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Antiquity versus Modernity: Aspects of Lifestyles and Life-conditions

Kofi Ackah
Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy and Classics,
University of Ghana, Legon

Abstract

Biology and ecology set optimal limits to our potential for development and significant deviations from these limits threaten our well-being and existence. Yet there seems to be little, if any, concern, for those significant deviations that are atavistic and are reinforced by or are generated from Western industrial modernity, which most Third World countries have adopted as their favoured approach to national development. This paper focuses on nine of the areas in which these deviations occur. The measure of deviation, explicitly or implicitly made, is a select set of lifestyles and life-conditions in modernity and antiquity. The emphasis in this paper on ecologically or biologically efficient lifestyles and life-conditions in antiquity is not a recommendation to return to the ways of antiquity; it is to highlight the principles and values of wellness embedded in those ways in order to provoke further discussions and to imply either that creative adaptations of those lifestyles and life-conditions are desirable or that policy interventions may be required to address deviations from them.

Keywords: antiquity, modernity, life-conditions, biology, ecology

In this paper I shall use ‘modernity’ and ‘antiquity’ in a predominantly cultural rather than chronological sense. I shall mean by ‘modernity’ lifestyles and life-conditions based on Western science and technology, and by ‘antiquity’ the ‘pre-industrial’ or, in certain contexts, ‘pre-scientific’ ways of life. As characterised, ‘modernity’ and ‘antiquity’ are very broad categories: each abstracts from innumerable local, regional, class and diachronic variations in lifestyles and life-conditions.

Modernity has a lot of good things to offer. At least, it promotes a culture capable of reproducing itself at higher levels and largely able to meet the ever-growing needs of large masses of people. Yet, almost without exception, human ways of doing things, however well thought-out, have unintended side effects. Thus, it is common knowledge

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1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the [then] annual Faculty of Arts Colloquium held on the 14th and 15th of April, 2010 at the Great Hall, University of Ghana. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for useful suggestions.
that aspects of modernity have either reinforced or produced significant deviations from the life-conditions and lifestyles that are optimal for human flourishing and for the sustainability of our ecology. Western research and public discourse have for decades highlighted these side effects and Western nation-states do, generally, make efforts to address same. Further, because of global concern about the issues, numerous resolutions of the UN and other international bodies—on food, climate, environment, poverty-reduction, education, etc.—have raised awareness about them and/or are attempting to address them. Yet, most developing societies appear to be adopting modernity indiscriminately—as there is little evidence of critical awareness of, or policy direction against, the said side effects.

In what follows, I address nine of these side effects, for two reasons: to provoke further discussions on them and to suggest that such side effects could be avoided or at least limited either by policy controls and/or by a creative adaptation of aspects of life and thought in antiquity, as characterised.

The ‘Scientific’ Attitude to Nature

Substantial changes in nature do affect our biological systems; but how much we are thus affected depends also on our general attitude to nature. Western science, practised on a strict logical elimination of value from facts, reflects the utilitarian attitude to nature that is wasteful in terms of excess production and consumption. In antiquity, human beings generally saw themselves as part of, rather than as separate from, the rest of nature. Groves, forests, meadows, water bodies and other vital sections of the ecology were invested with sacredness and sanctity and this investment resonated with our existential needs. Generally, such an attitude guaranteed biodiversity and the ecological balance that could secure the long-term survival and wellbeing of our species. Admittedly, this religious attitude to nature was ‘pre-scientific.’ Nor was it necessary or sufficient to save the biosphere: even in early antiquity, some societies for whom nature was sacred destroyed their natural habitation. Thus it seemed rational to welcome the European alternative, which evolved in the 17th and 18th centuries AD, when Bacon, Galileo, Descartes, Newton and others contributed various more empirically informed

2 The literature is huge. To mention just three early ones, see Thomas 1956, Passmore 1980 and Boyden 1987.
3 Until concern with ecological sustainability became global recently, occasional theoretical protests in the past against the fact-value distinction failed to gain any significant impact. One example is Julian Huxley (1947), who argued to the effect that what is ethical in human behaviour favours our biological evolution.
4 For example, in his Critias (111b-c), written in the fourth century BC, Plato makes this ecological observation of Attica: ‘There are remaining only the bones of the wasted body, as they may be called…all the richer and softer parts of the soil having fallen away, and the mere skeleton of the land being left. But in the primitive state of the country, its mountains were high hills covered with soil, and the plains…were full of rich earth, and there was abundance of wood in the mountains.’ In the same context, Plato tells us how ‘sacred memorials’ remain where once flowed rivers and streams.
perspectives on nature generally regarded as scientific—an attitude whose effect makes nature an object, filtered out of value, which the human subject can and has to manipulate to yield results that would satisfy human needs and wants.

To be sure, the scientific attitude has deepened our empirical knowledge of nature; but this is arguably knowledge without understanding (Max-Neef, 2009, p. 18), without the resonance of deep meaning, because an essential part of us—our feeling, intuition, imagination is consciously withheld or divorced from the reality we claim to know. Once it is unscientific to love, revere and respect nature, the alternative has been to see nature in purely utilitarian terms—with disastrous impacts on our ecology and biology. The apparent exception is ecological science, called by some ‘the subversive science.’ This has evolved to be an oasis in the landscape of the scientific temper—in a sense a mock return to the pantheistic, pre-scientific past. By insisting that what violates the natural harmony must be condemned and what enhances it must be endorsed, its holistic sensibility is a radical deviation from traditional science (Roszak, 1976, pp. 463-469).

We might start addressing this problem of the materialistic objectification of nature by appreciating the active, phenomenological constructivism of the mind or the complex, multi-layered structure of nature of which we are a part and the possibilities of many truths (religious, scientific, etc.) on a single subject, whether or not these truths cohere. Such an appreciation should be complemented by a linguistic shift away from the one dimensional vision of, and dependence on, the language, tools and methodologies of science to more open and pluralistic approaches, able to recognize competing and complementing pathways, such as between science and cultural traditions that promote our biological, ecological and social-psychological well-being.

The Sense of Economic Growth

Another problematic heritage from modernity is the sense of economic growth, which clearly implies the utilitarian attitude to nature earlier mentioned. Based on the use of machines and capitalism, modernity sustains itself by the accumulation of more wealth and goods for the satisfaction of an ever-expanding array of material needs and wants, for the further growth of the economy, for increasing the range of consumer choices and for pursuing higher and higher standards of living. Because mainstream economics claims to be value-free, the assumption that continuously increasing the range of consumer choices (consumerism) is desirable has rarely been seriously questioned. Indeed, we now live in a world in which it would be suicidal for a politician seeking high office to canvass

5 That value-judgments, aesthetic or ethical, can be unpacked as perceptions of how a set of empirical facts conduce to our biological or social-psychological functionality has been forcefully argued. See for example, Durant, 1952, pp. 186-203 on ‘What is Beauty?’ and Baier, 1958, pp. 8-26 on ‘Value Judgments.’
moderation in material consumption. Yet, as has been noted by many development economists, this materialistic conception of economic growth is inconsistent with the long-term ecological sustainability of human society (Leiss, 1978, p.23).

With the emergence of Development Economics (DE) in the 1950s and 1960s, there was much optimism that this was a new pathway to promote true development and overcome poverty in the Third World. But as the hoped-for goals were not fully realised, the language and practice of DE have been superseded by neo-liberal ideology, such as Hayek (1944) exemplifies. This ideology is essentially blind to the possibility of market failure, regards all state interventions as anathematic, presumes that the market is an infallible guide to all economic strategies and prescribes a developmental model based on absolute subservience to the interests of capital, unfettered trade and total freedom for private enterprise—in all situations and circumstances.6

The free-market dogma is backed by powerful international financial institutions, hegemonistic Western states and right-wing think-tanks. The following tenets seem to constitute its attractiveness: (a) the assumption of a free individual operating in free markets; (b) the efficiency of the market mechanism in delivering the greatest amount of resources at the minimum cost, all things being equal; (c) the fairness of the market system, as it rewards individuals according to their contribution—the price others are willing to pay for their services being a measure of their social value; and (d) the scientific strength in the precision of its theoretical tools and in its objectivity and universality (Gilles, 2009, p. 48, pp.63-65).

Arguably, the enduring side effects of the free-market dogma degrade its theoretical attractiveness. These include the rapacious exploitation of natural resources, especially non-renewable ones; global warming; and significant disturbances of the life-supporting processes of the biosphere. Besides, the dogma ‘creates and aggravates terrible inequities and disparities,7 tolerates high levels of chronic unemployment and deprivation, and destroys social cohesion’ (Bidwai, 2009, pp. 36-37).

These consequences, one could argue, amount to significant deviations from the largely needs-based economies of antiquity. Yet neo-liberalism continues to shape the policies and management of many Third World countries. This is evidenced by the proliferation of stock exchange markets, the wholesale liberalisation of most Third World economies, reinforced by a deceptively objective and morally neutral international trade

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6 Very much against the grain of historical reality—insofar as the development of First and Second World countries have required some degree of state protection of nascent industries; the promotion, at the state’s expense, of education, especially technology; domestic trade; and the equitable distribution of assets and income. See, for example, Bidwai, 2009.

7 So, for example, the National Health Insurance Scheme in Ghana is useful intervention, because its effective implementation would guarantee basic health services to all. But this welfare goal has been frustrated by political and management problems.
principle, the Law of Comparative Advantage,\(^8\) and fuelled by global markets dominated by natural resource extractions.\(^9\) It is common knowledge that the control of these markets has been slipping from the hands of elected national governments into those of transnational corporations, regional trading blocs and global institutions, such as the IMF, World Bank and the World Trade Organisation.

Perhaps one way to address the problem is, as Gilles argues, to teach pluralist Economics curricula, which would comprise various divergent theoretical orientations and competing approaches, for example, Neo-Classical, Keynesian, Marxist, the feminist critique, along with, one must add, critical sensitivity to traditional values and institutions. These varied perspectives must include both ‘positive’ and ‘normative’ aspects of economics, such as the relationship between markets and greed or materialism; between markets and power relationships; between efficiency and equity; and between resource exploitation and its impact on the ecology, livelihood and culture.

**Egalitarianism**

Societies have polarised into haves and have-nots since the dawn of civilisation.\(^10\) On the other hand, modernity promises and has modestly delivered an advancement in standards of living. Cell phones count among the latest in the instruments of modern civilisation with a global reach serving the communication and economic needs of rich and poor alike. However, the global improvement in standards of living has done little to close the gap between the rich and the poor. For example, the market distribution of wealth in industrialised societies has generally given rise to large differences in material wealth and income that deviate significantly from the relative egalitarian structures of the largely needs-based economies of the much simpler societies of antiquity (cf. Harrison, 1981, pp. 405–418). Income distribution in the USA published in 2004 shows that the bottom 90% of citizens earn an average income of US$ 30,374 annually and the top 10%

\(^8\) The ‘Law of Comparative Advantage’ claims that every nation stands to gain if it specialises in those goods it can produce more cheaply. However, this morally neutral principle is deceptive, given the contribution to global competitive pricing of well-known Western government subsidies to certain national industrial productions.

\(^9\) Writing in 1981 (pp. 337-345) Paul Harrison noted that Third World exports are roughly two-thirds primary products and imports are roughly two thirds of manufactured goods. This structure of third world economies does not appear to have changed much in the last thirty years. See, for example, Ghana Economy Profile, 2013 at www.indexmundi.com/ghana/economy/profile.html (accessed 8/6/13 at 6 pm), in which Ghana’s export commodities are listed as oil, gold, cocoa, timber, bauxite, aluminium, manganese ore, diamonds, and horticultural products—all primary products. Roughly the same economic structure is repeated across most of the Third World.

\(^10\) Every textbook on the history of Greek antiquity carries the story of Solon’s 6th century BC social and political reforms in Athens, which sought to reduce the explosive tension between the rich few, who also controlled power, and the poor masses, who were excluded from power. In Roman antiquity, too, significantly similar economic and social conditions led to the protracted Conflict of the Orders—between the patricians and the plebeians.
an average US$ 269, 658 (including capital gains). An overview of income inequalities in the Organisation for Cooperation and Economic Development (OECD) countries, according to a 2011 Report, shows that, on average, the income share held by the top 10% of the population, before taxes and transfers, is 45.7%.

The organisation Global Finance provides country by country data from the World Bank development/poverty indicators on wealth distribution and income inequality, based on GINI coefficients. These measure the extent to which the distribution of income or consumption expenditure among individual households within a country deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. The data for the first decade of the 2000’s show that economic inequality within countries has been widening over the past ten years or more. According to the 2006 data on Ghana, the percentage of the population living on less than US$ 2 a day is 51.84%, while the income share held by 10% of the population is 32.75%. In 2010 the percentage of Nigerians living on less than US$ 2 a day was 84.49%. Roughly the same pattern of wealth distribution in Ghana can be found in most developing capitalist economies. In real terms, the messenger’s salary is barely of subsistent value, while his top executive gets several multiples of it. Harrison’s observation in 1981 is still applicable: ‘these are inequalities not just of material possessions, but in lives, in minds, in flesh and blood, in wellbeing and in confidence in the world’ (Harrison, 1981, p. 410).

One justification of the free-market system is that the inequalities it generates constitute an incentive for people to work harder, invest more, and so on, which will lead to greater wealth for all. And the evidence is obvious: Western industrialised countries are wealthier and have generally higher standards of living across the social spectrum than in poorer countries. The Scandinavian countries, in particular, show that it is possible to attain high per capita income while ensuring a minimum level of inequality. And there is also strong evidence in these countries that state interventions, particularly in the production of public goods such as health and education, promote both equality and efficiency of the workforce and production. But this is cold comfort for the increasing millions who continue to live in grinding poverty, especially in most of the Third World. One factor that severely interferes with the enjoyment of life is the chronic feeling of


13 Wealth distribution differs from income inequality: the former refers to ownership of assets in a given society; the latter refers to differences in income.


deprivation, which occurs when individuals are aware that others in the neighbourhood have much higher material standards of living than they have. Such an experience, if accompanied by difficulties in occupational or social mobility, can lead to angst, mental and physical ill-health and patterns of interpersonal behaviour that may interfere with the order and stability of society.

An emerging by-product of the interface between the widening economic inequalities and science is the growing empowerment of the well-to-do to use enhancement medicine or drugs to advance their functionality, including their intelligence, life-span or range of emotions. If the trend continues, a pill for developing multilingual competence may soon cease to be science-fiction. These possibilities have given rise to the belief called ableism—the acceptance of the idea of the transhumanisation of the human species functioning beyond today’s species-typical capacities. The danger is that enhanced performances may in future set a new norm. One consequence would be that the non-enhanced majority of people regarded today as ‘normal,’ but who may not be able to afford enhancement medicine or drugs, are likely to be regarded as disabled and inferior tomorrow (Wolbring, 2009, p. 141). Such ‘disableism,’ likely to involve discrimination, oppression or abuse, would have serious implications for pluralism, social order and the survival of the human species.16

It seems, then, that we need to create alternative or complementary systems of values and economic development models that, while allowing differentiation and providing incentives for enterprise, retain a strong view of relative egalitarianism consistent with economic and social efficiency.

**Formal Education**

Modernity continues to require a shift from general education to subject specialisation, especially in scientific, technical, vocational, business and other professional studies in response to industrial needs. Thus, the general content of education has increasingly become utilitarian, with growing emphasis on science and technology. Admittedly, specialisation is necessary for in-depth study of subject-matter, whatever this may be. But as different subjects represent different aspects of reality, it is unfortunate that little effort is devoted to the multi- or inter-disciplinary integration that will improve understanding of the organic interrelationships between these aspects of reality.

One of the consequences of the extreme emphasis on specialisation in formal education is the fact that the human products of such education have extraordinarily different world-views and pictures of the same reality—so much so that effective

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16 The World Transhumanist Association is an international non-profit organization. It believes in the development and access to new technologies that enable everyone to enjoy better minds, better bodies and better lives. But it strongly advocates the ethical use of technology to expand human capacities.
communication between them on serious societal topics can be very difficult, sometimes impossible. Thus some religious leaders, who are otherwise highly educated formally, appear to be completely insensitive to polluting residential neighbourhoods with deafening amplitude of church music (often through the instrumentality of imported audio systems). Similarly, graduates in radically different disciplines are unlikely to agree in detail as to the problems and options facing modern society. Thus universities which prescribe certain general capacity-building courses for all beginning students and encourage flexibility in cross-subject choices at higher levels seem to be doing the right thing.

Industrialisation tends to undermine the importance of general education by demanding the vocationalisation and by promoting a utilitarian conception, of higher education. The practice of the free-market dogma intensifies the utilitarian allure by promising a materially comfortable life, through the cultivation and practice of what is pleasing or satisfying to the atomic individual. Its sense of ‘fairness’ or ‘justice’ appeals to the supposed objectivity and level playing field of the invisible hand of market forces, thereby encouraging the belief that significant inequities among a population is a normal reflection of the individual’s efforts. By referring to the individual’s ‘free choices’ or ‘preferences’ to describe consumer behaviour and by presuming same to be rational, we are lured away from thinking about the complete insensitivity of the system, about the systematic and diachronic deprivations and about the undulating playing field.

One is easily justified in believing that the free-market dogma has been playing too dominant a role in policy decisions in higher education. This is evidenced by the demand to design market- or demand-driven courses and programmes, tailored more or less specifically to industrial needs and trendy expectations. Subjects like Classics, which teach general capacities and such normative values as foresight, courage, citizenship, compassion, leadership, honesty, a sense of commitment and duty, et cetera, are seen as peripheral. But, if post-industrial theorists are right, we are already moving away from manufacturing and manual work to a knowledge-based economy where service industry\(^\text{17}\) and non-manual work dominate. This transition from work based on physical strength to mental agility, to knowledge-based services (Bell,1973), requires flexible specialisation, computerised control of production and re-toolable skills. This trend is likely, in the near future, to narrow the academic-vocational divide and to increase the need for curricula that build general capacities rather than vocational specialisms.

Finally, the print and electronic media as well as a wide range of electronic equipment now constitute major sources of information and learning for all classes of people, especially for the youth. This big-scale exposure of individuals to multiple

\(^{17}\) The service industry includes, but is not limited to, such activities as banking, insurance, brokerage, teaching, marketing, public relations, media, computer-related and cultural services.
sources of information and learning is unprecedented. Baudrillard (1981) may have a point in arguing that we now live in a world which is ‘media saturated’: a world in which we are bombarded by media and advertising messages through multi-channel television, globalised electronic and cable networks, a profusion of radio stations, newspapers and street billboards. One profound effect of this, Baudrillard argues, is the generation of codes of signification which become rules by which we govern our lives. For example, messages designed to persuade individuals to purchase commodities strongly influence people’s priorities in life and affect their attitudes and behaviour. Besides, the presentation of violent and sexually explicit scenes in films and soap operas may not influence everybody; but it may pollute the moral environment and incite a wayward and anarchic few.

The relationship between sex, violence and morality is a theme probably as old as the dawn of human society. Wars or their effects were a common direct experience for adults and the youth in much of antiquity. The vast Roman Empire was built and maintained for centuries by war, to say nothing of the glorification of violence in Roman public entertainments, such as gladiatorial shows. Before Roman imperial hegemony, most Greek city-states were frequently at war. Besides, Greek sympotic vase-paintings are characterised by explicit depictions of sex. And far beyond the bawdiness of Aristophanic comic theatre, ithyphallic processions were spectacular and memorable aspects of annual festivals of Dionysus—the god of wine and fertility. But if frequent wars, bloody gladiatorial sports and the publicity of sexually explicit symbolisms in ancient festivals may have contributed to moral degeneration, the modern print and electronic media reinforce this with their easily accessible and more socially penetrating reach. The problem of our times is whether it is desirable for the handful of people who control our print and electronic media often obsessed with profit or power to have such influence on the moral life of nations?

The question just raised evokes the complex issue of censorship on whether it can be justified. The debate, begun several centuries ago, continues to rack the best brains. Plato, for example, believes that the fine arts primarily appeal to the senses and the desire for pleasure rather than to reason; thus the arts possess a tremendous power for moulding human character, for good or evil. Consequently, in his Republic (books II & III) he argues for a policy of censorship designed, not in order to eliminate all of the fine arts but to prevent their harmful effects and to promote their good effects with a view to advancing the art of living the rational life. Although Aristotle agrees with Plato that art influences conduct, in his Politics (VIII: 5-7) he thinks that the fine arts have social therapeutic power: far from inciting people to action, they provide a catharsis, an avenue for safely discharging one’s excess emotions. Sartre (1948) denies any link between art and morality: morality has to do with conduct; art with aesthetics—a product to be judged by purely aesthetic standards and to be appreciated, not by action, but by contemplation.
Others, like Dewey (1934), think that the link is reciprocal, based on the common demand for imagination: to be moral requires imaginative effort—a going beyond our individuality—to identify with the ideal of love or right; and art is the imaginative discernment of possibilities that redeems human life from the damnation of routine and boredom. New art, in particular, makes us sensitive to new values, to novel ideas, thereby encouraging moral innovation. Still others, such as the American aesthetician Prall (1957), attempt to subordinate morality to art, by maintaining that all moral values derive from or are species of aesthetic values.

A censorship policy in the absence of a demonstrated link between art and morality is highly questionable. Yet, even if such a link exists, we are confronted with other formidable issues: (1) whether censorship can be justified by the need to preserve moral standards essential for social order and stability; if so whether such censorship will not (2) unjustifiably preserve such standards from critical appraisal and artistic interpretation—a consequence which would (a) arrest moral change and improvement, and/or (b) significantly curtail the right to free speech and thought. And (3) would not censorship centring round essentially vague concepts (e.g., ‘obscene’) endow law enforcement authorities with an undesirable degree of discretion? In view of these challenges, it seems, unfortunately, that whatever is not directly forbidden by law is permissible or proper.

**Modernity, the Family and Community**

Of the many definitions and historical variations of what constitutes a family, I shall mean by ‘family’ a group of people related by blood, adoption, marriage or a desire for mutual support (Meeks et al., 2005, p. 203; cf. Kirby et al., 1997, pp. 234-250). Different scholars, depending on their conception of the family, have proposed various social functions or roles of the family—from reproduction, sexual satisfaction, rearing of children (Muncie, Wetherell, Dallos, & Chochrane, 1995, pp. 11-12), the provision of economic, social and emotional needs for its members (O’Connell, 1994, p. 1), to the reproduction of the capitalist system (Engels, 1884; Beechey, 1977; Zaretsky, 1977). Whatever conception of family is at stake, modernity has greatly modified the social experience of family members due to many interlocking factors, including the rise of bureaucracy, the pull of urbanisation, the need to take up long-term residence elsewhere for employment and economic individualism. The effects include a pronounced weakening of the bonds between members of extended families. Even within the nuclear family, a sharp distinction has come to exist between the home and the workplace—the home having become, for most working parent(s), a place for taking a meal or so a day and for sleeping and less a place for close and continuous warm relations of affection and emotional support. Although these changes are not easy to quantify, there is, as a matter of fact, much less interaction and interdependence among members of the
extended family than was the case in antiquity, when most families lived together in the same house or neighbourhood.

Modernity has also significantly affected community spirit, if we take ‘community’ to mean an aggregate of human beings characterised by relatively informal relationships between individuals who know each other moderately well and who have certain shared interests, concerns and responsibilities; or, the social interactions and interrelationships beyond the immediate family, as seen, for example, in the typical village situation (cf. Gyekye, 1997, pp. 41-43; Anderson, 1971, Fletcher, 1966). In modernity, bonds between people are based on economic, political, or professional ties more than on kinship; and there are strong tendencies towards individualism, secularism and nuclearisation of the family.\(^\text{18}\) In such societies it is common for the expression ‘good neighbours’ to mean those who mind their own business rather than those with whom, as in antiquity, one has an easy-going, informal, reciprocally supportive relationship. The educated elite in Africa, as well as African governments, tend to construct residential facilities that look inward to the occupants rather than outward towards neighbours—an increasing individuation of essentially social beings.\(^\text{19}\)

Arguably, the nuclearisation of the family facilitates both geographical and social mobility—a useful adaptation to the demands of industrialized economy and society. On the other hand, this general shrinking of the extended family and the disintegration of the community spirit are resulting in less effective kin-related, social-psychological and moral support networks; in less interest in or responsibility for local affairs; in fewer opportunities for co-operative small-group interaction; and in fewer activities that give rise to a sense of personal involvement, belonging and love. The new social reality of ‘each for himself/herself’ may contribute to a sense of isolation or alienation that may have long-term side effect on our social humanity.

**Bureaucracy**

By ‘bureaucracy’ I shall mean the formal organisation of masses of workers in an effort to control, coordinate and monitor their working activities in order to achieve the specific goals of an organisation or institution. Complex hierarchical bureaucracies did exist in many imperial systems in antiquity: in China, Rome, Byzantium, Mali,

\(^{18}\) This general conclusion is not falsified by one or two counter-examples. O’Connell, 1994, p. 10 saw that urbanisation has not led inevitably to a disintegration of the extended family system. In Kenya households are generally larger in urban than in rural areas because of the following: the rising age of first marriage means young adults remain in their parental home for longer periods; economic difficulties hamper couples establishing separate residential units; and individuals who migrate to the cities usually live with other family members.

\(^{19}\) For a discussion on African communitarianism, see Gyekye, 1997, pp. 35-75.
Songhai and Ashanti, to name a few. Unprecedented, however, is the present globalised, techno-bureaucratisation of organisational or institutional work—in schools, churches, private businesses, public agencies, governments, et cetera. Weber notes that bureaucracy replaces decision-making procedures based on habit, custom and tradition with processes of scientific organisation and decision-making. Bureaucracy imparts qualities of order, stability and predictability to and promotes efficiency, procedural and rule-based precision and explicitness in, organisational management and governance structures (cf. Blau, 1963, pp. 1-2; Kirby, 1997, pp. 353-363).

Today, the lives of several million people are bureaucratised, with significant impacts on their personal and family life. Weber feared that the growth of bureaucracy would become a threat to individual freedom: ‘the more bureaucracy is dehumanised, the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred and all purely personal, irrational and emotional elements which escape calculation’ (Weber, 1946, pp. 214, 215-216). Weber overstates the air of impersonality that bureaucratic formalism generates. Our common experience is that informal interactions are always present, to various degrees, in bureaucracies. On the other hand, it is true that bureaucracy tends to produce life-conditions that deviate significantly from the work ethic to which our genetic constitution has adapted us: the rigid hierarchy and status differentiation; the routine monotony of job because of specialisation; the absence of opportunity for initiative and creative behaviour, especially for those below executive positions; the rigid formalisation of human relations; and the sedentary fixation—eight or more hours a day spent in or around an office for twenty or thirty odd years in one’s working life. These experiences, among others, constrain the tendency of all humans to seek personal involvement, self-esteem, a sense of belonging, excitement, variety in daily experience and regular physical activity alternating with regular periods of relaxation and leisure.

Evidence from biomedical science suggests that the sedentary requirement of the modern bureaucratised life, combined with low levels of physical activity, leads to premature death or the development of cardiovascular diseases, type-2 diabetes, high blood pressure, colon cancer, obesity, depression and anxiety. The same evidence shows that regular physical activity reduces or prevents the risks of developing these conditions and promotes social-psychological well-being—as regular physical activity induces the

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20 It is unlikely that these pre-industrial bureaucracies met all of Weber’s criteria of a standard case: (1) the distribution of regular activities as fixed official duties; (2) the division of labour by specialised competences; (3) the systematic discipline and control of the official; (4) the government of all operations by a consistent system of abstract rules and the application of such rules to particular cases; (5) the hierarchical organisation of offices; (6) the subjection of an official’s official duties to authority; (7) the appointment (not election) of candidates for bureaucratic positions on the basis of technical qualifications; and (8) the bureaucratic position as a career that can be advanced by promotion. See Weber, 1968: 330-4.
norepinephrine and beta-endorphin hormones that promote feelings of wellness (Meeks et al., 2005, pp. 340-343).

**Sleep, Rest and Leisure**

Sleep, a state of deep relaxation in which there is little movement or consciousness, helps to restore physical, emotional and mental energy. Rest, a period of relaxation, whether asleep or awake, counteracts physical and mental fatigue and helps us to cope with stress. Inadequate sleep and rest make one prone to accident or mistakes.

In hunter-gatherer societies, adults usually slept or rested as a spontaneous response to the physiological urge to do so and this is consistent with the biological sleep-clock of our species (cf. Boyden, 1987, p. 70). In ancient Greece, the daily life of the adult male, especially the educated and wealth elite, involved spending some time in the afternoon in the gymnasium, available in many towns, training, exercising or relaxing (Hibler, 1988). As a culture, modernity has tended to disturb our natural patterns of sleep and rest. It is true that modern science and technology have in many respects advanced our conception and practice of leisure and rest, which now include ways in which individuals and groups express and construct lifestyles through leisure tastes and activities (cf. Kirby et al. 1997, p. 465). For example, listening to live band music or watching a satellite transmission of a major soccer match in a restaurant while eating or drinking is now a way to rest or relax. However, the exhausting daily demands of work for the full-time employee and the general life-conditions in industrialised societies leave little, if any, time for adequately relieving oneself of stress and tension (Hordern, 1976). Besides, although we are told that about eight hours of sleep for adults is good for our health, the conditions of modern life systematically make a certain degree of insomnia the norm. And chronic insomnia is known to affect the immune system. It has also been observed that participation in leisure is still, as in much of antiquity, structured by social class and gender. Now a few professionals, among them fewer women than men, are able to engage in indoor sports on a much larger scale than the mass of working class people. The reasons for the differential include the following. Access to income is required, since, generally, charges are levied even when leisure centres are publicly owned and one may either need a car or pay for transport to get to the centre. Career women who are also mothers tend to have fewer leisure hours because they take up major responsibilities in the running and management of the home; and they may not be encouraged by their male partners to spend their leisure time outside the home on their own (Kirby et al., 1997, p. 363). Without appropriate intervention, liberal democracy and industrial capitalism have a long way to go in delivering significant empowerment of women and their liberation from the age-long burdens of responsibility that limit opportunities for rest and leisure. For all its rigid organisation of society, ancient Sparta promoted, as a matter of policy, leisure, recreation and exercise on equal terms for both men and women.
The Environment

Antiquity seems to have been aware that the abuse and pollution of the physical environment was suicidal for mankind; hence the ancestral investment of groves, forests, meadows, water bodies and other vital sections of the ecology with sacredness and sanctity. The suicidal consequence of environmental degradation is captured in the ancient Greek allegory of Erysichthon, the mythical Thessalian king who chopped down the sacred grove of the goddess Demeter in order to build himself a feast-hall. For degrading the environment, Demeter inflicted him with insatiable hunger, driving him to exhaust his riches and, finally, in poverty, to devour his own flesh. The moral of the myth is that our practical inability to distinguish between need and want is a significant factor in the process of our biological and environmental degradation.

Environmental pollution is a serious, well-known side effect of modernity (Passmore 1980; Sauer, 1956, pp. 49-69). Pollution is any change in the air, water, soil, noise level or temperature that has a negative effect on life and health (Meeks et al., 2005, p. 465). For example, the relentless extraction of natural resources results in the increasing loss of the regenerative capacity of the earth, the pollution or destruction of water sources and the reduction or destruction of the main sources of sustenance for millions of rural communities. This is especially acute in the western part of Ghana, which, for many decades, has been the hub of commercial logging and open-cast mining (cf. Ziem, 2013).

The endless exploitation of varied natural resources, together with the provision of an ever-widening network of supporting services to meet the growing needs and wants of industrial societies, has required the extensive use of machines powered by fossil fuels. The daily combustion of fossil fuels, including emissions from running motor vehicles, is widely known to be a significant source of global energy use and environmental pollution, especially in the Third World. Fossil fuels (e.g., coal, oil, gasoline, natural gas) are formed from plant or animal remains as a result of pressure over several hundred years. When such remains are burnt they produce, among other things, carbon monoxides, sulphur oxide, airborne lead, nitrogen oxides, and particulates. Let us look at these pollutants in some detail.

It is common knowledge that prolonged exposure to sulphur oxides damages the cilia and results in increased likelihood of respiratory diseases such as asthma,
emphysema, bronchitis and lung cancer. For decades, studies have shown that mean concentrations of sulphur oxides in excess of 500 micrograms per cubic metre are associated with high mortality rates (cf. Coffin & Knelson, 1976); that levels of about 15 micrograms per cubic metre of carbon monoxide are common in industrialised cities; that exposure to levels of 9 to 16 milligrams per cubic metre increases mortality from coronary disease; and that the probability of motor accidents may be higher with greater carbon monoxide exposure, symptoms of which include headaches, dizziness, lassitude, flickering before the eyes, ringing in the ears, nausea, vomiting, difficulty in breathing and apathy (Boyden, 1987, p. 251).

