ideas.

Consider another example. Many of us practitioners of African philosophy are familiar with the works of Robin Horton and of its status as part of the foundations of African philosophy. [Cite texts.] I am afraid that we have familiarized ourselves with the wrong Horton. For while in the 1970s some of the foundation works were devoted to confutations of Horton’s claims respecting the fundamental differences, chasms almost, between African Traditional Thought and Western Science. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to say that the metaphysics of difference, or a near absolutization of it regarding Africans and the rest of humanity, has dominated the discourse of our discipline. For so long, more ink was spilled on delineating the boundaries of the africanness of African philosophy. Such was the dominance of that viewpoint that it was difficult for a long time to have the works of many thinkers now discussed by Hallen in his Short History included in African philosophy. But nowhere was there reflected the fact that the attempts radically to separate the African from the rest of humankind was not only not new, but that a different Horton had, using the same philosophical resources from which the argument from difference emanated, sought to refute that point of view. In an essay titled “Exposition of Erroneous Views Respecting the African,” Horton wrote:

But the anthropologists of these days will not view the African race, whether educated or uneducated, with a calm, quiet, and unprejudiced mind; could they but do so they would involuntarily come to the conclusion that these people, even in their native rudeness, where they have nothing to stir up the latent powers of improvement in them but the book of nature, whose pages, truly, are filled with objects of wonder and admiration, do, in many cases, show signs of possessing wonderful powers of observation; and when once they acquire the necessary information respecting natural objects by habits of patient attention, which must be the inevitable result, when those powers are brought into play, they are indelibly riveted in their memory. [Horton, p. 21]

After having cited various authorities concerning the genius of the African and her humanity, Horton concluded:

I claim the existence of the attribute of a common humanity in the African or Negro race; that there exist no radical distinctions between him and his more
civilized confrere; that the amount of moral and intellectual endowments exhibited by him, as originally conferred by nature, is the same, or nearly so, as that found amongst the European nations; and it is an incontrovertible logical inference that the difference arises entirely from the influences of external circumstances. [Horton, p. 27]

It need be pointed out that Horton’s view was neither the only one nor was it universally accepted. The same period marked the emergence of Edward Blyden’s theory of the “African personality” which bought into the metaphysics of difference that Horton was determined to confute. What is important is that issues that had a fresh ring to them in the 1970s had even longer antecedents in the 19th century. Additionally, it is a mark of how well Horton and his contemporaries were inserted into the philosophical discourse of their time that specific thinkers were in their gun sight, intellectually speaking.

In another essay titled “False Theories of Modern Anthropologists,” Horton took on views that we in the 21st century are still struggling with. But his manner of proceeding here is symptomatic of the man of knowledge laying down the law for those who, though they had power given their membership of the colonizing nations, demonstrated profound ignorance of much of which they spoke when it came to the capacity of Africans. Might we have been spared the waste of time and precious intellectual energy in our time had we been better students of our intellectual precursors?

I must say a few words on some grave errors in generalization which men of science with restricted observation have arrived at respecting the capacity of progression in the African race…. Hume, in his Essay on Natural Characters, says that “There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion (Negro), nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation…. In Jamaica, indeed, they talk of one Negro as a man of parts and learning, but it is likely he is admired for slender accomplishments, like a parrot who speaks a few words plainly.” [Horton, p. 31]

Bristling with the righteous indignation of a man of knowledge at the antics of interlocutors driven by conceit underwritten by ignorance, Horton wrote:

Of late years a society has been formed in England in imitation of the Anthropological Society of Paris, which might be made of great use to science had it not been for the profound prejudice exhibited against the Negro race in their discussions and in their writings. They again revive the old and vexed question of race, which the able researches of Blumenbach, Prichard, Pallas, Hunter, Lacepède, Quatrefages, Geoffroy St. Hillaire, and many others, had years ago (it was thought) settled. They placed the structure of the anthropoid apes before them, and then commenced the discussion of a series of ideal structures of the Negro which only exist in their imagination, and thus endeavour to link the Negroes with the brute creation. Some of their statements are so barefacedly false, so utterly the subversion of scientific truth, that they serve to exhibit the writers as perfectly ignorant of the subjects of which they treat. The works of
Carl Vogt, *Lectures on Man*; of Dr. Hunt, *Negroes’ Place in Nature*; and of Prunner Bey, *Mémoire sur les Negres*, 1861, contain, in many respects, tissues of the most deceptive statements, calculated to mislead those who are unacquainted with the African race. [Horton, pp. 32-33]

