Metaphysical Doctrines of the Anlo of Ghana and Process Philosophy

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Concepts of mutual interdependence, process, change, creative advance and God occupy key areas in the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. Process metaphysics lays emphasis on a naturalism of rigorous rational and empirical methodology with far-reaching implications. Process thinkers have compared Whiteheadian thought to Buddhism, Christianity, and several others. However, African religious beliefs have not been considered in this area of study. Based on the gap in the literature, this article attempts to reconcile such seemingly different spheres. I discuss process philosophy in the framework 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 the one hand, and Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy, on the other.

First, I offer an account of Whitehead's process metaphysics as regards the aforementioned concepts. Second, I argue that nonconventional sources of African philosophy offer conceptual understandings of philosophies of African groups and their place in the metaphysical debate. Third, I discuss these key areas of process thought in Anlo traditional pragmatic philosophy. I illustrate their like-mindedness with process metaphysics through language, religious rites, and historical accounts. I conclude that, although process philosophy overlaps in prominent areas with Anlo belief systems, questions regarding the causal nature of God distinguish the Anlo conception of divinity from that of process philosophy.

Anlo[1] refers to a relatively small Ewe ethnic group currently largely located in the southeastern corner of Ghana in West Africa. As a group, they trace their ancestry to the land of Notsie[2]. The Anlo ethnic division possesses distinguishing features from the rest of the Ewes, although they share common ancestral lineage.

First, the dialect of Ewe they speak has noticeable conceptual variances from others like Fon, Tonu, and Hwedome[3], indicating the wealth of their metaphysical belief systems. In

addition, the rites and ritual practices of the Anlo-Ewe are rich portrayals of their convictions of a peculiar kind of spirituality distinct from these other groups.

Second, the conceptions of personhood among the Anlo reject notions of strict determinism. They believe in self-determination and mutual interaction of "communicative things" in the cosmos. On this basis, they hold a non-anthropocentric outlook of the universe while akin tribes emphasize a human-centered cosmos.

Finally, through historical accounts of their traditional religious sects, it appears that the Anlo were not polytheistic, as explained by Christian missionaries. Unlike most precolonial African religious beliefs that worshipped multiple deities, the Anlo held that the supreme authority was both Mawu and Se, which were aspects of the same God. Drawing from their hierarchical cosmology, it has often been argued that these names were either interchangeable or represented two distinct entities. I will here offer an alternative interpretation of a dual-aspect deity and show this position as reasonably coherent with the socio-politico-cultural practices of the Anlo.

The choice of process philosophy is methodologically advantageous for such an endeavor because African precolonial theories are often couched in ethnophilosophical sources such as folklore, songs, language, rites, rituals, and so forth. Consequently, any comparative analysis necessitates that both systems of thought be compatible in content and structure. Engaging with process philosophy, being speculative, as well as embracing a strong empirical yet rational methodology, offers a good illustration of a philosophical tradition that is unrestrictive and undogmatic. These qualities support effective dialectical exchange between two culturally distinct traditions without imposing normative chauvinism.

What Is Process Metaphysics?

According to Whitehead's metaphysics, the constitution of the actual world follows from and is composed of interacting entities. These entities are described as "drops of experience" with the capacity for self-determination by which they "take in" and "enter into" the constitution of other actual entities. This passing into others is what forms the passage of nature otherwise referred to as the cosmological advance. For Whitehead, because the final "real things" that make up the world are ontologically uniform, all entities found in experience must be composed of these. This position is contrary to Cartesian substantivist metaphysics of the *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, which are held as permanently interacting substances yet possessed distinctive ontologies. Whitehead disputes substance dualism because it perpetuates, what he describes as

the bifurcation of nature, a false dichotomy of reality. It is this tale of separate spheres of the apparent and the causal that translates into the notion of God as belonging to the causal sphere while controlling the apparent world. The effect of such a thesis is the incompatibility of the world and God since God is conceived to be completely removed from our affairs. Whitehead offers a means to escape this metaphysical entanglement by inserting God into the cosmic equation and ascribing to God the reality that all entities enjoy. In process-relational ontology, God is thus included in the natural system of relations of entities because God performs specific functions. Hence, as a part of the natural world, God is an actual entity.

