

A Response to Helen Lauer's Critique of the Tradition Versus Modernity Dichotomy

Jacob A. Aigbodioh

*Department of Philosophy, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Nigeria
E-mail: jabodioh@yahoo.co.uk*

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ABSTRACT The need to shed modernity of its Euro-centric overtone owing to its link with modern science, for which the tradition versus. modernity dichotomy has come under suspicion and is misunderstood mostly by African cultural revivalists, has become imperative. Does the contrast implied by the dichotomy turn primarily on the modern scientific content of a culture or on the extent of reflective critical attitude towards cultural elements? Against the backdrop of Helen Lauer's view that the dichotomy is false, the essay seeks to rehabilitate it as an intellectual framework for appraising African socio-cultural lag, and for pursuing the needed development in Africa. To this end, the essay proposes alternative definitions of tradition, modernity, and modernization in terms of attitudinal orientation towards cultural elements instead of modern science and 'scienticization' in the Western tradition. The method adopted is one of critical analysis.