The combination of sulphur oxides and nitrogen oxides with water vapour in the air results in acid rain—rain water or other form of precipitation that has a high acid content. Acid rain destroys plant crops, changes the composition of water in lakes or rivers, causes fish to die and even damages buildings. Further, in the presence of sunlight, water vapour in the air combines with motor vehicle emissions or the smoke and particles from factories to form smog, a threat especially to the elderly and to people who have various respiratory conditions. Sulphur dioxide was the chief component in the notorious London smog that killed 12,000 individuals and made 100,000 sick (Bell et al., 2004). Smog is also harmful to gases such as the ozone—a form of oxygen and a protective layer of the upper atmosphere of the earth that traps the harmful ultra violet (UV) radiation from the sun and prevents it from reaching the earth’s surface. We know that too much of UV radiation is harmful to living tissue and is associated with cataracts and other conditions that harm farms and forests (Meeks et al., 2005, pp. 463-467).

Either from the emissions of motor vehicles or from pipes that supply water, lead is especially concentrated in urban areas. An acceptable average is around 2 to 4 micrograms per cubic metre. The lead content of air in modern city streets is commonly up to 10 micrograms per cubic metre but sometimes reaches 25 micrograms (Boyden, 1987, p. 252). City dwellers therefore regularly inhale lead. In most industrialised societies, concentrations of lead in the blood of 10 to 15 micrograms are common. Even higher levels are found in people who are frequently exposed to the exhaust fume of motor vehicles. The symptoms and signs of lead poisoning are numerous. Epidemiological studies show that adults who are exposed to a dangerous amount of lead can experience anaemia, nervous system dysfunction, weakness, hypertension, kidney problems, decreased fertility and increased levels of miscarriages, low birth weight and premature deliveries (Voorhis, 2010). Children exposed to high levels of lead show similar

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28 Strictly, lead in the blood is measured in micrograms of lead per decilitre of blood (mg/dL).
29 Studies on how diseases spread and are to be controlled.
symptoms, especially mental dysfunction (Shurke, 2010) because the central nervous system is the body system most sensitive to lead (Meeks et al., 2005, p. 471).30

Health hazards caused by high noise levels using modern technology constitute another side effect of industrialisation. A decibel [dB] is a unit used to measure the loudness of sounds. A noise level of 40 dB is the acceptable maximum when people are talking. But sounds that measure more than 70 dB harm the environment, animal and human life. Local increase in noise levels in factories, on busy streets and near airports deviates significantly from the noise levels in the natural or evolutionary environment to which humans are suited. Indeed a few individuals find extreme levels of noise in discotheques, up to 120 dB, enjoyable. But the enjoyable is not necessarily compatible with the healthy: noise levels of 90 dB will cause a temporary reduction in the acuity of hearing and frequent exposure to such levels over long periods of time produces permanent impairment (Boyden, 1987, p. 253; Meeks et al., 2005, p. 473).31 In a busy city street today, the noise level may be up to 100 dB. High noise levels can also affect general health and well-being indirectly, by interrupting other sensory inputs, thereby interfering, for example, with enjoyable conversation or the contemplation of visually beautiful scenery.

In Ghana, as indeed in most of Africa, there are many occasions or events at which excessive levels of continuous noise are generated with instruments of modern technology. These include funerals, festivals, parties, sports, church service, hallweek celebrations in residential universities. Loud and continuous honking is a favourite pastime of drivers across the country. Again in Ghana and, presumably, in many Third World countries, there is little, if any, evidence that relevant state regulatory bodies regularly monitor or measure environmental pollution. This contrasts with what happens in the USA, where the federal Environmental Protection Agency measures air quality in all major cities on a daily basis; many newspapers and TV stations report on current air quality and sometimes advise that it is not healthy to exercise outdoors because of poor air quality; and there are many non-governmental agencies that advocate clean and

30 There is not enough space to talk about indoor air pollution, which takes a toll on our lives more subtly and much more deeply because it is trapped indoors and is, therefore, more concentrated. Indoor pollutants may be in water heaters (which can release the poisonous carbon monoxide), building materials like plywood, other wood products, insulations, cosmetics, upholstery, carpets, and other floor coverings. Meeks et al., p. 468 indicate that various household appliances contain formaldehyde, a colourless gas which, when inhaled, causes shortness of breath, coughing, dizziness, eye irritation, headaches, nausea, cancer, asthma, and more. Well-known among the harmful gases, and a leading cause of the thinning of the ozone layer, are the group called chlorofluorocarbons (or CFCs). Because these are easy to compress and expand, they are used as propellants in aerosol sprays, and as coolants in air conditioners, insulations, and refrigerators. Because enclosures trap and concentrate pollutants, the glass houses springing up all over Accra and other tropical cities, with limited ventilation and built more for their aesthetic appeal than for promoting health, raise serious questions about the practical value of our education system.

31 Several home appliances, e.g., blenders and vacuum cleaners, create a lot of noise in excess of 80 dB.
healthy environment, educate the public on environmental issues and organise projects to improve the environment (Meek et al., 2005, p. 466).

**Diet**

In the sense of (a) *what* we eat and (b) *how much* we eat, diet is one of the most significant ways in which modernity has affected and continues to affect our biology. Nutritionists and pathologists agree that the Mediterranean diet—a triad of cereals, olive and vine, supported by a high intake of fruits, nuts and vegetables—is generally healthier than the diets of the affluent West (Garnsey, 1999, p. 1). Indeed, the Mediterranean diet has seen foreign intrusions of maize, potatoes, tomatoes and sugar; it has also seen some corrosion, with the traditional triad being transformed by Western food technology (Garnsey, 1999, pp. 12-13). The story is similar across cultures whose foods and eating habits have been transformed by Western food technology. In some cases, this has resulted in significant deviations from thresholds most suitable for humans. Let us start with the quantity of foods.

Hunter-gatherers ate only when they were hungry (cf. Boyden, 1979, p. 256). In contrast, we moderns tend to overeat these days, for the following reasons, among others. First, there is ready availability or affordability of food, including junk food, euphemistically called ‘fast-food.’ Second, there is the regular practice of removing the fibre, which is relatively non-digestible, from foods of grain or plant origin. Without the fibre, more food energy than is appropriate for our health can be consumed before one feels full. Third is snacking (eating between meals) out of personal or workplace-induced boredom, loneliness, anxiety, depression or other conditions. Fourth, regular meal times, dictated largely by working conditions, compel us to have three major meals a day. Indeed, the meal-time experience can be positive, if it brings the family together to the table. But the demands on our time as a result of pressures of work and other obligations permit only rare occurrences of such experiences. The fifth reason why we tend to overeat is palatability. In the natural environment of antiquity, there was little conscious distinction between palatability and nutritiousness: in their habitat, animals and early peoples find palatable those food stuffs of survival value to them—foods to which their tastes, digestive systems and metabolism are suited through evolution. Pawpaw, sugar cane, mango, guava, banana, et cetera, satisfied the natural desire for sweetness, while meat served the natural desire for salt.

In modernity there is some disconnect between palatability and nutritiousness: modern food science and technology create irresistible sights, tastes and smells that tend to break down the restraints of appetite. Over-consumption leads to obesity, a body whose weight is 20% or more than is desirable; and this increases the risk of heart disease and certain types of cancer (Meeks et al., 2005, p. 315). Obesity threatens to become the leading health problem in the 21st century. The UN’s World Health Organisation in its
2003 Report describes obesity as an ‘escalating global epidemic’ in many parts of the world that is spreading into the developing world. In another research, close to 40% of Americans are obese. In the 2001 Report of the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an estimated 300,000 annual deaths in the USA occur from causes related to obesity. Most diet-related diseases result from excess fat and calories. Research shows that the average daily intake of fatty substances (of animal origin) is considerably higher in industrialised societies than in earlier phases of civilisation. Besides, the fat content of industrially reared animals is considerably higher than that of animals left to graze naturally on grassland (Boyden, 1987, p. 263). Moreover, a higher proportion of the fat in the industrially reared animals is saturated, that is, turns solid at room temperature. Its over-consumption contributes to high levels of blood cholesterol and is a source of various heart diseases and cancers. As the McDonalds, the Kentucky Fried Chickens and countless miniature local varieties of these are dotted at all points of human traffic in African cities and even villages, they exploit the limited time budgets of individuals, providing foods that often contain more calories and fat than the body needs at a time. This also comes with the risk of food poisoning. According to the 2000 Report of the CDC, an estimated 76 million cases of food-borne illness occur each year in the USA, of which there are about 325,000 hospitalisations and about 25,000 deaths (Meeks et al., 2005, p. 306). In those developing countries where there are no equivalents of CDCs or where the state agencies that regulate and report on food safety and health are ineffective and where the general culture is illiterate in food chemistry and scientific standards of health, both the production and risk of contracting various food-borne diseases are likely to be very high.

Additives constitute another problem in the diets of most people in industrial societies (Millstone, 1984). An additive is any substance deliberately added to food to preserve it or to improve its flavour, colour, texture, taste or appearance. The difference between additives and ingredients is sometimes difficult to draw. An example is table salt. But generally additives are chemical compounds, many of them synthetic. As additives, preservatives protect foods from decomposition; and a significant percentage of the world’s harvest could be lost to the activities of microbial, fungal and animal pests without preservatives; but that cannot be said for most other additives. Take the apparently harmless table salt. Thanks to modern science and technology, salt is cheap and available in unlimited quantities. Meek et al. (2005, p. 286) report that most people can get adequate sodium in their diet without adding extra salt to their food. Indeed, it has been calculated that one slice of a conventional loaf of bread provides sufficient salt

32 A nutrient that provides energy and helps the body to store and use vitamins.
33 A unit of energy produced by food used by the body.
34 Sodium regulates and maintains the balance of fluids in the body.
to satisfy an individual’s physiological needs for one day. Yet, we add salt to our vegetables, soups, sauces and so on; and it is contained in most canned and processed foods. The available evidence suggests that the majority of people consume 10 to 15 times more than is necessary for their metabolic requirements, a clear deviation from the evolutionary life-conditions of the human species (Boyden, 1987, p. 264). It is now established that when patients with hypertension are put on a salt-free diet, their blood pressure [the force of blood against the artery walls] drops; and that the consumption of salt at levels above those found in natural foods leads to high blood pressure. Increasing blood pressure after the age of 25 used to be considered normal in industrialised societies, until it was discovered that in certain non-industrialised societies (Papua New Guinea and some islands in the South Pacific) where people did not (at the time of research) add salt to their food, blood pressure decreases slightly as the individuals grow older after the age of about 25 (Boyden, 1987, p. 265). If excess salt can do this to us, what about the other additives?

Another issue that is important but cannot be dealt with adequately here for lack of space is the increasing chemicalisation of the soil and the farm for the sake of quantitative yield. This practice contaminates the food right from the start. Market gardening in and around the city of Accra, which uses highly polluted sewage water, belongs to this class of ‘organic contamination.’ A survey carried between 2007 and 2008 revealed that vegetables consumed in Accra had more than a dozen chemicals, all above tolerable percentages. In a report of the survey, Mr. George Ortsin, Country Programme Coordinator of the Small Grants Programme of the UNDP/Global Environment Facility (GEF), revealed at a media consultative workshop organised by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Accra that samples of vegetables on sale collected from various markets across Accra showed that most contained toxic chemicals that exceeded 2000% and that the least recorded was 500% (‘Most vegetables in Accra found contaminated—Survey,’ 2012). Slowly but progressively, nutritional science is demonstrating that there is no diet more conducive to human health and wellbeing than the diet to which our species is genetically adapted through evolution, that is, the varied diet of the typical hunter-gatherer: the fruits, fresh vegetables, nuts, roots, berries, some cooked lean meat (cf. Meeks et al., 2005, pp. 283-320).

**Conclusion**

In this paper, I have tried to highlight some of the unintended side effects of Western industrial culture which threaten our long-term ecological and biological sustainability. The suggestion here is that ‘modern’ does not necessarily and always mean...
‘better’ and that a conscious and creative adaptation of some life-conditions and lifestyles in antiquity could offer a viable alternative for promoting our biology and ecology. Alternatively, certain policy controls are required to correct or limit aspects of modern life-conditions and lifestyles that significantly deviate from those which enhance rather than threaten our biology and ecology.
References


Poetics of Resistance in Roman Antiquity: A Reading in Neronian Prosopography

Emmanuel Folorunso Taiwo  
Senior Lecturer, Department of Classics,  
University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract

Voices of dissent, whether verbal or written, have the historical antecedents of being symptomatic of governments characterized by oppressive policies and brutal force. In both ancient and contemporary climes, resistance poetry assumed different meanings in different creative contexts and academic disciplines. We have witnessed dissident activities transformed beyond linguistics, into armed struggle, against the individual or persons in power. During the Julio-Claudian dynasty, particularly, the Neronian Principate engendered poetics of resistance, due to its repressive policies. This paper attempts to examine the cadence of resistance poetry during this period relative to the prosopography of Emperor Nero (AD 54-65).

Keywords: poetics, resistance, Roman antiquity, Julio-Claudian, Emperor Nero

Writers in classical antiquity were adroit at depicting the adaptations and elusiveness necessary for survival under the pressures of living in a tyrannical regime. Yet their themes expand well beyond the parameters of political repression to address the moral contradictions and fickleness of the despot’s personality. Emperor Nero was one such tyrant whose internal compulsions combined with some external forces to buffet the fluidity of his identity. In the words of Jackson and Rosberg, “in a tyranny not only legal but also all moral constraints on the exercise of power are absent, with the consequence that power is exercised in a completely arbitrary fashion according to impulses of the ruler and his agents” (1982, p. 9). Over the years, scholars of ancient history, especially of classical Rome, have variously seen Nero’s reign as portraying the greatest brutality among the Julio-Claudian emperors. But then Gaius, the second of Augustus’ successors, was a wild tyrant, and aided by an equally wild temperament, he renounced all his promises of deferring to the senate and embarked on an experiment in oriental despotism¹.

¹ This experiment was informed by his patronage of Egyptian and other Eastern kings and princes, whose advice he sought. DIO CASS. Lix. 28.1ff.
Nero and Gaius shared tastes in the arts, chariot racing and a thirst for the brutality of gladiatorial shows. But while Gaius’ tyrannical tendency was manifested in his adaption of oriental mentality in absolutism; a strong belief in his becoming the first mortal god, Nero’s was in the pursuit of what he saw as the manifestation of the superiority of his position as princeps, along with its attendant beneficence on his subjects. This beneficence was unfortunately his tyrannical promotion of a pseudo-cultural excellence in Greek arts.

Nero had displayed to a damning extent his despotic power by promoting his poor taste in literature and theatrical shows in such a way that tended to stifle the decency of the Roman people. This drew the resentment of no less a fire-band writer/critic than Flaccus Persius (AD 34-62), an Etruscan knight from a well connected family. He lived and wrote under the emperorship of Nero and was a contemporary of M. Annaeus Lucanus/Lucan, another vicious critic of Emperor Nero. Along with others, they systematically condemned the Neronian principate and its idiosyncrasy and culture of pseudo-learning, sensual perversion, and incontinence.

Persius wrote six satires, which form a total of 650 hexameters of fourteen choliambic verses with a brief preface, during his short but sheltered life. His stoic leaning had considerable influence on his satires, which have been variously seen as obscure, difficult in style, but as critical of Emperor Nero. The satires of Persius have been aptly described by Villeneuve (1918), as a historian diatribe transformed by stoic rhetoric. In Satire 1, Persius criticizes the activities of pseudo-poets and the contemporary fashion of admiring elegant but unrealistic poetry. The leitmotif of this satire is the condemnation of Nero’s taste in poetry and his self-acclaimed status as the champion of the arts. And in this imagined dialogue with a friend, Persius judges literary taste as symptomatic of contemporary decay in the society:

\[
\text{Inde uaporata lector mihi ferueataure,}\\
\text{non hic qui in crepidas Graicorum ludere gestit}\\
\text{sordidus et lusco qui possit dicere 'lusce',}\\
\text{sese aliquem credens Italo quod honore supinus}\\
\text{fregerit heminas Arretiaedilis iniquas,}\\
\text{nec quia baconumeros et secto in puluere metas}\\
\text{scitrisisse uafer, multum gaudere paratus}\\
\text{si cynico barbam petulans non ariauellat.}\\
\text{his mane edictum, post prandial Callirhoen do. (Sat, 1.126-134)}
\]

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2 F. Villeneuve, Persius satires. The “evidence” comes from Ancient life of Persius, but sometimes ancient biographies are not always reliable.
I want a reader with his ears well steamed by that comic vinegar, not the lout who is eager to jeer at Greek-style sandals, and is willing to shout ‘Hey one-eye!’ at a man with that affliction, who thinks he’s somebody just because as Aedile at Arezzo he has smashed a few short measures with full municipal pomp, nor the witty fellow who sniggers on seeing cones and numbers traced in the sand of the abacus, and as is vastly amused if a Nones-girl cheekily pulls a philosopher’s beard. For them I suggest the law reports in the morning, and Calliroe after launch. (Rudd, 126-134)

In Satire 3, he sermonizes on the damage done to depraved souls by corruption and vice, while in satire 4, he gives candid advice to a young statesman, who could easily have swapped places with Nero, to disregard public accolades and pursue virtues by examining his own character. One wonders whose character needed re-examination, but Nero’s. In essence, Persius’ satirical irony is critical of the activities of the depraved emperor, Nero, whose warped idiosyncrasy is kindled by public accolades, as indicated in the following lines from Persius (Sat.1.69-71):

\[
ecce modo heroassensus adferevidemus \\
nugarisolitos graece, nec ponere lucum \\
artifices ne crus saturum laudare,
\]

behold; so we now see heroics produced by individuals who are accustomed to frivolous Greek verses, me who have not art enough to describe a grove, or praise the abundance of country life (trans. ours)

He begins the first satire with a vitriolic criticism of the foppery and ostentations of public recitation by authors who excite the passion of a depraved audience with their licentious verses.

\[
'turpe et miserabile.' quare? \\
Ne mihi Polydamas et Troiades Labeonem \\
praetulerint? nugae. non, si quid turbida Roma eleuet, accedas \\
examem uein probum in illa \\
castigestrutina necte quaesiueris extra (3-7)
\]
'Disgraceful! And pathetic!' but why? are you worried in case ‘Polydamas and the Trojan ladies’ prefer Labeo to me? What the hell? If woolly old Rome attaches no weight to a piece of work, don’t you step in to correct the faulty tongue on her balance. Ask no one’s view but your own (Rudd, 3-7)

Though this is done through pseudonyms, the tone may have been modulated by Cornutus, his famous philosopher/mentor, who was reported to have rewritten some of the works considered to be too vitriolic in their attack of the emperor. In addition, this may have been intended to avoid the anger of the emperor.3

Modern scholars, such as Grimes (1972, p.25) have absolved Persius of any direct political allusions to the emperor, arguing that even though there is a preponderance of the sermonizing, defining characteristic of the stoic opposition to Nero during his period, there was no political depth to the satires. Citing Dio’s account of his revered teacher, Cornutus, who was exiled in 65 BCE for speaking freely, Grimes continues: “Yet in spite of such committed company, Persius makes no political criticism or allusions in his Satires and avoids all references to specific contemporary events, institutions and celebrities” (1972, 26).

Although Grimes’ position merits some consideration, it is still possible to state that Persius’ preoccupation was philosophical as he was better disposed to attacking those vices which he saw as directly akin to a violation of virtue, or the victorious way of life. In essence, therefore, he would have preferred the sanctimonious approach which satire provided to Lucan’s frontal attack. While Persius was moved to lampoon the contemptible pretensions of literature, others were disposed to write against Nero’s tyrannical philhellenic predisposition.

Such writers as the famous historian, Tacitus in his Annals invariably saw the development as being responsible for the decline in Roman morals. He is quick to link the decline in morals, to the flourishing of drama in Rome. In his view, such shows were areas through which the worst foreign influences flowed into Rome. Tacitus has this to say:

\[
\text{Ceterum abolitos paulatim patrios mores} \\
\text{Funditus everti per accitam lasciviam,} \\
\text{ut quod usqquam corrumpi et corrumpere queat,} \\
\text{inurbevisatur, degeneret questudiis externis inventus,}
\]

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3 The dimension of poetry in satire one is quite in the Neronian style and the reference to Midas (Sat.1.119-21) has also been said to allude to Nero.
gymnasia et ostia et turpis amores execersendo.
Tac. Ann, xiv 20

Our ancestral morals, already in a state of gradual deterioration, have been quite overturned by this imported laxity. It causes everything potentially corrupting or corruptible to be on show in the capital. Foreign influence demoralizes our young men, making them pursuers of idleness, gymnastics and shameful love affairs (trans. Green P.).

The audience is not excited by the artistry of the dramatist, but rather interested in the lurid spectacles of the shows (Bieber, 1961, p. 28). Hence, Tacitus’ use of the Latin term “accitam,” while apt in conveying the sense of “imported from outside,” also expresses the idea of “self-inflicted”. Therefore, it may have been the susceptibility of the lowest elements in the society to “studia externa” – “outside influences,” that drew the anger of Tacitus and others in the upper rung of the Roman society and caused them to speak and write against Nero’s frivolities. Indeed Persius in his Sat 1.17-23 presents a graphic picture of contemporary literary stylistic depravity. He denounces the content and manner of presentation to the audience:

liquido cum plasmateguttur
mobile conlueris, patranti fractus ocello.
Tunc neque more probo uideas necuoceserena
Ingenti strepidare Titos, cum carmina lumbum
intrant et tremulos calpuntur ubi intima uersu.
tun, uetule, auriculis alienis colligisescas,
ariculis quibus et dicas cuteperditus ‘ohe’? (17-23)

Rinsing your supple throat with a clear preparatory warble, your eyes swooning in ecstasy. Then, what a sight!
The mighty sons of Rome in a dither, losing control of voice and movement as the quivering strains steal under the spine and scratch the secret passage.
You old fraud- collecting tidbits for other men’s ears-ears which will puff your skin out of shape until you cry ‘whoa there’(trans. Rudd, 1978)

Without doubt, imagery of effeminacy is conveyed by the reciter’s voice modulation and the betrayal of a lecherous but unmanly glint in his eyes as he recites the lines. The younger Pliny (AD 61 or 62-113), who may have remembered as a child the
activities of Nero, likewise spoke and wrote against the society which tended to become coarser through theatrical and circus shows. He wrote ten books of letters on different subjects in relatively straightforward prose, and poetry, a few examples of which are extant. The subjects of his writings include eulogies of writers, such as Martial, and the heroism of Arria, the wife of Thrasea Paetus. In his *Panegyricus* (54.1), Pliny is critical of the audience’s enthusiasm for Nero’s theatrical presentation.

Martial, another poet of a later period, expressed disdain for the *ludi scaenici*. This disdain by the upper class may have encouraged private theatrical performances for a select audience by some in this class. Martial, however, was abject in his flattery of Domitian. Pearse (as translator of Martial’s *Epigramata*) observes,

> Here, where the starry Colossus surveys the skies from nearer point than we, and where lofty scaffoldings now rise the midst of the street, the detested halls of a cruel king lately glistened, and one single mansion began to occupy the whole space of the city. Here, where the venerable mass of the far-seen Amphitheatre now rises, were the ponds of Nero. Here, where we gaze with admiration at the Thermae, a boon so suddenly bestowed, a proud lawn had deprived poor wretches of their homes. Where the Claudian portico now throws its wide-spreading shadows, was the last remnant of a felling court. Rome has been restored to herself, and what were formerly the delights of the master, are now, under thy rule, Caesar, those of the people (2008, pp.25-26).

However, in spite of this disgust felt by the Roman nobility for actors, accounts have it that some members of the elite were so fascinated by the privilege, that they shamelessly appeared on stage⁴, even as gladiators (Barton, 1989, p. 72).

Juvenal does not hide his indignation at this degradation of Roman mores. In Sat 8.193, he laments the appearance of some noble families on stage; “nullo cogente Nerone” (without a Nero to enforce it). Roman society in general viewed the stage and other public appearances of that nature as totally against proper etiquette. This is evident from an order by Tiberius banning senators and equestrians from associating with these *in fames* (Tac. Ann, 1.77).

However, with the accession of Nero to the throne, this tendency of the elite class received imperial blessings. Besides compelling individuals of this class, Nero also appeared on stage himself. Indeed, when Emperor Nero became an actor, appearance was mistaken for reality. This gesture single-handedly put him above the social constraint, which bound the rest of the Roman society. Seutonius remarks:

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⁴ Dio, CASS. 77.21.2, Pliny NH.29.9
Tragoedias quoque cantavit
Personatus heroum
deorumque, item
heroidum ac dearum

He also wore a mask and sang tragedies
in the character of gods and heroes
and even heroines and goddesses. (Suet. Nero, xxi.3)

Nicolet (1980) recalls that Roman theatre audiences in the last century of the republic were politicized to a remarkable extent (pp. 10-15). Thus, an actor, whether of comedy or tragedy, made political allusions through his lines directed at the contemporary political mood. Therefore, the audience would have been highly sensitive to lines capable of multiple interpretations.

Years later, during the reign of Trajan, Pliny the Younger, in a speech in praise of the optimus princeps, was to express horror at the imperator scaenicus Tacitus, whose works were critical of the tyranny of the Julio-Claudian emperors, especially Nero. Pliny the Younger also recorded a story about a young soldier, who in disgust decided to join the Pisonian conspiracy against the emperor (Ann, xv.67):

Odisse coepi, postquam
Parricida martris et uxoris,
auriga et histrio et incendarius extitisti.

I began hating you when
you killed your mother and wife
and became a charioteer,
actor and incendiary (Grant, 1975, p. 61, Trans.)

Such were the feelings of disgust expressed by these writers as shown in their works during this period, most of whom adopted a publish-and-be-damned attitude which emboldened their resolve even in the face of Nero’s no-nonsense stance against literary rivalry.

However, a writer like Petronius was more discreet since he had the advantage of maturity on his side. Seneca, though a dissenting voice, clearly had no proclivity for confrontation with the emperor. He thus concealed his works behind the screen of philosophy. Juvenal was another fire-brand critic of the Neronian regime, known for his bitter criticism against the society and certain individuals chose, however to vent his
indignation on the “long dead.” These writers suffered one form of repression or another, which shaped the literature of the period.

One author of this period, who has been identified as the most voluble critic of Nero, was Lucan/M. Annaeus Lucanus (AD 39-65), born of an eminent pedigree at Corduba in Spain. He was a cousin to Seneca the Elder, and he became Nero’s teacher. Lucan had his education, just like Persius, in Rome under the famous stoic philosopher Cornutus. He was for several years a prominent poet in Nero’s court. Nonetheless, the friendship between the emperor and Lucan turned sour and in AD 65, Lucan joined Calpurnius Piso’s conspiracy to overthrow Nero. When ordered to commit suicide, Lucan recited several lines of his poetry before death (probably Book III, 1. 700-712). An anti-imperialist writer, Lucan made it clear in the opening lines of his De Bello Civili, that freedom and true Roman spirit died with Pompey at Pharsalus. This work, the only one extant of all his literary efforts, was a celebration of Pompey as the beacon of the old republican freedom. Based on the struggle between Pompey and Caesar at the battle of Pharsalus, his epic poem laments the loss of freedom during Caesar’s reign. It should, however, be noted that even though his account is not scrupulously accurate, its attraction lies in the poetic aesthetics as a work of literature, which endeared it to the medieval and renaissance poets.

Lucan’s De Bello Civili also lends itself to a political interpretation owing to the nature of his involvement in dissident activities during Nero’s reign. Early in the opening passages (1.30-40), he laments the destructiveness of war and celebrates the accession of the emperor Nero as portending good prospects for Rome and for the restoration of republicanism.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{non tu, Pyrrhe ferox, nec tantis cladibus auctor} \\
\text{Poenuerit: nulli penitus descendere ferro} \\
\text{contigit; alta sedent ciuilis uolnera dextrae.} \\
\text{quod si non aliam uenturo fata Neroni} \\
\text{inuenereu iam magno que aeterna parantur} \\
\text{regna deis caelumque suo seruire Tonanti} \\
\text{nonnulli saeuorum potuit post bella gigantum,} \\
\text{iam nihil, o superi, querimur; scelera ipsa nefasque} \\
\text{hac mercede placent. Diros Pharsalia campos} \\
\text{Inpleat et poenis aturentur sanguine manes;} \\
\text{neither you savage Pyrrhus nor Hannibal ever caused such havoc:}
\end{align*}
\]

5 Pliny, Pan. 46.4
6 Lucan, Phars. VII.
none of the other antagonists could strike thus deep; but civil strife alone dealt the fatal Wound and left Death behind. Yet if the fates could find no other way to prepare For Nero’s coming, nor the gods with ease Gain thrones in heaven; and if the thunderer could not prevail till the giant’s war was done, then we complain no more against the gods even such atrocities and crimes are not too high a price to pay, let Pharsalia’s fields be crowded with our dead (trans. ours).

Tyranny in Lucan’s view was triumphant at Pharsalia. Why then did Rome ever know freedom, if she was to lose it? Surely, the gods’ apathy had led through civil warfare to the creation of new deities and a new religion in emperor worship. These sentiments of Lucan in the seventh book provide evidence of the change in AD 65. Additional episodes are contained in the three books, which he probably wrote between the years AD 62 and AD 63.

This change of attitude mentioned above is given further credence in a tradition by Vacca’s life, written about four centuries later. The account has it that Nero did reserve the Latin verse prize at the Neronia for himself. Having become jealous and indignant when the audience applauded Lucan’s Orpheus and Eurydice somewhat too enthusiastically, he forbade him from giving poetry recitals even in private. This animosity, which also led to the banning of Lucan’s poetry and the termination of his senatorial career, has been emphasized in Tacitus’ account in the Annals and adduced as Lucan’s personal reason for joining the Pisonian conspiracy (Ann. XV 49. 3).

In addition, the view that Lucan’s Bellum Civile was politically motivated receives enough backing from the tradition on Lucan’s involvement in the Pisonian conspiracy, as well as from all the historical sources in support of the rupture in relationship. Besides, the Bellum Civile betrays the indignation of a republican activist with his furious fervour for the old republic. In addition, there is ascription by Johnson (1987) of a dual image to Pompey as a symbol of failed hopes and chances nearly grasped but subsequently lost (p. 145).

Indeed another position, which sounds equally convincing, is that of Rudich (1997) that the change is reflected in Lucan’s assuming a pro-Pompeian stand. The ban on publishing and reciting, he points out, drove him underground allowing him to jettison the mask of pretence (p. 85). Yet the dissenting voice of Kleijwegt [1998] points to the dubious integrity of the historical source material, contending that there are no ancient parallels for the combination of political poetry and action along the lines of the ideological message of the Bellum Civile. Therefore, it would be risky combining both
elements. But from the arguments above, an outright political reading would not be quite apt, since it is the view of Tacitus elsewhere\(^7\) that restoring the old republic was not the objective of the conspiracy. In other words, assessments of Lucan’s writing under the Neronian regime should be accepted with cautious assertion. The above notwithstanding, extant accounts of the reign of Nero indicate that literature critical of the tyranny of the emperor was sustained by a small circle of the elite who were social and political stakeholders in the empire. They may not have wanted a restoration of the old republic, but they were adversely affected socially and politically by Nero’s style of governance.

Gaius Petronius Arbiter, the generally acclaimed author of the *Satyricon*, was also a member of Nero’s circle. He was a prominent figure in the Neronian government (this may have precipitated his disaffection towards Nero). According to Tacitus\(^8\), Petronius “idled into fame.” Unlike most of his contemporaries who trod the way to ruin, he was never regarded as a debauchee or wastrel, but as an accomplished artist *luxuruditus*. And for this same reason, he incurred the jealous anger of Tigellinus and was implicated in the Pisonian conspiracy. Petronius Arbiter is reported to have lived under the reign of Claudius (AD 41-54) and died under Nero (AD 54-65). His work did not differentiate between sexual immorality and sumptuary excesses. Rather *licentia* and *luxuria*, constituted themes for his attacks on particular individuals. It is said that he shocked Nero, when, on his deathbed, he sent him a “chronique scandaleuse,” a comprehensive list of the emperor’s sexual diversions with the names of members of both sexes. The *Satyricon* shows Petronius as a critical observer of Neronian society. This enabled him to develop a picaresque tradition, which was also critical of the *incontinentia* of Nero. His themes invoke amusing parallels from Greek literature and issues of interest around him. These issues have by the consensus of modern writers, such as Edwards (1996), Green (1967); Rudich (1987) among others, been seen as satirical of Nero.

Written between the years AD 63 and AD 66 the work covered the active years of Nero’s frivolities. Boissier (2012) believes that the work was composed for court entertainment and, therefore, would be better suited for recitation. However, because of the allusions contained therein, the recitation may have been restricted to his circle of trusted friends. These may have been the same friends, as those with whom he indulged in “light poetry and sportive lines”\(^9\) on his deathbed. From our reading of the *Satyricon*, we cannot but shudder at the realism of the “chronique scandaleuse,” which Petronius may have hurled at the despot.