The actual entities, no matter how insignificant, conform to all the qualities of this metaphysical system such that no quality presented is unexpressed by the system of relations that are the entities themselves. The difference between entities comes from gradations of importance and diversities of function hence emphasizing the law of conformation that actuality exemplifies. This notion resembles Spinoza's monism and its resulting modes. However, Whitehead's actual entities are themselves pure subjectivity: complex and interdependent. Therefore, they do not require any substantive objectivity separate from their system of relations. Whitehead is determined to show through his philosophy of organism that the Aristotelian doctrine of substantive being is not only incoherent, but it leaves too many gaps and questions unanswered. The establishment of actual occasions comes to replace the concept of being with that of becoming. In becoming, there is indication of impermanence and a contrast of substance immutability. In addition, because the variability of actual entities is by means of other entities, there is mutual interdependence. Like the monads of Leibniz, actual entities are atomic, but instead of windowless, changeless monads, actual entities interact (prehend) and simply become. Whitehead draws objectivity from the uniformity of subjectivity of actual entities without establishing an element out of the system of mutual interaction.

The term *prehension*, or to *prehend*, is the process by which an entity (subjectivity) objectifies other actual entities by taking it up into itself and rationally determining how to do so. This idea, in a sense, mirrors the Cartesian thinking substance since its entire essence is to be a prehending thing. The prehensive process is selective because it defines which element is included or excluded in the real internal constitution of an actual occasion. This makes an actual entity—no matter how insignificant—performative, not passive. Each prehension is comprised of the subject of the process that takes up data from prior entities, moves toward completion, according to rational self-determination that Whitehead calls the "subjective aim," and then culminates in the "satisfaction" of that aim. At its satisfaction, it perishes and it is felt by other

actual entities as an "objective immortality." This process of prehension ensures that there is interdependence among entities while each entity maintains a self-determinative facet. This also articulates how nature becomes perpetually since the past comes into the present while developing potentiality for the future. Reality is nothing more than the universal sequence of interdependent relationships, each composed of actual occasions of "general connectedness" and "mutual immanence."

It is by the process of satisfaction that the universe of many elements acquires a discrete unity by losing individuality and subscribing to a unified whole. This is what Whitehead calls the many becoming one, or concrescence. An actual occasion is 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. By the process of "feeling" the world, of housing the world in one unit of complex feeling, in every way determinate (see Sherburne 8), there is the union of impermanent autonomy along with mutual dependence of entities. An actual entity is a *causa sui,* as it defines its own internal constitution, and it is dependent as this internal constitution is derived from its interaction with others of similar nature. The fundamental notion is that the self-causing and the dependent poles are inseparable. This duality of actual entities is its nature, its aim, and the process of reaching such an aim. This is the thrust of the cosmos, implying that nothing comes to be in isolation, but retains an appreciable level of the subjectivity of each entity.

As discussed in the previous section, an actual entity is the cause, process, and effect of itself. I discussed this trifold aspect by claiming that the subject feels the data through its choice of subjective form and becomes the superject[6] of its experiences. Objective immortality implies that each actual entity, which is an object for another actual entity, enjoys the vicarious immortality of being continually concrescing in all other imminent actual occasions in which its present subject is prehended or included. In this way, the immortality of God is not borne outside the cosmic structure. Immortality becomes synonymous with actuality since to be actual is merely to prehend and be prehended. Our inclusion in the fabric of the universe emulates the idea of the nesting of boxes in a Chinese toy, where each one finds itself in another to infinity.

I have shown how Whitehead expresses the actual occasion as a becoming entity, unceasingly reaching toward its satisfaction by prehending, as datum, anterior occasions, all the while presenting itself as an object for successive entities. Because of this coming in and out of actuality, the world is a process, and it is the process of the becoming of actual entities. The consequence is a world that draws from all occasions, transforming and advancing on the back

of every single action, extending from God to the flap of a butterfly. The moral significance is daunting because process ethics presupposes that our intentions result in concrete actions that have inevitable causal consequences.

I have explained briefly the foundational assertions of process ontology. I have shown that Whitehead restricts himself to a set of claims drawn from the experience of the natural world. He strives to frame a coherent, logical, and necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted. By insisting on a coherent and logical system, rational and empirical methods are employed, while the necessary system for elements of our experience is founded on strong naturalism. As long as an element is expressed in experience, it is bound by the rules that produce all of experience. The question of God arises through the development of the theory of actual entities. It is true of actual entities that the data they prehend, how they make their choice, and what becomes of that rational choice when they accomplish their final aims arise from the interactions they hold with themselves and with other entities.

However, two key notions need further clarification. First, if an entity has rational choice, it must have acquired such an inclination from a source. Again, if Whitehead posits that the becoming of the cosmos arises from the perpetual mutual interdependency of actual entities, then such a system appears closed to novelty. This is because the mere prehension of each other will eventually result in plain redundancy and no ingenuity. In order to maintain the rigid schema that Whitehead constructs, he must introduce an additional entity into the constitution of the natural world that injects this dimension of novelty.

