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Metaphysical doctrines of the Anlo of Ghana and Process philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The concepts of mutuality and interdependence, process, and God occupy important roles in the doctrines of process thought. Hitherto, very little attention was given to evidence of process metaphysics originating from traditional African religion. Based on this, my paper attempts to reconcile these seemingly different spheres of metaphysics that have been sparingly discussed. I offer, firstly, an account of Alfred North Whitehead's process metaphysics on the tripartite concepts earlier specified. Secondly, I argue that non-conventional sources of African philosophy indeed offer conceptual resources that could nourish our understanding of their philosophies and their place in the metaphysical debate. I further explicate how, through comparative philosophy, African ideas can assume a novel dimension understood as the discussion of doctrines of Africa, by Africans and/or about Africa. Thirdly, I discuss these three key areas in Anlo traditional precolonial thought, and I illustrate their affinity towards process metaphysics through language, religious practices and historical accounts. Finally, I conclude that although Whiteheadian process philosophy overlaps in prominent areas with Anlo belief systems, questions of the limits of the causal nature of God as well as the potency of atonements distinguish the Anlo conception of God from that of process philosophy.

Keywords: Actual Occasions/entities, Anlo, Concrescence, Consequent nature, Ewe, Mawu, Notsie, Prehension, Primordial Nature, Process philosophy, and *Se*.

Introduction

Whitehead's metaphysics has been widely discussed, applied to a wide variety of subjects, and criticized over the century. His contributions to various disciplines cannot be overstated, yet much

of his work still remains unexplored.¹ The aim of this paper is to attempt such an exploration. In this research I will present and discuss process philosophy in the context of Anlo traditional thought. The objective is to initiate a comparative discussion of the metaphysical doctrines of African societies specifically the Anlo people of Ghana on one hand, and Alfred North Whitehead's process metaphysics on the other. The key areas to be considered are (1), mutuality and interdependence, (2) change and process, and (3) the nature of God.

*Anlo*ⁱ refer to a relatively small Ewe ethnic group currently largely located in the south-eastern corner of Ghana in West Africa.² As a group, they trace their ancestry to the land of *Notsie*.ⁱⁱ The Anlo ethnic division possesses distinguishing aspects from the rest of the Ewes believed to share a similar ancestral lineage. First, the Ewe dialect they speak although identical to *fon*, *Tonu*, and *hwedome*ⁱⁱⁱ bear some differences that allow a phenomenological interpretation of their everyday existence that have distinct characteristics. In addition, linguistic and ritual elements of the Anlo-Ewe reveal a foundation of philosophical concepts of impermanence and process.

Secondly, socio-political conceptions of personhood of the Anlo reflect an affinity towards mutuality and interaction of entities in the universe which is non-anthropocentric.

Finally, their cosmological ideas conveyed through ethnophilosophy reveal that they believe in a dual-aspect supreme deity. Although this has been debated in certain literature as rather a belief in two separate deities, I will argue that a dipolar characterization of the deity is buttressed by their rituals, oral tradition and language. Such a supreme deity believed to be the first cause according to Anlo cosmology is both the performative interactor with humanity as well as the passive phenomenality of the universe.

Alfred North Whitehead, a 20th-century philosopher and mathematician, is recognized for the distinctiveness of his metaphysics in its depiction of God, change, subjectivity, and interdependence. Process philosophy has gained much favor over the years because of its complex yet comprehensive ontological structure that offers unconventional responses to some of the most boggling questions of philosophy. The detailed exposition of the contingencies of nature in process ontology has become urgent in an ever-growing world where concrete philosophies are constantly questioned and defied by reality.

This research paper begins with Whitehead's process philosophy on each of the comparative themes followed by an exegesis of the sources and methodology of African philosophy in general. Thirdly, I will outline the evidence in language, historical account, and cultural practices interpreted in support of the position that some Anlo metaphysical beliefs align with process ontology. Lastly, this paper concludes on the differences between the Anlo and process metaphysics by outlining the areas of divergence between both schools of thought. It is important to note that this research paper adopts a cross-cultural philosophical approach which attempts to dialogue two traditions of thought. The choice of process philosophy is not arbitrary, but I believe it represents a good example of a philosophical tradition that is unrestrictive and undogmatic thus allows such effective dialectics without imposing normative chauvinism.