The irony is that by the end of the 19th century which saw the imposition of formal colonialism in the aftermath of the Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884-85, the views of the anthropologists, most of which Horton had condemned in very strong terms as we have just seen, had not only become dominant, they were the default views of Africans sponsored by the colonial administrator-class and actively insinuated by them into policies in the colonies. Simultaneously, they were the views that were widely disseminated in the academy and they became the default views with which African nationalists and those in sympathy with them have had to do battle till now. They constitute the warp and woof of what my colleague, Jennifer Vest, has dubbed “perverse debates” in African philosophy where we spend more time on pedigree questions or fritter away precious energies on needless throat clearing concerning the legitimacy of our subject matter.

No thanks to the extraversion that continues to afflict African intellectual production, we remain dominated by considerations of whether or not our output can find a home in Euro-American journals. We end up seeking to test our mettle against the dominant views of Euro-American philosophers. This is not accident. In our different ways we are mostly the products of educational institutions in which our socialization consists of a deliberate shielding us from those who could and ought to have served as the foundations for African philosophy. We ended up instead with rigged choices between the ethnographies of our societies served up by anthropologies of the type I identified above—the source-head of much of what is derisively referred to as Ethnophilosophy—and contemporary reflections done under the inspiration of colonialism or its aftermath.

What I am advocating for is this: In order to renew the foundations of African philosophy we must

1. abandon the perverse debates about pedigree;
2. reject the false choices just mentioned;
3. recover as a matter of urgency the disquisitions of our forebears in the 19th century whose profiles are not unlike our own at the present;
4. encourage regional/ethnic/linguistically-based and culturally specific philosophies;
5. begin to treat with respect the intellectual offerings of African thinkers even when they are not obviously or self-consciously philosophical;
6. be suspicious of externally induced honorifics—they are quite often, even when they are adulatory, no more than the praise of the rabble;
7. begin to consider that, like other human societies, there is no aspect of African life and thought that cannot be the object of philosophical attention;
8. restore Africa as a single, indivisible whole identified less by its fractures and discontinuities and more by its unity and continuities and, by so doing, banish forever from our discourse locutions like “Black Africa,” “Sub-Saharan Africa,” “Arab Africa,” “Pre-colonial Africa,” “Traditional Africa,” and so on;
take seriously Africa’s inseverable links to its Diaspora beyond the occasional singling out of a few notables as if the rest do not matter.

For us to do (1) through (9) we may need to enter into a period of isolation when our conversations would be internally driven, introverted, without their being mediated by what referees in Euro-America or funders therein might think. This will remove the pressure that I often see, in my position as a journal editor and referee for publishers of journals and books, in papers submitted by our scholars both within and outside the continent, to reflect their familiarity with dubious, even irrelevant, authorities in order to meet the criteria of publishability in those fora.

Think of it. What is likely to be the fate of one who is commenting on the ongoing crisis in Liberia and is familiar with, among other things, the prescient warnings of James Africanus Beale Horton back in the 19th century before the denizens of colonial anthropology rendered null and irrelevant, perhaps illegitimate, native reflections on their own reality? Yet the evidence is solid that Horton had back then warned his American-Liberian compatriots that they had to work out a modus vivendi with their “native” hosts if their new country’s future prosperity was not to be in jeopardy. Here is what he said:

Whilst we rejoice with the Liberians on their yearly accession of emigrants from America, it behoves us to remind them that unless certain improvements are made among the aboriginal inhabitants whom they meet in the country, in order that they may be brought to the scale of equality with themselves, there will be a poor chance for the prosperous futurity of the Government. [Horton in Wilson, pp. 191-192]

Anyone familiar with the reasons for the Master Sergeant Samuel Doe-led coup of 1980 will appreciate the prescience of Horton’s observation. But it was not only the issue of the relationship between the aboriginal inhabitants and the emigrants from America that exercised Horton. He was particularly concerned with the issue of representative government, liberal democracy and the installation of modern regimes in West Africa. Since I have explored this elsewhere, I need not go into it here. [Cite text.] What is important to mention is that in his writings we have some of the earliest reflections on the suitability of liberal democratic forms of rule for Africans.