The God that Whitehead introduces in his metaphysics is primarily a functional concept. God, in divine performance in the reality of actuality, is a contributor to the grand scheme of existence through the offering of subjective aims to actual entities as well as the bringing of novelty into a world that otherwise would be “stale.” It is obvious that this falls outside the scope of classical religious doctrines of a transcendent, immutable, and sole creator. God is rather immanent in the actual world of entities, affected by other entities and a co-creator. In place of a God that has unlimited unilateral power, this Whiteheadian God abides by the structure of the world, with roles that finite actual occasions are in themselves unequipped to perform. Here are three key qualities of God that White- head enumerates: God as the outcome of creativity, God as the origin of novelty, and God as an ordering force.

I have insisted that in this process system, being is to be understood in terms of becoming since existence is performative, not passive. Therefore, an actual entity such as God is subject to this law of activity called creativity. For Whitehead, creativity is the "ultimate" principle that compels entities to perpetuate their existence. For God to exist, God must create. Although God is, in a way, surpassed by creativity, the creativity of God is not given by any other actual entity but by his divine nature itself. In other words, God supplies the divine subjective aim. God is at once a creature of creativity and its condition. As a creature of creativity, God is the effect of the divine advance into singularity, while as the condition for creativity, God is self-caused. All actual entities, including God, possess such creative power by their very existence as actual entities. According to Hartshorne, "To be is to create" (CSPM 272).

Creativity is ultimate because the fact of process cannot be described in terms of anything more fundamental. It simply is; it is given. Yet, process is not possible apart from the primordial structure, which is the part of God embodied in concrete events. Therefore, in process philosophy, in some sense, God is not responsible for the character of the conditions through which creativity works. The freedom of human beings, for example, is a gift of creativity. It is inherent in created things. The creative capacity through which the process is animated is intrinsic to created events. Creativity allows the universe to surge forward in originality by offering novel aims for the actual entities. The universe is never a completed completely, according to Whitehead, because of its perpetual concrescence from the many to the one, as opposed to a static morphological universe.

In process thought, God is not (or should not be) an exception to the categorical system. The refutation of this principle, according to Bernard Loomer, involves "the price of erecting an unknowable God before whom all our honest strivings and seekings are as nothing."(24) The world of experience will subsequently crumble into the nothingness of illusion, of mere appearance. Nevertheless, if we comprehend God in terms of the unconditional scheme erected for actual entities, God is responsible for at least some of the conditions that define our world. God's primordial nature "at once exemplifies and establishes the categorical conditions" (PR, 344). Although God holds the ultimate creative power, God is not the only creative power. Thus, process theists speak of God and creatures as co-creators.

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 is equally requisite for novelty and aim for entities. Since actual entities possess physical and conceptual poles, God also has a consequent and primordial nature. The latter holds all pure

possibilities and the former is the effect of entities on God as God prehends them. By the interaction of these poles in God, God sets new aims to which actual entities aspire. We can conclude, "It is as true to say that the world is immanent in God, as that God is immanent in the World (Sherburne 185). If both poles of God are interdependent, the world influences God as God 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 and aims to the actual entities, while the world creates God not by the act of bringing God into existence, but by offering material for objective immortality.

To conclude, in process philosophy mutuality and creativity are shared by all actual entities—from the trivial puff in far-off space to God (PR 28). Actual entities are not entirely determined; nevertheless, they enjoy a level of autonomy given by the creative impetus that abides in them. In place of a God who transcends all creation, process theism offers a God who is "the great companion—the fellow-sufferer who understands" (PR 351). This understanding is not out of sheer benevolence, but because God indeed feels (prehends), what we feel.

African Philosophy and Methodology

This comparative endeavor between process-relational metaphysics and African philosophy requires prior understanding of the structure, then the content of the latter. The Anlo metaphysical system, the key focus in this article, falls within a broad spectrum of African thought, defined both geographically and demographically. In general, very little is known of African philosophies and practices, especially in formal philosophical scholarship. The alienation of African philosophy from metaphysical debates is attributed to the absence of unified documented evidence on the history of African thought systems compared to the methodical writ- ten sources of the West.

However, philosophers, especially African ones, seek to reconstruct these ideas from unconventional sources, such as oral tradition, art, songs, and language to complement limited written sources. Bearing in mind that a majority of philosophical treatises on African philosophy either were written by non-Africans or were highly influenced by the structure of Western systems of thought, it appears a Herculean task to assess African philosophy in its authentic form.