1. Whitehead and Process metaphysics

According to Whitehead's metaphysics, the actual world is constituted of entities that perpetually interact for change and progress to occur. To understand how contingent entities constitute actual elements of nature, there are two key principles to consider: the interaction of entities and the property of self-causation. First, let us build from the ground up by discussing the basic elements that the theory posits, which are *actual occasions* also known as *actual entities*.^{iv} For Whitehead, the final 'real things' that make up the world are actual entities of which God although different in genus is included.^v Contrary to substance metaphysics, actual entities do not differ in ontology from one another. They share a common genus no matter how insignificant they may seem. Though they exist in gradations of importance, and diversities of function, in the principles which actuality exemplifies, all entities are on the same level. Much like Spinoza's modes,^{vi} actual entities do not differ in nature but in degree, yet they are not neutral nor devoid of subjectivity. They are themselves drops of experience, complex and interdependent. The interdependence and interaction of entities are facilitated by the processes akin to the nature of actual occasions that we will carefully discuss in the subsequent section on mutuality and interdependence.

1.1 Mutuality and interdependence

Having established actual occasions as foundational blocks of the world contrary to a world of substances, there is the question of how these interactive and interdependent elements are both self-causing and dependent altogether. First, there is the process in which the universe of many

elements acquires an individual unity. This is how each entity loses its individuality and subscribes to a unified whole. This is what Whitehead calls the *many* becoming *one*. This process is what is called a concrescence.^{vii} An actual occasion is hence understood as the unity to be ascribed to an instance of concrescence because, in its singularity, it is a concrescence of previous entities and is itself the object of future concrescence. This concrescence is thus nothing else than the 'real internal constitution' of the actual occasion in question. The process by which the many become one is not separate from the consequence it produces. The method itself is the constitution of the actual entity. Therefore, actual occasions represent a mode of the process of 'feeling' the world, of housing the world in one unit of complex feeling, in every way determinate (Sherburne, 1966, p. 8). Much like the monads of Leibniz^{viii}, they are determinate entities that reflect their internal constitution but instead of changing as monads do, they merely become. However, in their appropriation of other entities, actual occasions undergo what is termed *prehension*.^{ix} This process of objectifying other actual entities is its true essence. Accordingly, it mirrors the cartesian thinking substance because its entire essence is being a *prehending thing*. The prehensive process is a selective one that determines which element is included or excluded in the real internal constitution of an actual occasion. In short, this complex understanding of actual occasions reveals that it is made up of prehensions. For it to complete its concrescence it feels other actual entities which themselves have previously objectified other anterior occasions. An actual entity is a *causa sui*^x because it defines its own internal constitution and it is dependent because this internal constitution is derived from its interaction with others of the same nature. The fundamental notion is that the self-causing and the dependent natures are inseparable. This duality of actual entities is its nature, its aim, and its process of reaching such an aim. This is the thrust of the cosmos thus allowing nothing to happen in isolation yet retaining the subjectivity of each entity.

1.2 Process and Change

As discussed in the previous section, an actual entity is both the cause and effect of itself. In Whiteheadian terms, an actual entity is at once the *subject* experiencing and the *superject*^{xi} of its experiences. The term superject refers to its character of *objective immortality*^{xii} as an object for succeeding actual entities. Objective immortality implies that each actual entity that is an object for another actual entity enjoys immortality of being continually concrescing in all other imminent actual occasions in which its present subject is prehendend or included. There is the idea of the nesting boxes of a *Chinese toy*^{xiii} where each one(occasion) finds itself in another till infinity in a

continuously becoming cosmos. We have shown how the actual occasion is a becoming entity unceasingly reaching towards its satisfaction by prehending, as datum, anterior occasions all the while concreting itself as an object for successive entities. Because of this coming in and out of actuality, "the actual world is a process, and it is the process of the becoming of actual entities" (Whitehead, 1978). Hence the classical metaphysical interpretation of permanence of substances is abandoned for the doctrine of impermanence. The consequence is a world that draws from all occasions, transforming and advancing on the back of every single action ranging from God to the flap of a butterfly several light-years away. The moral significance is daunting because it supposes that our intentions result in actions that have inevitable causal consequences.