A particularly revealing parallel is the *Cena Trimalchionis* (Trimalchio’s dinner party), an extended episode in the *Satyricon* which poking fun at an extravagant dinner-

\(^7\) TAC. Ann. XVI, p. 18.
\(^8\) TAC. Ann. XVI, p. 19.
\(^9\) TAC. Ann. XVI, p. 19.
party host. This episode is replete with characters alluding not only to the activities of Nero, but also providing a vivid picture in classical literature of the social life of this period. Here the major character, Trimalchio, is portrayed as a garrulous bore, a haughty master, and a pseudo-intellectual.

These traits incidentally closely portray the idiosyncrasies of the depraved Nero, who could hardly have failed to notice them. This is not to say that there were no other morally disreputable individuals in Neronian society. There were also the *nouveaux riches* freedmen, and other collaborators of the emperor whose activities the character of Trimalchio appears to represent vividly. Apart from the character of Trimalchio and others of the same caliber in the *Satyricon*, Petronius also used low characters as personae for his moralizing speeches. One such character is made to quote a part of a poem, which includes numerous topics on moralizing rhetoric. In addition, Petronius uses a debauched, bogus philosopher Eumolpus in *Satyricon* (88), to attack moral decadence in Roman society. The recourse to this technique by Petronius illustrates Perry’s (1967) assertion that the satirist’s use of this literary style is basically a function of the circumstances under which he wrote (p. 31). Since he was close to Nero, he had to disguise his intent by assuming a smokescreen. To this end, he drew parallels from low and base life styles in Rome. Edwards (1966) corroborates this style of writing when he notes that the Romans viewed luxury and lust as cognate vices so that those prone to sexual temptations would likewise succumb to excessive appetite for food, drink, and material possessions. Such reasoning may have prompted Petronius’ indirect attacks on Nero’s *incontintentia* through his portrayal of Trimalchio. Petronius was, after all, a writer of achievement and standing in the Neronian period. A close study of his works brings to our attention the various verse passages, which appear critical of contemporary versifiers: his didactic lines through Agamemnon on “The Training of an Orator”, Eumolpus’ lambics on “The sack of Troy.” Both compositions reveal the futility of attempting to equal the Virgilian feat. But then his use of the personae further illustrates Perry’s points.

The circumstance of Seneca’s literary production is one that has provoked different feelings among modern commentators. In the words of Duff (1936), few philosophers are more vulnerable than the stoic who amassed wealth and the moralist who drafted exculpatory orations to be delivered by a “tyrant.” And so, modern commentators have invariably frowned upon his bitter invective against a deceased ruler in the *Apocolocyntosis*. However, we must bear in mind that Seneca’s lampoons of Nero were based on his experiences while in the emperor’s service. Nonetheless, Seneca must not be judged only by his ambivalence, for we must also realize that he was no exception to the corrupt tendencies of individuals in the imperial court, according to Pliny.

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10 TAC. Ann. XVI, p.19.
11 Pliny (EP. V.111) p. 79, 2.
Conclusion

Emperor Nero, who was born into the Roman imperial household of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, was notorious for his tyrannical tendencies. The prosopography of the Julio-Claudians thrived on its notoriety. Emperor Nero naturally, exhibited these traits when he became Princeps. However, there were also some extraneous factors that encouraged despotism in him. These factors include his mother, his mentor and teacher - Seneca, and his other advisers. Indeed, his reign was so repressive that it drove all voices of dissent underground. Little wonder then that the temperament of literature during this period was invariably determined by the condition under which writers found themselves. In other words, the kind of literature that flourished during the reign of Emperor Nero was conditioned by the tyrannical atmosphere, which prevailed then.
References


Language Choice in Multilingual Communities: The Case of Larteh, Ghana

Mercy Akrofi Ansah
Research Fellow, Institute of African Studies,
University of Ghana, Legon

Abstract
In a multilingual community, the multilingual speaker needs to make the right language choice which principally depends on the domain of usage and the linguistic repertoire of speech participants. This paper investigates factors that govern language choices that multilingual speakers make in Larteh, a multilingual community. The study is informed by insights from the Markedness Model, developed by Myers-Scotton (1993, 1998). Larteh is a non-reciprocal bilingual community, where the people speak Larteh and Akuapem Twi (Johnson, 1973, p. i). English is the third language for those who have had formal education. In this paper, three domains of language use are examined: education, tradition, and religion. Data from an interview survey on language use and participant observations are employed. The paper notes that due to changes in various spheres of life in Larteh, current language use patterns in the community differ from what pertained about three decades ago (Johnson, 1973, 1975). Subsequently, factors that determine language choice are gradually undergoing some modification.

Keywords: language choice, multilingualism, education, tradition, Christianity

This paper explores factors that inform language choices that are made by multilingual speakers in Larteh. People who speak more than two languages are often confronted with making the right language choice within a particular domain. Language choice is informed by the kind of participants in a communication situation, the topic, social distance, and also location. Studies on language use in multilingual communities in Africa abound (see Yakubu et al 2012; Kamwangamalu, 2000; Ncoko et al 2000;

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2 In this paper, Larteh is the spelling adopted for the language of the people of Larteh. Elsewhere in the literature, the language is also known as Larteh or Letɛɛ.
Bodomo et al 2009 among others). Brokensha (1966) and Johnson (1973, 1975) constitute significant research on language use in Larteh. Whereas Brokensha (1966), an ethnographic study, briefly discussed the subject of language use in Larteh in his introductory chapter, those by Johnson are thorough studies of the subject matter. In his introductory chapter, Brokensha presented an overview of the linguistic situation of Larteh, and also the functional distribution of the three major languages: Leteh, Twi, and English. Leteh was described as a domestic language, which was learnt by children as their first language. English was learnt at school and school lessons were taught in Twi. To some extent, Twi was considered to be a prestigious language, and associated with education and Christianity. In church, English was used out of necessity, especially when there were non-Africans in the congregation. Brokensha further commented that the language used in church was Twi even when the congregation was made up of only Leteh speakers. In this regard, he cited the example of the Pentecostal Church at Larteh where all the worshipers were Leteh speakers and yet, Twi was used. Besides the use of English in school, it was spoken by educated adults in conversation. School children who wished to practise their oral skills or impress non-literate also used English outside the classroom setting. The present study will verify if the functional distribution of the three languages as described by Brokensha still persists in Larteh.

Johnson (1973) was an in-depth study of the patterns of language use in Larteh, as an example of a bilingual community. The work described all aspects of language use in the Larteh community, and his findings corroborated those by Brokensha (1966). Johnson further stressed the domestic function of Leteh by commenting that although school children spoke Twi and English for practice at home, it was often considered rude and disloyal, especially when spoken in the presence of adults. The author commented that the home was essentially a monolingual environment at Larteh. With regard to language choice at church, the author further noted that Twi was the language of the Bible, hymnals, and prayer books. English was used only when visitors were present, as was the case when the author and his wife visited the Larteh Presbyterian Church as part of his field trip.

With regard to education, the Basel Missionaries supported the use of Twi, and made it the foundation of their educational system. Twi was the medium of instruction, and Larteh children only learnt it at school. Some attempts were therefore made by the Gold Coast educational authorities to post teachers who could speak Leteh or Kyerepong (Guan language) to Larteh to teach the lower primary classes. In school, the use of Leteh was permitted, but not encouraged. Codeswitching between Leteh-Twi was also not encouraged as it was believed to have the potential of impeding the learning progress of school children.

During traditional ceremonies, Leteh was the primary choice. However, in some instances of libation pouring, orations, and speeches, some Twi phrases were heard. In
these instances, English was not used except among the audience. Finally, Johnson (1975) discussed the triglossic relationship among Leteh, Twi, and English. He described the language situation as one characterized by a division of communicative functions among the three languages, a situation which is the result of a gradual change over a long period. The author asserted that the functional distribution of languages in Larteh was not random, and proposed a set of rules which could be used to predict language choice in a multilingual community such as Larteh. These were repertoire rules, situational rules, and metaphorical rules.

Changes in the various spheres of life in a community are very likely to affect language use. Broad areas which are susceptible to change include education, technology and social interaction. Undoubtedly, conditions which prevailed during the period of previous research (Brokensha (1966); Johnson (1973, 1975)) have changed; hence transformations in the patterns of language use in Larteh are to be expected. It is in light of these changes that this study is undertaken. This paper will therefore investigate factors that impact language selection in Larteh with respect to these changes. The paper is organized as follows: after the introductory section, sources of data and collection methods are discussed in section two. Myers-Scotton’s Markedness Model (1993, 1998) and its application to the study are dealt with in section three. In section four, a sociolinguistic background of Larteh is given. In the three sections that follow, patterns of language choice in the three domains of language usage are discussed. The discussion is summarized, and conclusions are drawn in section eight.

Data and Methods

An interdisciplinary method of data collection was used for the study; linguistic and anthropological. A linguistic survey of Larteh (LISL) was conducted to collect information on individual and societal linguistic repertoires. The survey was conducted from September 5 - September 9, 2011 with 12 Research Assistants: 6 locals, paired with 6 National Service personnel from the University of Ghana. One Research Assistant helped with data analyses.

Results of the survey also gave indication of patterns of language use in Larteh. In all, 418 interviews were conducted to specifically determine language types that are used in the community. This number represented about 5% of the total population of Larteh - 8,310 (Ghana Housing and Population Census, 2000). The interviewees who were randomly selected were aged 10 years and above. Furthermore, Primary 1 classroom teaching sessions in three public schools in Larteh were observed. The schools were the Anglican Primary School on September 12, 2011; the Presbyterian Primary School on September 14, 2011; and the Methodist Primary School on September 15, 2011. Funeral activities and church services were also observed. Two funeral sessions were observed on October 29, 2011 and November 26, 2011. With regard to language choice in the
church, notes taken at the Presbyterian Church and Lighthouse Chapel on January 22, 2012 and February 5, 2012 respectively are used for illustration. These exercises enabled the researcher to investigate the choices that teachers, family spokesman, and church leaders make in multilingual contexts such as the classroom, funeral gatherings, and church services.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study is done within the framework of Myers-Scotton’s Markedness Model (1993, 1998). Markedness, according to Myers-Scotton (1998, p. 4), relates to the choice of one linguistic variety over other possible varieties. Myers-Scotton (1993, p. 84) further posits that each language in a multilingual community is associated with particular social roles, which she calls rights-and-obligations (RO) sets. The speaker-hearer signals her understanding of the current situation by deciding to speak a particular language. The choice of a particular language is also an indication of her relevant role within the context.

The Markedness Model is stated in the form of a principle, the negotiation principle, and three maxims. The negotiation principle presents the theory’s central idea. Hence Myers-Scotton’s assertion: “Choose the form of your conversational contribution such that it indexes the set of rights and obligations which you wish to be in force between the speaker and addressee for the current exchange” (1993, p. 113).

Three maxims emerge from this principle: the unmarked choice maxim; the marked choice maxim; and the exploratory choice maxim. The unmarked choice maxim states, “Make your code choice the unmarked index of the unmarked RO set in talk exchanges when you wish to establish or affirm that RO set” (Myers-Scotton, 1993, p. 114). The marked choice maxim directs, “Make a marked code choice...when you wish to establish a new RO set as unmarked for the current exchange” (Myers-Scotton, 1993, p. 131). Finally, the exploratory choice maxim states, “When an unmarked choice is not clear, use CS (codeswitching) to make alternate exploratory choices as candidates for an unmarked choice and thereby as an index of an RO set which you favor” (Myers-Scotton, 1993, p. 142). In this sense, social meanings of language choice, as well as the causes of alternation, are defined completely in terms of participant rights and obligations.

The Markedness Model uses the marked versus unmarked distinction to explain the social and psychological motivations for making one language choice over another. What community norms would predict is unmarked; what the community norms would not predict is marked (Myers-Scotton, 1998, p.5). As Kieswetter (1995, p. 15) explains, the unmarked choice is considered as the expected choice within that particular context, whereas making a marked choice often carries extra social meaning. The Markedness Model (1993, 1998) is appropriate for the present study as it relates to the choice of one linguistic variety over other possible varieties in a speech context. In this paper, marked and unmarked choices that speech participants make in the educational, traditional, and
religious domains in Larteh will be matched against the rights-and-obligations (RO) sets. In the present study, the rights-and-obligations sets may be likened to the known functions of the three major languages which co-exist in a triglossic relationship in Larteh. In this sense, the choice of a particular language is viewed with reference to the extent its use matches community expectations for the domain or type of activity.

**Sociolinguistic Background of the Larteh Community**

Larteh is a town in the south-east of Ghana, located on the Akono Hills, the range of hills which cross Akuapem from south-east to the north-west. It is bordered in the north by the Mamfe-Akropong road; in the south by the Shai Hills, in the east by the towns of Abonse and Aseseeo, and in the west by the Apopoano Hill near Dodowa. The closest neighbours are Mamfe and Akropong where Akuapem Twi is spoken, and Dodowa and Ayikuma, where Dangme is spoken. The Population and Housing Census of Ghana (2000) put the population of Larteh at 8,310. This clearly does not represent the exact number of speakers because of the presence of immigrants in the town. Yet another difficulty in arriving at a specific number stems from the fact that there are many Larteh speakers who reside outside Larteh.

Larteh is a neighbour of language communities like the Akan and Dangme. Her closest Guan community is Abiriw, about 10 kilometers away, where Kyerepong is spoken. Interactions among these language groups are through inter-marriages, celebrations of traditional festivals, trade, and education. Consequently, on a typical market day in the town, the multilingual skills of the traders within Larteh and those from neighbouring towns are utilized. During the celebration of traditional festivals, it is common to find people from neighboring communities in attendance to lend support. Short distances between Larteh and neighboring towns allow school children to enrol in schools outside Larteh. This has further exposed young school children to other languages besides Leteh, their first language. Additionally, the use of Twi as the language of instruction at the lower primary level makes it mandatory for school children in Larteh to pay attention to Twi. Contact with English and Twi has resulted in remarkable phenomena such as borrowing, codeswitching, and diglossia within the Larteh community.

The Basel Mission established the first school in 1858 with 12 children. Presently, the town boasts of 6 pre-schools, 7 primary schools, 7 junior high schools and 3 senior high schools. In addition are 2 privately-owned commercial schools. Many children have therefore had the opportunity to go to school, at least to the junior high level, thus enhancing their competence in Akuapem Twi which is the medium of instruction at the basic level of education and also, a school subject in Larteh and the surrounding Akuapem towns. The number of schools presently, is in sharp contrast to Johnson’s report of 1973 when there were 6 primary and 5 middle schools at Larteh. According to his report, Larteh had 1 private commercial school and 1 government-
assisted secondary school. The increase in the number of schools has therefore led to a corresponding increase in the use of English as a greater number of Larterians (my own coinage for the inhabitants of Larteh) have now been exposed to English through the school system. The Basel Mission was the first missionary body to gain roots in Larteh, establishing the Presbyterian Church in 1853. This was followed by the Wesleyans (Methodist) in 1879 and the Anglican Church in 1913. After the establishment of these churches, other churches usually referred to as Pentecostal churches also sprung up. Churches in Larteh may therefore be broadly categorized into two: Orthodox Churches and Charismatic Churches. The major orthodox churches are the Presbyterian, Methodist, Catholic, and Anglican churches. The Church of Pentecost, the Apostolic Church of Ghana, Jesus Generation Church, and Lighthouse Chapel International fall under the umbrella of Pentecostal churches in this study.

Funeral ceremonies in Larteh are communal where family members are expected to make donations in cash and in kind to finance the funeral. A typical funeral ceremony in Larteh covers three days, and regardless of the society being male-dominated, women play significant roles in funeral activities.

Previous studies have recorded that in Larteh, Leteh is the first language of almost everyone, and Akuapem Twi is spoken by almost everyone as the second language, a phenomenon which is corroborated by the present study. A study by Stewart (1972, p. 83) reports that the use of a second language in Larteh is a common mark of Guan speakers, and that “Except in the case of Gonja, it seems that most speakers of Guan languages speak a second language as a lingua franca.” The use of Akan as a second language by Leteh speakers may be explained by geographical factors, first and foremost, and secondly by the effects of national educational policies which stipulate that Akuapem Twi be used as the medium of instruction at the basic level of education in Larteh and surrounding towns. Educated Larteh people speak English in addition to Leteh and Twi since English is the language of education, administration, and trade in Ghana.

Leteh is unwritten and does not possess an official orthography. The language is mostly used in the homes, among the speakers, and also as a means of communication at traditional gatherings, such as funerals, festivals, marriages, and naming ceremonies. Brokensha (1966, p. xvi) sums up the linguistic situation in Larteh in the following words: “Three languages are in common use in Larteh—Guan, Twi and English. Guan is generally the domestic language, children learning it as their first language and using it in their early years. At school, children learn English and they also have lessons in what is called ‘Vernacular’, which is in fact Twi, for Guan is not taught at any school. Twi to some extent occupies the position of a prestige language, as does English on other occasions, being for example used in church.”

It is common knowledge that multilingualism is the norm in Africa, and in many communities in Africa, it is significant to find out what criteria multilingual speakers
employ when they need to choose between various languages. It is reported, for instance, that in Kenya, there are more than forty languages which are spoken besides English and Kiswahili, the official languages and the main lingua francas (Kamwangamalu, 2000). An urban dweller therefore needs to master the use of more than one language in order to communicate effectively in the various speech domains (Kamwangamalu, 2000). It is, however, noted that community multilingualism does not always imply individual multilingualism, but in the case of Larteh, available data indicate that monolinguals are almost non-existent (Table 2). In Table 1, languages that are reported as being used in the community are recorded. A sample size of 418 inhabitants which represented about 5% of the total population of 8,310 (Ghana Population and Housing Census, 2000) was used.

Table 1
Larteh Community Linguistic Repertoire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LANGUAGES</th>
<th>CLAIM</th>
<th>USE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leteh</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twi (Akuapem)</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ga</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangme</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hausa</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ewe</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bono</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagaare</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frafra</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyerepong</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wala</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krakye</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonja</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwa/ Anum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nzema</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoruba</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wassa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sehwi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data in Table 1 distinguish between people who claim knowledge of Leteh from those who actually use the language in their day-to-day activities. According to the data, there are about 20 languages spoken in Larteh. Of this number, three languages are dominant:
Leteh, Twi, and English. 322 of the sample claim that Leteh is their first language, but 269 of this number use Leteh whereas 53 of them prefer to use Twi and other languages. Out of the 418 respondents, 362 claim they can speak Akan whilst 354 of the number actually use Twi effectively. In the case of English, 227 claim that they are able to communicate in English whereas 102 of the number use English in some of their interactions. The scenario confirms the multilingual nature of the community.

Individual multilingualism in Larteh is also attested by data in Table 2. In order to investigate individual linguistic repertoire, the 269 respondents who indicated that Leteh was their first language were considered. In this study, this number represents Larterians, i.e., the people of Larteh; people who consider Larteh to be their hometown.

**Table 2**

*Individual Linguistic Repertoire*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LANGUAGE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF SPEAKERS</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE REPRESENTATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leteh only</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twi only</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leteh and Twi only</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>98.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leteh, Twi, English</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>93.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leteh, Twi, English &amp; other</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>42.01%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of the population sample, only one person is a Leteh monolingual. This is a 75-year-old woman who has had no formal education. Similarly for Twi, three people claim that it is the only language they speak. These people had Leteh as their first language; they previously spoke Leteh when they were children, but lost their proficiency when they migrated to live in Northern Ghana for a greater part of their lives. As many as 265 people are bilingual in Leteh-Twi. A little over 90% of the population sample is multilingual in the three major languages spoken in the community. Furthermore, 113 of the population sample spoke other languages apart from the three major languages, representing about 42% of Leteh speakers. The data therefore substantiate a community where almost everyone is multilingual.

**Language Choice in a Multilingual Classroom**

The current Educational Language Policy of Ghana supports the use of mother tongue in teaching at the lower primary level. The policy stipulates that the majority of instructional time is spent on L1 (90% in kindergarten and 80% in Grade 1) while time for English gradually increases to 50% by Grade 3. The use of English as a medium of instruction is expected to take effect from Grade 4 (National Literacy Acceleration
Programme (NALAP\(^3\) Baseline Assessment 2009). Teaching sessions in Primary 1 of three public schools were observed to explore how teachers manipulate the three major languages used in the community. It was ascertained that all the pupils were bilingual in English and Twi. Secondly, the teachers who taught in these schools were also multilingual in three or all of these languages: English, Akan, Leteh, and Anum. Table 3 illustrates the multilingual background of the pupils.

### Table 3
**Linguistic Repertoire of Pupils**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Presbyterian Primary</th>
<th>Anglican Primary</th>
<th>Methodist Primary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number on Roll</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English, Akan</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English, Akan, Leteh</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three teaching sessions were observed. The first lesson was in Environmental Science at the Anglican Primary School, and the topic was ‘Dental Care’. The topic was mentioned in English and then translated into Akan. The following is an excerpt of the teaching session.

**Figure 1**

*Language choice in an Environmental Science lesson*

**Teacher:** Everybody, let me see your teeth. What are the uses of your teeth? *Den na wode wo se ye?*

1\(^{st}\) *Pupil:* Chewing
2\(^{nd}\) pupil: *Mede we nam*
I use it for chewing meat

**Teacher:** Are our teeth useful then?

**Class (chorus):** Yes!

**Teacher:** Today, we want to learn how we can take good care of our teeth. *Yebesua senea yebetumi ahwe yen se so yiye.*

**Teacher:** What is the first thing you do in the morning?

3\(^{rd}\) *Pupil:* We wash our face, we brush our teeth.

**Teacher:** What do we use for brushing our teeth?

---

\(^3\)NALAP was formed to address the literacy crisis in Primary Education in Ghana.
4th Pupil: *Duawa*
Chewing stick

5th Pupil: Brush *ne* pepsodent
and

Teacher: How many times do we have to brush our teeth in a day?
*Mpen ahe na ese se yetwiw yen se dabiara?*

6th Pupil: Two times

Teacher: Good, well done!

The teacher introduced the topic in English, and translated it into Twi. After the lesson had been introduced in both English and Twi, the pupils answered questions using either Twi or English, whichever they were proficient in. When the questions required one-word answers, the pupils spoke English otherwise Twi was used. The teacher did English-Akan codeswitching throughout the teaching session.

The second session which was observed was a Mathematics lesson. Language choice of pupils was quite different, with English language dominating in the answers that pupils gave. The use of English dominated in the answers, because the questions did not demand complete statements. When the teacher had introduced the topic “Simple Division”, she went ahead to explain the concept in Akan using objects.

**Figure 2**
*Language choice in a Mathematics lesson*

Teacher: *Nnipa baanu kyε akutu anan a, obiara benya ahe?*
When two people share four oranges, how many will each have?

1st Pupil: Two

Teacher: *Nnipa baanu kyε kwaadu asia nso ε?*
And when two people share six fingers of bananas?

2nd Pupil: Three, three

Teacher: And when three people share nine pencils?
*Na nnipa baasa kyε pencil akron nso ε?*

3rd pupil: Three

The third lesson that the researcher observed was in Religious and Moral Education where the teacher taught the “Creation Story” from the Holy Bible. The Bible was read in English, after which the teacher narrated the account in Twi. All the questions were asked in Twi, and the responses from pupils were mostly in Twi. After the lesson, there was a memory verse taught in English. Below is an excerpt of the class session.
Figure 3
Language choice in a Religious and Moral Education lesson

Teacher: Den na Onyankopon bɔ dii kan?
“What did God create first?”

Pupil 1: Star, nsoroma

Teacher: Nna ahe na ɔde bɔɔ biribiara?
“How many days did He use in creating everything?”

Pupils 2: Nnansa
“Three days”

Teacher: Dabi
“No.”

Pupil 3: 6 days
Teacher: Good!

The teacher narrated the story in Twi after reading from the English Holy Bible, because she intimated that biblical English was sometimes difficult to understand. She could not read the Twi bible so she read passages in English and then explained them in Twi. Pupils gave some one-word answers in English, especially where it was a loan word or lexical items which were better known in English. In most of the instances, the answers were in Twi. The memory verse was taught in English, because it gave the pupils a sense of pride to recite Bible verses in English. During school Open Days and Children’s Day in the Presbyterian Church, for example, school children were made to recite English Bible verses to the admiration of unlettered parents. For the parents of these school children, the ability to recite Bible verses in English was evidence of literacy.

The three preceding teaching scenarios present language choices in the Primary 1 classroom. In each case, the teacher’s language choice may be described as unmarked. The bilingual strategy adopted by the teacher is what is expected from a Primary 1 teacher as per the Government of Ghana’s educational policy on language. The teacher’s speech was therefore characterized by codeswitching. The type of lesson also determined the teacher’s language choice. In this case, the appropriate language had to be selected in order to achieve teaching and learning objectives as seen in the Religious and Moral Education lesson. On the other hand, the pupils’ choices stemmed from their competency levels in the two prescribed languages of instruction. The institutional factor may be likened to Johnson’s situational rule (1975) which stipulates that it is a situation type that determines the choice of language. In the classroom situation therefore, the language (s) is/are prescribed, and the teacher does not have much control over the language of instruction.

Applying the Markedness Model, we can assert that the teacher’s unmarked choice of language was dictated by the Educational Language Policy of Ghana. The
choice was therefore normal and matched community expectations. For the pupils who may have had very little knowledge or none at all about language policy, their English-Twi bilingualism was exploited. The language choices that pupils made in answering questions indicated their proficiency levels in the two languages: English and Twi. Again, one would describe their language choices as unmarked since they were expected.

It must be noted that Leteh, the first language of the majority of the pupils was not used in any of the teachings sessions. If any of the speech participants had spoken Leteh, that would have been a marked choice, and would have carried “extra social meaning” (Kieswetter, 1995, p. 25). This pattern of language use in education is similar to what pertains in some multilingual communities in Africa. For instance, Ncoko et al (2000, p. 239, p. 231) reporting on the benefits of codeswitching for teacher education, recommended that in the multilingual schools in South Africa, codeswitching could be used as a teaching strategy since it had communicative functions such as translation, checking comprehension, giving instruction, and clarification. Similar to observations made in the present research, the study by Ncoko et al also established that learners utilize their linguistic ability and resources to control their conversations according to content and circumstances.

Table 4 summarizes the three scenarios of teaching sessions. In each session, the language which predominates is listed first.

Table 4
Patterns of Language Choice in Primary 1 Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Addressee</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Pupils</td>
<td>Integrated Science</td>
<td>Dental Care</td>
<td>English/Akan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mathemtics</td>
<td>Simple Division</td>
<td>English/Akan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Religious and Moral Education</td>
<td>Creation</td>
<td>Twi/English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language Choice at Funerals

Funerals at Larteh are public, and are characterized by the attendance of many mourners and sympathizers. As sympathizers may be of diverse language backgrounds, language choice is made with care so that communication goals are realized. To a large extent, language choice is dependent on the acceptable social roles of each language, the rights-and-obligations (RO) sets (Myers-Scotton, 1993, p. 84). For each sub-activity of the funeral therefore, participants expected a particular language choice. In Larteh, funeral activities normally span three days, Friday-Sunday. The dead body is laid in state
from Friday late afternoon to the morning of the Saturday. In the evening of the Friday, close relatives of the deceased gather in the family house to keep wake. The tradition is that any sympathizer who comes around to greet the family is given an update or a briefing on the cause of death, which is usually done in Leteh first, and then summarized in Twi.

On the following day, the family head performs a rite to select a successor for the dead person. The gathering is usually made up of close family members who are mostly Larterians. It is a short ceremony during which Leteh is largely spoken. The following is an extract of a funeral session for a deceased relative who had lived and worked in Kumasi, a town in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. On this occasion, Leteh (L) is spoken and then interpreted into Twi (T).

**Figure 4**  
*Language choice at a funeral (i)*  
(Sympathizers enter the funeral grounds to greet the bereaved family; the family spokesman introduces them).  

**Family Spokesman:** Agoo!  
Attention!

*Ɛse ne debiake a twu Kumase pεε. Amo gyi Papa... esumitese. Amo debeboakunafɔ a, ne ahure mo kuru. (L)*

*Adɔfonom, nnipa yi a wogu so rekyia yi fi Kumase pεε. Wɔyɛ Agya...adwumayɛfo. Wɔaba rebeboa okunafɔ no asie ne kunu. (T)*

“The people who are greeting used to be the co-workers of Mr… They have come all the way from Kumasi to help the widow bury her late husband.” (E)

During the funeral, various announcements are made. These announcements are meant to direct visitors to venues of funeral activities, and also to inform the gathering of donors. Announcements are made in all the three major languages: Leteh, Twi, and English due to the diverse language backgrounds of mourners and sympathizers. A scenario is illustrated in Figure 5.

**Figure 5**  
*Language choice at a funeral (ii)*

**Family Spokesman:** *Ɛne debena asɔretsa nte. Ɛne ntwu asiei mbe a, Ɛne bebunkyir bɛ mfe ara* (L)
We shall go to the church from here. From the cemetery, we shall come back here. (E)

In the first instance (Figure 4), the family spokesman used Leteh and Twi. He interpreted his statements into Twi for the benefit of the sympathizers who had arrived from Kumasi. This scenario differs from the one during which only Leteh was spoken, the selection/election of a successor. In Figure 5, all the three languages are used in order to reach a larger audience. The family spokesman assumes the role of host and ensures that his “guests” do not lose their way whilst they are in town. It is also important to mention the names of donors so that they are well appreciated. The spokesman therefore uses Leteh, Twi, and English. An interaction of marked and unmarked language choices was observed. Although it was expected that during a traditional ceremony, Leteh would be the unmarked choice, this was not always the case due to the diverse language backgrounds of speech participants. The use of English in the traditional domain does not match community expectations, and as a result the choice may be described as marked so far as domain type was concerned. Nevertheless, Leteh, the unmarked choice was used in performing some exclusive traditional rites. The mourners and sympathizers used various languages among themselves, according to their linguistic repertoire. In selecting a language to address the mourners and sympathizers, the speaker always considered their linguistic repertoire; he therefore used all the three major languages. The alternate use of unmarked and marked languages confirms the assertion that within the markedness model, code choices are intentional in that they are made to achieve specific social ends. In this sense, the speaker will choose one language variety over another, because it has more benefits than costs (Myers-Scotton, 1998, p. 19). The repertoire rule as proposed by Johnson (1975) dictated marked language choices to a large extent in the traditional domain.

Table 5 is a summary of patterns of language choice during the various sub-activities of a funeral in Larteh. For each of the activities, the predominant language is listed first.
Table 5

Patterns of Language Choice at Funerals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Addressee</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Activity/ Topic</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tradition</td>
<td>Family Spokesman</td>
<td>Mourners and Sympathizers</td>
<td>Funeral</td>
<td>Introduction of sympathizers</td>
<td>Leteh, Twi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reporting cause of death</td>
<td>Leteh, Twi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Electing a successor</td>
<td>Leteh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Announcements</td>
<td>Leteh, Twi, English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language Choice in the Church

For the purposes of the present study, churches at Larteh were categorized into two: Orthodox and Pentecostal churches. The classification is necessary because the mode of worship in these two types of churches differs significantly, a disparity which has the potential of influencing language choice. In the case of Orthodox churches, the Presbyterian church service and the Catholic mass were observed. Language choice as observed in the two churches did not differ significantly. During a normal Sunday morning service at the Presbyterian Church, the language of worship was predominantly Twi. Biblical references were, however, read in English. There were a few cases of Akan-English codeswitching in sermons. Leteh was not used in the course of the church service. This differed from special occasions, for example, a funeral service where the congregants had various language backgrounds. During such funeral services, the sermon was delivered in Twi and then a summary given in English.

The following field notes which were taken on January 22, 2012 illustrate language choice in a normal Sunday worship service in the Presbyterian Church. Call to worship was done in Twi by the Senior Minister. A prayer was said in Twi, and hymns were also sung in Twi. When a hymn was introduced, the reference was first mentioned in Twi, then in English. Bible readings were done in Twi, and similarly the references were said in both Twi and English. The choir and the singing band sang in Twi. The congregants used Twi hymn books. The Session Clerk (church secretary) read the announcements in Twi. The Senior Minister said the closing prayer and pronounced the
benediction in Twi. After the church service, interactions among the congregants were in both Leteh and Twi.

Language choice in the orthodox churches may be accounted for by their history. In the case of the Presbyterian Church for instance, the Basel Mission which introduced Christianity in Larteh had as its basic policy concerning missionary work, the utilization of Ghanaian languages. Missionary work started at Akropong-Akuapem; Akuapem Twi was therefore adopted as the literary standard for use in the churches where Twi is spoken. Other factors accounting for the predominant use of Twi over Leteh in the church are that many Christian ministers who are posted to Larteh to head the orthodox churches are non-Larterians. In addition, all Christian materials are printed in Twi and English, and none in Leteh. It was, however, gathered that whenever the chief of the town attended church service, and he was given an opportunity to address the congregation, he spoke Leteh.