There are two major schools of thought on the methodology of African philosophy. Notably, the particularists are those who, in a bid to preserve authentic style and content, restrict African philosophy to themes and/or problems of specific relevance to Africa and Africans alone.

Second, there are the universalists who embrace a more inclusive approach and rather insist on critical and reconstructive methods (Wiredu, Companion). The universalists support comparative approaches between African philosophy and other external doctrines in order to maintain the core attribute of philosophy as discursive and not purely descriptive. The universalists maintain that the uniqueness of African philosophy is not lost by its interaction with the outside world; rather, it is affirmed because of its difference. I am persuaded that any comparative analysis of philosophical positions strengthens the contested ideas and allows each to find its dialectic voice.

The sources of African philosophy are diverse, and it is in this diversity that the study of African philosophy is interesting. A cross-cultural philosophical approach between African and Western philosophies is not without risks. As earlier indicated, attempts to structure African philosophy have often led to descriptive and normative chauvinism. Again, because Africans either on the continent of Africa or in the diaspora are divided by socioeconomic, historical, and geopolitical factors, any attempt to define a monolithic African ideology would be out of place. Consequently, instead of a strict regional comparative philosophy, due to the nature of African thought, it would be preferable to restrict our comparison to the Anlo group without ascribing their ideas to the entire continent.

In addition, to avoid normative skepticism, I will attempt to analyze the Anlo metaphysical system based on its own cultural scheme to reveal the inconsistencies that lie in it. Although the Anlo system of thought appears to be interestingly distinct from akin traditional groups, it does not lack inaccuracies and incoherencies. These will be highlighted through its comparison with process theology on the question of the extent of God's power.

Finally, another conceivable pitfall of comparative philosophy, especially involving African thought, is the problem of conceptual colonization. This notion is somewhat similar to normative chauvinism, but conceptual colonization is a more steeply anchored bias due to language. According to Wiredu, for conceptual decolonization to be effective, the African philosopher must engage in an analysis of philosophical idiosyncrasies by thinking through various concepts in one's vernacular (here Anlo) ("Conceptual"). I will attempt to overcome this problem by laying major emphasis on the conceptual structure of the Anlo language because of its peculiar structure and conceptual exclusivity. The Anlos have, from precolonial times, expressed their proclivity toward the mystical through everyday language, which is structurally dense, notably rhythmic, and almost impervious to influence from other languages.

The Anlo People of Ghana

The Ewe people as indicated are today located in the southeast corner of Ghana. The Anlo-Ewe however, is a subdivision distinguished by language, political allegiance, and ancestral lineage. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they occupied the same geographical area that extends from modern-day Nigeria through to parts of Benin, Togo, and Ghana. Their cultural representations of metaphysical questions were not commonplace. Although there is very little documented evidence that they engaged actively in philosophical dialogues, their language, culture, myths, and proverbs reveal a certain familiarity with metaphysical ideas. This affinity toward non-classical views on the structure of the world are not merely a social and linguistic expression for the Anlos, but they are part of a complex ontological structure.

Anlo was one of the largest political units within the Ewe land. The Anlo people draw their unity from a shared dialect, common ancestry, and allegiance to the Awomefia, established by strong patrilineal ideologies and institutions (Nukunya, "Afa," and "Some"). The town of Notsie (now in south-central Togo) was the common home of their Ewe ancestors where a king ruled with tyrannical power, leading to the great dispersal of Ewe-speakers. Accounts of their origins are drawn from oral narratives, corroborated by Anlo insiders and informants, although because of extensive European influence such sources suffer inaccuracies.[9] Most of their metaphysical positions were more pragmatic than theoretical, as they were often enacted during festivals and other ritual gatherings. They also relied heavily on oral traditions in the form of music, traditional dances, and much later unifying state pledges to pass on belief systems to generations. It is interesting to note that even in their daily greetings, prayers, and language, they communicated the need for an alignment with nature by respecting peculiar rhythmic patterns of speech, favoring certain colors, numbers, and bodily movements believed to be in harmony with a pervasive configuration of the world. In Anlo society, because of the belief in patterns and symmetries, concepts of mutuality, process, and change were primal.