6. Many who read this are familiar with the popular refrain relating to the incompatibility between so-called African culture and liberal democracy. While I do not propose to justify the claim, it is possible to make a case for tracing this widespread skepticism about the viability of liberal democracy in Africa to the self-same metaphysics of difference that was inaugurated when Africa was hived off the rest of the world and made into a special case for anthropology and other such dubious sciences. But if we would only take seriously the disquisitions our forebears and the intellectual offerings of African thinkers we would find that African thinkers did not despair of the relevance, necessity even, of liberal democratic forms of rule when they were newly socialized into its philosophical underpinnings in the 19th century.

In 1865, the Select Committee of the British House of Commons passed some resolutions one of which went thus:
That all further extension of territory or assumption of Government, or new treaties offering any protection to native tribes, would be inexpedient; and that the object of our policy should be to encourage in the natives the exercise of those qualities which may render it possible for us more and more to transfer to them the administration of all Governments with a view to our ultimate withdrawal from all, except, probably, Sierra Leone.

Whether or not the above resolution evidenced a British reluctance to play the imperial game, the new educated elite in various parts of British West Africa, those I call our precursors, took it as a signal that they should show themselves worthy of self-government. After all, the principle of self-governance that is at the heart of modern political philosophy is that no one ought to be bound or governed by a government in the constitution of which she has had no hand. In short, the consent of the governed is the only basis for the legitimacy of governments. Horton then wrote a series of essays on self-government in the different British territories then, colonies and protectorates alike, his objective being, on one hand, to assess the suitability of each area and the different regions and peoples therein for self-government and, on the other, canvass the British authorities and enlightened opinion at the time for the allocation of resources and adoption of methods that would allow West African peoples to assume responsibility for their own governance in the shortest possible time. He took care to state that he had been spurred into action by the above resolution. I would like to suggest that Horton’s essays on self-government represent foundation works in African political philosophy.

The essays evinced a belief in the superiority of the modern form of governance and in the fact that an embrace of that form with its insistence on the consent of the governed and the free elections of rulers as the preferred determinants of state legitimacy would vastly improve African societies. Horton was not alone in his advocacy. In the opening decades of the 20th century, J. E. Casely-Hayford and other leaders of the National Congress of British West Africa made a sing-song of that famous rallying cry of the American Revolution: “No taxation without Representation”. For those who are tempted to dismiss their efforts as mere sloganeering, I urge them to take seriously those proclamations and their supporting arguments and see whether their dismissal is justifiable. On my part, precisely because I have elected to treat with respect the intellectual offerings of African thinkers even when they’re not obviously or self-consciously philosophical, I can see the connecting lines between Horton’s case for self-government in the 19th century and those of post-2nd World War African nationalists from Azikiwe to Kaunda, Senghor to Nyerere. I shall have more to say about these thinkers presently.

While Horton was busy providing a philosophical justification for self-government, a group of educated elites elected to hasten along the business of self-government in more practical terms. They had the temerity to think that they were ready for self-government and, even if they were not, practice makes perfect—they would learn the rope as they went along. They got together over a three-year period and at the end of it in 1871, they issued a constitution which, as far as I know, would, when better known, rank as one of the earliest attempts at writing a charter of rule in the modern key. In fact, I know of only one other like it outside of the American Constitution and the French, that of Poland in 1793, that can be cited as early instances of modern constitutions. Again, I have written about this elsewhere; so my discussion here will be brief.
We have united together for the express purpose of furthering the interests of our country.

In the Constitution it will be observed that we contemplate means for the social improvement of our subjects and people, the growth of education and industrial pursuits, and, in short, every good which British philanthropy may have designed for the good of the Gold Coast, but which we think it impossible for it at present to do for the country at large.

The methods by which they were going to achieve the ends articulated in the above passage evinced a strong commitment to the modern principle of governance.

