

THE 4 TRADITIONS OF RESPONSE

as defined by Dr. Cornel West

Intro

The 4 traditions of response are theoretical constructs created by Dr. Cornel West as an interpretation and description of the Afro-American experience. They are a reconstruction of the Black counter discourse to modern racist discourse and present a hermeneutic of Afro-American history that focus on the diverse conceptions of self-image and self-determination.

Exceptionalist Tradition

“Luads the uniqueness of Afro-American culture and personality. Two types (Strong and Weak). Speaks to the physical or sociological superiority. Related to values, modes of behavior, or gifts aquired from their endurance of political oppression, social degredation, and economic exploitation.”

Assimilationist Tradition

“Considers the Afro-American culture and personality to be pathological. Two types (Strong and Weak). Affirms claims of physical and sociological inferiority. Makes the claim the Afro-Americans are below other racial groups because of inherent deficiency.

Marginalist Tradition

“Posits that Afro-American culture is restrictive, constraining, and confining. Emphasizes the suppression of individuality, eccentricity, and non-comformity. This tradition is parastitic in that it relies upon the assimilationist or humanist traditions.”

Humanist Tradition

“Extolls the distinctiveness of Afro-American culture and personality. It makes no ontological or sociological claims about superiority or inferiority. Affirms the membership in the human race, not above it or below it.”