Language choice in the orthodox churches, typified by the Presbyterian and Catholic churches, is governed by factors like domain-type and occasionally by the linguistic repertoire of speech participants. In the first place, the unmarked choice was Twi, because it is the language of the Christian religion in Larteh and the surrounding Akuapem towns in Ghana. Secondly, the varied repertoire represented during special services, such as a funeral service, required the use of English in addition to Twi. The recourse to English, an unmarked choice, is therefore said to carry additional meaning. Finally, the choice of Leteh over Twi by traditional leaders who visited the church occasionally may be described as figurative. By using Leteh, a marked choice, the chief built solidarity with his subjects. Johnson’s rules on situation, linguistic repertoire and metaphoric are applicable to language choice in the orthodox churches in Larteh.

Language choice in the Pentecostal churches was quite different. The following are field notes taken at the Lighthouse Chapel International Church branch at Larteh on February 5, 2012. The church service began with a prayer led by the Assistant Pastor. The Assistant Pastor whose first language is Ewe used English. During the prayer time, members prayed mostly in English. This was followed by a period of singing. The songs were in Twi. The song leader did English-Twi codeswitching to urge the congregants to sing and praise God. Congregants were heard praying in both English and Twi. When it was time for church members to share testimonies of God’s intervention in their lives, they used Twi with a few English phrases such as “Praise the Lord”; “My sister encouraged us; everybody encouraged us.” Although the two speakers were Larterians, they spoke Twi mainly. The sermon was characterized by Twi-English codeswitching (Figure 6). Both the Twi and English bibles were read. The Senior Pastor welcomed visitors using Twi and English. At the close of the church service, members recited a prayer (grace- a scriptural verse which has been memorized by members) to one another in English whilst they shook hands.
Figure 6

*Codeswitching in a sermon*

**Pastor:** I told you that *se wofa bible a, baabi a eyε kɔkɔɔ no, Yesu na ɔkaεε...*

“I told you that when you pick a bible, the red parts are the direct sayings of Jesus…”

*Enti* this year, we have all decided that this year we want to make it. *Okristoni, nneεma bebree wɔ hɔ a ese se yeye.*

“So this year, we have all decided that this year, we want to make it. Christian, there are many things which we ought to do.”

Unlike the Presbyterian Church, the Lighthouse Church had a membership which was younger, generally between ages 10-40. The members were mostly pupils and students, a fact which accounts for the comparatively widespread use of English. The predominant use of English also stems from its foundation; the founders of the church encouraged the use of English right from the onset.

In the Pentecostal Church, there was a combinatory use of unmarked and marked choices. From the perspective of the visitor who has no knowledge of the RO sets of the church, the expected language choice was Akuapem Twi. However, the church members who shared the RO sets of the church would consider Akuapem Twi to be a marked choice as opposed to the expectations in the Orthodox Church. Although the majority of the worshippers were Larterians, Leteh was not used. Tables 6a and 6b summarize language choices that are made in the church.

### Table 6a

*Patterns of Language Choice in the Presbyterian Church, Larteh*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Addressee</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian Religion</td>
<td>Pastor</td>
<td>Worshippers</td>
<td>Presbyterian Church</td>
<td>Call to Worship</td>
<td>Twi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Church Leader, Church members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>Twi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Congregation, Singing groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>Twi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Church members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bible Reading</td>
<td>Twi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pastor
Church Secretary
Pastor
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sermon</th>
<th>Announcements</th>
<th>Benediction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twi</td>
<td>Twi</td>
<td>Twi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6b**

*Language Choice at the Lighthouse Chapel, Larteh*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Addressee</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian Religion</td>
<td>Assistant Pastor</td>
<td>Worshippers</td>
<td>Lighthouse Chapel</td>
<td>Preparatory Prayer</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>Twi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior Pastor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sermon</td>
<td>Twi/English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Church members</td>
<td>Bible Reading</td>
<td>Twi/English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Church members</td>
<td>Testimonies</td>
<td>Twi/English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior Pastor</td>
<td>Announcements</td>
<td>Twi/English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worshippers</td>
<td>Sharing of grace</td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary and Conclusion**

The paper set out to explore factors that dictate language choices made by multilingual speakers in Larteh, a multilingual community. The study was conducted within the framework of Markedness Model (Myers-Scotton, 1993, 1998). Three domains that were investigated are education, tradition, and Christian worship. The results of this study are founded on data gathered from a linguistic survey, interviews, and participant observation.

Research done on language choice in multilingual communities has established that among many considerations that multilingual speakers make in selecting a language for communication are the domains of language use, topic/activity, and the language background of speech participants (Kamwangamalu, 2000). Within the framework of markedness, the social and psychological associations that speakers attach to languages inform choices that are made. A language choice may therefore be perceived as unmarked or marked, depending on the extent to which it matches community expectations. In this study, community expectations are aligned with the set functions of the three major languages, typical of a triglossic community. In this paper, these expectations which are
shared by members of the Leteh community represent Myers-Scotton’s rights-and-obligations sets. Johnson’s set of rules (1975) for predicting language choice were also applied to the data where relevant. This study has shown that in addition to factors of language choice documented in the literature, national language policies play significant roles in determining language spoken in some speech domains.

In the educational domain, it was found out that the teachers’ choice of both English and Twi in teaching Primary 1 is largely dictated by the Ministry of Education’s policy on language. On the part of pupils, their proficiency level in either of the two languages governed their language choice during classroom interactions. The RO set in the educational domain, therefore, accounts for language choices. Language choice in the domain of tradition, for example at funerals, was based on the linguistic repertoire of addressees. A combination of marked and unmarked choices was observed. Accordingly, it came out that all the three major languages: Leteh, Akuapem Twi, and English were employed during funeral activities.

Finally, in the religious domain, whereas Akuapem Twi was the unmarked choice in the orthodox churches, it was regarded as the marked choice in the Pentecostal Churches. In the Pentecostal Church, the history of its establishment was such that English was accepted as the unmarked language choice. Church services were also characterized by English/Akuapem Twi codeswitching. Language choice in the Orthodox churches was largely governed by the type of domain, whereas in the Pentecostal Church, it was a combination of factors.

The functional distribution of the three languages: Leteh, Twi, and English as reported by earlier researches, Brokensha (1966); Johnson (1973, 1975), has changed with regard to the use of English. In the educational domain for instance, English is combined with Twi as languages of instruction as directed by the language policy on education at the basic level. Again, the use of English at traditional ceremonies, such as funerals, is also noteworthy. This is contrary to Johnson’s report (1973, p. 122) that Leteh is the principal language at traditional ceremonies. Similarly, with the founding of Pentecostal churches, English has been introduced as a key language in the Christian religious domain. The introduction of English in some domains, as well as the comparative increase of its use may be accounted for by a corresponding growth in education in the Larteh community.

In conclusion, I make the following assertions:

i. Social change in Larteh over the past three decades has influenced factors that dictate language choice.

ii. Domains where English is used have increased to the detriment of Leteh, thus posing threats of endangerment.
iii. In the face of the multifaceted changes that have taken place in Larteh, which have also affected language use in the community, Johnson’s (1975) assertion of “stable triglossia” is contestable.

iv. In view of the above, it is recommended that conclusions that are drawn from studies on language use in multilingual communities need to be reviewed periodically in line with global and local changes.
References


Gordon S. K. Adika
Senior Research Fellow, Language Centre,
University of Ghana, Legon

Abstract

John Swales’ Create a Research Space (CARS) model comprising three rhetorical moves; namely, Move 1 (establish a research territory), Move 2 (establish a niche), and Move 3 (occupy the niche) describes the rhetorical strategies that researchers utilize in order to claim research space in their disciplines in a highly competitive research environment. This paper analyzes Moves 1 and 2 of the introductions in Research Articles (RAs) in an African journal in order to examine the space that the contributors to the journal allot to themselves through the linguistic devices used in signalling gap statements, along with the extensiveness of references to previous work as a way of situating and mainstreaming their research. To this end, the introductions of 59 RAs published in the Legon Journal of the Humanities from 2005 to 2010 were analyzed using the CARS model. The findings reveal that the authors of these RAs may perhaps not be exploiting Step 3 (reviewing items of previous research) under Move 1 in order to reinforce the research niche being claimed in Move 2.

Keywords: Genre analysis, introductions, Moves, scholarly communication, African journals

1The initial analysis of data and write-up of this paper were made possible by a Write-shop Project retreat organized by the University of Ghana under the auspices of UG-Carnegie “Next Generation of Academics in Africa Project”in 2012. I would also like to acknowledge the following academics for reading through drafts of the paper and offering valuable suggestions: Prof. KwesiYankah, former Pro-Vice Chancellor, University of Ghana (UG); Prof. Augustine H. Asaah, Department of French (UG); and Dr. Charles Asante, Language Centre (UG).
As a descriptive and analytical tool, Swales’ Create a Research Space (CARS) model (Swales 1981, 1984, 1990) has gained wide scholarly attention for the past two and half decades (See for example, Crookes 1986; Nwogu 1997; Anthony 1999; Posteguillo 1999; Bunton 2002; Samraj 2002). The CARS model, represented in the next section, proposes a move structure for research article introductions. Substantial research has been done in this area, and evidently, studies have been extended to diverse communicative events – from research article introductions to introductions in theses and dissertations, and then to abstracts. Research has also focused on cross-cultural and cross disciplinary variations. However, corpora for much of this research derive from western journals which in terms of the metaphor of space arguably dominate international scholarship. This paper attempts, therefore, to extend the discussion on the usefulness of the CARS model by applying it to some data collected from a journal published in Africa. It analyzes Moves 1 and 2 of the introductions in order to examine the research space that the contributors to this journal “rhetorically” allot to themselves through the linguistic devices used in signalling gap statements, along with the extensiveness of references to previous work as a way of situating and mainstreaming their research. Research space is defined in terms of the rhetorical configuration embodied in the CARS model; that is, the expanse or breadth of research territory negotiated, declared, or asserted through Move 2 and predicated on a depth of relevant items of previous research in Move 1.

The CARS Model

The CARS model relates the research enterprise to the struggle of a species to carve out an ecological space for itself in a competitive environment, and presents researchers as struggling for recognition and acceptance in a highly competitive research environment (Swales, 1990). In other words, scholars attempt to establish a research territory by making rhetorical moves (claiming centrality and/or making topic generalizations, along with a review of prior literature) that indicate that the topic of research is pertinent and constitutes part of a well-established research area. Thereafter, the scholar may create a research niche by specifying a gap – an inadequacy or a weakness in previous research. This then provides the basis or the motivation for a declaration of the intended research.

The CARS (Create a Research Space) model for writing academic introductions

Move 1: Establishing a territory

Step 1  Claiming centrality and/or
Step 2  Making topic generalizations and/or
Step 3  Reviewing items of previous research
Move 2: Establishing a niche

Step 1a Counter-claiming or
Step 1b Indicating a gap or
Step 1c Question-raising or
Step 1d Continuing a tradition

Move 3: Occupying the niche

Step 1a Outlining purposes or
Step 1b Announcing present research
Step 2 Announcing principal findings
Step 3 Indicating Research article structure

As Dudley-Evans (2000) puts it, the “model captures the way in which academic writers justify and highlight their own contribution to the ongoing research profile of the field by first establishing a topic for the research and summarizing the key features of the previous research, then establishing a gap or possible extension of that work that will form the basis of the writer’s claims” (p. 5). Over the years, research related to the CARS model has largely focused on cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary variations in terms of the nature and range of the rhetorical moves. The influence of the model on genre analysis in terms of the range of applications is tremendous: a move-based approach has been used in the analysis of a variety of texts such as research articles, abstracts, and dissertations/theses (Dudley-Evans, 2000). Notable recent studies include Shehzad (2008) who focuses on Move 2 and presents an in-depth analysis of various types of gap statements used in Computer Science research article introductions; Al-Ali and Sahawneh’s (2011) comparison of English and Arabic PhD dissertation abstracts in the field of linguistics in a cross-cultural study; and Kwan et al (2012) who analyze the micro area of evaluations in the literature reviews of research articles in the field of Information Systems. These studies underscore the usefulness of the generalized CARS model as a starting point for investigating the discourse structuring of genres.

Move 2, Knowledge Construction, and the Metaphor of Space

The relative importance of Move 2 derives from its role as an indicator of the relevance of the new or fresh research that the author is embarking upon. As a mini-critique, most Move 2s establish a niche by showing that the research story so far is not yet complete and highlight the motivation for the study. In terms of structure, Move 2s are quite short, often consisting of no more than a sentence. The predominant linguistic devices used for signalling Move 2 (Shehzad, 2008) are: (i) Contrastive Statements (however, while, but, although, nevertheless, as opposed to, rather than); (ii) Quantifiers and quasi-negatives (limited, few, little, none of, no [work/research/data/study]); (iii) “Negative” verbs combined with contrastive statements (disregarded, ignored, been
limited to, overlooked); and (iv) “Negative” adjectives (incomplete, inconclusive, misguided, unconvincing, unsatisfactory, flawed, and many other adjectives). Generally, the linguistic devices used in signalling Move 2s are composite in nature or character, reflecting the complexity of making that discourse act. The significant issues here are how the linguistic choices made impact on strength of claim; and how the literature review (as presented in Move 1, Step 3) in turn affects the persuasive power of the strength of claim. These issues are important in view of the nature of knowledge construction in the humanities.

It would largely be presumptuous to attempt to delineate what constitutes knowledge construction in the humanities considering the broadness of the concept and the ideological tensions connected with cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural epistemological biases. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this study which locates itself in the general area of genre analysis and, specifically, focuses on the social interactive dimension of disciplinary discourses (as expounded in Hyland, 2004), explaining the nature of knowledge creation and dissemination in the humanities, albeit brief, is essential. In the humanities, new knowledge emerges through an accretive process in which authors explore the diversity of prior knowledge, mapping out the thematic landscape in terms of history and schools of thought, and dealing with the vast literature which typically invites interpretative challenges depending upon one’s ideological viewpoint. As Hyland (2004) concludes:

> Writers therefore often have to pay greater attention to elaborating a context through citation, reconstructing the literature in order to provide a discursive framework for their arguments and demonstrate a plausible basis for their claims. The more frequent citations in the soft texts therefore suggest greater care in firmly situating research within disciplinary frameworks and supporting claims with intertextual warrants (p. 31).

Hyland’s comments show that in the humanities, locating research properly or firmly through a comprehensive review of prior knowledge is an imperative of the knowledge creation and dissemination process. Against this background, it is arguable that if introductions to research articles in the humanities are to effectively establish common ground as well as show persuasive force (that is, enable their authors to gain acceptability and recognition), then they must deploy the relevant rhetorical moves.

A major assumption that has directed the issues raised in this paper is, following Swales and Feak (2004), the notion that journals constitute authoritative and fast channels for scholars to communicate their research contributions to the wider scholarly community, and besides claim validation and recognition. They have thus become...
mainstream terrains for determining who and what gets published, with the major international journals, especially those published by Western outlets exercising more power and influence. This is hardly surprising since journal publication in Africa, in relation to Western journals which began more than three centuries ago, is a recent phenomenon, beginning from the early twentieth century with the 1950s witnessing quite a remarkable increase in the number of journals published across the continent (see Aina 1997; Myers 1999; Stilwell 2000). African journals constitute part of worldwide scholarly communication; implying therefore, that they provide outlets for members of the African academic discourse community to interact with the wider international scholarly community in order to gain recognition.

Research Questions

The specific research questions are as follows:

i. What steps characterize Move 2, and in this regard what expressions are used to indicate the steps?

ii. Is Move 2 predicated on a small, moderate, or extensive review of literature in Move 1?

iii. What do questions 1 and 2 reveal about the research space that the African scholar has been claiming?

Method

The Corpus

The corpus for this study was extracted from the *Legon Journal of the Humanities* which until 2013 was published by the Faculty of Arts, University of Ghana. It is available on most electronic databases as well as public and national libraries globally. The corpus comprises the introductions to 59 articles published in the journal from 2005 to 2010, constituting six editions of the journal. The word length of the entire corpus was 32,203 words. Each introduction was numbered and classified according to the year of publication; therefore, RP 27: (2007) Linguistics means “Research Paper Number 27 in the field of Linguistics and published in the 2007 edition of the *Legon Journal of the Humanities*”. All the articles in each edition, with the exception of a keynote address, in Volume 10, 2010 comprised the data. The distribution was as follows: Language and Linguistics (19 RAs); Literature (20 RAs); History (2 RAs); Education (4 RAs); Performing Arts (7 RAs); Philosophy (4 RAs); Religions (3 RAs). This distribution indicates that the articles were predominantly from the inter-related disciplines of language, literature and linguistics, signalling therefore that the generalizations made in

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2 It is now published by the College of Humanities, University of Ghana, Legon.
this paper may perhaps be more applicable to these disciplines than to, for instance, history, education, and the performing arts.

**The Procedure**

The introductions were analyzed using the CARS model as the analytical tool. Each introduction was numbered and classified according to the year of publication. All the introductions were read and assigned Moves and the sub-steps associated with the Moves. These were tabulated and percentages computed. For Move 2, the linguistic devices used to signal the gap statements were identified and compiled. The manual procedure adopted here derives its validation from Hyland (2004) who explains that computer-based “concordance techniques are unhelpful when dealing with move structure analyses … because the schematic structure that writers employ to shape their purposes for a particular readership are [sic] not always explicitly marked linguistically, but more often draw on pragmatic understandings” (p. 140).

**Results**

*Research Question 1: What steps characterize Move 2, and in this regard what expressions are used to indicate the steps?:* Thirty-eight of the RAs, representing 65% of the samples, had clear Move 2s, and the distribution of the various steps (as captured in Table 1) was as follows: question raising (6 introductions representing 10.3%) occurred predominantly in the field of Literature (that is, 5 out of the 6 cases); continuing with a tradition (5 introductions representing 8.5%) was also predominantly in the area of literature; counter-claiming (1 introduction representing 1.7%) occurred in philosophy; indicating a gap (26 introductions representing 44.5%) occurred across disciplines. Thus, the following rhetorical devices were deployed: counter-claiming; indicating a gap; question-raising; and continuing a tradition. Linguistic devices used included contrastive statements, negative expressions, quantifiers, negative verbs combined with contrastive statements, and negative adjectives. On the flip side, 17 of the introductions (28.8% of the sample size) did not have Move 2s, and this applied across the disciplines; while 4 (6.7%) had implicit gap statements which refer to situations where Move 2s had to be deduced from the extensive narrative or exposition.
Table 1

Distribution of Steps in Move 2

Yes (38 RAs Representing 65%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move 2</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1a: Counter-claiming</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1b: Indicating a gap</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1c: Question-raising</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1d: Continuing a tradition</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 2: Is Move 2 predicated on a small, moderate or extensive review of literature in Move 1?: In terms of the structural configuration in the Move analytical model, Step 3 under Move 1 may be further sub-categorized as Small (little or no reference to prior knowledge); Moderate (reasonable reference to prior knowledge); and Extensive (wide-ranging reference to prior knowledge); where “small”, “moderate”, and “extensive” index the expansiveness of prior knowledge that the author engages in order to locate his or her study or to justify the research niche. From this reference point, the degree of the review of previous literature or prior knowledge in the data is captured in Table 2 which shows that 61% of the RAs reviewed up to four items of preceding literature (small); while 27% considered between 5 and 9 items (moderate); while 12% made use of over 10 items (extensive):

Table 2

Extensiveness of Literature Reviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items reviewed</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(0 - 4)</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5 - 9)</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10+)</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

The inter-relationships between Moves 1 and 2 in terms of how they impact strength of claim (as expressed in research question 3) are discussed below.

Strength of Claim: Move 2

Strength of claim refers to the persuasive force conveyed by the introduction to the RA, and in this section it is discussed as a function of Move 2. Inevitably, a Move 2 in isolation cannot fulfil the adequacy conditions required for properly situating the new contribution within the discipline’s epistemological framework. The various steps under Move 1 help to show why the article is important or worth publishing, and this is an important aspect of establishing a research territory; however, as regards establishing a niche, making an explicit Move 2 is a key rhetorical strategy. It must be pointed out that this does not necessarily transfer all the power to Move 2; the steps under Move 1 do play a necessary orientational function and help to create some contextualization for the new contribution to knowledge and why it should be published. The argument, however, is that where Move 2 is explicitly indicated, the establishment of the niche is much more strongly conveyed; where it is not, the reader carries the burden of spotting the relevance of the author’s proposed contribution. This arguably weakens the strength of claim.

As noted above, remarkably, 17 (28.8%) of the RAs had no Move 2s employing mostly the rhetorical pattern Move 1 to Move 3. In the following introduction, RP18: (2006) Linguistics, the absence of Move 2 numbs the author’s attempt at announcing the new research:

RP18: (2006) Linguistics: Reduplication is the morphological process in which all or part of a word is copied. It is a process which is found in many languages across the world. Reduplication is used to achieve various kinds of functions, both lexical and grammatical. In Igbo, reduplication is employed to achieve different kinds of intensification such as action, taste, smell, colour, unspecified plurality and distributive uses (Anagbogu, 1995). McCarthy & Prince (1986, 1990) studied reduplication in several languages including Ilokano, Arabic, and proposed ways of analyzing the process. Other studies of reduplication include Marantz (1982), McCarthy (1981). [No explicit Move 2; Establishment of niche rhetorically desirable] This paper examines reduplication in Ewe. The various reduplicative processes are explored. It is shown that Ewe reduplication performs either lexical or grammatical function.
Apart from the presence or otherwise of a Move 2 influencing the strength of claim, the language used in making the move could also affect it. Strength of claim may also be characterized as robust or tentative. For example, in RP 28: (2007) Philosophy, the author proclaims: “Now, I don’t buy this, and I’ll explain why.” Here the author makes a strong claim despite the dearth of items of previous literature as evident in the text below:

RP28: (2007) Philosophy: Talking about certain experiences being exclusively female and significant for that very reason is common among people analyzing gender. In order to look critically at the notion of a uniquely women’s point of view, I’ll discuss these two related statements:

Key aspects of human experience are polarized into two diametrically opposed, mutually exclusive ways of experiencing and being in the world, contoured by a combination of biology and social conditioning.

Women have special access to knowledge of aspects of reality through certain ways of sentient understanding that are inaccessible to men, that is women are capable of exercising a special intuition or sensitivity that lies outside the scope of male recognition or comprehension. *Now, I don’t buy this, and I’ll explain why.* I hope to show that there is no good reason to assume that experiences acquired uniquely by women must be incomprehensible to men in some fundamental and insuperable way – nor vice versa. ...

In the case of RP34: (2008) Literature, the author’s claim is highly tentative, probably on account of the small number (in this case three) of review of previous items of research: “*If he did this for a study of Idanre and other poems and A Shuttle in the Crypt, [then] it is possible to do a study of this latest volume along the same route …*”

RP 34 (2008) Literature: *Sarmakand and Other Markets I have known* (2002) is the latest volume of poems by Wole Soyinka. It differs in tone and style from the earlier collections of poems such as *Idanre and Other Poems* (1967), *A Shuttle in the Crypt* (1972), *OgunAbibiman* (1976) and *Mandella’s Earth* (1988). The difference is that while the earlier ones are based on intense metaphysical and sometimes mystical or psychological experience of the poet, this latest collection could be described as poems of the moment and therefore transitory because of the situations that induced their writing. ... Soyinka’s poetry has earlier been criticised of wilful obscurity, of private esoterism and concerted opacity (Chinweizu et al 1975:11). His response to the charge of constructing syntax and imagery that are imprecise and opaque is that he draws his creative inspiration and aesthetic matrix from a broad cultural spectrum – in a global level – which has allowed him to be selective in diction and ideas (Soyinka 1975). ... In an earlier effort to assist people in reading and studying
Soyinka’s poems and their political message, Tunde Adeniran (1994) devised a four-point outline which he has listed as (a) poems based on Soyinka’s personal experience (b) poems inspired by the experience of other individuals (c) poems informed by events in his immediate community (Nigeria) and (d) universal poems echoing the human condition. If he did this for a study of Idanre and Other Poems and A Shuttle in the Crypt, it is possible to do a study of this latest volume along the same route as the different sections of the volume have made possible. ....

Strength of Claim: Interaction between Move 1 and Move 2

In the previous section, strength of claim was discussed in relation to Move 2. In this section, it is considered in relation to the interaction between Moves 1 and 2. First, let us consider an introduction that bases its claim on a robust Move 1, Step 3. RP3: (2005) Linguistics below is representative of a few of the cases where the authors explored all three Moves in order to map out their research territory and properly lay claim to a niche.

RP3: (2005) Linguistics:

MOVE 1: ESTABLISHING A TERRITORY, STEP 1: CLAIMING CENTRALITY: [Serial verb constructions (SVCs, henceforth) have been explored extensively in many languages of the world.] MOVE 1, STEP 3: REVIEWING ITEMS OF PREVIOUS LITERATURE: [Serial verb constructions have been attested in languages of Southeast Asia, West Africa, New Guinea, Oceania, Australia, and some Central and South American languages (Bamgbose 1982, Durie 1997, Lord 1993, Alkhenvald 1999, Sebba 1987, Nylander 1997). In Ghana, a significant effort has been devoted to the study of the phenomenon in some languages. In particular, the Benue-Kwa group of languages such as Akan (Boadi 1968, Dolphyne 1987, Osam 1994) and Ewe (Ansre 1966, Agbedor 1993) has received a fair amount of attention in the treatment of serial verb constructions. Some studies have also been done on a few languages of the Gur group. Typical examples are Dagaare (Bodomo 2001, 2002, 1993; Saanchi 2002), Dagbani and Mampruli (Bodomo 1993) and Buli (Youngjoo 2003).]

MOVE 2: ESTABLISHING A NICHE, STEP 1B (INDICATING A GAP): In Gurene, however, there has not been a single study that is detailed enough to account for the characteristics of serialization in the language. Bodomo (1993) did an integrated study of serial verb constructions on what he calls the Mabia languages (which include Dagaare, Dagbani, Mampruli and Gurene) but unfortunately less than ten example sentences were cited in Gurene. Thus, his analysis was not comprehensive enough as far as Gurene is concerned. Also Dakubu (2003) made a proposal for a criterion for recognizing a structure as an SVC in the languages of the Volta Basin and included a discussion on
Gurene SVCs. However, since her focus was not on Gurene SVCs not much was said about it.

MOVE 3: OCCUPYING THE NICHE: STEP 1A (OUTLINING PURPOSES): The present paper therefore, attempts an analysis of serial verb constructions in Gurene with the objective of characterizing the key features in the language. It is my hope that new insights would be gained and thus increase knowledge in the already existing body of literature in this phenomenon.

MOVE 3: STEP 3 (INDICATING RA STRUCTURE): The rest of the work is organized as follows: section 2 gives the sources of the data for the study, section 3 looks at the definition of SVCs from a typological perspective whilst section 4 examines SVCs typology in Gurene. Section 5 considers common predicates used in SVCs in the language with section 6 on grammaticalization and serial verb constructions. Section 7 is the conclusion.

In the introduction above, the author claims centrality for the specific research area, and through an extensive review of the literature (Move 1, Step 3) prepares the ground for claiming his research space. Move 2 in this introduction is distinctive for its elaborateness. The author lines up studies done in the area (Bamgbose 1982; Durie 1997; Lord, Alkhenvald 1999; Sebba 1987; Nylander 1997); (Boadi 1968; Dolphyne 1987; Osam 1994) and Ewe (Ansre 1966; Agbedor 1993) etc.), and for each he uses contrast and negation (namely, “however”, “there has not been a single study”; “but unfortunately less than”; “his analysis was not comprehensive enough”; “However, since her focus was not on Gurene SVCs not much was said about it.”) to indicate the gap in the research. It is a very strong statement of what has not been done in the area. The use of the quantifiers (“a single study”; “less than”; “not much”) underlies the lack of adequate research on the subject matter. Drawing predominantly from African sources, the author’s claims are emphatic and robust, which may derive from the author’s confidence in his knowledge of the research territory being reviewed.

In the following introduction, RP31: (2007) Performing Arts, review of items of previous literature was limited in extent:

31: (2007) Performing Arts: MOVE 1: ESTABLISHING A TERRITORY, ‘COVERT’ STEP 3: [A lot has been written about the traditional music of Ghana, and there are also some studies on some of the composers of Ghana.] MOVE 2: ESTABLISHING A NICHE, STEP 1B (INDICATING A GAP): [However, scant regard has been paid to the compositions of Isaac Daniel Riverson whose ground breaking pedagogical work, The Atlantis Music Readers, was used in all schools across the length and breadth of Ghana, and whose compositions touch on almost every facet of Ghana’s history, from the colonial era to the time of independence.]
MOVE 1: ESTABLISHING A TERRITORY, STEP 3: REVIEWING ITEMS OF PREVIOUS LITERATURE: [Some writers have touched on the compositions of composers like Amu and Nketia. Agawu (1984), for example, has discussed the importance of language on music compositions in Ghana, with particular reference to the musical style of Amu and concluded that Amu regarded parallelism in between speech tones and melodic contour as an essential compositional premise, and that Amu “strove continually to provide a ‘translation’ of his text into music.”]

MOVE 2: ESTABLISHING A NICHE, STEP 1B (INDICATING A GAP): [A point worthy of note is that Riverson was a contemporary of Amu and had his own views with regard to the importance of language on musical compositions; however, no reference is made to him by Agawu.]

MOVE 1: ESTABLISHING A TERRITORY, STEP 3: REVIEWING ITEMS OF PREVIOUS LITERATURE: [Nketia also makes mention of Riverson in connection with the differences between Nketia and Riverson as regards notation of Ghanaian folk songs in his publication Folk Songs of Ghana;]

MOVE 2: ESTABLISHING A NICHE, STEP 1B (INDICATING A GAP): [however, again the contributions of Riverson to the development of traditional music in Ghana are not mentioned.]

The need for the present study becomes even more imperative when one considers that Riverson’s Songs of the Akan Peoples was the second most significant collection of African songs after the publication of Amu’s Twenty-Five African Songs (more will be said of these two works later in this paper).

MOVE 1: ESTABLISHING A TERRITORY, STEP 3: REVIEWING ITEMS OF PREVIOUS LITERATURE: Turkson (1987) and Mensah (1991) have both recognised the work that Riverson did especially with notation of traditional African rhythms. Mensah, for instance, notes “Riverson’s collection of folk songs, especially from the traditional Fante lyric repertoire and arranged a few ... [and] set these to four-part harmony lest he ruined the essence”. Mensah further points out that Riverson “strictly follows the tendency to match tone patterns in tune and text” especially in the lead cantor’s part. It is in the light of these that the nationalistic works of Isaac Daniel Riverson are worthy of study.

This introduction, which contains multiple Moves (that is, the Moves are repeated in a cycle), begins with a generalization about prior literature. This generalization suggests that the author, after a review of the literature, can conclude that “a lot has been written” about the subject matter. In this regard and for purposes of verification and validation, some of these studies could have been cited. This is not done, and incidentally, the author’s negotiation and declaration of research space chiefly hinge on three sources, namely Agawu (1984), Turkson (1987), and Mensah (1991), the currency of which, presumably, cannot be said to significantly strengthen the gap statements which have been reiterated across the introduction. For example, “however, scant regard has been paid to
the compositions of Isaac Daniel Riverson; however, no reference is made to him; however, again the contributions of Riverson to the development of traditional music are not mentioned”, which is further combined with a declaration of relevance in the sentence – “The need for the present study becomes even more imperative when one considers that Riverson’s Songs of the Akan Peoples was the second most significant collection of African songs after the publication of Amu’s Twenty-five African Songs”. In sum, although the author tries to establish a niche in a robust manner through the reiteration of gap statements, the limited literature review items could reduce the persuasive strength of his Move 2.

In another example, RP27: (2007) Linguistics below, the author initiates content with topic generalizations which have a generic reference to prior studies done in the area “most previous treatments associated with” [+TOPIC] precluding any attempt at some literature review.

RP27: (2007) Linguistics: Most previous treatments associated with inalienable possessions in the Swahili language have concentrated on two particular construction types; one in which the possessor and the inalienable possession are respectively the direct and the oblique objects.

[EXAMPLE 1]
And to a lesser extent one in which the possessor and the inalienable possession are respectively subject and object.

[EXAMPLE 2]
With these two constructions above, (1) and (2), the Possessor Promotion of Possessor Raising rule applies. The person affected (agent of the verb) is represented by an object prefix in the verb. However, a third construction type, which is usually overlooked, is the subject of this paper. ...

Section 2 of the paper describes variants of the auto-referential affective construction. Section 3 considers the semantic range of the construction and the contextual features of the predicate. And section 4 discusses the possible restrictions that govern the choice of variant. Section five is the conclusion.

Therefore, the gap statement in Move 2 “However, a third construction type, which is usually overlooked, is the subject of this paper.” is not backed by an explicit review of prior studies. We have to accept the claim of the author that the construction type is indeed overlooked. How then do we evaluate the relative merits of the gap statement? The lack of a robust contextualization of what is clearly a huge claim being made reduces the persuasive force of the introduction. The subject matter of the paper in question is the Swahili language, and it has attracted scholarly studies among academics all over the world, especially in East African as well as North American universities. Therefore, material exists for intertextual contextualisation of the gap statement.
A further example is RP 59: (2010) Language which begins with a Move 3 (Occupying the Niche – Announcing present research). Move 2 of this introduction is structured in the form of a justification: “The study was undertaken because it is apparent that some English words have assumed a distinct mode of pronunciation in Ghana.” There is reference to literature (prior knowledge); after which, there is another Move 2 signalled through a contrastive statement plus question raising, and the questions posed are multiple and consecutive.