Conceptual Evidence: Things and Concepts

The Anlo believed in a preset design integral in all things expressed through the harmony of interconnection. This predetermination is the ability to communicate by aligning to a pattern of conduct in the natural world. The Anlos held that no entity is exempt from the power to influence and be influenced according to antecedent pattern forms. This influence was a form of transitive communication. In fact, the word for "thing" or "entity"—enu—is a polysemic term for "mouths" as well. It was believed that things were openings that communicated and

received information. The distinction between a human and a piece of stone lies in the complexity of the former's means of communication, just as a human being's means of communication might be inferior to that of divine beings.

Again, another polysemic word *gbe* is used to describe greeting, prayer, and language. It characterizes the synchronic communication between entities in nature. When used to refer to greeting, there is rhythmic synchronicity in the structure of the questions posed and the responses given. Again, in reference to prayer, there is an integration of rhyming words and movements in seamless coordination as a sign of effective prayer. In reality, prayer was considered as no different from salutations among the Anlo; while the latter is found among entities that share the same attributes, the former is communication with higher order beings. One of the central pillars of their social system is language since true communication is inherent in all elements of the universe. Thus, one had to align with antecedent patterns in order to produce the desired phono- logical configuration. This is the reason why the Anlos favored the use of proverbs, because they represent ancestral phonological patterns by which all of nature was aligned and is thus understood. Especially during social gatherings, public speeches may be composed entirely of proverbial and metaphorical expressions. The Anlo language is made up of sounds and stresses often producing an intrinsically tuneful and poetic rhyme. The Anlo believed that a harmonious semantic mirrored ontological symmetry so that all things had acquaintance with such configurations by their interactions. This is why their language was highly metrical and structured so as to follow antecedent patterns (in greeting, for example, the questions and responses were agreeing to the last vowel sound produced by the original speaker). In short, because communication was ontological, language was believed to be an expression of this transcendent universal cosmic structure. This idea was so deeply rooted in Anlo beliefs that any native who failed to speak Anlo correctly was not regarded as a member of the community and was pejoratively referred to as "abandoned at the outskirts" (Etsi gbe).

Accordingly, by virtue of interaction, spiritual beings preserved these patterns because the extent of the power of the spiritual depended on the physical dealings maintained with it. Thus, spirituality was not a distinct realm, but an emergent dimension of protracted interaction with certain organized entities. In other words, spiritual dimensions were essentially considered partially spatiotemporal and could be accessed through extended durations of interactive existence among natural entities. This is why the majority of their proverbs exalted old age because it signified a journey toward the spiritual, which, for them, is the culmination of all entities. Although their idea of spirituality is identical to consciousness in Western parlance, for

their spirituality surpasses mere human conscious- ness. The spiritual represents the purpose of perfection given by God to every entity. Consequently, if a human, animal, or thing is completely cut off from community, with only limited interaction with others, they are said to have diminished in spirituality. Unlike other tribes, like the Akan of Ghana, who believed that Oboade is the creator who gives the spirit of consciousness, the Anlo-Ewes believed that consciousness was attained through interaction with a world composed of communicative beings. Consciousness in Anlo *is nudzɔnɔnɔ* or *ntenɔnɔ*, loosely translated as alert- ness or to keep watch, indicating that consciousness is performative, not a substantive immutable form. The fundamental things of the world are neither bodies nor minds, but communicative beings—*nnuo*—a sort of go-between. To be is to communicate, to interact. Hence, consciousness, although not an ultimate aim of God for creatures, is nonetheless a higher-level form of communication (with both self and the outside world) while spirituality was the zenith of all existent things. This meant that an entity could be spiritual yet not necessarily humanly conscious. This interconnection was fundamental in all of nature such that everything in existence is in perpetual communication.

This inference is possible from the Anlo's adaptive relationship with material and nonmaterial elements of nature. Land sites, household effects, stones, sand, pets, and sacred locations were seen as both physical and spiritual among the Anlos (Greene 48). The preservation of individual life and the social unit was paramount for the balance of all life forces (see Fiawoo). The extended greeting of the Anlo was peculiar for asking after the well-being of one's pets and livestock as a way of praying for their flourishing. 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, have to interact perpetually in a conformed pattern. Indeed, spiritual bodies, gods as well as ancestral spirits were considered as part of the community such that shrines, altars, and sacred objects remained in community quarters. In akin African groups, the belief in the nature of spiritual forces was often limited to the moral and/or spiritual sphere as punishers or rewarders of deeds. Even in cases of economic decline or political instability, these were often attributed to moral deficiency of members of the society. Nevertheless, for the Anlo, their belief in mutuality and interdependence account for the difference in perspective in 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 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 or continued vitality in shared memories and meanings is tied to their economic and geographical positions in the Anlo territories.