1.3 On God

In the construction of his metaphysics, Whitehead reaches a point where he requires an entity that injects novelty into the universe and gives entities their subjective aims. This is because the mere prehension of each other results in plain redundancy and no creative advance. The concept of God that Whitehead introduces in his metaphysics is purely a functional entity. I describe it as functional because He performs specific roles in the grand scheme of existence. He falls outside the scope of classical religious doctrines and, much like Spinoza's God, he is immanent in the actual world of entities. In place of a God that is all powerful, this Whitehead God abides by the structure of the world and is tasked only with roles that actual occasions are unequipped to perform. There are three key qualities of God that Whitehead enumerates: God as the *outcome of creativity*, God as the *organ of novelty*, and God as an *ordering force*.

For Whitehead, creativity is the ultimate to which God himself is subject. But this subjectivity is born out of the character of self-causation that he shares with all actual entities. God is at once a creature of creativity and a condition for creativity. As a creature of creativity, he is the effect of his own advance into singularity while he being the condition for creativity he is the cause of himself. All actual entities including God possess creative power by their very existence as actual entities. According to Hartshorne, "To be is to create" (Hartshorne, 1970, p. 272). Although God holds the ultimate creative power, he is not the only creative power. Thus, process theists speak of God and creatures as co-creators (Hartshorne and Reese 2000, p.140; Hartshorne 1967a, p.113). This doctrine of creativity is, therefore, the obvious consequence of two principles that emphasize the mutuality and interdependence of actual entities which are the principles of relativity and that of self-causation. Creativity allows the universe to surge forward in creative advance into novelty

by offering novel aims for the actual entities. The universe is never a completed whole according to Whitehead because of its perpetual concrescence from the many to the one as opposed to a static morphological universe.

Finally, the ordering of the universe is the function of God's immanence in the world. The metaphysical system that Whitehead posits requires an ordering of potentialities which was equally required for novelty and aim for entities. Much like other actual entities, God is subservient to the metaphysical categories that Whitehead constructs. While actual entities possess physical and conceptual poles so does God also have a primordial and consequent nature. The former holds all pure possibility and the latter is the effect of entities on God as he prehends them. By the interaction of these poles in God, He sets new aims for actual entities. He concludes that "It is as true to say that the world is immanent in God, as that God is immanent in the World" (Sherburne, 1966, p. 185). If both poles of God are mutual and interdependent, the world influences God as He influences the world; God creates the world and the world creates God in perpetuity. This creation must not be understood in the traditional sense. For God's creation of the world is the unfettered supply of potentiality/ aims to the actual entities while the world creates God not by the act of bringing him into existence but by offering material for objective immortality.

To conclude, in process philosophy, mutuality and interdependence are common to all actual entities; from the *trivial puff in far off* space to God (Whitehead, 1978, p. 28). Actual entities are not entirely determined but enjoy a level of autonomy. God supplies the aim to which actual occasion aspire to satisfy. However, this is a two-way street. The non-spiritual actual entities are co-creators with God, and in place of a God who transcends all creation, process theism offers a God who is «the great companion—the fellow-sufferer who understands" (Whitehead 1978, p. 351). This understanding is not out of sheer benevolence and kindness but because He feels (prehends) what we feel.

2. African philosophy and Methodology

This comparative endeavor requires an understanding of the structure and content of African philosophy. The Anlo metaphysical system which will serve as the key reference in this paper falls under the broader spectrum of African philosophy.