RP 59: (2010) Language: This paper attempts to find out how students at the University of Ghana treat final stops, especially in monosyllabic words. We thus:

wanted to look at the tendency in younger students of the University of Ghana to elide final /t/ /d/ /b/ /k/ /g/;

attempted to determine the prevalence of glottal stops (GS) as final stop substitutes; and

wanted to find out whether the subsequent sound and / or preceding sound influences the selection of final stop or not.

The study was undertaken because it is apparent that some English words have assumed a distinct mode of pronunciation in Ghana. ‘But’, for example, is often heard as [ba] or [ba?]. That a final consonant sound can be elided in Ghana is not unusual, after all, as was noted by Strevens (1965:113):

[QUOTE]

However, this quotation leads us into a further question: do aspects of pronunciation in Ghanaian English always reflect transfer phenomenon? In many Ghanaian languages the syllable structure does not have a consonantal coda, so one might wonder whether we are dealing with a transference phenomenon when students elide final stops. But as many students substituted final stops with a glottal stop, we have had to ask, where does the glottal stop come from? Whereas final consonant elision is a common feature of Student pidgin, glottal stops are rare in this code. Can the use of the glottal stop or the elision of final stops be explained by the number of Ghanaian students going to the UK to work during the summer vacation and picking up Cockney traits in their speech? Can the use of the glottal stop or the elision of final stops be a temporary fad inspired by, for example, TV announcers who use glottal stops? How widespread is the elision of the final stop or its substitution by a glottal stop?

A glottal stop, according to Gimson (1972:9), is produced when “the glottis is held tightly closed with the lung air pent up below it”. ...
Move 2 is emphatic largely because of the multiplicity of questions raised it is not anchored in an extensive review of the literature which arguably could have provided a much more thorough contextualization of the author’s work.

**Conclusion**

Disciplinary conventions in the humanities call for a proper contextualization of current research in terms of prior knowledge, but what we find in the data is a rhetorical preference for claiming centrality and making topic generalizations with scant literature review. In summary, the analysis demonstrates that; (a) Move 1 is mostly characterized by a rhetorical preference for claiming centrality and making topic generalizations with limited literature review or none at all; (b) Move 2 is absent in a number of cases implying a lack of explicitness or robustness in establishing a territory prior to or as part of announcing present research; (c) Move 2 where explicit, the gap statement made is not backed by sufficient contextualization in the form of an extensive synthesis of prior knowledge, and this, arguably, weakens the strength of claim.

It has to be emphasized that the approach adopted here is not prescriptivist; rather the argument is that from the perspective of knowledge construction in the humanities the expectation is that the formulation of niche rhetoric should be grounded on a more robust review of prior literature. A Move 2 anchored on topic generalizations or merely claiming centrality without the benefit of prior literature would not attract acceptance and recognition for the author of the paper. The limited literature review probably reflects a lack of rigour on the part of the contributors to the journal in constructing “intertextual warrants” for the research spaces they are claiming or perhaps an uncanny nonchalant attitude towards the knowledge creation and dissemination process. It must be acknowledged though that while a robust or extensive review is important, its adequacy or rhetorical worth is both author and reader (as a member of the sub-disciplinary community) dependent. In re-constructing prior literature in order to establish a research territory/niche, an author’s view of what constitutes adequacy is a strong determining factor; nonetheless, this in turn is ultimately subject to the expectations of other members of the sub-disciplinary community as well as accepted practices within the sub-discipline. I hasten to add that it is not the intention of this study to suggest that the pattern observed in the data may be characteristic of RA introductions in African scholarly communication. Indeed, as mentioned in the introduction to this paper, the literature indicates that niche rhetorical strategies differ across disciplines and cross-culturally. Therefore essentially, the value of this study is twofold. First, an analysis of published scholarly writing from a genre analytical perspective enables us to see how scholars make use of rhetorical strategies as part of their internalized sense of the communicative protocols governing the construction of knowledge in their disciplines. Second, it signals how language teachers, especially those involved in the teaching of academic writing courses in universities, can
use the material and the insights gained to help younger scholars particularly in second language contexts to deploy the rhetorical strategies more resourcefully.
References


Reading Ayi Kwei Armah’s *Why are We so Blest?*

Albert A. Sackey  
*Professor, Department of English, University of Ghana, Legon*

**Abstract**

This paper is a revised version of a 1974 essay I wrote on the novel when it was first published in the early 1970s. The changes I have made for the present publication are not substantial and in the main the original impression remains undisturbed, the primary objective of the current exercises, now as then, being to guide the reader in a generic reading of the novel. An amazing novel steeped in a complex maze of philosophies, ideologies and ideas, *Why are we so blest?* presents a perplexing mix of literature, history, and myth, and part of my undertaking in this article is to attempt a mining of the novel’s treasures for the benefit of the ardent reader. The focus of this paper is thematic but the approach is mainly semic; hence most of my investigation revolves round character study and the relevance of character in the semantic vision of Armah.

**Keywords:** Utopia, love, race, violence, African liberation

*Why are we so blest?* carries out its thematic mission through a systematic and systemic study of the personality and psyche of characters. There are three major characters in this novel: Solo Nkonam, Modin Dofu, and Aimée Reitsch. In addition, there are eight minor characters, presented essentially as types, whose relevance in the novel is not diminished by their subordinate roles: Naita, Mrs. Jefferson, Sylvia, Miss Molly Jefferson, Prof. Jefferson, Mr (and Mrs.) Richmond Oppenhardt, Jorge Manuel, and Esteban Ngulo.

Solo the site through which the narrative passes on to the reader is the Tiresias of the novel, albeit an inadequate one. His name Solomon (shortened into Solo) means the wise person. He is wise because he is the one character in the novel who seems to understand the hidden meaning behind appearances and whose comments on the action throw immense light into our understanding of the novel. But his name also means the lone figure, the lonely one, and this underlines his impotence as a helper. He is weak and powerless in the face of powerful forces whose destructive potential he acknowledges but against which he is impotent. He is one of the many dead in life in the world of the novel,
a ghost, a heap of emptiness whose brilliant and far-reaching wisdom is paralysed by his inability to act. He is consumed by physical and spiritual vapidity and has come to the end of the road. He has seen his people abused and the intelligent ones among them brainwashed into gaping slaves. He, like Modin, has refused the agony of privileged slavery but has found his future impotent and without direction. Unlike Modin, however, he realized early that an awareness of his perplexing condition as an African was not a necessary tool for his salvation. He has seen the rape of Africa, but because of his impotence he withdraws into his loneliness and becomes a mere observer of life.

In a way he is like the Teacher in *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, Kofi Ocran and Naana in *Fragments*, and the wise Ndola and elder Isanusi in *Two thousand seasons*. And yet, he is so unlike all of them. The Teacher survives on indifference to the general filth of independent Ghana; he no longer cares about what happens to the “Loved Ones” or his country, and though in dreams he suffers the pain of his impotence, he is content to suffer in the silence of his nakedness. Kofi Ocran, in spite of his earlier impotence, is able to rise to the challenge in the end and save his old student Baako and help him regain his hope in himself and life. Naana, after years of humiliation and emptiness, finally joins her ancestors in the confidence that her grandson, Baako has “strong spirits looking after him” and “something hidden that will reveal itself with time”. Ndola suffers humiliation and loneliness for speaking the truth and is rendered impotent; but “she had spent her life after that waiting in the grove for the arrival of another soul who could see the truth an act on it.” That soul arrives in the person of Isanusi to whom she reveals the truth before she dies and has the consolation of being buried in peace by this new “soul.” Elder Isanusi, banished from Anoa for speaking the truth, follows Ndola to the fifth grove and learns the secrets of the truth from her before her death. Nevertheless, he undergoes long periods of agonizing emptiness and inactive impotence, his words of warning unheeded by those in whom he puts his confidence, until hope arrives with the nineteen, and together with them he fights and wins the war of First Liberation from “the White Destroyers”.

Solo, therefore, is a unique character in Ayi Kwei Armah; he alone suffers humiliation and defeat to the very end; he alone finds it difficult to mitigate his suffering in the end. To the very end, he remains a “ghost” among the victims of the “blest”, impotent to act, and suffering in his impotence. The first time we meet him in the novel he overwhelms us with the sheer force of his isolation and ineptitude: “Even before my death I have become a ghost, wandering about the face of the earth, moving with a freedom I have not chosen, something whose unsettling abundance I am impotent to use” (1974, p. 11).

When finally, he realizes that in his emasculation he has failed to save Modin, he blames himself and withdraws into the desolation of his insulated self:

My impotence stimulates omnipotence. Often, what seems a reasonable arrangement I know is false. It is not understanding I am reaching for,
I have time to kill an infinity ahead of me, and these notes are reduced to something to help a defeated man survive empty time. I arrange them, rearrange them. Out of all this destruction my aim is no longer to search for sense. My goal is littleness itself: to fill time, to survive emptiness (1974, p. 232).

For the time, let us leave good old Solo to wallow in his self-pitying loneliness and turn to a more pitiful figure of tragic confusion, Modin Dofu. His first name Modin is the Ga word (Ghanaian vernacular) for Blackman. He is the average black man with enough intelligence to go through the colonial system we call formal education. He leaves his native Ghana full of ambition and hope of improving upon his education in far-away America. He has completed his secondary education at Achimota School, Accra, Ghana, and won a special scholarship to read for his first degree at Harvard. On his arrival in America he is full of excitement about the immense possibilities opened before him; he grasps at the opportunities with naive fanaticism and refuses the advice of the one person who could have saved him at the very beginning. But gradually, very gradually and painfully, the truth dawns on him that his native ingenuity is being undermined by America. America has a special way of rendering the average African intellectually impotent. First, he is made to feel special; to feel different from other Africans, to believe he has been brought to America to perfect that rare potential in him, uncommon in the African. He is being prepared to enter the privileged heaven of the “Blest” and take his rightful place on Mount Olympus. Meanwhile he must look down on the depths from which he has been raised by the generosity of America and be grateful to his benefactress. Unlike many of his people Modin rejects this Olympian heaven of concealed slavery. He would not accept this “crudest form of manipulation, mystification, planned ignorance.” Instead he would "shift from the periphery to the centre” and “escape some of these cruder forms of manipulation”. But he must be prepared to pay the price of this escape. The price is “loneliness, separation from home, the constant necessity to adjust to what is alien, eccentric to the self”.

But America has an answer also for such a rebellion. America is aware of the “all-pervading” loneliness that accompanies the “shift from the periphery to the centre”. America will capitalize on this loneliness of the rebellious African, America would use sex. America has several types of sex agents, usually the female, to use as antidote against rebellion. The less potent are the likes of Carol who would like to be “screwed” by the aggressive African whose sexual exploits have become legendary; or the likes of the working-class housewife Mrs. Quinn who is ever ready to jump into a man’s bed anytime she is asked. These are powerless sexual objects whose rejection by the lonely African student is never problematic. Indeed, this type is not really meant for the African who has “shifted from the periphery to the centre”. She is intended for the pleasurable enslavement.
of the African who accepts the periphery and whose loss of freedom is maintained by this process.

The real test for Modin, the rebellious African student, now a lonely figure, comes with the second type of sex agent, the upper-middle class American housewife, frustrated with her husband’s inability to satisfy her ever-increasing sexual demands. If the rebel is lucky, he will go through this test in one piece; if he is not, his end will be swift, painful, and shameful; his destruction, at the hands of the enraged husband who in the eyes of America is justified in slaughtering the nigger who seduced his wife. Modin is lucky, he goes through this test in one piece. The final test is America’s ace; it is the one test the rebel cannot possibly pass: death that comes in the name of love and uses unnatural sex as a means to destruction. This time there is no escape for the rebel, for, in spite of his better knowledge, he will accept death as love and embrace it with all his soul. He would not accept the truth dictated by his rational self even if the hypocrisy of the love-death is apparent. He will continue to call death love and his impotence will increase until finally he finds no escape from this death which comes in the name of love. In the end, when he is destroyed, his only epitaph is the emptiness he leaves behind and the frustration of those who see in him the tragedy of unfulfilled promise.

Such is the fate of Modin in this novel. His meeting with Aimée is prophetic in its tragic inevitability, for although Modin would have nothing more to do with white women whose only aim is destruction to the black man, fate drags him unwillingly towards this girl:

I did not go searching for her, Naita. I have stopped doing that. I did not even go where she might have found me if she was one of those out looking for someone like me. The idea itself of lonely white women moving from knot to little knot of talkers at parties wanting to find the African of their unconfessed desires nauseates me these days. The need to work out new way of containing loneliness has pressed as heavily on my mind, but the wandering days are behind me. I will not slip back into those old ways, not after everything that has happened (1974, p. 167).

And yet:

I’ve had to find new ways to survive. The jobs I found after the break with Oppenhardt are now too strenuous. The last time I tried scrubbing a floor the neck wound burst open and I had to go back to the hospital. Standing in the service line exhausts me, so I can’t work in the dining hall either. A library job gives me pocket money. When I need more money I sign on as a subject for experimenting graduate students mainly in the Psycho Lab. That is where I met Aimée (1974, p. 168).
After this initial connection gradual involvement is inevitable:

I did not feel lonely anymore. We can’t help serious involvement, Naita, I did no want to. I tried your normalising outlets. They almost killed me. I don’t feel dissipated anymore. It is so difficult to explain real things across distances, Naita, But that is not my fault (1974, p. 181).

Involvement is followed by naive surrender:

Last night a frightening thing happened, Naita. You will blame me and call me a fool for not ending the friendship when it happened, but let me tell you everything. Something still tells me Aimée is not the same, not like the others I have known here, not a destructive person (1974, p. 193).

And finally the prophetic vision:

Other sounds, calmer sounds far beyond hers, with a meaning I chose to close my ears to them. The voice of the smiling Afro-American who gave no name, the sight of him sitting motionless here in this room, looking with his direct stare at Aimée. He talked not to her but about her, as if she were a body without life. He talked to me, calling me brother. “Sure go ahead. I can’t stop you. We don’t use force, not even on brothers losing themselves. Go ahead, take blue eyes here for your soul sister... I’m not fighting you, brother. We don’t fight the lost. But hear me. Blue eyes here love you. Sure. Only way blue eyes ever know to love. Like a blue-eye baby love a chock-lit candy bar. Blue eyes gon eat you brother. Blue eyes gon eat you for soul food. That’s all she’s looking for, food. Things her people threw and wouldn’t eat. Blue eyes is greedier than all her people. Blue eyes had all them special things her people set aside for their own selves. Blue eyes still not satisfied. Blue eyes greedier than the greediest white folks. Now she ready for them hog maws and chit’lins too. That’s you for her. Soul food, that’s you. Blue eyes gon eat you, brother, blue eyes gon eat you dead” (1974, p. 200).

In a way, Modin is like the Man in The beautiful ones are not yet born and Baako in Fragments and yet so unlike them many ways. The Man can take consolation in the fact that his abstinence from the gleam is finally rewarded by the coup d’état and he is vindicated in the end. Nevertheless, his rejection of corruption and filth is circumscribed
by his impotence to fight against it. And therein lies the parallel with Modin whose rejection of Olympus becomes meaningless in the face of his impotence to act against it. The similarity with Baako is more pronounced. Faced with the same problem of loneliness as a result of their refusal to embrace the periphery and their rejection of the “Cargo Cult Mentality”, Baako seeks solace in a withdrawal into himself and is saved from insanity in the end with a little help from his friends, Kofi Ocran, and his Puerto Rican girl-friend, Juana.

Not so with Modin; Solo cannot save him because he (Solo) lacks the down-to-earth practicality of Ocran which makes easy communication with others possible. Nor can Naita who lacks the patience of Juana to accept the tragic flaw in the character of her friend and help him overcome it. One is abandoned by impatient and impotent friends, the other saved by the patient and practical potency of his friends.

It is now time to turn to Aimée of whom so much has already been said in connection with the tragic hero of this novel. “Aimée” is French for loved one, the female object of love. The name itself is European and represents European values. The irony here is that Aimée Reitsch, with her typical European-settler surname, has nothing loving or lovable about her. Hers is a negative love, a destructive death-force clothed in the hypocrisy of love. Her role in the novel (consciously or unconsciously on her part) is to lead Modin gradually to his destined doom. In a way her name is appropriate, the loved one, not the lover. She is loved with a tragic passion by Modin. She, in turn, sees Modin as a means to an end, a tool to be used, to be enjoyed like the “chock-lit candy bar” and be discarded when his utility value diminishes. She is indifferent to Modin’s feelings so long as her perverse desires are satisfied. The first time we meet her, she is bored with the routine vapidity of her academic and social life:

I can’t stand this place. Second year was supposed to feel better, but everything’s been pallid, boring, lifeless. My transcript says I’m doing fine. That’s a lie. The whole thing is childish. First week of term, find out what a Prof’s idiosyncrasies are. Second week, flip through the library getting note cards together. After that sit through boring lectures filling in gaps in my notes with the prof’s favourite quotes. Then wait for the inevitable term papers, the exams, the inevitable A (1974, p. 143).

Ironically, it is this restlessness, this sense of mental waste, this frustration, this loneliness, which is her link to Modin and which drags him towards her. And yet, there is distinction. Aimée’s reasons for frustration are private and selfish. “There is no fire around here,” she says. She wants action, anything which can make her feel life in her. She is not interested in changing the pallid routine in which she finds herself; what she wants is a temporary escape from it. In contrast, Modin desires change, change that will cater for the empowerment of the African spirit and free his people from mental slavery.
and physical deprivation. For solution, Aimée goes to the project center “looking for something to do, come summer”. She finds “Operation African Junction” (Operation Crossroads, Africa?) She has a choice between ten African countries “all relatively tame”, in her own words. She chooses Kansa (Kenya?) because with the Moja, Moja (Mau, Mau?) rebellion still active, there must be “fire” there. In Kansa, the reader comes face to face with the full force of her perverse sexuality. She enters into casual sexual relations with at least three men within a short period: a doctor of philosophy, a government minister, and the Head of State, Bombo Pakansa (Jomo Kenyatta?). In all these relations, her preference is sex rather than love, sex without the satisfaction that accompanies it. According to her, “life is so dull”; “I don’t feel anything.” She confesses she “got one good interview, but that was with a woman,” but on the whole, the trip turns dull and she decides to return home. The transcript of the “one good interview” arranged by one of her lovers, Agenda Ochiena, is given on page 37 with the heading “Transcript. Tape 12. Date. May 3.” The cold detached title of the transcript and her entire attitude to the political struggle of the people of Kansa show a marked academic detachment from the suffering of the people she claims to have gone to study. For her, both the struggle and the interview are good material for the preparation of her thesis. The transcript, however, illustrates the agonies of an oppressed people whose leader has sold himself to the oppressors.

On her return to America, she meets Modin and enters into the lethal liaison that ends so tragically for the black man. Aimée’s perception of the “unnatural” relationship is best articulated in her own words: “If I was stupid I’d be in love. Modin almost has me convinced. It’s not impossible.” (1974, p.185). Her sexual fantasies— from her fantasy of her perverse sexual orgy with Professor Kaufmann in the classroom to imagining herself the wife of a white settler somewhere in Africa whose erectile dysfunction forces her into sexual indulgence with the houseboy, Mwangi (who like Modin “could grow into a fine specimen”) these reveries feed on the idea of violence and death, death to the African. At the end of her sexual fantasy with Professor Kaufmann, there is an allusion to genocidal ethnic cleansing:

He’s got his prick tied down to his thigh but it comes up anyway, red and knotty. His nose stops twitching and he drops his chalk. Instead of writing he shoots his juice up on the board, writing figures like a bloody YPSL Poster. MAJI MAJI: 100,000 AFRICANS KILLED

He shakes all over when he’s finished (1974, p. 185)

Again, in one of her wild chimeras around the imaginary houseboy Mwangi, violence becomes a necessary agent to sexual climax:

I’ve kept Mwangi, and I’m not tired. I’m sure I’ll get there if only something would happen, but what?
I’m looking over Mwangi’s head. He’s been silent a long time, moving in me. The KapitanReitsch is coming back, along the path. He’s very big. His face is red. Mwangi knows nothing. His head is turned away from the window. My husband has no shirt on. He still has his gun. I am forced to look at the gun. From the distance he’s aiming it into the room, at Mwangi’s head.

I say nothing to Mwangi. He feels so good in me. He has a smile. He moves silently. I have a happy feeling rising.


Aimée, as the imaginary Kapitan’s wife, equates erotic fulfillment with vicious images of death and devastation only reachable when clothed in the imagery of a bored housewife seducing her naive houseboy in the expectation of her jealous husband’s sudden appearance. The whole extract with its short sentences and quick movements depicts the excitement of each moment as the woman makes her gradual climb towards her unreachable sexual climax. It is this imaginary Mwangi who is identified with Modin in the malevolent imagination of Aimée during one of their unnatural sexual experiments. The equation of pleasure and violence, consumer and commodity is now complete. Mwangi and Modin are the commodities to be consumed in violence; Aimée is the consumer for whose gratification the commodity has been purchased.

The role of Modin in the sick profusion of Aimée’s warped cognition is now clear to us; to serve as an instrument of carnal pandering by suppressing his own sincere natural emotions in fidelity to the erotic sensitivities of insatiate concupiscence. We may illustrate this condition with pertinent extracts from pages 198 to page 199 where the lovers are playing love games with Aimée desperately vying with her impaired sexuality for supremacy:

“A lot of the time...I seem to do O.K. if I can imagine myself into a different scene. It’s worked for other things.” (Aimée talking to Modin)


“Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yeeesssooooh, Mwangi, Yeeesss” (Aimée in “mad, happy energy” to Modin)

“Move, Mwangi! Don’t stop!” (Aimée with “an imperative frenzy” in her voice to Modin)
“Don’t stop! I found the scene. Help me.” (Aimée with “a tight, impatient smile” to Modin)

“Kansa. The rebellion, my period. My husband is coming home. He’s a settler. I don’t know when. It’s dangerous, you’re the boy.” (Aimée to Modin)

“And Mwangi is my name” (Modin to Aimée)

“Yes, yes, yes, yes dooon’t stop! Yes!” (Aimée to Modin)

“All I need was your help,” (Aimée with “anger” to Modin)

In this sexual game the black boy is the guinea pig, the sacrificial lamb wilfully led to the slaughter on the altar of Caucasian hegemony. Protest or nonconformity on the part of the inferior race is frowned upon as simply unnatural and against reason:

Modin has a simplistic approach to everything, As if I could tell myself I want to get rid of bad ideas, and I’d come clean immediately.

He even got me feeling guilty about fantasizing with him making love to me. Everybody fantasizes, so what the hell is wrong with that? It’s just a game. I don’t see why he has to get all serious about it.

Modin is just conservative. Strait-laced. He can be helpful, though, and I’ve never been bored talking to him. His mind is sharper than anyone’s around here.

I wish he wasn’t so set in his ways. That was a foolish thing I did, going all guilty and making a confession to him. Goddamn, I didn’t do anything wrong, (p. 203)

Despite this open display of unfeeling racism and bigoted intolerance, Modin, like the blinking devotee, can only acquiesce:

Something still tells me Aimée is not the same, not like the others I have known here, not a person.

Her attitude to their relationship is one of detached involvement, detached enough not to get involved too deeply and involved enough to gain all the benefits of the union. To put it bluntly, Aimée has come to believe that it is only Modin with his aggressive maleness who can help restore life and feelings in her dead limbs and help her achieve orgasm.
These are her words when she is proved right and “it worked:”

We were just playing. I wasn’t even aware Modin had decided to make love. He just played with me. I wasn’t trying or anything. We were simply having fun. It took a long time. He went in me, moving slowly, stopping, moving.

It was like a weakness in my waist when it began. It’s not at all the way I imagined it would be. It made my body get all tense before it relaxed. God, now I know I never had a relaxed feeling in my body before. The world is different, I’m not frigid. I’m not frigid. Hey, hey, I am not frigid. Aimée is not frigid. (1974, p.217)

The careless confession of an amoral trollop whose sense of morality is degraded by an unnatural perception of the self completely sealed in a vicious cycle of narcissism and condescension. From her patronizing high ground, Modin can only have one utility value: “to help loosen her frigidity and make her feel” like a woman in the area of her sexuality.

Finally, let us turn to the tragic sequence in the desert, fatal for the black boy, ecstatic for the white girl: the one experience which finally removes the scale from Modin’s eyes and makes him realize though too late, the deadly nature of the relationship he has nurtured so intensely. On their way, they meet white French soldiers in the desert whose eyes on Modin “contained death they couldn’t let out right there and then, and the frustrated violence gave them a wild, would-be predatory look.” The sight of the soldiers with a frustrated urge to kill, at once reminds Modin of the “the Boston girl who cut off her man-friend’s testicles with a nail clipper.” This image of the Boston girl in turn evokes the ominous vision of Aimée with her mouth taking his penis in her teeth to caress. For the first time his relationship with Aimée frightens him. At the police station, “the only open place” in the desert that night, the friendly policeman tries to caution him but Aimée as usual, has her way:

“You want to go there, in the desert?”

“Yes”, Aimée said.

“You have something important to do there?”

Aimée laughed. The man appeared to have accepted that for an answer. For me the question has begun to seem extremely important. I wish I were not so tired (1974, p.278)
As they continue their journey through the desert, the young black man continues to experience downcast feelings of inertia and lethargy. The Citroen arrives: the white driver whose “single pair carried as much of the hostile force as all the massed pairs of eyes” of the French soldiers, will not stop for Modin but stops for Aimée. Modin refuses to join Aimée in the car with the white man, so Aimée, in frustration, gets down and the driver speeds off. The following dialogue ensues:

“What does it matter if he doesn’t want to see you?”

“It doesn’t matter to you. You’re white. He sees you. You’re just like him, you know.” I felt too tired to say anything else.

“Modin, you’re a racist.”

I didn’t answer her. I could think of only one thing: the Frenchman driving off in his anger had looked like a man cheated, a creature deprived of something that should have been his birthright (1974, p.280)

A gloomy admission of separation and an acknowledgement of the essential dissimilarity in both physiognomy and disposition, a manifestation of crucial racial difference that belies the forced twinship which shocks Solo on his first impression of the pair:

I got up and walked over to the two. At first sight I had noticed the contrast they made – one black, the other white. What struck me now, as I went closer, was how similar they had tried to make themselves. I looked harder. It was true.

From top to bottom the two wore identical clothes: coarse – woven blue shirts in the American style with their collars held down by small buttons, light – coloured cowboy jeans with nothing to hold them up, thick white socks with thick soles and a blue line over each toe cap. Two people, so different, yet so wilfully assimilated. The thought came to me: here was an acute case of love. Or ... A smile threatened to force itself to the surface. I was able to surpass it. Their clothes were not the only identical things they had. There were also burdens on their backs: soldiers camping knapsacks made from green cloth over an aluminium frame (1974, p. 56).

Completely convinced now of the binary dichotomy that marks their relationship, Modin resolves to return to Laccryville for a boat back to America, but he is too sick and
weak to do anything. Aimée is however full of vigor and energy and is determined to have her way irrespective of her partner’s feelings and condition. She would never take “a boat back home. What would I look like telling people I didn’t cross the Sahara after all” (1974, p. 283).

A matter of survival for one, of prestige for the other. It is now time to make individual decisions. First Modin’s: “I told Aimée I would go back to Laccryville, I don’t know how many times, how many different ways she called me a coward” (1974. p. 280). And Aimée’s “I never thought Modin would also start using the black and white thing as an excuse. He has deteriorated a lot. I’ll have to find ways of making my own way soon as the crossing is over. He’s lost his drive “(1974, p.283)

Tragic partition of an artificial union which should never have been contracted in the first place or at the least, should never have been taken to this depth of involvement. In the end, it is a fatal orgy of decadent sexual behavior and aberration fully embraced by the white girl and masterminded by her own white race that brings Modin back to the reality of his final doom:

Modin started bleeding. The blood curved out in a little stream that jerked outward about every second. I reached him and without thinking of what I was doing I kissed him. His blood filled my mouth. I swallowed it. I wanted him to speak to me. He had groaned a little when I took him and kissed him, but he said nothing (1974, p.288)

An obscene scene of sacrificial ritual of sex and blood; and it is Aimée who is narrating the experience. What Aimée is kissing, which gushes blood every second, is Modin’s snapped penis. Even in Modin’s terminal throes of death, Aimée does not fail to grasp at her final share of the sex-violence complex, a source of pain for the one, of pleasure for the other. We are reminded of all the imaginary scenes of sexual violence which have plagued the sick mind of this obnoxious white girl as she struggles for unnatural sexual gratification with the black boy as her instrument of sexual liberation in violence.

I have dealt at length with the important role of Aimée in our understanding of Ayi Kwei Armah’s intentions in this novel: let us now turn to other characters less important but very relevant if our understanding of the novel is to be complete. To fully appreciate the thematic role of these minor characters we must probe the very depths of the author’s intentions in this novel. What is Ayi Kwei Armah trying to say? What is the underlying theme of the novel? Are there any moral lessons for us? The title, Why are we so blest?, is our first indicator (pp. 89-103). White America considers itself “blest” (note the unusual biblical form of the participle) for all the good things God has bestowed on the American commonwealth, especially in fulfilment of the “Great American Dream".
For this reason, every year on the day of “Thanksgiving” America gives praise to God for all the blessings the American people enjoy in life.

In the view of Armah, this so-called state of “blessedness” is based on several myths:

The American dream was a realization of the Utopian ideal. It was built by men who while bringing with them “the whole deep matrix of European civilization, were careful enough to reject the all-too human flaws of feudal Europe;” men who refused to participate in the European “crimes against humanity”

What these men and women have built is therefore a new paradise, a paradise that allows no ordinary humanity into its heaven; a paradise of “grace”, grace which affirms and maintains “the distance that separates the holy from the merely human;” a paradise that separates and protects “the sacred from the profane”: a paradise that upholds the privileged class of the “blest” whites and separates them from “the remnant of the world”.

In this Eden, some are more “blest” than others. Into this privileged heaven (which is a blend of the Olympian and Christian paradise) the vulgar among men, in spite of their lack of vision, are sometimes admitted, but at their own level. This state of blessedness “can’t exist without its opposite” – “the underprivileged”, made up of the last remnants of the exterminated Indians, the African or Negroes, the great mass of the suffering peoples of the world. (Flood in Thailand, miners’ strike in Chile, the war in Vietnam, government changes in Laos, etc.). In spite of this interdependence of the two opposite poles, indeed, because of it, it is not the duty of “the blest” to help “the underprivileged” out of their depths of poverty.

The philosophy of the two opposite poles is Graeco-Christian in origin, and presupposes an Olympus, below which are “the plains of mediocrity”, and far below the plains, the hell of Tartarus. The only hope for the “underprivileged” (The foreign students – African, Asian, or Latin) is for each to struggle from their heritage of “communal dirt”, and rise to the heights of the “blest”. This is not an easy task and only few of “the underprivileged” succeed, and even then, he/she can only be one of the vulgar among “the blest.” This is called a crossover, an achievement which makes him/her a human among gods. In rare cases, however, very rare cases, a unique specimen among “the underprivileged” achieves the crossover without effort. Such a rarity rises “from the plains to live on Olympus. A hero. Part man, part god;” but still not fully god.

Sometimes, accidents happen; but they are “unique,” “idiotic”: “the promethean factor” sets in, and there is a “reverse crossover” --first the heroic crossover of the rare specimen, then an unexpected promethean crossing of the god-man. But this is not
“practical”; it is “Quixotic” and few of the crossovers ever think of it. Such reverse crossovers “can’t happen as long as there’s justice in the arrangement.”

The title, Why are we so blest, therefore introduces us to the philosophy of inequality, of separate development, each race according to its merits; the master-race occupying a unique heaven of their own, the slave-race barely surviving below. The American commonwealth is the epitome of the capabilities and achievements of the master-race. The biblical spelling of the past participle of bless is pertinent in this regard. It highlights the underlying divinity of the arrangement, something akin to the feudal concept of the divine rights of kings and divine sanction of societal stratification. Into this commonwealth the foreign student is introduced, the student who has shown by dint of hard work and innate ability his capacity for Olympian values, which he has demonstrated through “the educational process”:

Elementary School. First gate, the million already eliminated, leaving thousands. No justification. Just the way things are. The way things have been made.


Sixth Form. The hundreds forgotten. A dozen here, twenty there, small groups getting absorbed deeper into European ways. The justification: a higher quality.

University. Single survivors in the last reaches of alienation. The justification: “You are the only one”; “You are not like the others”; “You are the first” (1974, p.224).

In the Olympus of the American Commonwealth where he takes his university education, the foreign student is exposed to knowledge:

Knowledge about the world we live in is the property of the alien because the alien has conquered us. The thirst for knowledge therefore becomes perverted into the desire for getting close to the alien, getting out of the self. Result: loneliness as a way of life.