However, this flexibility of Anlo metaphysical attachments to certain sites stems from an ultimate ontological belief in the interdependence and changing nature of existing things because the spiritual was not ontologically distinct from the physical. Again, the notion of sacredness referred to as kɔkɔe had mutually dependent spiritual and physical meanings. For example, ponds, burial sites, and land formations, referred to as kɔkɔe, if they were physically free from impurities. The physical cleanliness ensured a maintained spirituality while the continuous divinity also guaranteed its physical status in the society. It is no surprise that whenever such sites lost their physical prominence due to either pollution or inaccessibility to life forms, they no longer had spiritual significance. In conclusion, to be an existent thing, in Anloland, is to shuffle persistently between the physical and the spiritual. Objectivity reality was thus understood as an illusion since actuality is born out of interactivity.

On Change and the Role of God

A significant proverb in Anlo-Ewe is the proverb of constant change and uncertainty, coined as Xexeame 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 a chameleon, is indicative of mutuality and process as catalysts of change. The nature of a chameleon as responsive to its environment echoes the process of change sparked by mutual interaction. Change was in effect responsive to rules of conformation yet marked novelty. Interactivity of the material and nonmaterial bred a conception of nature as holistic and interactive, resulting in plurality and interactivity, against singularity and linear causality. I will thus proceed to the concept of God, which without a doubt is central to Anlo culture and doctrine. Before the advent of the Europeans, historical studies show that the Anlo had a distinct conception of God. This is contrary to earlier assertions of missionaries that African traditional religion lacked a unified concept of a supreme deity.[11]

In Anlo cosmology, the "first cause" named Mawu, is outside of space- time and sets the structure of causes and effects in motion at the birth of the universe. Although the etymology of the word is imprecise, some informants have interpreted it as the unsurpassed as the contraction of the words ame ("being") and wu ("to surpass/to be beyond").[12] Consequently, Mawu is to be translated as "one who is unsurpassed by other beings." Likewise, another

reading is “the being who is beyond,” thus confirming the notion of God as being “beyond time and space.” I am more inclined to accept the second interpretation because of my affinity with the Anlo language as a native speaker. Again, my conviction is also based on the names of Mawu in Anlo that are attributes tied to God’s transcendent nature. For example, Gbedegbleme (“Almighty”), Sogbolisa (“Creator”), Kitikata (“sustainer of creation”), magblẽmagblẽ (“incorruptibility”), and Blemavo (“ancientness”) are attributes prefixed by and solely ascribed to Mawu. Greene reports that in 1450, Notsie, the ancestral home of the Anlo, was home to this deity Mawu (3). This Mawu was the highest deity and ruler of the several gods and spirits that animated the entities in the universe. The fifteenth-century Notsie saw a great number of rituals devoted to this deity and appellations, which included Mawu sogbo lisa, Mawu Kitikata, Blemavo Mawu (“ancient God”), Mawu magblẽmagblẽ (“the incorruptible one”), and many others. Even prominent religious groups of the Anlo, like the Yewe, called on Mawu to crown their rites as the ultimate sovereign of all other divinities.

The late eighteenth century, on the other hand, witnessed a prominent mention of the god Se. This novel introduction is interpreted in two ways. First, there is the dispute that there are no differences between Mawu and Se. This position claims that Mawu and Se are directly synonymous and interchangeable (see Fiawoo). A second interpretation asserts that Mawu and Se referred to two different deities. On this view, the Supreme God, Mawu, was replaced with a more powerful God around 1750 called Se, borrowed from the Yoruba. Greene, who supports this assertion, argues that, but for libation and other ritual ceremonies, Mawu was rarely prayed to or offered sacrifices, nor was Mawu assigned shrines or servants. Therefore, it is more probable that Mawu was a god of lesser position. Conversely, Se represented a more present and dynamic god in times of economic, social, and political turmoil like wars, slave raids, famine, and so forth.

I put forward an alternative perspective on the disparity between Se and Mawu. This interpretation advocates a dual-aspect theory on the nature of the Supreme Being. As previously stated, Se was an active and performative God functioning swiftly in the universe and representing the attributive capacity of God. In this latter sense, it implied that just as the created world is an expression of God, Se is the expression of law, order, and harmony as the purpose of God. Mawu represented the nonperformative aspect of God, while Se was the epitome of executive strength who directly influenced human life.

My alternative interpretation is founded on two reasons: first, the term Se already existed in Anlo land before the influence of the Yoruba because it is also a word for strength and law.