The alienation of African philosophy from contemporary debates is often attributed to the lack of unified evidence of the history of African thought systems compared to the numerous documented

evidences of the West. However, philosophers, especially African ones, have sought to reconstruct these ideas from sources such as legends, myths, art, songs, and proverbs. To achieve such a feat, two main questions are to be clarified: What is African philosophy? And how does it fit into the broader spectrum of modern philosophy? The first question refers to the characteristics of philosophical discourse that permits its qualification as African. There are two responses to this question. Foremost, the *particularists* restrict African philosophy to themes and/or problems of specific relevance to Africa and Africans alone. Second, the *universalists* embrace a more inclusive approach that privileges critical and reconstructive methods (Wiredu, 2004). The universalist position admits a comparative approach between African philosophy and other external traditions of thought. For the universalists, the uniqueness of African philosophy is not lost by its interaction with the outside world. On the contrary, by comparative analysis, African philosophy finds its dialectic voice in the philosophical debate. However, the second question on the place of African philosophy refers to its content and structure. The contents of African philosophy are diverse, sometimes opposing and defy the falsehood of any monolithic African ideology. Yet the argument of a single African perspective on philosophical issues will not be discussed in this paper.

On the contrary, on contents, this paper asserts that African philosophy is any philosophical discussion by and/or of the African diaspora that embraces a dialectical approach with other perspectives outside of it. I define African philosophy as such to merge a universalist approach with what has come to be called the position of Africana philosophy (Outlaw, 2004).

The Anlo-Ewe is a subdivision of one of the major ethnic groups in West Africa. In the 18th and early 19th century, they occupied the same geographical area which extends from modern-day Nigeria through to parts of Benin, Togo, and Ghana. As a people, their perspectives on ontological ideas like time, change, being, and God are far from being described as commonplace. Although there is very little evidence that they engaged actively in philosophical dialogues, their language, culture, myths, and proverbs reveal familiarity with metaphysical ideas. This affinity toward a non-classical view of the structure of the world as well as a belief in mutuality and interdependence is not merely a social and linguistic expression for the Anlos but are associated with ontological necessities. This paper aims to compare the metaphysical stance of the Anlo with that of process philosophy.

2.1 The Anlo people of Ghana

The Ewe people are largely located in the south-east corner of Ghana in West-Africa. Anlo was believed to be the largest political unit within the Ewe Land. In order to give this section its proper context, we must analyze the traditions of origin of the Anlo-ewe people. The Anlo people draw their unity from a shared dialect, common ancestry and allegiance to the *Awomefia*^{xiv} established by strong patrilineal ideologies and institutions (Nukunya, 1969a, 1974). Most of their metaphysical positions were embedded in their rituals which embodied their beliefs, myths and social reality. The accounts of their origins are drawn from oral narratives, Anlo insiders and informants which coupled with extensive European influence could suffer inaccuracies.^{xv}

The town of Notsie (now in south-central Togo) is remembered as the common home of their Ewe ancestors where a king ruled with tyrannical power and led to the great dispersal of Ewe-speakers. This section is important for two main reasons. First, to draw from oral and historical accounts, language and cultural practices the metaphysical position of the Anlo-Ewe. Second, to initiate a dialogue between process philosophy and the metaphysical doctrines of the Anlo people. This will be an attempt to decolonize the philosophical idiosyncrasies by thinking through various issues in Anlo vernacular (Wiredu, 2002). However, conceptual decolonization is a reciprocal venture. It not only permits an understanding of philosophical ideas through one's native tongue, but it also reveals the philosophical concepts of the vernacular through the difference in linguistic structures. The need for conceptual decolonization is of utmost importance in the context of religion because the Anlos have from pre-colonial times expressed their thoughts through a staunch proclivity towards the mystical. Christianity introduced by imperial powers did influence the philosophical outlook of the Anlo people. Although these influences changed the structure of their views on the material and the non-material world, the anlo language to this day bears evidence of what they used to be.