This loneliness is an inevitable part of the assimilationist African’s life within the imperial structure (1974, pp. 32-33).
There are two choices left to the assimilated African – to stay at the periphery and be no longer lonely, or to shift to the centre and embrace an “all-pervading loneliness.” Modin chooses to shift to the center, a unique choice, and pays the ordained price with his life.

We may now turn to the minor characters and the various roles they play in this polarized world of opposite poles. First, we shall examine Mrs. Jefferson, wife of Prof. Jefferson, Modin’s “mentor.” Mrs. Jefferson is one of “blest among the blest”. Her life has all the abundance of material fulfilment. Yet she is a tragic figure, like many American women among “the blest” whose life consists of a tedious monotone of affectation and frustration. She has problems like “everybody! Can’t get feelings where she lives.” She suffers the same “epidemic” that has hit all the “blest” among her race – from Carol who took off her panties at the party after smoking hashish and wanted to be “screwed” by Modin, through the fatal Aimée, to Mrs. Jefferson herself. Each suffers the same predicament - inability to feel, to experience emotional fulfilment in their life of atrophy, their world of death-life-olympus-hell. It is a problem which “bothers more girls than most people think,” “reconciles you to the world”, “a personal solution” in “sex, the great co-opter.” “It changes everything,” sex or the fantasy of sex (1974, p. 94).

Mrs. Jefferson, like Aimée, is a symbol of domineering and aggressive sexual behaviour and abuse. Indeed, she is like Aimée in many ways: Aimée as the Kapitan’s wife is like Mrs. Jefferson, the professor’s wife. Both are frustrated wives whose “husbands can’t screw them so they come to black men to get some.” It is wishful thinking and fatal for the black boy to think that such “a white bitch gon be his friend.” The similarities go further. Professor Jefferson, like K. Kapitan Reitsch, cannot satisfy his wife. The Kapitan Reitsch has an African houseboy, named Mwangi; Professor Jefferson has an African student, named Modin. The Kapitan’s wife in her frustration turns to Mwangi for sexual satisfaction; the professor’s wife in her frustration turns to Modin for sexual satisfaction. Both boys are seduced by the women, Mwangi by threats, Modin by an appearance of friendship. The first sexual intercourse between each pair has a kind of “friendly frenzy” about it, the woman in each case, experiencing a kind of joy mixed with “the motions of agony.” The desire of either woman is carnal rather than emotional. In each case the relationship between the white wife and the black boy possesses a kind of sex - violence duality. We recall the “hot” excitement of Mrs. Jefferson when Modin puts his fingers in the juice of her cunt at the back seat of her husband’s car while the husband and the daughter sit in front, the one concentrating on his driving, the other on her reading. In this scene the risk in their intercourse enhances Mrs. Jefferson’s sexual excitement. This episode, together with the last near-fatal sexual encounter between Mrs. Jefferson and Modin, may be referentially set against the last of Aimée’s imaginary sexual fantasies as the Kapitan’s wife with Mwangi when the Kapitan aims his gun at the head of the unsuspecting Mwangi while he enters into her. On both occasions, the white women are conscious of the impending danger which seems to increase their erotic arousal. In both
instances, the scenes are planned in advance with a perverse precision by the white women. In the case of Aimée, everything takes place in her callous imagination (1974, pp.188 – 189).

On the part of Mrs. Jefferson, she first arouses her husband’s jealousy by willfully confessing her adultery with Modin; then, on the night of the incident she wears a scent pleasing to Modin; then finally while her husband is upstairs nursing his depression from her confession, she deliberately lures Modin outside. It is the one night she is most ready for sex, as if the possibilities of sex-violence excite her more. Here is Modin’s own account of the incident: “Make love to me, Modin, please. I’ve been waiting all night.”

At the climax of this prostitution of love, when the noise from inside the house, of glass breaking and metal dropping, gives clear indication of what impends, Mrs. Jefferson holds Modin tighter and whispers: “Don’t spoil it Modin. Someone a bit drunk, that’s all.” (156) What follows is a frenzy of hate and viciousness. Mrs. Jefferson stands by while her husband stabs her victim repeatedly “till the other dancers came and pulled him away.” This bacchanalia of gory sensuality is what is repeated in the desert when Modin meets his destined doom under the seductive spell of Aimée’s fascinating charisma.

To summarize, the role of Mrs. Jefferson, like that of Aimée, in the novel is to demonstrate that there is only one kind of relationship that can exist between a black man and a white woman. It is not the one between slave and mistress but the more sinister one of “carrion fastened to a beast of prey.” Both white females present negative images of lust and violence moulded in wild promiscuity and malignant vampirism and using open seduction as instrument of sexual oppression with potential and capacity to transform isolation into slavery with death as the final destination.

Juxtaposed against this sex-violence affiliation with the white women is the free, natural bond (which even distance cannot obliterate) between Modin and Naita, the Afro-American girl. Naita is not one of “the blest”, she is one of the “vulgar” in the midst of the blest; hence is denied their stale abundance. Because of this, she is different from Aimée and Mrs. Jefferson and does not suffer from the frustration of stale eroticism, the epidemic of the escape-in-sex, the lack of feeling and the general waste of sex-violence emotions. Consequently when she meets Modin, her own blood brother, an “underprivileged” like herself, their relationship is unforced, their sex life natural and their feelings mutual in a free kind of way. From the beginning, she tries to save him from the destruction that surrounds him. She tries, without success, to warn him of their “propaganda,” to point out that most of them are “crooks,” mere “crackers” who want him “feeling all special on account of being with them.” In the end, she gives up and resolves to abandon him because “white folks got him surrounded.” She is not going to waste herself away, waiting for him to learn. She only leaves him a prophetic warning:
Why you talk so dumb all of a sudden? You need sex, take it. But this talk about love and sincerity is just foolishness. I thought you were smart enough so white folks couldn’t get you sick, but you ain’t. That’s just too bad. Their men box you in so you feel all tight and lonely. Then their women move in to pick you clean and you too dumb to know that it’s got nothing to do with love and sincerity. You gon stay that dumb, just stay away from me till you grow up, hear? (1974, p. 134).

For Naita, the confession of love is “silly stuff,” “the white Hollywood way of making speeches about it, but the words don’t go deep.” The only way to confess love is “you just be the way you want to be with me. I’ll know.” This outlook of Naita is contrasted sharply with the free confession of love by the two white women. Ironically, it is when the black victim is at the edge of the sex-violence abyss that such professions of love become profuse. Listen to Mrs. Jefferson by Modin’s bed at the hospital after the assault by her husband: “She looked at her watch. ‘I must go,’ she said. ‘Harry is crazily suspicious these days.’ She wiped her eyes dry. Then she asked: ‘Modin, do you love me? Modin, say you love me. Say it please. Modin, please. Modin... (1974, p.154). And here is Aimée in her sing-song voice at the end of the perverse sexual circus in the desert:

I ask him “Do you love me?”

He didn’t answer me.

“Say you love me, Modin, please.” He wouldn’t say a word to me (1974, p.288).

The dichotomy between Naita and the two white women is further demonstrated in Modin’s first sexual experience with each of them. First with Mrs. Jefferson:

I had seen her, looked at her, found her attractive in that special, almost-too-ripe way. I had not thought she would come to me like this. I too needed someone like her. I wished she were Naita.

She was not. Her love-making made it hard for me to think she was a woman, a mature one. I saw her face. She meant well and her body had some shape, but the way she made love, it was a friendly frenzy, and I could not help it if a part of me stood outside of us, watching her joy that had the motions of agony. She cried as she began reaching her end, and then at the end itself the crying was mixed with real laughter, laughter of a sort I did not know existed within her. Her end was multiple: she seemed to hang there on top of her feeling, to start
dropping and then to rise again as often as I renewed my motion in her. When I also reached my end her laughter ended, she came down from the top, and her tears continued to flow (1974, p. 130).

Expressions like “hurt”, “groped”, “good”, “legs spread apart under the blanket”, “thick juice”, “mound”, “minute pouty lips”, “lubricated spaces”, “cavities”, “unreachable”, “roamed at will inside her”, “hot”, “pulled me directly on top of her”, “wettest”, “slipped in”, “subdued”, “low”, “moaning”, “loud”, etc., mark the language and passage of their love-making.

Modin’s first sexual affair with Aimée is depicted in similar vocabulary:

In other areas we were already becoming friends. So this day I touched her instead of holding the attraction down. I hugged her, and she responded. Her arms felt unnaturally strong as though they were unused to the gentleness of embraces. I wanted to feel her directly. She did not resist me when I began taking off her clothes. She did not help me either. The moment I started removing her clothes she seemed to situate herself somewhere outside what was happening.

Because we had spent such a long time hugging each other, I expected to find her wet when my hand reached her cunt. It was completely dry. I looked at her face. Her eyes had none of that defiant confidence I had at first thought was her natural look. Quickly I looked away. I touched a nipple, playing with it (1974, pp.178-179).

The expressions to note here are: “get out”, “frightened”, “dead”, “dead tissue”, “exciting”, “dormant”, “forced smile”, “wanted to feel”, “come when you feel satisfied”, “clitoris”, “bad”, “smell”, “stink”, “dead sperm”, “awful”, “greedy”, “poro”, “mad”, “happy energy”, “move”, “don’t stop”, “help me”, “dangerous”, “tight”, “crazy with desire”, etc. These words present like echoes and ripples from the experience with Mrs. Jefferson. By way of contrast let us return to Modin’s first sexual encounter with Naita:

In the beginning I thought the feeling came from every part of my body; but I looked at Naita, and she was not touching me. The focus of that feeling was my penis, her vagina was contracting around my penis and then letting go, slowly, easily. No hands could ever imitate that gentleness of feeling. The sweetness filled my body, my head. What was most beautiful. I knew she felt something of my exhilaration with every contraction. We were quiet like that, now how long I cannot
remember, then just when there was nothing I could do to keep myself from moving she said to me.

‘Move in me, Modin, yes.’

I could not have done otherwise no matter how hard I might have wanted to. The motion of my body then was something entirely natural, the unavoidable result of everything Naita had done. We moved together. Each motion told me she felt what I felt. Our end was unforced, natural. She said nothing. I just felt every motion, knew everything.


Expressions like “naked”, “perfect”, “natural”, “wonderful”, “two people…together so freely, so easily”, “relax”, etc., illustrate the richness and freedom of their relationship. Naita therefore represents love, hope and life for Modin; Mrs. Jefferson and Aimée represent hate, doubt and death. Unfortunately, Modin chooses death in place of life.

There are two other women among the “blest” with crucial thematic roles. First is Sylvia, the Portuguese girlfriend of Solo. In the extract below Solo compares her (Sylvia) with Aimée:

The American girl for some reason I could not precisely grasp just then, had reminded me sharply of Sylvia. And yet thinking of her, I realized she was not at all like Sylvia. Sylvia was very feminine, somewhat small, with her virginal face and short dark hair. I had known her, I thought as deeply as she had ever let anyone know her. But whenever I saw her in my mind, her picture had something of a hidden quality about it. She was very gentle, very soft. The American girl looked the opposite of all this. She was big in a tall, bony way. In the Bureau she had moved as if control was something alien to her nature, and her behaviour, her words and her gestures as she talked- all gave a strong impression of a destructive wildness, of a lack of self-control. She seemed the kind of person it would be impossible to share a small space with. Wide, endless expanses, dotted with lifeless things, hard and unbreakable – that would have been the perfect environment for her. And yet she had brought memories of Sylvia so sharply to me (1974, p. 62).

Indeed, Sylvia and Aimée share a common heritage: both are products of Mount Olympus, the blest paradise of the whites. But that is all the similarity; the rest is distinction. While Sylvia embodies the good and human side of Mount Olympus, Aimée
epitomizes the odious and obnoxious side. Sylvia is a respectable member of the white society and cannot be permitted “to throw herself away” on a black man. Aimée is one of the ever-increasing casualties in the system and is best left alone to herself. She is incapable of love, so her sexual escapades are best overlooked. On the other hand, Sylvia’s humanity is evident in her genuine expression of love, and her people would not allow a black man to tamper with her affection. It will be “very foolish” and a “sickness” in Sylvia to believe that she can ever be in love with a black stranger. She is a model of the ideal on Olympus, and she is guarded and guided with careful jealousy and patronage. Her people would not tolerate waywardness on her part. Her relationship with Solo is therefore ruthlessly suppressed, and in the end she jilts Solo and returns to her people. Solo is lucky to have had a Sylvia rather than an Aimée to love, hence when finally the illusion of love wears off, he is left with no bitterness:

It did not come to me as a shocking thing, her going away, when I was able to come out of the vagueness that was everywhere after her departure. Then it seemed such a natural event, that I was amazed at myself – that I could have thought anything else possible (1974, p. 67).

Now a brief look at the bookish Miss Molly Jefferson, one of the “blest” among the blest. She is the very opposite of the sex-starved mother. “She’s serious about her PhD... goes to scholarly conferences with her father. Otherwise she remains on campus.” “She doesn’t seem to notice” or care that her mother looks “so much more attractive” than herself. One of her favourite books which “she doesn’t read for pleasure” is Coming of Age among the Wamakonde. In her state of “blessedness” she looks down on all things of the flesh and studies with cold detachment “the coming of age” of primitive peoples. She has a serious attitude to life, and her only ambition is to achieve that unique vision which alone makes the existence of Eden possible. She is indifferent to the abundance of Olympus; the existence of Olympus is enough for her. On the whole, she is a pathetic victim of the system she is so proud of; she is neither woman nor man but a pitiful automaton – a casualty of the philosophy of the two opposite poles.

Sharply contrasted with the two black men (Solo and Modin) are the white guardians of the Olympian commonwealth, such as Prof. Harry Jefferson and Mr. Richmond Oppenhardt. The pathetic Prof. Jefferson is the brain which makes the system possible, and yet he is another of its victims; without the system’s money his knowledge is impotent and useless. It is a matter of survival, therefore, for him to play the gaping sycophant of those whose money keeps the system going. His heartbreaking affectation is clearly visible in his shameless display of sycophancy at Modin’s first meeting with The Committee:
But the one who smiled consistently was one of the six old men. His shape was different. He was thin, and tall. In everything he said to the others, there was a desire to please. Whenever Mr. Oppenhardt spoke to him, his answer began with a “Sir”. Once Mr. Oppenhardt called him Professor. Otherwise he called him Harry (1974, p. 119).

The tragedy of Professor Jefferson’s situation is that it is the same system which starves him so emotionally that drives his wife into the arms of other men. He and Mr. Oppenhardt are two sides of a single coin. Mr. and Mrs. Richmond Oppenhardt are rich (notice the pun on his first name) and “open-hearted”. Mr. Oppenhardt is a “big hearted man, a very big man”. “People like the Oppenhardts can have a home wherever they want”. It is their money which makes the system work and they are conspicuously conscious of this. The result of this awareness is an inbuilt vanity, a sense of superiority and supremacy. Sometimes their vanity manifests in extreme behavior, almost bordering on the absurd. They affect deep understanding of everything that goes on around them and even believe they know more about the foreign student and his country than the student himself. Their so-called generosity is a demonstration of vanity rather than charity. In their twisted mind, a student from the “underprivileged” world who makes it to America is “unusually intelligent”, and only one of a very few rare specimens. At the first meeting of The Committee, Mr. Oppenhardt advises Modin:

It’s because of your unusual intelligence that you’re here... Don’t ever apologize for that. You have earned everything you’ve got. I hope you’ll continue to earn even more, by recognizing the special intelligence that has set you apart, and never hesitating to use it. (1974, p.120).

The likes of Oppenhardt expect gratitude for their generosity. Ingratitude is rebellion which should not be countenanced. And yet underneath this perceptible power and omnipotence is a disarming impotence. Modin recognizes this emptiness on their first encounter:

I tried to see the old men as highly intelligent beings, but it was impossible. I could only imagine they were powerful, and even that sense was destroyed whenever I looked closely at them. They did not look powerful in themselves. They looked tired, like people who were looking for something to do (1974, pp.120-121).

Ayi Kwei Armah’s verdict on white society is unequivocal. It is a culture saturated with pretensions masquerading as munificence, a people in inertia masked in
vibrancy, a community of inequality parading as privilege. The survival of such a predatory fraternity is sustained in the servility of other races. Indeed the very nature of American civilization betrays this inhuman agenda. Such a caste at the least should be pitied rather than admired. But Armah’s pitiless lash does not fall only on the white race, nor does he blame the Caucasian for every misfortune of the less “privileged”. Armah’s critical censure descends similarly on his black brothers and sisters. In their mad rush to imitate, Blacks cultivate the destructive spirit of competition in which the objective is the color of whiteness with the victor pushing to be as white as possible in attitude and behaviour. The educational process has made it impossible for the average black person to accept African values as worthy of cultivation. Their one ambition is to set themselves as far apart from their own people as possible. If the black person happens to be a half-caste, the better for this process of alienation. For illustration Armah takes us through the world of African freedom fighters with a glimpse of their interpersonal relations. Our example is the relationship between Jorge Manuel (the half-caste) and Esteban Ngulo (the darker African) two revolutionaries who have sworn death to everything white until their country is liberated:

There has always been, to me, something sad in the relationship between Jorge Manuel and Esteban Ngulo, the mulatto and the dark, silent African. Perhaps at first I had not wanted to think of it directly, choosing instead to see them as brothers co-operating in the long fight for our country’s freedom. But how long would it have been possible not to see that the light brother drank spirits upstairs with suave, travellers, while down below the black one licked the tasteless backs of stamps? So the awareness would not bury itself, that here, too, was a division that would exist even when the last of the Portuguese had left Congheria, the ambiguous freedom of Esteban Ngulo to serve while Jorge Manuel consumed the credit and the sweetness. Man and his shadow, I begun to call them in my mind. At times I just sat and thought of them, and all the slogans and the dreams of equality and justice dissolved in my imagination into an endless procession of masters and servants, men who would remain managers and workers even in moments when they were engaged in fighting some third oppressor (1974, pp. 51-52).

Manuel, the revolutionary, keeps a “white-haired American woman” as white and “predatory” as Aimée. Ngulo performs his revolution behind an office desk with envelopes and stamps, while the fighters die everyday on the field. Therefore, in spite of the distinction, the two armchair revolutionaries have more in common with each other than with the fighting men in the field. They stay alive to the very end to enjoy the fruits of freedom, but not “those who offer themselves up to be killed, to be maimed and driven
insane, those who go beyond what is even possible for other human beings in their pursuit of the revolution” (1974, p. 26) In the course of the revolution “all the best ones died.” And many of those left are “cripples, worse off.” The militants who give their lives on the field do not gain in the end. “The militants are the essence ... that also means they are the fuel for the revolution. And the nature of fuel ...something pure, light, even spiritual, which consumes itself to push forward something heavier, far more gross than itself” (1974, p. 27).

The nature of the African Revolution is symbolized by the diagram of “a vehicle moving up a steep incline from one level stretch to another.” Solo himself explains this symbol:

The truck represents society. Any society. Heavy. With the corrupt ones, the opportunists, the drugged, the old, the young, everybody in it. And then there are the militants, pushing the whole massive thing from the lower to the higher level. But they themselves are destroyed in the process (1974, p. 27).

By the end of the revolution, the militants, the real “essence” of the revolution have been destroyed. What is left is a waste land of the crippled, the drugged, the sick, the young, and the old. The corrupt ones, the opportunists, like Manuel and Ngulo, capitalize on this general waste and step in the shoes of the white masters. Neither the militants nor the people gain. Freedom from white domination means power and affluence for the few, disease, poverty and want for the many. An example of such “freedom” is the sad independence of Laccryville.

Witness these two extracts from the daily life of independent Laccryville:

There are the children. Every morning, even before I am up, they are there waiting for me to open my window, waiting to receive anything I may care to give them. I have never been sure about the right way to treat them. At first only one or two came every morning to wake me up with their shrill voices. I gave them money and biscuits, and since then, they have been bringing their brothers and sisters, so that at times I find about a dozen faces smiling expectantly at me when I go to open my window. Money makes them very happy there is no doubt at all about that. I have made a few attempts to find out who they are, but they do not say much. When asked about their families they talk about their mothers. About their fathers they all give the same answer:

There are the real beggars, the grown-up ones. I do not know, and I do not think anyone knows, how many there are in all. There must be at least one for every block, and there are thicker concentrations of them in front of the larger shops and around busy places like the underpass beneath the large square near the university. It is impossible to tell who among these were beggars before the revolution, and who were beggared by the haemorrhage itself... I see in their eyes a deeper knowledge of what it is that is happening to them and a resentment of the fact that they are reduced to begging whilst someone else is elevated to the position of bountiful giver (1974, pp. 16-17).

The name Laccryville from its Latin root (*lacrima* – tears; *villa* – country house) means a place of sorrow, tears, and misery. Laccryville is a nation of fatherless children (whose fathers have been killed in the war of independence) and beggars (who have been reduced to their state of penury by the war in which they participated as militants). The sense of shame which overwhelms Solo whenever he is confronted by these children and beggars demonstrates an awareness of a futile independence in which only the opportunists enjoy any freedom in any real sense. The children and beggars are aware of this unfair state of affairs and they resent the demeaning role they are being forced to play (1974, pp. 15-19).

In Solo’s mind, there is no difference between the present revolution of his country men and women to bring independence to his country, Congheria, and the completed revolution of Laccryville. Men like Manuel and Ngulo are the opportunists of the Congherian revolution. Congheria (echoing Congo and all its political and historical implications?) is currently undergoing a revolutionary process which Laccryville has already experienced in the immediate past during the independence struggle. It is the way of all revolutions in Africa: freedom is won after a long and bloody struggle; but with independence comes the real enslavement of the ordinary people whose toil and selfless sacrifice help to win independence. Wealth and power are concentrated in the hands of the few opportunists; the rest of the population live in abject poverty and filth.

This is the message of the early novels of Ayi Kwei Armah: *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, *Fragments*, *Why are we so blest*, and *Two thousand seasons*. In *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, independence for Ghana means a mad rush for plunder, a life and death struggle to achieve the “gleam.” In *Fragments*, in our “great haste to consume things we have taken neither care nor trouble to produce”, we cultivate the “Cargo Cult Mentality” which in turn hastens our insane rush towards mental and spiritual colonialism. The new God of the African is “much like the one that began the same long destruction of our people when the elders first ... split their own seed and raised half against half, part selling part to hard eyed-buyers from beyond the horizon, breaking buying, selling, gaining, spending till the last of our men sells the last woman to any passing white buyer and himself waits to be destroyed by this great haste to consume things we have taken no care nor trouble to produce”.

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In *Two thousand seasons*, Armah’s fourth novel, he gives a cosmic picture of his worldview. In this novel, Armah reveals to us why the beautiful ones are not yet born, why the present-day life of the African is in fragments and why the white man is so blest. According to Armah in *Two Thousand Seasons*, the condition of the African – the colonial experience and the present state of division and confusion – had long been prophesied by the prophetess, the “far-listening Anoa”. In “her vatic utterance”, (*Two thousand seasons*, 3), “Anoa spoke her prophecy of a thousand seasons and another thousand seasons: a thousand seasons wasted wondering and amazed along alien roads, another thousand spent finding paths to the living way” (1973, p. xv). This living way is the way of “Reciprocity. Not merely taking, not merely offering. Giving, but only to those from whom we receive in equal measure. Receiving, but only from those to whom we give in reciprocal measure” (1973, p. 27).

Again,

Receiving and giving are twins; any attempt at separation is instant death, for “whatever cannot give, whatever is ignorant even of receiving, knowing only taking, that thing is past its own mere death. It is a carrier of death. Woe to the giver on the road to such a taker, for then the victim has found victorious death” (1973, p. xi).

The full impact of the message of *Why are we so blest* is better appreciated in the context of Armah’s vision in his fourth novel, *Two thousand seasons*. The two thousand seasons prophesied by Anoa have been long and tragic. The first colonialists were the white “predators” from the desert (the Arabs) who came as beggars, but gradually with the aid of “the ostentatious cripples” among the natives and those they turned into askaris and zombies, they took the land from the natives. After several hundred seasons of enslavement under these “predators”, the native women rebelled and threw off the Arab yoke. But even with the Arab defeat, the Africans were still far from their way and after a series of upheavals the majority of the natives who did not want the Arabs back decided to migrate further south to find new land. The trek down south was long and hazardous, with treachery and betrayal as constant companions. But being conscious of their “living way”, the natives marched on undaunted till they finally reached the new land, the fertile land near the sea. Here would have been an ideal paradise for the practice of the way of reciprocity. But Anoa’s prophecy had not yet fully matured. The natives had not long settled by the fertile land near the sea when the most ambitious and greedy among the people brought forward the idea of kingship. These were “the ostentatious cripples” who “turned the honoured position of caretakers into plumage for their infirm selves”, and “in the course of generation imposed themselves on a people too weary of strife to think of halting them.” In the course of time, these “ostentatious cripples”, now turned kings, sold
their people to “destruction’s whiteness” and gave the fertile land to the “white destroyers” from the sea, all to satisfy their insane greed for the white man’s “things”.

The result is the slave trade and European colonialism. Nor has the wave of African political independence ushered in a return to the lost way. The two thousand seasons of sufferings and search for the lost way, are not yet over. The final return to the way will not be easy; the road to the way must be learnt and understood before the natives can “destroy the destroyers”; for

Our way is reciprocity. The way is wholeness. Our way knows no oppression. The way destroys oppression. Our way is hospitable to guests. The way repels destroyers. Our way produces before it consumes. The way produces far more than it consumes. Our way creates. The way destroys only destruction (1973, p. 62).

The African way is unity and amity rather than division and hostility:

Ours is a companionship of the mind willing to find our way again against the luring softness of immediate situations made garish by the white destroyers, the better to blind unwary lookers; ours is a companionship of the spirit willing to use its energy to survive the immediate hardness of efforts to find liberating paths to our way, the way” (1973, pp. 283-284).

Of course there are setbacks caused by the Africans themselves: “Anxiety there is: always there are those spirits forever hypnotized, eternally trapped to work for the white destroyers, their wills a plaything in alien hands. Always they will be thrown against us” (1973, p. 299). But in the end, Ayi Kwei Armah’s final message is a prophecy of hope and inevitable fulfilment:

Against this what a vision of creation yet unknown, higher, much more profound than all erstwhile creation! What a hearing of the confluence of all the waters of life flowing to overwhelm the ashen desert’s blight! What an utterance of the coming together of all the people of our way, the coming together of all the people of the way (1973, p. 321).

In his first four novels Ayi Kwei Armah chronicles the history of his people in a cosmic vision. In this vision, past, present, and future are juxtaposed in the prism of vatic utterance: before the Whites arrived, Africans had their own “way”, their own culture, institutions, etc. The white people came to destroy all that and replaced them with their own alien values. The only survival of the black people therefore is to reject these alien
values and return to their own way. This is a difficult thing since “there are those spirits” among the Africans that are forever “hypnotized, eternally trapped” by “the luring softness” of the white man’s “things.” The final triumph of the way is, however, inevitable. It will surely come at the end of *Two thousand seasons*. 
References

Responding to Robert Wolff’s *In Defense of Anarchism*

**Emmanuel Ifeanyi Ani**  
*Lecturer, Department of Philosophy and Classics, University of Ghana, Legon*

**Abstract**

While I partly agree with earlier responses to Wolff’s anarchist proposal, I find them inadequate or counter-productive in one way or another. Partly in contrast and partly to supplement, I object to Wolff’s argument that individual autonomy is incompatible with state authority by arguing that this incompatibility is negated if individual autonomy is represented by internal moral and practical convictions for obeying state command. I fault Wolff’s avoidance of contractualism and his presentation of state as alien, and show that his definition of authority is actually a definition of power. I object to Wolff’s assumption that men are purely rational animals, and that rationality is the only component of human decisions, which is foundational to his proposal that men can exist without state or social organization. I argue that Wolff’s *de jure* attack on state ricochets into individual autonomy: if there is no state in the ideal sense, it is because there is no individual autonomy in the ideal sense.

**Keywords:** anarchism, state authority, individual autonomy, freedom, responsibility

**Wolff’s *In Defense of Anarchism***

In his famous book, *In defense of anarchism* (1970), Robert Paul Wolff seeks to show that political authority contradicts individual autonomy. He begins by clarifying the respective concepts (authority and autonomy). He defines authority as “the right to command, and correlative, the right to be obeyed” (Wolff, 1970, p. 3). He distinguishes this from power, which he sees as the ability to compel compliance, either through the use or the threat of force. According to him, we would hand over our items to a thief, not because he has authority, but because the fate which he threatens might be more than the loss of money that we are made to suffer (1970, p. 3).
Importantly, Wolff (1970) wants us to take seriously the distinction between claiming authority and having authority: “To claim authority is to claim the right to be obeyed. To have authority is then -- what? It may mean to have that right, or it may mean to have one's claim acknowledged and accepted by those at whom it is directed” (p. 4).

Wolff also takes care to distinguish between the descriptive and normative senses of the concept of authority. Descriptively, there may be lots of practical reasons why we should obey a political authority (like law and order, peace and security, etc.) but these do not settle the normative question of whether the political contraption has legitimate authority, that is, whether it has the normative right to command, and can (normatively) claim the right to be obeyed. Wolff raises his stakes by making this clarification: “Obedience is not a matter of doing what someone tells you to do. It is a matter of doing what he tells you to do because he tells you to do it” (1970, p. 6). So why, Wolff asks, do men obey authority? Wolff suggests three reasons. The first is tradition: “The fact that something has always been done in a certain way strikes most men as a perfectly adequate reason for doing it that way again” (1970, p. 5). The second is that people, by virtue of their extraordinary characteristics or charisma, gather followers and acquire the ability to command and be obeyed. The third source of perceived authority is today’s bureaucratic positions (the image of a man or woman in uniform is one such instance). But for Wolff:

That men accede to claims of supreme authority is plain. That men ought to accede to claims of supreme authority is not so obvious. Our first question must therefore be, under what conditions and for what reasons does one man have supreme authority over another? The same question can be restated, under what conditions can a state (understood normatively) exist? (1970, p. 8).

This leads Wolff to distinguish between de facto and de jure authority. De facto means that something actually exists (it is a fact); de jure means that it is right or lawful, existence or no existence. Since there are men who acknowledge claims to authority, there are de facto states, but can we prove a de jure state? Wolff (1970) reminds us that: “All normative concepts are non empirical, for they refer to what ought to be rather than to what is. Hence, we cannot justify the use of the concept of (normative) supreme authority by presenting instances” (p. 6).

Wolff also takes care to distinguish between authority and persuasive argument:

When I am commanded to do something, I may choose to comply even though I am not being threatened, because I am brought to believe that it is something which I ought to do. If that is the case, then I am not, strictly speaking, obeying a command, but rather acknowledging the
force of an argument or the tightness of a prescription. The person who issues the “command” functions merely as the occasion for my becoming aware of my duty, and his role might in other instances be filled by an admonishing friend, or even by my own conscience (1970, p. 4–5).

This leads Wolff to tackle the concept of individual autonomy, in which we see Kant’s influence. Wolff begins with the fundamental assumption in moral philosophy that men and women are responsible for their actions. Taking responsibility for actions results from (1) freedom to take decisions, and (2) ability to reason out decision to take from alternatives. For example, mad men and women are deprived of free will while children are deprived of mature reason (Wolff, 1970, p. 8). Taking responsibility for decisions and actions does not come from mere ability to choose, but also from increasing one’s capacity to choose, which lays upon one the burdens of gaining knowledge, reflecting on motives, predicting outcomes, criticizing principles, and so on. But the shortage or lack of these does not preclude taking responsibility for one’s actions. Thus, an individual is alone the judge of his/her own moral constrains, he/she is self-legislating, he/she may listen to advice from others, but makes it his/her own by determining whether it is good advice. In short, individuals are autonomous (1970, p. 9). Here is the heart of Wolff’s anarchism:

As Kant argued, moral autonomy is a combination of freedom and responsibility; it is a submission to laws which one has made for oneself. The autonomous being, insofar as he/she is autonomous, is not subject to the will of another. They may do what another tells them, but not because they have been told to do it. They are therefore, in the political sense of the word, free (1970, p. 14).

Wolff notes that in as much as autonomy is to take responsibility for one’s actions (and decisions), subjects frequently forfeit their autonomy at will, by deciding to obey the commands of another without the attempt to determine for themselves whether that command is good or wise. But this should not be confused with the false assertion that an individual can give up responsibility for their actions, for even after they have subjected themselves to the will of another, they remain responsible for what they do (1970, pp. 9-10).

Wolff also notes that taking responsibility for one’s actions means taking the final decisions about what one should do. Thus for the “autonomous man”, there is no such thing, strictly speaking, as a command (1970, p. 10). Now, it will be more productive to quote in verbatim Wolff’s major thesis:
The defining mark of the state is authority, the right to rule. The primary obligation of man is autonomy, the refusal to be ruled. It would seem, then, that there can be no resolution of the conflict between the autonomy of the individual and the putative authority of the state. Insofar as a man fulfils his obligation to make himself the author of his decisions, he will resist the state's claim to have authority over him. That is to say, he will deny that he has a duty to obey the laws of the state simply because they are the laws. In that sense, it would seem that anarchism is the only political doctrine consistent with the virtue of autonomy (1970, p. 18).