From the onset the framers of the Fanti Constitution sought to make unambiguous their commitment to the electoral principle as the preferred mechanism for choosing who should rule in their communities. In fact, if their formulations were followed, it was only a matter of time before all offices big and small within the Fanti Confederacy would have succumbed to the vagaries of electoral politics. Secondly, they provided for separation of powers between the Legislature, the Executive and what they anticipated would evolve into a Judiciary. Nor did they neglect to write into the Constitution provisions for the improvement of the lives of the peoples in their jurisdiction. Such articles included those for publicly financed public education and compulsory attendance of “all children between the ages of eight and fourteen” and for the specific education of “the female sex”; the construction of modern roads “with good gutters on either side.”

The Fanti Constitution was one example among a slew of constitutional experiments in Africa in the 19th century that ought to rivet the attention of African philosophers. Another one that was close to that of the Fanti but was not formally written was that of the Egba United Board of Management under the inspiration and leadership of George M. Johnson, otherwise known as Reversible Johnson.

My argument is that every time we join the chorus of those who think that there is something in the African soil or its various cultures that makes liberal democracy unsuitable we have unwittingly accepted the libel of colonial apologists and done ourselves a disservice. Once we restore to a central place the antecedents that I am urging on us, we shall be reinstalling, in this case, African political philosophy on more appropriate foundations.

By the same token, in taking seriously the ideas of our precursors in the 19th century, we shall be restoring the centrality of native agency and thereby empower ourselves to conduct autochthonous discourses that must characterize an African philosophy that is for us, about us, by us and done near us. We started with the 19th century because our interest had turned on the writings of those proximate to us in their outlook, training, and predilections. Those that I have mentioned come mostly from West Africa and from its English-speaking parts. They have been used here as a foil for the main point that I wish to make: there are more and better candidates for foundation works in African philosophy than those that we have so far embraced.

I have to leave out the riches in indigenous philosophical traditions latent in different areas of our oral cultures ranging from Ifa divination to religion, from literature to music, and so on. Now that there is a growing body of secondary literature on Hallen/Sodipo, Wiredu, Gyekye, and Oruka, the case for their listing as foundation works is beginning to be strengthened.
I digress. We need to also take seriously the contributions in political philosophy by Africa’s political thinkers who seldom attract philosophical attention except of the opprobrious kind. Yet it takes but only a little respect for us to realize that African political philosophy cannot be about Aristotle or Montesquieu, Laski or Rawls, Lenin or Marx, etc. It must be about what African have to say about the central questions of political philosophy and how well or ill they articulate their views. Africans may tap into their indigenous heritages and create philosophical theories from them; or they may marry new insights from those with the legacy of Euro-American education to create new syntheses. However they do it, African political philosophy which, looking at the material available, ought to be the most advanced of the philosophical subdisciplines, happens to be one of the most backward. The reason, I am afraid, is that the foundation works have not found any audience in professional political philosophy except as objects of vituperation and vitriol. Yet one can make the case that in their different ways and with varying degrees of sophistication, Julius Nyerere, Obafemi Awolowo, Kenneth Kaunda, Kwame Nkrumah, Kofi Busia, Sylvanus Olympio, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Amilcar Cabral, Sekou Toure, Ben Barka, Leopold Senghor, Patrice Lumumba, Bandele Omoniyi, Kobina Sekyi, Adegoke Adelabu, P. Seme, among others, are among Africa’s foremost political philosophers whose works must be adjudged foundational. [Cite texts.] In their writings—brace their practice for it is irrelevant in this context—they tried to respond to the central questions of political philosophy.

I identify three such questions. (1) Who is the human being for whom a political order is being constituted? This question arises from the fact that no political order can escape some assumptions about what type of humans will occupy or benefit from its arrangements and how the interests of those humans might best be served. (2) Who ought to rule when not all can rule? Answers to this question essay to provide justification and legitimacy for political arrangements under which some exercise power and others are required to conform their behaviours to the say-so of the power-wielders. Arguments for one-party rule were attempts to answer this question. (3) How ought we organize society for purposes of governance and social living? What political and social arrangements are likely to conduce to the efflorescence of what is best in us? Arguments for socialism, mixed economy, or capitalism fall under this rubric.

There is a remarkable continuity between the intellectual disquisitions of Africa’s 19th and 20th century thinkers in the area of political philosophy. Might there be a similar continuity in other areas of philosophy? Only research can bear that out. But that research will not take place until we leave well alone as unworthy of our philosophical labours the issues that are framed by the denial of African genius and focus exclusively on the substantive challenges posed to Africa by reality and history and Africans’ responses to those challenges.