2.2 On Mutuality and Interdependence of Nature

In the Anlo society, there is evidence of the conception of mutuality and interdependence of entities in nature through their relations with natural bodies, humans, and animals. Prominent among these natural bodies that bore special relation to human life are the *Blolui* ponds, the *Keta* sea, burial sites, etc. (Greene, 2002) The belief in the elements of nature as possessing special powers is often explained away as a form of animalism and nature worship. However, the Anlo people, although

display such beliefs, perceive their relationship with nature on a more fundamental level. The difference between classical animism, worship of nature and what the Anlos practiced lies in the extent to which the idea of mutuality and interdependence were pushed. Unlike the traditional animists and nature deifying cultures, according to the Anlos, no existing entity is exempt from the power to influence and be influenced in return. The worship of nature and totemism practiced here do not depict linear causality but rather implies a dependent co-existence of the spiritual and non-spiritual. They held a pantheistic conception of the world yet believed that some entities possessed more causal power than others. This can be inferred from their adaptive relationship with material and non-material elements of nature. Lands sites, household effects, stones, sand, pets, and sacred locations were defined as much by their physical properties as by the spiritual forces that the Anlo believed occupied and operated from such locations (Greene, 2002, p. 48).

How did they portray this mutuality and interdependence among all entities? At the core of the Anlo religious practices is their philosophy of life. The preservation of individual life and the social unit was paramount for the balance of all life forces (Fiawoo, 1959). The scope of causality of spiritual forces extended beyond the paranormal to the economic, political, and social spheres. For the preservation and protection of life, all entities in the physical domain as well as the spiritual perpetually interact to maintain the balance. In akin African groups, the belief in the nature of spiritual forces were often limited to the moral and/or spiritual sphere as punishers or rewarders of deeds. Even in cases of economic decline or the political instability, it was often attributed to moral deficiency of members of the society. Nevertheless, for the Anlo, their belief in mutuality and interdependence accounts for the difference in perspective on the worship of nature and their daily interactions with sacred sites and natural bodies. According to Sandra Greene, the nature of spiritual interaction among the Anlos led to the reconfiguration of their identifications of and connections with their landscape in diverse ways. She noted that some sites retained their sacred character despite the people's exposure to novel European explanations of the nature of the physical world. The forgetting and continued vitality in certain memories and meanings could be attributed to their economic and geographical positions in the Anlo territories (Greene, 2002).

Nevertheless, this flexibility of Anlo metaphysical attachments to certain sites can be attributed to a fundamental ontological belief in the interdependence and changing nature of existing things. We will discuss this in the ensuing section, however, I will conclude that mutuality and interdependence for the Anlo system of thought are not only exhibited in the rapport with

entities they consider sacred but also lie in their notion of sacredness. Purity or sacredness referred to as *kɔkɔe*^{xvi} has both spiritual and physical meanings that were interrelated. For example, ponds, *Keta* Sea, burial sites, and land formations were referred to as *kɔkɔe* which translates as clear or free from impurity if they were physically clean and orderly. The physical traits ensured a maintained spirituality while the continuous divinity also guaranteed its physical position in the society. It is no surprise that whenever such sites lost their physical importance either due to pollution or inaccessibility to life forms they were no longer held as spiritual entities.

2.3 Process and Change

In order to demonstrate how an understanding of change and process in Anlo metaphysics relates to the dual concepts mutuality and interdependence introduced above a brief description of some important linguistic features of Anlo dialect is appropriate. An important proverb in Anlo-Ewe is the proverb of constant change and uncertainty coined as *Xexeam la agamagbale wonye. Etrona yesiayi*. This translates as- *the world is like the skin of a chameleon. It is always changing*. This notion of a perpetually changing world metaphorically expressed as a comparison with the nature of a chameleon is indicative of mutuality and interdependence as catalysts of change. The nature of a chameleon is responsive to its environment so is the process of change sparked by mutual reaction. I showed in the earlier section that the Anlo doctrines and practices are grounded in their metaphysical ideologies. By their interaction with material and non-material entities in nature, the Anlos display an affinity towards a holistic and interactive existence that prioritizes plurality and interactivity over singularity and linear causality. The idea of change and process are represented in language, culture as well as the oral tradition.

By showing disparities between mere animalism and the interactionist ecology that the Anlos display through their constant change of sacred sites and water bodies, we have implied that it is probable that the religious beliefs of the Anlo stemmed from a deep-seated process metaphysics that influenced their way of life. I will thus proceed to the concept of God which without a doubt is central to Anlo culture and doctrine.