Wolff concludes this thesis by noting that if all human beings have a continuing obligation to achieve the highest degree of autonomy possible, then there would appear to be no state whose subjects have a moral obligation to obey its commands. Hence for him, political authority is a logical contradiction, the concept of a de jure legitimate state seems to be vacuous, and philosophical anarchism would seem to be the only reasonable political belief for an “enlightened man” (1970, p. 12).

**Responses to Wolff’s In Defense of Anarchism**

Wolff’s *In defense of anarchism* has provoked responses. The most sustained of these is Jeffrey Reiman’s book *In defense of political philosophy*. Reiman begins by telling us the background that motivated Wolff’s position by explaining that there is a difference between the politics of a nation (day-to-day decisions and actions of politicians) and its political imagination (that sense of the connection between the real and the ideal, possible and utopian, which is felt before it is reasoned out [Reiman 1972: xiii]). The American popular political imagination (political ideals) was under attack from rising inequality. Those for whom affluence is the realization of a personal dream sensed little tension between the real and the ideal in American institutions, but those for whom poverty was a fact of life felt a painful distance between these two positions (American popular political imagination and reality). The youthful President John Kennedy, who represented the last attempt to heal this breach, was assassinated, and those who succeeded him made it clear that the business of politics is power (1972: xiv). The change in political imagination was great, from the identification of the real and the ideal to their radical separation, and Wolff’s defense of anarchism, emerging from this background of growing political skepticism, became its most well received philosophical expression.

However, Reiman distinguishes between moral and political authority, and argues that what Wolff denies is moral authority. Reiman agrees that moral authority can
be denied, and argues that, indeed, the notion of moral authority is redundant and meaningless, since it implies creating by fiat other people’s moral duties, regardless of their decisions to their moral duties (1972, p. xx). The notion of moral authority is like conceiving of a “wild-card morality” demanding that one should have a moral obligation to do something, while the nature of that something can be filled in later (1972, p. 2), it implies a duty to do something not because of what it is but because of where it comes from (God, King, Law, or Father), it entails a moral obligation to something with indifference to the moral nature of that action (1972, p. 3). But Reiman asks if we see a work of art as beautiful simply because its artist said so, or if we see an argument as correct simply because the proponent of the argument said it is correct (1972, pp. 3-4). He does not think so, and he argues that just as the truth of a conclusion comes from the nature of an argument and the beauty of a painting comes from an art work itself, so the moral obligatoriness of an action comes from the nature of the action itself. And since moral obligatoriness enjoins us to do what is right rather than what people say, Reiman takes this to mean that moral autonomy is an essential component of moral obligation (1972, p. 2). Only a morally autonomous individual could entertain moral reasons and be persuaded by them as to his moral obligation…Moral autonomy is a component of acting out of moral obligation itself (1972, p. 7).

So, argues Reiman, it is not only that the notion of moral authority is a contradiction (1972, p. 4), moral authority and moral autonomy are strictly incompatible (1972, p. xxi). Here, Reiman seems to be on the same page with Wolff, but Reiman then proceeds to state his case against Wolff. Reiman argues that what the state has is not moral authority, and that Wolff is conflating the political with the moral realm (1972, p. xxii), indeed, that Wolff wants to swallow political philosophy into moral philosophy (1972, p. xxvi). Reiman argues that what the state has is political (rather than moral) authority, and that the commands of a state are legally, not morally, binding (1972, p. xxv). He explains this by saying that a state can be legitimate without its commands or laws necessarily constituting the moral duty of its citizens, and that an individual can be under a legitimate legal obligation even when he is under a moral obligation to break the law (p. xxv)\(^1\). In fact for Reiman, moral authority entails making the final decisions about what one should do, but political authority entails having the liberty to act upon the decisions one has made. To seal this argument, Reiman argues that coercion is the key to the meaning of the state (1972, pp. xxiv; pp. 20-21). To reconcile this with the issue of morality, Reiman argues that the legitimacy of a state can only be judged from the moral result of coercion, the moral test of the legitimacy of the state lies in the moral consequences of the existence of political authority (1972, p. xxx), and this moral test can

\(^1\)Reiman uses “legal” and “political” interchangeably (1972, p. 21).
be augmented by asking and answering: what will be the moral consequences of alternative political systems, or the absence of a political system (1972, p. 18). Reiman thus tells us that, had Wolff seen that moral authority is meaningless, he might have seen that seeking legitimate political authority defined in terms of moral authority is equally meaningless (1972, p. 5).

On the whole, I consider Reiman’s response to be bold, even if a bit reactionary. Let me point out some reservations that I have about Reiman’s refutation attempts. In distinguishing moral from political authority, and in defining political authority as deriving its essence from the use of force (1972, p. 20), Reiman does nothing to assuage the very kinds of skepticism that he sees as fueling proposals like Wolff’s. Reiman says this:

Indeed, coercion is the key to the meaning of the state…Moral autonomy entails making the final decisions about what one should do. Political autonomy entails having the liberty to act upon the decisions one has made. A defense of political autonomy can be a defense against coercion, against the authority of the state, but a defense of moral autonomy cannot – because one is not more morally autonomous when one is less coerced. I am not less able to make the final decision about what I should do when I can do nothing (1972, p. xxiv).

Of every other possible argument that can be made in defence of the existence of the legitimacy of the state, this is the kind of argument that Reiman thinks fit to make to assuage the growing political skepticism that he so clearly identified in Wolff’s societal background. In fact, Reiman seems to go too far when he adopts this argument from Thomas McPherson: politics is not a branch of ethics, just as ethics is not a branch of politics, the plain man recognizes differences between the political game and the moral game (Reiman, 1972, p. 17). This is not necessary to refute Wolff. After denying that a political system should have binding moral effects on its citizens, Reiman argues that a political system should be judged according to its moral effects. Both arguments (politics is not ethics, but political systems should be judged with moral consequences) are unhealthily juxtaposed, and the contradiction emerges in this passage from Reiman: “The political system represented by a state is the system of the conditions distinguishing acceptable from unacceptable behavior, and thus the conditions under which the state will exercise physical force as a last resort to prevent or punish or discourage unacceptable behavior”. But how different is “acceptable behavior” from moral acts? Given that what counts as moral is decided by human beings, will the same themes not underlie their determination of what is “acceptable”? This seems like playing into Wolff’s hands.

In responding to the charge of de jure illegitimacy against the state leveled by Wolff, Reiman argues that it is impossible for a legal and political system to yield
principles that will always have moral results (1972, p. 26). When you introduce words like “always” (as just cited), “not inevitable” (Reiman, 1972, p. 44) or “perhaps not even usual” (Reiman, 1972, p. 44), you are discussing in *de facto* rather than *de jure* terms. But Wolff is not interested in this *de facto* rendition of political authority. Wolff addresses *de jure* political authority. So when Wolff says that political authority is illegitimate *de jure*, Reiman replies by asking whether *de facto* political authority is illegitimate. Reiman does not meet Wolff on Wolff’s platform, which is because Reiman frequently conflated the state *de jure* (the state should exist) with *de facto* states (states actually exist). The *de facto* appeal can be seen in Reiman’s employment of terms like “most states…” and “must do with ‘second best’” (1972, p. 27) in his book.

Although Reiman generally thinks that the political and the moral can overlap (1972, p. 43), he thinks that the political derives its meaning from *not being* moral. Read him: “to ask…that for a political system to be legitimate it must yield commands which are the same moral commands that all its citizens would autonomously give themselves is to ask that a political system stop being political in order to be legitimate *[emphasis in the original]* (1972, pp. 28-29). A little later, he says: “Political systems start from the assumption that some forms of behavior must be prevented, even if they are conscientiously chosen. *This is the logic of political systems* *[emphasis in the original]* (1972, p. 29). But this is precisely why Wolff sees political systems as illegitimate. In criticizing Wolff, Reiman’s argument has the general effect of presenting the state as a primarily coercive instrument. Although no one denies that this is one of the functions of a state, this is precisely the kind of refutation that strengthens the perspective projected by selfish political leaders (cited by Reiman himself) that the business of politics is power.

Revealingly, Reiman further submits: “It is by failing to see that real human moral autonomy, as opposed to the concept of moral autonomy, depends on political autonomy because it depends on power…that Wolff gives us an anarchism without a political program” (1972, p. 75) ; “As soon as the relationships between autonomy to power and of power to society are granted, then the conceptual anti-thesis of autonomy and authority is revealed as a mere abstraction” (1972, p. 75) ; “In reality, moral autonomy depends on political autonomy ; It depends on the availability of power” (1972, p. 76) ; “Power is the subterranean tunnel which links autonomy with authority” (1972, p. 75). Thus, Reiman does little to calm the very conceptions and fears that ground Wolff’s denial of political authority. On the whole, we can credit Reiman with a beautiful distinction between moral authority and moral obligation, even though this distinction had an effect of clarifying (if not strengthening) Wolff’s position and concerns.

Another attempt to refute Wolff’s conception of political authority is Rex Martin’s “Defense of Philosophical Anarchism” (1974, pp. 140-149). Martin devotes his essay to contradictions in Wolff’s denial of *de jure* political authority by trying to show that most of Wolff’s arguments show that Wolff is denying authority on *de facto* rather
than *de jure* grounds. According to Martin, “let us take it that what Wolff’s philosophical anarchist is claiming is not that it is logically impossible for a government to have a rightful authority but rather that it is factually impossible, for reasons physical or, perhaps, psychological” (1974, p. 143). Secondly, Martin argues that Wolff misunderstood political obligation to be political authority, and that his arguments against political authority easily translate into arguments against political obligation (1974, p. 145), and that these arguments are made on the presumption that there is an analytical connection between political authority and political obligation, a connection that has been presumed by prominent philosophers, including Socrates, and to a lesser degree, Kant, Hobbes, and Locke (1974, p. 144). Martin then distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic obligation: an obligation is intrinsic when it is a feature of the theory of the political system itself, such as the obligation that good citizenship in a rights-producing state involves strict commitment to abide by the laws that define those rights (1974, p. 144). An obligation is extrinsic if it requires an extra-systematic feature to ground it, like being obligated to laws because they are divinely commanded, or simply because they are laws, or because one has taken an oath to obey laws. Martin argues that extrinsic grounds of obligation never create strict obligations to obey laws *qua* laws (1974, p. 144), and argues that Wolff’s rendition of obligation is based on extrinsic grounding (1974, p. 145). Martin concedes that if the anarchist’s case is made on extrinsic grounds, it is an impeccable one. If, however, it is made on intrinsic grounds, the anarchist’s case is still strong, but inconclusive: he can show that most theoretical systems of politics will not support obligation in the strong (extrinsic?) sense that the anarchist is interested in, but he cannot show that every system that has been advanced historically is unable intrinsically to support obligation (1974, p. 147). Martin argues that Wolff’s case against extrinsic obligation is conclusive, but begs the question, and as such is simplistic.

Returning to the concept of authority, Martin denies that there is any analytical connection between political authority and political obligation (1974, p. 147). As an example, he argues that the statement “This government has authority but the citizen does not have to obey each and all of its laws” is not self-contradicting (1974, p. 147). Martin recalls that authority means having a rightful license to issue rules with a presumption of compliance or the possession of possible title(s) to back these rules with threats and even the use of force. He argues then that it is possible to disobey a law without using coercive force or without claiming that the law is invalid, just as it is possible for a citizen to be strictly bound to laws of a government that does not have rightful authority (1974, p. 148). Martin relies on these analogies to show that the analytical connection between authority and obligation is false. But I am not convinced of Martin’s denial of analytical connection between authority and obligation, since Martin uses instances of disobedience as well as instances of wrongful or unjustified obedience to demonstrate his position. Thus, when Martin says that Wolff has made a successful case against obligation but not a successful
one against authority (1974, p. 148), Martin has not demonstrated it, and a more straightforward refutation of Wolff’s conception of political authority is still needed. Indeed, Martin’s acceptance of the success of Wolff’s denial of political obligation is symptomatic of a general consensus among political philosophers, including anti-anarchists. In his book *Three anarchical fallacies* (the second major response to Wolff after Reiman), William Edmundson (1998) considers the anarchist objection to political obligation to be so strong that rectifying it is not the answer to restoring the concept of legitimate political authority. Rather, Edmundson thinks that the only way to defend political authority is by modifying two major premises of the anarchists, which are contained as the first and second of the argument of philosophical anarchism thus:

i. A state is legitimate only if it claims to impose and, in fact, does impose on its subjects a general, at least prima facie, duty to obey its laws.

ii. There is no general, even prima facie, duty to obey the laws of a state, not even those of a just state.

iii. Legitimate states are not only possible, but actual (Edmundson 1998, p. 8).

Edmundson considers this triadic argument to be inconsistent because the truth of any pair of the three [propositions] entails the falsity of the third (1998, p. 8). Philosophical anarchists will see the first two as correct and therefore deny the third, while many anti-anarchists will affirm propositions one and three by denying two. But to deny two is to propound a credible theory of political obligation, which Edmundson not only sees as impossible, but advocates for a separation of propositions two from one, that is, to divorce the issue of the legitimacy of political authority from the issue of the obligation of citizens to obey state laws. Edmundson executes this “divorce” by simply modifying the first and second premises to shift attention from the duty to obey laws to the duty to not interfere with their enforcement. Hence, Edmundson’s modified argument reads:

i. A state is legitimate if it claims to impose on its subjects a general, at least prima facie, duty to obey its laws and its subjects have a general prima facie duty not to interfere with their enforcement.

ii. There may be no general, even prima facie, duty to obey the laws of a state, not even those of a just state; but there is a general prima facie duty not to interfere with the administration of the laws of a just state.

iii. Legitimate states are not only possible, but actual.

Edmundson (1998) considers this modification an effective refutation of philosophical anarchism because, according to him, “the duty to obey the law and the duty not to interfere with the administration of the law are quite different” (p. 49).
example, there may be no general obligation to obey traffic laws, but there is a general
duty not to resist traffic police (Dagger, 2000, p. 398), it may be hard to see how one has
a duty to obey the law, but it is not hard to see that we have a duty to stop for the traffic
cop (Edmundson, 1998, p. 50). So Edmundson thinks that philosophical anarchism
commits a fallacy when it argues from failure of political obligation that no state is
legitimate. But, as Dagger rightly argues, the duty to not resist administrative prerogatives
(or administrative officers) derives from, relies on, or collapses into, a general obligation
to obey the law (Dagger, 2000, pp. 405-406). We stop for the policeman because he is an
officer of the law (Dagger, 2000, p. 402). It is not the other way around: we do not obey
the law because it derives from the policeman or lawman. But concerning Wolff’s
proposal, this distinction between law and administrative prerogative (or officers) does
not matter. Dagger rightly observes that it can respond to a posteriori anarchisms, such
as that shown by John Simmons (a state can be legitimate, but existing states are yet
to prove this [2009:4]), but it is useless against the a priori philosophical anarchism of Wolff
who holds that authority is antithetical to autonomy, and that for the autonomous man,
there is no such thing, strictly speaking, as a command (Wolff 1970, p. 10; Dagger, 2000,
p. 403).

The second of the three fallacies which Edmundson responds to is what he sees
as the unwarranted presumption that law is coercive. He argues that we take this
presumption for granted (Edmundson, 1998, p. 73) but it leads to anarchy because what
we regard as coercive we regard as prima facie illegitimate, and what is not coercive is
presumed to be in order (1998, p. 73). So, Edmundson responds to this “fallacy” by
seeking to show that the law is not coercive, except in extraordinary circumstances. He
deploys a two-pronged description of coercion that rests on the concepts of choice and
wrongfulness. It goes like this:

A coerces B to R if and only if (1) A’s proposal creates a choice
situation for B such that B has no reasonable alternative but to R and
(2) it is wrong for A to make such proposal to B.

Edmundson then argues that there is nothing wrongful in the requirements of the
law, and even contends that those who hold a non-moralized concept of law rely covertly
on moral notions (1998, p. 123). So when one says that the law is coercive, according to
Edmundson, the person is saying that legal requirements are wrongful, but legal
requirements are not wrongful, so we must reject the concept of the law as coercive.

It seems to me that this kind of response from Edmundson puts political
philosophy into the further jeopardy of defending an understanding of the state that is
becoming increasingly dependent upon the concept of coercion. Not only does he give up
on defending the concept of political obligation, he also takes the kind of refuge that
Reiman takes in the concept of coercion, this time by seeking to strip coercion of any negative meaning. But as Dagger (2000: 401-2) notes, it seems odd for Edmundson to embark on the ambitious task of stripping a word like coercion of its traditional meaning, just because of anarchism. For instance, it runs contrary to Hardin’s use of the same word in his recommendation of “mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon by the majority of the people affected” (Hardin, 1968, p. 1247; Dagger, 2000, p. 401) which implies that the word “coercion” is not necessarily a morally wrong concept as Edmundson seeks to show.

Edmundson, however, contributes to refuting philosophical anarchism when he responds to his third perceived fallacy: another presumption that divides morality into two spheres, the outer sphere in which wrongs can be addressed by law, and an inner sphere where law cannot apply. This inner sphere is commonly associated with privacy, and seems to underlie much of the debate about privacy (Edmundson, 1998, p. 127). Edmundson argues for a disappearance of this divide resulting in a kind of coincidence scenario in which what morality requires and what law requires become the same (1998, p. 128). His reason for this is that every moral requirement permits some form of social enforcement, even if the enforcement is as mild as a sharp word or a disapproving glance. Secondly, all moral requirements are social requirements, making the notion of a private moral requirement a bit nonsensical (1998, p. 400). Legal enforcement is a form of social enforcement (1998, p. 157). He notes that this proposal to collapse this divide will predictably lead to politically bloody debates about what is morally wrong (1998, p. 176), but he argues that this event must be braved since morality and prudence, not privacy, should be the standards.

I agree with Edmundson on this point, since this public versus private morality dichotomy seems to fuel proposals of anarchism. Morality ought to be seen for what it is: a socially engineered set of rules for living together in community, something without which it would be difficult for human beings to live smoothly together. Seen in this way, the whole concept of morality depends on human organization, and the entire issue of human organization in turn leads us back to contractual theories of governance.

I also find valuable an attempt to demolish Wolff’s authority-autonomy antinomy by Patrick O’Neil in his article, “The Inadequacy of Paul Wolff’s Authority-Autonomy Antimony” (O’Neil, 1970, p. 1-5). But I will prefer to feature this contribution a little later in this paper, where I argue that O’Neil’s reference to internal moral considerations for obeying authority is admirable but incomplete, and should also be supplemented with what I call internal practical considerations for obeying authority.
Responding to Wolff’s *In Defense of Anarchism*

Let me now proceed with responses that I feel are, in contrast to earlier responses to Wolff, quite rudimentary, simple and clear to Wolff’s defense of anarchism. I will group my responses to Wolff into sections for clarity and logical sequence.

**Reconsidering Wolff’s Definition of Authority**

We might need to reconsider Wolff’s (1970) definition of (obedience to) authority as “not a matter of doing what someone tells you to do. It is a matter of doing what he tells you to do because he tells you to do it” (p. 6). This definition of authority is not distinguishable from the definition of power. What this sort of authority needs is blind obedience. And the only reason why obedience here does not need to be morally or practically justified is because it either comes with a threat of force or is directed at a moron. If it comes with a threat of force, it is content to rely on this threat alone. And it is this sort of definition (doing what someone tells you exclusively because he/she says so and excluding any moral or practical personal considerations) that leads him/her to conclude that authority and individual autonomy are incompatible. If Wolff’s concept of authority is that I do something for no other reason than that an authority tells me to do it, then such authority is receding in contemporary social life. As democratization and its associated behaviors develop, obedience to authority is becoming more and more conditional (as heralded by John Locke in his *Two treatises of government* with his notion of conditional sovereignty). Thus, authority is faced with the increasing imperative to align more and more with natural law, morality, practical considerations, and “wishes of the masses,” in order to continue to exist.

In consequence, we may be faced with two different conceptions of authority: if authority has to do with (1) obeying a command for no other reason than that it is issued by someone in authority, then this kind of authority is becoming less and less representative of the general state of affairs in society. As I said, this sort of authority is content either to rely solely on the threat of the use of force or to elicit the compliance of a fanatically non-reflective recipient. But people in authority face increasing compulsion to provide justifications for their commands to their subjects. These justifications are provided to make their subjects obey their commands not simply because they are commands (backed by threats of the use of force), but to furnish them with independently moral or/and practical reasons for deciding to go along with such commands. So if authority has to do with (2) obeying a command both because it is issued by authority and that it coincides with natural law, moral law, practical imperatives or something I otherwise believe in, then such a concept of authority is becoming more and more representative of what authority looks like in contemporary social life. Note that this includes authority that is backed by threat of the use of force, but the important distinction
is that this authority is not content with this threat, seeks to accompany it with “reasons,” and thus routinely relegates it (the threat) to the background.

Let me further consider these two conflicting conceptions of authority in relation to individual autonomy:

(1) Authority that does not need any meditation on the part of the recipient, and thus undermines individual autonomy, especially in repressive governance like the old authoritarian regimes, and

(2) Authority that accommodates intellectual considerations on the part of the recipient, and is thus created to enhance individual autonomy like that in participatory democracy.

The desire for (2) often leads to revolt against (1). The reasons for the command for obedience by (1) and (2) are very different. While the individual is obliged to obey (2) because she is a participating co-author of (2) for reasons of enhancing her freedom, life and property, the individual is only obliged to obey (1) by myth of divinity and royalty (regarding monarchies) or out of fear (dictatorships).

Now let us ask: which conception of authority is Wolff operating with? If he meant (1) then his anarchist theory is collapsible regarding democracy. If he meant (2), then his concept of authority vis-à-vis individual autonomy is misplaced. Either way, the anarchist proposal seems collapsible.

Nonetheless, I still object to describing the “repressive” conception of authority (1 above) as “authority.” Let me illuminate this with another distinction, this time between internal and external reasons for obeying a command from authority. Internal reasons for obeying such a command will include personal moral and practical considerations, while external reason will have to be nothing except the fear of consequences or use of force. My suggestion here is: authority must compel both internal and external reasons for obedience. Whatever compels obedience only externally is power, not authority.

Correcting Wolff’s Definition of the State

Let us consider Wolff’s definition of the state. According to him (Wolff, 1970), “The state is a group of persons who have and exercise supreme authority within a given territory. Strictly, we should say that a state is a group of persons who have supreme authority within a given territory or over a certain population” (p. 3). By this definition, Wolff considers the state as only a group of persons in power, it does not include the subjects. Thus he confuses “state” with “government.” But a state is composed of both a government and its subjects in a territory. In objection to Wolff, I would suggest that a state is a polity made of citizens and their rulers. Wolff’s definition applies rather to
dictatorial and unrepresentative political structures where the ruled are not regarded as a part of the equation. To consider democracy is to redefine a state as “a sovereign territorial organization of citizens who elect public servants to manage their affairs and help in their protection.” This kind of state does not issue “commands” that are alien to the moral consciences of the recipients and to be blindly obeyed (which is Wolff’s central concern regarding the loss of autonomy). This state is rather a polity of inclusive collective decisions that bear the authorship of its citizens, either directly in choosing its leaders, or indirectly in representation. These days, scholars talk of citizens acquiring more direct authorship of laws and policies, not just through election, but through public deliberation. If what Wolff chooses to call “command” is actually just a reminder to the citizen of a law, principle or policy that she co-authored, it means the contradiction between authority and individual autonomy is disproved.

The Alienist Conception of State

Wolff’s position thus reflects the anarchist conception of the state as something of an alien imposition. Clearly lacking from the anarchist view is the orientation that the state is within the society, and that it is individuals like you and me that constitute it. This alienist conception of the state feeds the premise that individual autonomy is discontinuous with state legitimacy. But if we adopt the contractualist conception of the state as an aggregation of the wills of individuals, then it becomes possible to see the state and its laws as existing, not to take away, but to enhance, individual autonomy.

The Question of Reason

Anarchists generally present “reason” and “state” as two options from which we must choose one. The anarchist projection is a society which will be free from authority and governed by cooperation based on rational freedom. Specifically, the anarchists argue that reason should replace state, figuratively speaking. This rendition makes one to believe that human life is governable by pure reason. But the following questions could interrogate this: Is reason fallible? Can reason not make mistakes? If (and when) reason makes mistakes, what happens? Is reason the sole controller of actions? What about feelings, emotions, prejudice and greed? Is a man’s reason so autonomous that it is completely self-reliant? Does it not need review and contributions from the reasons of others? It does not strike me that the answering of these questions will lead to a conception that we can be governed purely by reason. Ani (2014) has argued regarding deliberation and consensus that deliberation is not a purely rational activity. I might as well add that the business of life itself cannot be a purely rational activity. If this could conceivably be true, then there must be common community or at least inter-personal instruments for checking short-falls of reason.
Reason and Justice

What determines justice? We could all say: reason. Does this mean that we can do without authority? Anarchists will say: Yes. But this conclusion relies upon a judgment that is valid but not sound, such as:

- Reason is the source of justice.
- All men have reason.
- Reason (not the state) should govern men’s actions.

The argument above seems valid, but its unsoundness stems from the second premise. It is true that all men have reason, but to have reason is not the same as to utilize it or to use it properly. The second problem with the second premise is that all men may have reason, but it is not only reason that all men have. Men are not just purely rational beings, and hence, reason is not the only component in reaching decisions. The third problem is that reason can be used unjustly. Many people make very unjust decisions, which is the reason for crime rates as well as Hobbes’ grim depiction of the state of nature or what a lawless society could look like.

The Ideal and Real Worlds

As we see in our analysis of reason, anarchic theory would not be a bad idea in an ideal conception of moral rationality. In the real world, however, the replacement of state with individual moral reason will possibly mean that whilst some people will be counted on to make proper individual moral choices, some others may be counted upon to make the worst kinds of personal moral choices, including those detrimental to others. It is not far-fetched to suppose that some would kill, maim and do all manner of vile deeds against their fellow humans. The early nineteenth century struggle by many states to curtail large organized crime networks, as well as current battles against human trafficking, are indicative of this. It is not clear that the propagators of these crimes are practicing something different from their moral choices. In fact, I dare to imagine that if real anarchy is unleashed, it is not unrealistic to imagine that the same proponents of anarchist theory will conceivably call for a more ordered society.

De Jure and De Facto

The success of Wolff’s argument is derived from his distinction between de facto and de jure situations. As a matter of fact (which means de facto), states exist, but ideally (de jure), individual autonomy renders them unnecessary. However, the de factode jure
distinction is also the source of the weakness of this argument. Ideally \textit{(de jure)}, individual autonomy means that the individual is capable of taking decisions that leave nothing to be desired, in other words, perfect decisions. But this is an overblown rendition of individual autonomy. As a matter of fact \textit{(de facto)}, individual autonomy is influenced by lots of environmental factors and human desires, in short, it is to some extent determined. In other words, individual autonomy does not automatically translate to individual perfection. Thus, just as there can conceivably be no \textit{de jure} state in the complete sense, there can conceivable also be no \textit{de jure} individual autonomy in the complete sense. \textit{De facto}, many subjects handle their autonomy in very appalling ways. In short, a few humans are hardly distinguishable from lesser animals in behavior, many of whom need to be discovered and kept away in jails for the safety of the rest of society.

The matter then is this: If humans always vindicate their autonomy and responsibility by decisions/actions of integrity and responsibility, then there would be no need for a state. But human beings do not always maintain decisions/actions of integrity and responsibility. Thus there is need for states. Wolff’s defense of anarchism can be summarized as saying “If human beings were perfect, then there would be no need for states.” But humans are not perfect, so we have states. Thus, if there is a gap between the theory and the practice of individual autonomy, then there must also be a gap between the theory and the practice of philosophical anarchism. Philosophical anarchism is itself rendered impracticable.

Demolishing the Authority-Autonomy Antinomy

As earlier stated, the authority-autonomy antinomy, which Wolff sets up, is demolished by a number of factors. The term authority-autonomy antinomy was actually coined by Patrick O’Neil in his review of Wolff’s defense of anarchism. O’Neil (1970, p. 2-3) tries to demolish this “antinomy” by distinguishing between (1) acts that are held to be evil in themselves \textit{(mala in se)} but not necessarily prohibited by authority, (2) acts that are forbidden by authority for some reason, but are not evil in themselves \textit{(mala prohibita)}, and (3) acts that are both evil in themselves and prohibited by authority \textit{(mala in se et prohibita)}. So O’Neil develops three types of morally wrong actions: (1) simply \textit{mala in se}, (2) simply \textit{mala prohibita}, and (3) \textit{mala in se et prohibita}. Acts like murder, theft, perjury belong to both (1) and (3) since they are both evil and prohibited by authority. Disobedience to traffic codes and some other policies of technical and social order belong to (2) since stepping into the wrong lane is not evil in itself but prohibited for the sake of order. Not all acts of (1) need to be prohibited to become (3), like smaller forms of lying and cheating. O’Neil accuses Wolff of predicking his authority-autonomy antinomy on acts that are simply \textit{mala prohibita}. If someone avoids an action simply because authority says so, and not because she sees any independent reason for avoiding
it, then Wolff’s authority-autonomy antinomy can gain some traction. But if an individual avoids an action both because authority says so and because she has reached an independent conclusion to avoid it even if authority does not say so, then individual autonomy has coincided with, and not contradicted, authority. So for O’Neil, avoiding acts that are both intrinsically evil and prohibited by authority does not constitute losing our autonomy to authority, for we are also avoiding these acts out of personal moral evaluation of the nature of the acts, and would have still done same without authority. In fact, O’Neil argues that Wolff’s authority-autonomy applies only to (2); in acts that avoid (1) and (3), authority and autonomy are compatible.

However, it still does not occur to O’Neil that even avoiding acts in (2) – *mala prohibita*– may involve individual autonomy, and thus, make it compatible with authority. If I decide to obey traffic codes, it may not just be out of a bland decision to obey authority. I may have deliberated internally and realized that there has to be some sort of order for the movement of vehicles, and what better order than for vehicles heading in the same direction to move on a certain side of the road, and others heading in an opposite direction to move on another side of the road? In fact, it is likely that in the absence of state or political organization, I might have found myself wishing that someone could come up with this idea and propose it to everyone. If this is what actually happens, then the command of authority is coinciding with my independent evaluation of the value of the content of the command – to enhance vehicular movement through some sort of traffic order. Therefore, my individual autonomy is not threatened or affected by this command. Avoiding acts that are not intrinsically evil (not to drive on certain sides of the road) do not involve any loss of autonomy if they are preceded with personal decision to act along that line for practical reasons. Thus, it is not only moral personal evaluations that can lead to autonomous acts as O’Neil envisages (acts 1 and 3). The authority-autinomy is still demolished in acts to avoid (2), examples of which I will treat with a further subsection of this article: O’Neil only cites internal moral reasons for complying with a command to demolish the authority-autonomy antinomy; I will proceed to cite examples of internal practical reasons for complying with a command (or any command) by the state to complete the demolition of the authority-autonomy antinomy.

**Examples of Internal Practical Reasons for Obeying State Command**

Apart from internal moral considerations for acceding to state commands, let me now take a more detailed glance at internal practical considerations. To begin with, let us even imagine that Wolff’s anarchist objections are directed at repressive forms of government. His theory is collapsible anyways. This is because there are a lot of values that people derive from even repressive regimes, in other words there are a lot of reasons to find any political organization indispensable, such as law and order, provision of...
amenities, regulation of the economy, protection from foreign aggression and so on. In other words, political organization exists to protect life, liberty, property, and other benefits to be derived from entrusting leadership or ruler-ship to a person or body of persons.

Let me begin with the value of life, and a typical example is the situation in the Middle East. It is no surprise that the generally authoritarian bent of political leadership in this region coincides with the authoritarianism in its culture and history. Such authoritarianism is often for good reason: it might not be a case of the isolated imposition of an authoritarian leadership, it might rather be the case of authoritarian leadership as a response to a society that is yet to dispense with much of its authoritarian values. In such a situation, the idea that liberalism can be installed by simply removing an authoritarian leadership (like Saddam Hussein, Bashir al Assad, etc.) may be dangerously mistaken. If law and order needs a little bit of an “iron hand” in such societies, then removing such authoritarian structures could be to license the enthronement of chaos (absence of law and order) by (much more authoritarian) radical and cantankerous groups.