Again, one of the appellations of Mawu was Mawu Ese (the creator of humans and the God of destiny). The concept of Se is unlikely to have been borrowed entirely from the Yoruba, as Greene argues, and it is coherent to hold that the Ewe ethnic group has always known the concept, considering its deep roots in the language.

Se is the aspect of Mawu, "the supreme being," within each person. For the Anlos, God was an intimate part of humans. Among the Yewe group, they gave names like Huenyeame, meaning, "God is the embodiment of the human" (see Nyamuame). As such, the divine is an active force coexisting in humans, both in the physical and spiritual sense. This version is again consistent with the understanding the Anlos have of the structure of the cosmos as unified through interactive communication. Accordingly, the Se characterized the purpose of God as lived through a human (Parrinder, Religion), such that there is an attainment of spirituality that is the aim to which all entities aspire. Se, as God through a human, was responsible for strength, character, and will, as well as destiny and directionality. The fulfilment of these aims, however, involves a constant interface of entities and Se. In God's physical pole, Se sets the aims or laws and nudges a human into the fulfilment of those temporal aims. The awareness of those aims, how they are fulfilled, and their results, are then taken in by God to create other objectives. This Se is on the spatiotemporal stage since it guides the order of the physical realm by providing new direction at the individual level. God ultimately is a co-creator of life with existent entities, and the causes and effects of one's actions hail from this cooperation. When one accomplishes the aims that Se disposes, it is said that *Ame si ya ƒe se me se*, which can be translated as "this person has a strong personality or aura," implying that the person channeled the divine dimension well. In effect, a strong aura suggested that the niche of human and God that together composed the individual is sturdy and resistant to any external force. Each entity has a peculiar set of aims called the dzɔgbese, and certain groups of people share similar aims because of the days on which they were born. Some such elements include a person's preference for foods, courage, dexterity, and so forth. However, each per- son is imbued with the particularity of how to channel these.

There are two concepts of God we find here: (1) Mawu, the transcendent pole, who gives initial aims, and (2) Se, the immanent pole operating these aims through the *dzɔgbese.*

This dual-aspect God echoes the Anlo saying, "God is everywhere and God is nowhere, God is manifold and God is one." The former characteristics refer to the ubiquity of the immanent nature of God in the world, while the latter is the unmovable transcendent aspect of God. Though the Anlo metaphysical position on God is not as exhaustive as that of process

philosophy, it is one of the rare notions of God in precolonial African belief systems that upholds a duality of God. With this position, the Anlo achieve a monotheistic and semi-polytheistic culture because the initiating cause of all creation is considered as a singular being, while all other entities are seen as constantly becoming spiritual beings through their earthly interactions. The aim is not to become gods, but to achieve the designed aim that God sets for each entity. This also ensures that there is coherence in the concept of spirituality since the physical and spiritual realms are dissimilar in hierarchy, not in their nature.

On the Nature of the Power of God

Process theists typically distinguish between persuasive and coercive power. In the literature of process theism, some authors discuss an inherent link in the distinction between efficient and final causation, on the one hand, and the distinction between coercive and persuasive agency, on the other. It can be said that God is both the efficient and the final cause of actual entities without assuming that divine power is coercive rather than persuasive. God can lure the entity to develop in a certain way (see Keller), and this dimension does not eliminate God as the efficient cause, according to Ford and Kraus. It is more accurate to say that God is an efficient cause because God is a final cause. God furnishes the subjective aim of creatures via the hybrid prehensions in which the creatures feel God's conceptual prehensions. All forms of prehension allow for the transmission of efficient causality, but in hybrid prehensions that we have of God there is an aim that functions as a final cause. It is consequently consistent that the process God is both the efficient and final cause while maintaining that God does not exert forced unilateral divine power. This article has stated that the Anlo held that there was an actual aspect of God in our world in the form of a pull toward spiritual perfection.

Thus, in the actual world there is a hierarchy of entities by order of their realization of the aims of God. The extended interaction of such entities is achieved through time and space. The cultural hierarchy of the Anlos is as follows: preeminent God, gods, ancestors, elders, adults, women, and children. According to Dogbey and Sapaty, these are the seven major cycles of life in some Ewe oral narratives, and all these stages also have several sub cycles defining several roles and responsibilities of members in that environment.