2.4 God

Before the advent of the Europeans on the shores of Ghana, historical studies have shown that the Anlo had a distinct perception of God contrary to earlier held assertions of the absence of a unified

concept of a supreme deity.^{xvii} Through language, rituals, arts and symbols, the Anlo never failed to bring this understanding to the fore. In Anlo cosmology, the ‘first cause’ was named Mawu. Although the etymology of the word is unclear, some informants have interpreted it as *the unsurpassed*. Greene reports that in 1450, Notsie, the ancestral home of the Anlo was home to this deity *Mawu* (Greene, 2002, p. 3). This God was the highest deity and ruler of the several gods and spirits that animated the entities in the universe. The 15th century Notsie saw a great number of rituals and appellations devoted to this deity of which included *Mawu sogbo lisa*, *Mawu Kitikata*, *Blemavo Mawu* (ancient God), *Mawu magblēmagblē* (the incorruptible one) and many others. It is believed that a prominent non-Christian religious group of the Anlo called the *Yewe* call on *Mawu* to crown their rites as the ultimate ruler of all other divinities.

The late 18th century on the other hand witnessed a prominent mention of the god *Se*. This novel introduction has over the years been interpreted in two ways. First, the argument that there were no ontological differences between *Mawu* and *Se*. This position, on the contrary, claims that the *Mawu* and *Se* are directly synonymous and interchangeable (Fiawoo, 1959).

A Second interpretation asserts that the *Mawu* and the *Se* referred to two different deities. According to this school of thought, this Supreme God- *Mawu* was replaced with a more powerful God in about 1750 called *Se* borrowed from the Yoruba (Greene, 2002). They argue that but for libation and other ritual ceremonies, *Mawu* was rarely prayed to or offered sacrifices and was assigned neither shrines nor servants therefore it most likely represented a god of lesser position. For Greene, *Se* represented a more present and dynamic god in times of economic, social, and political turmoil like wars, slave raids, famine, etc.

I propose an alternative perspective on the disparity between *Se* and *Mawu*. This view advocates a dual-aspect theory on the nature of the supreme being. As earlier stated, the *Se* was an active and performative God who functioned swiftly in the universe in addition represented a supreme God just as *Mawu* did in the 15th century. Again, the *Se* has been described as representing an attributive capacity of God. In this latter sense, it implied that just as the created world is an expression of God, the *Se* is the expression of law, order and harmony as the purpose of God. It appears the *Mawu* represented the non-performative aspect of God- the embodiment of creative power- while the *Se* was the epitome of executive strength. However, this third interpretation reveals the *Se* as the notion of destiny thus serving as the argumentative basis for my dual-aspect theory. For the Anlos, God was an intimate part of humans, not necessarily in the

classical Christian way where the spirit is given by God, but as an active force coexisting in humans both in the physical and spiritual sense. This characterized the purpose of God as lived through man (Parrinder, 1969). The *Se* as God through man was responsible for strength, character, and will. The *Se* also represented destiny and directionality that originated from an individual distinct from the *dzɔgbese* (literally translated as the destiny of one's day of birth). While the *Se* implied a unique and subjectively made *god-in-man* armed with purpose, this *se* was as subjective as it was objective. The concept of God through man was far from being entirely deterministic. God is a co-creator of life with man and the causes and effects of one's actions hailed from this co-operation. Very often, the expression "*Ame si ya fe se me se*" translated as *this person has a strong personality or aura* implied that the person channeled the divine part in him well. In effect having a strong aura suggested that the niche of man and God that together composed the individual is sturdy and resistant to any external force.

On the other hand, *dzɔgbese*, born also from the *Se* (God) referred to the objective source of self and destiny. As an objective foundation of the self, it englobes the elements of one's world that are included in the causal chain of events. Some such elements include a person's preference or disdain for certain things which is believed to be a shared attribute of individuals born on the same day of the week. Although it reveals a less subjective force that draws a person to certain reactions and dispositions, it was believed that the *dzɔgbese* was not inescapable. It could consequently be guided and/or altered if one willed it strongly. The Anlo believe that existence consisted of a perpetual interaction of one's *se* and *dzɔgbese* none of which were completely out of the control of the individual. One is believed to draw from his *se* and *dzɔgbese* both of which had physical and phenomenal poles. Therefore, the *se* which represented strength and character implied both bodily and mental power and *dzɔgbese* represented the spatio-temporal conditions that influence events as well as the lure of the spiritual (God) towards a man's destiny. An entity in the universe drew from its physical aspects and its phenomenal or spiritual natures that were intertwined in each event. The coexistence with God thus implied that he was also determined by the actions of men although not in the same measure, but he required existing things to maintain his physical hold on the universe. The Anlo did not believe in a Supreme God that was invariable like Christianity advocates. Instead, they perceived themselves as co-creators with God in a world that was non-static. The supreme being was referred to also as *Mawu Sogbolisa* which meant an everchanging and versatile chameleon. This perspective of an ever dynamic God echoes the