However, questions as regard coercive and persuasive power are not directly tackled among the Anlos because of the unconventional nature of their philosophy. Nevertheless, I will endeavor to define the possible implications of their cultural and religious practices concerning such a distinction. Since ritual and performance are the fabric of Anlo life itself, the extent of the power

of God can be understood by analyzing these activities. It was held that the Mawu aspect of God outside the physical realm operated through the spatiotemporal side of God. This meant that when prayers and sacrifices were offered, the responses came through the physical pole of God expressed in the cultural hierarchy earlier enumerated. Therefore, the food and drink that was offered was for the gods, ancestors, elders, adults, women, and children in order to reward them for intervening in a particular situation. Thus, it appeared that the physical expression of God in the world was characterized by coercive power that was necessary for performance in the world. From the historical account of the escape of the Anlos from the tyrannical king Agorkorli, it is believed that the leader of the group evoked the powers of Mawu to intervene and pave the way for their escape.[14] This intervention came through the men and children playing drums loudly and dancing to distract the guards while the women poured water on the clay-made walls, which enabled their escape by walking backward. Hence, God's power was seen as causally efficacious because God's physical aspect permitted operation in our world. The Anlo, as a result, believe strongly in the possession where God or other spiritual entities could take over the bodies of humans and animals to execute their wills.

The coercive power explanation from the Anlo perspective is not without its inconsistencies. According to Anlo cosmology and the cultural hierarchy, even though the gods and ancestors exist in a quasi-physical sphere as plural expressions of Se, they require cooperation with other entities in order to act. This implies that the coercive power was not necessarily unilateral; therefore, this theory is difficult to defend adequately.

Again, the Anlo gods, such as the thunder god of the *Yewe*, *mami* water, and so forth, would only strike down their enemies if they were offered sacrifices or appeased in some ritualistic form. What seems difficult to decipher is the extent of the exertion of their power if they required some necessary cooperation from other entities. I believe that the Anlo metaphysical system necessitates further reflection and analysis if any structured philosophical doctrine can be built from it. Although the Anlo are pragmatists, the reassessment of their practice and doctrines will not only eliminate the incoherencies of their beliefs, but could offer new possibilities in their traditional rites and way of life.

In this article, I have assumed that there was something of philosophical significance in Anlo traditional religion, historical accounts, and language. I also have attempted to draw parallels between process metaphysics 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 attempts to reveal underlying philosophical notions of the Anlo, which hitherto

have remained unexplored. I have shown that process-relational metaphysics is not conceptually far off from African philosophy, although some conceptual and linguistic evidence still must be reviewed and critically analyzed. While the theoretical overlap is significant, Anlo metaphysics through language, historical accounts, and rituals presents some limitations that undermine the accuracy of the inferences made. That notwithstanding, Anlo metaphysical beliefs remain viable perspectives to explore, especially as tools of dialectical importance for the African philosopher.

Notes

1. The name Anlo means to be "curled up" into a fetal position as well as to be "unfolded." The name communicates the duality of the ontological sys- tem of the Anlo-Ewe as an alternation between states of entities. See further discussion on embodied consciousness in Geurts.
2. The ancestral home of the Ewes.
3. These represent popular dialects of the Ewe language.
4. See Yovel.
5. 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.
6. The term subject describes the actual entity in respect to its own real internal constitution, and superject refers to the character of objective immortality.
7. The analogy of the nesting boxes of a Chinese toy explains a series of durations of any temporal extension. However, I employ it here to symbolize how previous entities enter other entities and remain immortally present in subsequent future concrescences.
8. The Awomefia is the paramount chief of the Anlos. Paramount chieftaincy refers to the rulers of multiple chiefdoms that had subordinated others.
9. See further Greene 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, "Insider."
10. For example, an infant could be said to be more spiritual than an adult man was, if the infant is believed to have been reincarnated. Based on previous lives, a reincarnated infant has had more interaction than the adult who is living their first life.
11. The question was discussed extensively over the years against the Ellis school of thought that asserted the absence of any notion of a deity of ultimate power. Evidence and arguments have shown the contrary in the work of Parrinder and again in Rattray.
12. Others argue it represents the male aspect of Mawu Lisa of the Dahomey vodu. Although this is not pertinent to our current discussion, it shows their ease with concepts on the duality of God.
13. A popular Anlo song describes the scope of the influence of Se in human life. It states the difficulty of living according to the dictates of Se: Menya wòna, menya wòna Ese ñdò menya wòna o.Vinywie dzidzi le segbò, Srònywie dede le segbò, Deka dzedze le segbò, Ga

kpòkpò le segbò, Menya wòna ò Menya wòna o Se ñdò menya wòna ("The task of Se is not easy. To have a good spouse is due to your Se. To be beautiful or handsome is due to your Se. To have good children is due to your Se. To be wealthy is due to your Se. To be intelligent is due to your Se").

14. A 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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