process idea that “It is as true to say that God is permanent and the World fluent, as that the World is permanent and God is fluent” or again that “God creates the world and the world creates God”

Both man and God enjoyed immortality not exclusively after death but in life through choices, action and words. The moral implications of process philosophy differ from those of the Anlo in the following ways: persuasive and coercive power and consequences.

In process theism, the question of the power of God differs from the classical religious conception of an all-powerful God, where omnipotence implies the unrestricted power to do and affect all things. If we understand omnipotence plainly as the power to influence all things or events, we can infer that process theism does support such a stance. This is because according to Whitehead the potentiality for being an element in a real concrescence of many entities into one actuality is the one general metaphysical character attaching to all entities, actual and non-actual. All actual entities by their real internal constitution have the power to feel all other entities in their actual world and by virtue of their objective immortality, they remain in the past of all datum for future concrescences. In this sense, omnipotence is a feature of all actual occasions including God. However, omnipotence in the classical religious sense suggests the authority to unilaterally intervene in the events of the universe out of sheer volition. The nature of process metaphysics does not allow a separate categorization of God from actual entities because it would imply an ontological difference between actual entities and God. This means that what God can do is not essentially different from what other actual occasions can do because his power differs only by degrees of intensity. Process theists typically distinguish between persuasive and coercive power with regards to God. While God possessed the former, it is asserted that God lacks the coercive power to totally determine their behavior, more precisely, the concrescence-of any entity. God can only lure (attempt to persuade) the entity to develop in a certain way (Keller, 1995).

In fact, no entity, including God, can totally determine what another entity does. Nonetheless, because God establishes the laws or potential aims of nature of each cosmic period, He can lure actual entities towards a certain concrescence. God sets the potential aims for actual entities because he includes in his prehension all actual occasions without exclusion because he is infinite. While for the finite occasions, there is little range of possibility for what it can become. Consequently, in setting the aims of actual occasions, God lures them to strive towards a full conformation to that existing law or aim.

On the contrary, the Anlo belief system thrives on the notion of instant intervention or justice by spiritual forces. They hold that God could be conjured to render prompt punishment or swift remedy to any situation if he so pleases. From the historical account of the escape of the Anlos from the tyrannical king *Agorkorli*, it is believed that the leader the group evoked the powers of Mawu to intervene and pave the way for their escape.^{xviii} Again, the Anlo gods such as the thunder god of the *yewe*, *mami water*, etc were also greatly feared because they could strike down their enemies as well as cause good fortunes to befall them whenever they prayed and offered sacrifices. The Anlos believed that an essential quality of being God(supreme) or a god was the possession of deterministic power that allowed them out of volition to unilaterally influence the course of events. It is uncertain how the Anlos combined such beliefs with their cosmology as presented so far, but based on historical evidence, oral traditions, and ritualistic customs handed down, it appears that the mark of any true deity resided in its will and ability to exert autonomous force and influence the course of life.

The possession of such powers is associated with the doctrine of reward and punishment. The Anlo agree that one's deeds have unescapable consequences both on his own life as well as the lives of others. Among their popular adages is the understanding that living a bad life leads to bad death (*agbe bada, ku bada*). However, they also believed in atonement for one's wrongdoing as well as seeking protection to ward off evil. In a way, although all entities are connected through mutuality and interdependence, one could influence his world of entities through enchantments and spells of protection to ensure that neither his/her evil deeds nor that of others influences their fortunes in life. This forms a fundamental difference between process theism and Anlo traditional religion. While the former hold that no event possesses the unilateral power to influence another causally, the latter presents a possibility for the aversion of evil and the atonement of wrongdoing. As I stated earlier, because the Anlo valued life above all things, the preservation of a worthy life was of utmost importance, so they employed all their powers to such a course.

For this paper, I assumed that there was something of philosophical significance in Anlo traditional religion, historical accounts and language, and attempted to draw parallels between process metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead and the Anlo metaphysical ideas derived from these sources. I have attempted to show that this comparative adventure does not imply any normative prejudice but reveals underlying philosophical notions of the Anlo which hitherto have remained unexplored. I have shown that the non-classical ontological account of process

philosophy is not conceptually far off in African philosophy although some conceptual and linguistic evidences need to be reviewed through further analysis. While the theoretical overlap is significant, Anlo metaphysics through language, historical accounts and rituals each present some limitations that undermine the accuracy of the inferences made. That notwithstanding, Anlo metaphysical beliefs remain viable perspectives to explore especially as a tool of dialectic importance for the African philosopher and the outside world.

Notes

ⁱ The name Anlo is believed to mean to be ‘curled up’ into a fetal position. See further discussion on embodied consciousness in (Geurts, 2003)

ⁱⁱ The ancestral home of the Anlo. Based on oral accounts, it is believed to have been the next settlement from Tado to the west of the River Mono. Notsie is believed to be *Nuatja* in what is now French Togoland (Fiawoo, 1959).

ⁱⁱⁱ Represent popular dialects of the Ewe language.

^{iv} Actual entities also called actual occasions or simply entities are the final real things of which the world is made up. There is no going behind actual entities to find anything more real. They differ among themselves but there is only one genus of actual entities (Whitehead, 1978).

^v Contrary to Descartes theory of God ‘existence’ in a generically different sense, Whitehead argues that God shares a similar existence with entities. This is like the ultimate substance for Spinoza. God or substance according to Spinoza bears the same nature with all other creations.

^{vi} Baruch de Spinoza is one of the earlier process thinkers. He asserted that the components of nature are modes of the same being. Spinoza’s modes are the expressions of the existence of God like the Whiteheadian position advanced here. The coherence of an interactionist process world rests on the assertion that there are no ontological disparities because a difference in nature does not allow an interaction (the cartesian interaction problem)

^{vii} A process term that characterizes a progressive integration of feelings into one. The subject does not exist prior to its concrescence, it comes into being with its concrescence, it is its concrescence—its being is its becoming.

^{viii} For the theory of monads see further the *Monadology* (Leibniz, 1714).

^{ix} Each process of appropriation of an element is termed a prehension. When an entity actual entity effects its own concretion of other things it engages in the activity of prehending.

^x To be self-causing.

^{xi} The term ‘subject’ is employed to describe the actual entity in respect to its own real internal constitution and Superject refers to the character of objective immortality.

^{xii} The character of an actual entity as an object encountered as initial datum by succeeding actual entities.

^{xiii} The analogy of the nesting boxes of a Chinese toy is used to explain a series of durations of any temporal extension. However, I employ it here to symbolize the how previous entities enter other entities and remain immortally present in subsequent future concrescences.

^{xiv} The *Awomefia* is the paramount chief of the Anlos

^{xv} See further (Greene, 2002) on the influence of Christian religion on the origin of the Ewes. Also, for a more detailed analysis of the role of insider and outsider anthropology in the shaping of ethnography see (Nukunya G. , 1994).

^{xvi} *Kɔkɔe* translates as sacred, clear, distinct or without impurity.

^{xvii} The question has been extensively discussed over the years against the Ellis school of thought that asserted the absence of any notion of a deity of ultimate power. Evidences and Arguments have been shown to the contrary like in (Parrinder, 1969) and also again in (Rattray, 1923).

^{xviii} Notsie prayer

*'O sky, Earth, Mawu who has scattered human beings
on the face of the earth;
Thou who has protected us from Ketu to Notsie
Open now to us a way through this massive wall
That we may sally forth to find peace and refuge beyond.'*

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