The example of a repressive regime is an extreme one. States generally exist to protect life within their territories, and a decision to obey state command must involve this practical internal consideration. This consideration means that one should consider an alternative to not obeying state command, in short, an alternative to not having a state. In the absence of a state, for instance, each individual would have to take up the personal defense of both her life and property, in the way that is supposed to be done by the police and military services. In practical terms, this means personally investing in as much physical combat skills and technology as is required for this. This has serious implications in time, energy, and resources, and it is not clear what amount of time will be left for personal economic and other forms of development. Such a world of human beings would contain no serious specialisations in art, science, entertainment, and Wolff does not provide what he would see as alternative safeguards to personal development in the absence of political order. It is not even clear that personal ideas of protective (or offensive) combat would result in success, as individuals would be left largely to their personal and uninformed devices, and nobody would be conceivably willing to teach anyone else, out of fear that such a transfer of skills could be used against self. (In fact, it is possible to imagine that there would be no distribution of any form of knowledge, since there would exist no ethical rules [such as patent] to protect intellectual property.) Life and property left to individual protection might not be life and property at all, since a few individuals could succeed minimally in personal protection while the majority might not. The same argument goes for other practical internal considerations for responding to state command, such as protection from foreign aggression, regulation of relations among citizens, provision of health initiatives, and so on.
This does not imply a blind obedience to state command. It is precisely the contrary: it means that responding to state command ought to always be accompanied by practical considerations, which will include considerations about whether the state actually portends to fulfil its roles as a state (by the state, I mean both government and the governed, since command may also issue from principles that are co-authored by citizens and rulers). Such continuous practical considerations (ideally by all participants in a state or polity) are likely to stir state structure toward the goal of more ideal co-authorship of state commands by all involved, especially those at whom the commands are directed.

This brings us to the narrowness of Wolff’s concern with responding to state commands: Wolff’s whole syllogism rests on a conception of state as just eliciting commands and never giving anything in return. According to this conception, all the state exists to do is demand obedience to its commands, and it provides nothing in return for this. This will depend on the capacity to imagine that there can be an entity that was sent from heaven with express powers to perpetually take and to never give in return, or if we can imagine any relationship that operates a one-way demand traffic and completely lacks any give-and-take description. But such one-way relationships may not exist in actuality. It is possible, if not certain, that Wolff himself enjoyed educational amenities to become an academic. So let me consider an alternative perception of the state as an arrangement reached by a group of people to better organize themselves by entrusting the running of some of their broader affairs to a person or group. In return for the values they will be enjoying from the service of this person or group, part of what they will need to sacrifice is a little of their convenience, including the inconvenience of relinquishing a little fraction of their free will, for better regulation of affairs amongst them. A person who lives in an organized society cannot have as absolute a free will as he/she would have if they lived alone in a forest, wilderness, or island, and it does not strike me that any form of social organization can escape this little clause.

The Question of Freedom

The anarchist proposal is usually predicated on the notion that the state is juxtaposed against freedom. But we might want to rethink the relation of the state to freedom. What if we see the state as created to set rules to make the enjoyment of freedom more possible? What happens to freedom if there is no security? What is the benefit of freedom if it cannot be enjoyed? But freedom with no security seems to be no freedom. Beginning from social contract theorists, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, scholars have distinguished between natural and civic freedom, or natural and civil liberties in Michael Carpenter’s (2014) description. Natural freedom is that possessed by every human being in the state of nature, in which he/she is free to do whatever they want. The disadvantage
is that this kind of freedom has no constraints, no law or order. An individual can take the next person’s life, it is his/her freedom to do so, and he/she is constrained only by his/her ability to do so. And so, this freedom depends, for its enjoyment, on a person’s capacity to defend him/her self. Civic freedom is that obtained from being a citizen, or a member of a common agreement or social contract to secure freedom through security by making freedom a community project. This is freedom accompanied by common security. To obtain this common security (and other benefits accruable from fabricating a general will), natural freedom (or part of it) has to be given up for civic freedom. In my view, what is termed natural freedom, on its own, is really no freedom. Admittedly, persons or bodies entrusted with common security and governance can take advantage of the civic freedom of the people by encroaching on people’s liberties, becoming corrupt and doing things against the general will. But these are excesses particular to this kind of responsibility. Apart from the fact that these excesses can be checked by removing these persons through the vote, impeachments, protests, and other forms of expression of popular opinion, the excesses are not comparable to the total absence of law and order.

**Checks and Balances Argument**

The anarchist proposal rests crucially on the premise that whatever will infringe upon the autonomy of humans must be avoided and rejected. The problem is: what is the guarantee that humans can live and exercise their autonomy in a society where there exist no checks and balances? We might not speedily dismiss Thomas Hobbes’ picture of man’s capacity to be a wolf to man. The following passage clearly expresses this grim fact:

> Again, men have no pleasure (but on the contrary a great deal of grief) in keeping company where there is no power to overawe them all. For every man looketh that his companion should value him at the same rate he sets for himself, and upon all signs of contempt or undervaluing naturally endeavours, as far as he dares (which amongst them that have no common power to keep them in quiet is far enough to make them destroy each other), to extort a greater value from his contemners, by damage; and from others, by example (Hobbes 1660 (2010), par 5).

Hobbes adds:

> So that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First, competition; second, diffidence; third, glory.
The first maketh men to invade for gain; the second, for safety; and the third, for reputation. The first use violence, to make themselves masters of other men’s persons, wives, children, and cattle; the second, to defend them; third, for trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and any other sign of undervalue, either direct in their persons or by reflection in their kindred, their friends, their nation, their profession, or their name.

Hereby it is manifest that during the time men lived without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man (Hobbes, 1660, chap VIII, pars 6-8).

It might be argued that Hobbes paints a too-pessimistic picture of human nature, but the fact remains that Hobbes’ version of human nature is vindicated by much of history. This is why checks and balances have become necessary everywhere: government is divided into arms that check one another, people ought to check government through elections, referendums, and demonstrations, leaders ought to check the dedication and work ethics of their subjects, subjects ought to check the sincerity of leaders, and the list goes on. So the question is: what would it be like to live without checks?

The Question of Community

Wolff’s appeal to a world that is completely regulated by ungoverned reason reflects an assumption (maybe un-reflected) that is common to anarchists. For instance, individualist anarchists like Mark Stirner advocate the ultimate reign of the individual ego over God, society, and morality, and argue that the only limitation to the rights of individuals is their power to obtain what they desire (Stirner, 1995, p. 9). But Stirner contradicts himself by advocating “a union of egoists” (Stirner, 1995, p. 93). The question is: Can such a union of egoists exist without any trace of social organization? It seems to me like a comic concession to the inevitability of society and organization. If the individual could live in isolation, then I would have no issues with Stirner. But living in society is a deconstruction of absolute individualism, a process that begins with being born into a pair of human hands. Compromises are inseparable from community and inter-personal life. So are dos and don’ts.

Regarding the community, it is worthwhile to ask: Can there be community without state? Yes. There used to be, and it performed much of the internal regulation of the state, but it lacked coordinated, systematized, and mutually recognized foreign relations and policies. Thus, inter-community aggression is an inseparable part of community-level political organization. The state is an initial attempt to regulate this state
of nature among communities, and the world council of states (presently, the United Nations) is an attempt to mitigate the state of nature on a universal scale. It is very arguable how successful this attempt can be, but it is even more questionable what the prospect would be of scrapping political organization down to the micro-community – or even the individual – level.

**Conclusion: Any Middle Ground?**

We might not entirely throw the anarchist proposal overboard, since we might consider regarding it as a dangerously misguided quest for liberty. This is where we can appeal to a libertarian position for a bit of a middle ground. For instance, Mill (1999, p. 9) discusses exercising the greatest possible liberty that is just short of undermining the liberty of others. This conception pushes government role increasingly away from interference and increasingly towards protection, away from the precarious nature of Hobbes’ natural liberty to the security and responsibility of Rousseau’s civic liberty, in the calculation that the best aspirations of the individual can be unleashed and still be protected. It is not a conception that dismisses the relevance of authority and political organization altogether. Such a position envisages a democracy that allows us to be as autonomous as rationally possible without encroaching on the parallel autonomies of others, or without seeing liberty as juxtaposed against the state. To conclude, an ideal, adoptable position is one that sees individual autonomy as enhanced by protection made possible by formal political organization.
References


On the Rationality of Traditional Akan Religion: Analyzing the Concept of God

Hasskei M. Majeed

Lecturer, Department of Philosophy and Classics,
University of Ghana, Legon

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to show how logically acceptable (or rational) belief in Traditional Akan religion is. The attempt is necessitated by the tendency by some scholars to (mis) treat all religions in a generic sense; and the potential which Akan religion has to influence philosophical debates on the nature of God and the rationality of belief in God – generally, on the practice of religion. It executes this task by expounding some rational features of the religion and culture of the Akan people of Ghana. It examines, in particular, the concept of God in Akan religion. This paper is therefore a philosophical argument on the sacred and institutional representation of what humans have come to refer to as “religious.”

Keywords: rationality; good; Akan religion; God; worship

By “Traditional Akan religion,” I mean the indigenous system of sacred beliefs, values, and practices of the Akan people of Ghana\(^1\). This is not to say, however, that the Akans are only found in Ghana. Traditional Akan religion has features that distinguish it from other African religions, and more so from non-African ones. This seems to underscore the point that religious practice varies across the cultures of the world, although all religions could share some common attributes. Yet, some philosophers and religionists, for instance, have not been measured in their presentation of the general features of religion. The danger in doing this is that such philosophers and religionists risk coming across as scholars who are either unaware of the nuances of religion or overlook them. While, for instance, Jarvie and Agassi (1977) and Horton (1960)

\(^{1}\) In this essay, I will refer to indigenous Akan religion as “Traditional Akan religion” – but not as “traditional Akan religion”. This is because starting it with a capital letter makes it fall in line with the way the names of the other religions mentioned in this essay are written. Wole Soyinka’s “The burden of memory, the muse of forgiveness” (2014) underscores the equality of all religions.
generalize their findings on Western culture to cover all religions, Abioje, an African religionist, generalizes his observations on Yoruba religious thought to constitute the position of Traditional African thought. By each of these generalizations, the rationality of Traditional Akan religion would be affected. For, the argument of Jarvie and Agassi and Horton ultimately points to the irrationality of all religions (of which the Traditional Akan religion is one); and that of Abioje exposes Akan religion, being an African religion, to the charge of irrationality as leveled by Jarvie and Agassi and Horton. But, a careful examination of contemporary literature, including those of the above mentioned scholars, reveals how shaky the arguments of the two generalizing parties are – especially, if the question of the possible irrationality of Akan religion is considered. I begin with the argument of the former.

Some Western philosophers, such as Jarvie and Agassi (1977, p. 174), purport to ascribe “partial” rationality to all religions, while another Western philosopher, Horton (1960, p. 222) strips them off all rationality altogether. Jarvie and Agassi explain their position this way:

… let us attribute rationality to an action if there is a goal to which it is directed; let us attribute rationality to a belief if it satisfies some standard or criterion of rationality which has been adopted, such as that it is based on good evidence, or is beyond reasonable doubt, or is held open to criticism, etc. (Jarvie & Agassi, 1977, p. 173)

They therefore consider “the goal of religious actions as rational” because it includes “something like the worship of God, or the exorcism of sin, or the survival of life after death” (Jarvie & Agassi, 1977, p. 174). Nevertheless, they “maintain that religion defies most criteria of rational belief” and as such religious beliefs are irrational (Jarvie & Agassi, 1977, p. 174).

However, since religious actions, including those of the Akans, can hardly be devoid of any religious beliefs at all, it is difficult to see how Jarvie and Agassi’s apparent awarding of rationality to actions can absolve religion of the charge of irrationality. For religious beliefs are conceived by them as some sort of dogmas. Indeed, the other-worldly expectations of practitioners of Christianity, as well as the supernatural, superhuman origins of Christian tenets, have all contributed to the emergence of the idea of the alleged irrationality of Christianity and religion (in general).
These aspects of religion are not only taken as instances of unquestioning acceptance of beliefs among religious followers, but are also regarded as containing beliefs that are not beyond reasonable doubt. Religion is also seen, as in the thesis of Horton (1960, p. 222), to thrive on faith because human reason cannot justify it.

The above conceptions of religion, assuming they were right, would not really apply to Traditional Akan religion. While recognizing the fact that Akan religion postulates the existence of spiritual entities, it differs substantially from Christianity. In Akan culture, for instance, the source of religion is traced to the human being. He was not asked by any metaphysical, higher being to worship or practise religion. Regarding how Akans came to practise their religion and why they expect others to see the need to do same, Gyekye (1996, p. 5) observes that, according to the traditional Akan thinkers,

the human being, irrespective of the culture to which he or she belongs, is essentially a religious being who will, sooner or later, come to see himself or herself as a created being and to appreciate the need not only to look for his or her creator but also to depend on the omnipotence and bounty of that creator...When man sees himself as a created being, he infers that there must be a creator worthy of worship and adoration. Traditional African religion is, thus, a natural religion, independent of revelation.

There are many logical conclusions that can be drawn from this perspective on the origin of religious beliefs or ideas. It can be said that traditional Akan sages have a clear view of the world, a world in which the human being only occupies a part, for, the need to depend on the omnipotence and bounty of the creator, and the idea of being a created being would not have come to him if he was not convinced in any way that he only has control, power, knowledge, and ability over some things and events, while he has virtually no control over other events or existents that lay beyond – the capabilities and knowledge of – humans. In addition to this, it is evident that traditional Akan thinkers adopted what in Western thought, is referred to as Creationism – the belief that the world and things in it were substantially created as they are by a Supreme Being – to postulate the existence of a worshippable Supreme Being.² So, if all this logical reasoning went into the discovery of religious beliefs by these thinkers, then, it may not be correct to

² The reasons offered in this paragraph are more comprehensive and, thus, better account for worshippability of the Akan God than the account that will be given by Danquah in the next section.
make the categorical statement that religion is illogical. Indeed, the Akan thinkers will take exception to Benjamin Franklin’s (Jarvie & Agassi, 1977, p. 175) rejection of religion because it is, to him (Franklin), irrational, in the same way as he (the Akan thinker) will contest Horton’s comment that religion is founded on faith and not on reason. For, he (Horton) suggests, reason supports science, the claims of which are observable or “testable” (1960, p. 222). Similarly, the Akan attitude toward religion contrasts with the Western orientation revealed by Jarvie and Agassi that “in our society it is no longer controversial to regard religion as irrational; indeed, few people these days bother to claim that religion is rational…” (Jarvie & Agassi, 1977, p. 174).

The main problem with Pius Abioje’s argument is that it erroneously draws Akan religion into the realm of “revelation” and possible irrationality – irrationality as conceived by the former group. Abioje is not the first person to argue that, generally, Traditional African religion is revealed; but he is most probably the first to offer the sort of reasons (to be explained below) in support of that argument. He is therefore singled out for discussion in this paper because (i) analyzing these (new) reasons for the revealed argument is crucial for the understanding of Traditional African religion(s), (ii) doing (i) above will show how generalizing about African religions does not always work, and (iii) his arguments have some implications for the rationality of Traditional African religion(s), including the Akan which is also the subject of this paper. Abioje discusses the general features, common characteristics, of African religions – as a result of which he speaks of the religions in a singular sense. Consequently, I will adopt this singular sense in my discussion or critique of his views.

Although current discourses on Traditional African religion appear to have abandoned the discussions on whether or not the subject of their study is revealed, some contemporary scholars have seen the need to revisit the debate (on the origin of Traditional African religion) with the view to either introducing fresh perspectives to the issue or correcting past ideas. As recently as 2007, Pius Abioje made such an attempt with his publication in the Legon Journal of the Humanities. Therefore, a critique of his views, in the context of examining current opinions on Traditional African religion, is tantamount to addressing a contemporary problem regarding African thought.

Abioje attempts to compare aspects of Traditional African, Islamic, and Christian teachings, and makes recommendations that should lead to mutual respect between these religions. He also argues for the existence of shared human values, stressing that “Human beings can always learn from one another, generally speaking, if there is humility and openness of mind” (Abioje, 2007, p. 156). However, there are serious factual and logical problems regarding the generalization which he makes of his findings on Traditional Yoruba religion to cover Africa. Of interest to this paper are those that portray all African religions as revealed, especially after observing above that such a portrayal, if accurate, would make an African religion like the Akan to be regarded by some philosophers as
irrational. Here are a few examples. He argues that Traditional African religion is revealed because of a number of reasons. He suggests, first, that since a myth can be understood as “a sacred tradition or primordial revelation [that has] …some lessons to teach, beyond the material detail,” Traditional African religion must be a revealed religion because there are myths – some of which relate to God – in traditional African thought (Abioje, 2007, p. 150).

It is not clear why Abioje should find this sense of revelation a good basis to suggest the revelation of Traditional African religion, especially, given the fact that he also shares S. O. Oso’s view that African myths are “the mental efforts of African ancestors to interpret the various cosmological and biological phenomena that they experienced” (Oso, 1979, p. 22). In the instance where an experience-based religious truth or knowledge is described by religionists as having been “revealed naturally”, the suggestion has been that such a truth was acquired through the observation of nature. They sometimes call this “general revelation”. But, even in this context, the description of the experience as “revealed” could be quite misleading. For, the truth did not “impose” itself as such on the person. Rather, the world (the given world) was made sense of by the person, and subsequently thought of by him/her as leading to some religious truth. After all, subjects or individuals could come to different conclusions upon observing what is largely the same thing. It can, therefore, be maintained that the natural world does not necessarily “reveal” religious truths, since (for instance) it does not necessarily lead one to either the belief in the existence of God or to the practice of religion. One only comes to postulate nature-related religious truths on the basis of one’s own reflections, but not because there is a raw “revealed” world. This is consistent with Oso’s remark which effectively makes “revelation” alien to African thought. Natural religion is a creation of the human being that derives from the secondary activity of reflection – reflection on the natural world. This point, however, contrasts with what is often called “special revelation”, according to which God reveals His religion and prophesies to some special or chosen individuals. It is in this latter sense that religion can properly be described as “revealed”, a description which has made some to criticize religion as irrational. The term “revealed religion”, as just argued, does not make much sense in the context of “natural religion” because nature does not contain religion, let alone reveal it to humans. Humans rather construct natural religion.

What is needed by Abioje, therefore, to establish that Traditional African religion is a revealed one – something he unsuccessfully attempts to do – is any strong evidence that would suggest that God revealed His religion to our forebears. If African myths (which are not always religious) teach lessons, then they are the direct result of the good quality of reflection done by our forebears on certain recondite concepts. For sure, myths disclose the thoughts of their holders but do not necessarily show that those holders are “spoken to” or revealed to by a Deity in the sense in which religion is often criticized.
Therefore, to attribute “revelation” to Traditional African religion smacks of an attempt to superimpose an alien concept on African thought.

Abioje’s conviction that Traditional African religion is revealed can also be seen in his suggestion that adherents of that religion live by the revealed wishes of God. In this respect, he paraphrases E. B. Idowu (1977) and S. O. Oso (1979) as follows: “in man’s earthly life, he is in the hand of the Deity, and to live a good real life, the behests of the Deity must be fulfilled” (Abioje, 2007, p. 149). Of course, God is regarded in traditional thought as good. However, it is quite consistent and even more plausible to argue of the originators of this religion as having not received a sort of catalogue of dos and don’ts from God, but rather that they might have expected the good God, conceived as interested in the well-being of His creatures, to also prefer good human actions, especially those that enhanced the welfare of humans. This exposition also means that the adherents of Traditional African religion did, as they still do, determine good human actions without having to receive any revelation; and that, they have always cherished actions or lifestyles founded on sound moral principles, not because those actions or lifestyles are the commandments of God. Consequently, life on earth, to the practitioners, cannot be fulfilling because it is at the behest of God, but because the actions are motivated by goodness. It may well be that the problems with Abioje’s thesis have to do with the way he interpreted his sources and, indeed, the generalization of his findings on Yoruba religion as wholly applicable to Traditional African religion.

This paper will, henceforth, discuss the Akan concept of God, and then the rationality of Akan religion as contained in some wise Akan sayings. The choice of wise sayings is dictated by the need to tap directly into traditional philosophy which is sometimes found in maxims.

**The Concept of God in Traditional Akan Thought**

Here, I intend to analyze Akan expressions for God, and discuss the rationality of arguing that His goodness should lead to His being “worshipped.” I will also look at whether or not He is personal. All this is to help clarify the Akan concept of God.

In the Akan language, God is referred to as *Onyankopɔn* (*Nyankopɔn*) or *Onyame* (*Nyame*). Beside these, He has several appellations that seek to convey traditional ideas about His nature, works and potency. An example is *Jbɔadɛɛ* (Creator, Creator of all things) which also contains the notion of a potent God – since He must logically be potent (indeed, omnipotent) to be able to create all things. *Onyankopɔn* and *Onyame* are often used interchangeably, although some Akan thinkers have sought to distinguish between them. Danquah, for example, has suggested that in a primal sense of God (as “Great Ancestor” of humans), God is referred to as *Onyame* (Danquah, 1968, p. 27 and p. 152). But the concept of *Onyankopɔn* (the “Nana of Ultimate Reality”), in his view, suggests
more greatness. He further posits that above Onyankɔn, is the notion of Ṣdomankɔma which expresses the idea of the Final God (Danquah, p. 152).

Danquah distinguishes between Onyame and Onyankɔn in terms of constitution. The former, according to him, is “feeling” or a “feeling entity” with Onyankɔn as its metaphysical or intellectual goal (1968, p. 141). Therefore, relating feeling (or Onyame) to sunsum and insight (or Onyankɔn) to “okara”3 (understood as “destiny”), Danquah makes Onyankɔn “the greater actualization, or deeper meaning or the intent of Onyame” since “Onyankɔn (sic.) is the Okara of Onyame” (1968, p. 141). Although Onyankɔn is placed higher by Danquah, He is not deemed to be entirely different from Onyame, in spite of his conviction that they are conceptually separable. The Akan, he explains,

conceived Nyankopon as not being absolutely bereft of all the primitive nature that had attached to Onyame. Onyankopon, too, is feeling. But feeling of a certain active mind, what, at a higher remove, is called conation, or will; namely, an attitude of mind involving a tendency to take action. Again, the Akan conceived of Onyankopon as having the new and additional character of intuition or insight, the intellectual capacity that only an Okara other than Sunsum can possess (Danquah, p. 147).

This seems to suggest that the insight and activity of God unite sunsum and Ṣkra in the concept of Onyankɔn. Secondly, it is apparent that Onyankɔn should have a logical connection with the more abstract Ṣdomankɔma. For although Ṣdomankɔma in itself is Soul, an “Ideal” (Danquah, 1968, pp. 67-68) and devoid of experience, for Him to be an “experiencing being” and be known or experienced by humans (Danquah, pp. 67-68), He must do so through Onyankɔn who, according to Danquah, embodies both experience and Ideal (“sunsum” and “okara”) (pp. 68-69). The element of experience in Ṣdomankɔma is, or is supplied by, Onyankɔn. This, logically, seems to be his main reason for putting forward Onyankɔn as a concept ultimately receptive of the other two: that “In the conception of Onyankopon as both Sunsum and Okara, the primal Onyame and the final Odomankɔma have a reconciliation” (Danquah, p. 152). For Danquah, “this dual nature of Onyankopon comes to us under two modes: (1) the conception of him as

3 In Akan language, the soul is referred to as Ṣkra. Danquah’s reference to it as “okara” appears to make possible a link between the ancient, black Egyptian ka (soul) and the Akan soul, since ka is contained in “o-ka-ra.”
the Okara of Onyame, and (2) the conception of him as the Sunsum of Odomankoma” (p. 147).

From the above, I make just two observations. First, that perhaps, the centrality of the concept of Onyankopↄn in understanding the Akan doctrine of God – even in such a divisionist thesis as Danquah’s – explains why Onyankopↄn is an acceptable translation for the word “God.” Secondly, in Akan thought, the metaphysical ideas of the ɔкра (soul) and sunsum (spirit; or activity [according to Danquah]) together suggest fundamental existence. In this sense, the physical side of any being is distinguished from its core, metaphysical component. The latter is sometimes spoken of in separate ways (as in sunsum and ɔкра) or as one entity (as ɔкра which, in any case, is a spiritual entity – hence, a sunsum). The human example of this point is articulated by Gyekye (1995, p. 98). But this also means that sunsum is probably the most basic, essential element of all experiencing or existing beings. Accordingly, if Danquah identifies Onyame with sunsum, then it could imply that Onyankopↄn and Ṣdomankoma cannot be conceived without Onyame. Onyame, therefore, is the essential identity of God who, in a more comprehensive form, is Onyankopↄn. These two names, unlike, Ṣdomankoma, capture the heart of the ontology of God – for, they convey to us God’s basic identity as a metaphysical being who experiences and can be experienced. But if, as Danquah notes, the “deeper meaning” of Onyame is Onyankopↄn, then, it is not surprising that Akan thinkers use the two names interchangeably. In this paper, I adopt the same approach of using the two names interchangeably.

Onyankopↄn is seen in Akan thought as good and “identified with goodness itself” (Gyekye, 1996, p. 9). Hence, Onyankopↄn is not only a desirer of goodness, but also a doer of good. Danquah’s understanding of the word “good” appears to capture sufficiently the latter half of the preceding statement. For, his understanding of it is instrumental. That is to say, he advances that to be good is to do good. As he puts it, “Goodness implies value of something done”, and that “Onyankopon’s doing is good” (Danquah, 1968, p. 152). Therefore, if it is said that “Onyankopon is good” or is “the Supreme Good,” it means that He is “the Akan God of Beneficence, practical content of moral life” (Danquah, p. 152). This practical usefulness of Onyankopↄn seems to Danquah to call for some reciprocal action from the Akan. Indeed, in the immediate consequence to this presentation of the practical conception of the goodness of God, Danquah rhetorically asks: “Why should he (Onyankopon) not be worshipped?” (Danquah, pp. 152-153).

But the question that some philosophers would ask here is: “Why should Onyankopↄn be worshipped as a result of His supreme goodness to the human being? How much, if it does at all, should God’s being supremely good count in His being an object of worship? If these questions are understood in the manner discussed by Socrates in the Euthyphro, then, it could be said that being good to humans does not call for the
worshipping of the good-doer. Socrates pointed out how the gods’ goodness to humans in exchange for worship amounted to a form of barter – and thus not morally worthy. For a morally worthy action is the one performed in expectation of no goods. It appears, then, that the more intelligent and morally aware a being is, the more dishonorable it would be for that being to engage in this trade-off. God is conceived of in Akan thought as supremely moral and rational. As such, it would not be appropriate, on Socratic grounds, to ascribe worshippability to Him on the basis of His goodness or, worse still, supreme goodness to humans.

However, this unjustified correlation between goodness or supreme goodness and worship could mislead one into attributing worshippable status, even if at a lower level, to some non-human agents of goodness. Ancestors are an example. They are believed in Akan thought to be good to the living. It is held that they promote the well-being of the community by enforcing morality and, also, “helping” or “blessing” those who “obey the laws and customs and fulfil their obligations” (Busia, 1954, p. 201). In doing this, the ancestors “see to it that the crops of such people are plentiful, that children are born to them and that their undertakings prosper” (Busia, p. 201). Yet, many Akan philosophers, including Gyekye (1996, p. 161), have argued that the ancestors are not worshipped. This implies that in a case where a worshipped being is deemed to be good, more is required than goodness or supreme goodness to justify the being’s worshippability.

It is appropriate here to emphasize the need to treat the question of the “worshipping” of God with caution, since, if not well explained, “worship” might not apply to Traditional Akan religion. Unlike, say, in Christianity where “worship” could mean a religious service to God, Onyankopɔn is not in this way worshipped. For, Onyankopɔn does not have any religious service that is performed in His honour. What comes close to being a religious service is the gathering of the people in celebration of religious festivals or landmarks. But even here, the gathering (usually, annually) is often in celebration of the benefits of those events to the people, and to acknowledge the role believed to have been played by the community’s deity (“lesser god”) and ancestors in their achievement. The deity is conceived of as an intermediary between Onyankopɔn and the people, but such gatherings as mentioned above are neither in the absolute “service” of the deity nor Onyankopɔn.

Nonetheless, if by “worship,” the intended objective is the showing of veneration or devotion to a supernatural being, then this applies to Onyankopɔn. From the foregoing, it would be wrong to describe practitioners of Traditional religion as “worshippers of deities (or lesser gods)”. By parity of reasoning, the reference to Traditional religion by many Akan speakers – having been most probably influenced by Christian teachings – as abosonsom (literally, “the-lesser-god or fetish religion”) does not appear to capture very well the Akan situation. Secondly, even though the word som is commonly translated as:
1. “to serve” – for instance, “the girl will serve this nation very well” is rendered in Akan as *abaayewa no besom oman yi yie*,
2. “to worship” (as in attending religious service) – the statement “Christians meet on Sundays to worship God” is translated as *Kristofoo hyia Kwasiadabiara som Nyame*,
3. “religion” – “Christian religion” is literally translated as *Kristosom*,

translations 2 and 3 have to be carefully looked at. On the basis of the initial discussion of “worship” and the Akan culture, it can be inferred that translation 2 is not part of Akan sacred practices. Likewise, *som* as religion (translation 3) appears not to be a good translation of the English word ‘religion’ because *som* does not translate into other contextual understandings of the word. For instance, the idea of religion as an organized body with all its institutional structures, guiding scriptures and proselytizing tendencies is not quite applicable to the Akan cultural paradigm. As a result, *som* may not necessarily mean religion but represent ways in which Akan culture (and possibly different indigenous African cultures as well) tries to make sense of this Western culture called “religion.” An objection may be raised about why, given the preceding statement, the title of this paper has “Akan religion” in it at all. Indeed, the paper is about aspects of Akan sacred beliefs and practices; but it is for want of a better expression that the beliefs and practices are presented as components of “Akan religion.”

*Onyankopɔn* is also perceived in personal terms. The personality of *Onyankopɔn* is, for instance, implicit in the following appellations. *Nana* (Grand Ancestor), *Abɔmmubuwafre* (Consoler), *engkapɔ* (Creator), *Nyaamanekose* (One in whom you confide when in trouble) [Opoku, 1978, p. 15]. In spite of all this, *Onyankopɔn* is regarded as a spirit. Religion is fundamental to the individual and the community, as God and other supernatural entities are believed to play important roles in the life of both the individual and the community. For instance, the powers of the deities (*abosom*) are sought for individual and communal protection, and libation is not even poured without the mention of God. But God, being personal, is portrayed in libation as one who understands prayers and grants the requests of humans. Moreover, the Akan would sometimes say *Nana Nyame boa me!* (“God help me!”) when in need or difficulty. A deity, on the other hand, might give a charm to a person to serve some need. Similar roles are attributed to the deities and God in most African cultures, although there may be significant differences between theirs and the Akan’s.

Consider Yoruba and Akan religions: Abioje holds the view that charms (or what he calls “occultic charms”) in Yoruba thought enjoy the blessing of God; and he eventually comes to the conclusion that “occultic charm incantations also reflect a mark of divine revelation” (2007, p. 152). With his view on charms – especially those meant for evil purposes – Abioje was seeking to use the Biblical Isaiah’s declaration (Isaiah...
45:7) about God as having revealed His nature as the author of both good and evil to claim that what is contained in Isaiah’s message is neither new nor different from what adherents of Traditional Yoruba religion have always held about God. Abioje puts it more bluntly: “An informant put the argument to rest when he asked: ‘Who made snakes and scorpions?’ He said it was the same God who made sorcerers and witches” (2007, p. 152).

In Akan metaphysical thought, also, the deities who are the source of charms play very critical roles. Apart from their status, in Akan thought, as the next most potent beings after God, they are also regarded as intermediaries between humans and God. They are, like humans, creations of God and free. Their potency derives from God but they have autonomy and preferences (Gyekye, 1995, pp. 124-125). This is what makes it possible for them to use their powers in ways that do not promote the well-being of human beings, and in ways that God would not like. So, if someone consults a deity for a charm – or, if someone who has such a charm passes it on to another – with the intention of harming someone else and his wishes are fulfilled, the Akan would say to him that he has or his charms have the blessing of the originating deity. This is contrary to the Yoruba position that charms “enjoy the blessing of God”. And, if “occultic charm connotes power, and a misuse of it represents abuse of power” (Abioje, 2007, pp. 153-154), then the difference is this: while in Yoruba thought responsibility for the abuse may ultimately be traced to God, only the user-recipient of the charm and the deity would be the abusers of power in Akan thought.

Quite related to the foregoing is the reference to the deities as “agents of God”. Abioje asserts that “many adherents of the [Yoruba] religion maintain that all the divinities and spirits that are worshipped are agents of God” (Abioje, 2007, p. 150). This seems to imply that the divinities are representatives or that they act only at the bidding of God. In Akan thought, on the other hand, the divinities (abosom) are believed to (i) do things only occasionally on behalf of God, and (ii) do some things on behalf of human beings sometimes. If these make them agents, then they are agents of humans as well. 4

Having discussed the concept of God in Akan thought – especially, the nature, worhippability, and personality of God – I now discuss the logical foundation of belief in God as found in some wise Akan sayings.

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4 I do not therefore support the prominent Akan philosopher, Kwasi Wiredu (1980) when he describes abosom as “agencies” of Onyankopon (God). See the chapter “Philosophy, Mysticism and Rationality.”
Rationality of Akan Religion: Evidence from Wise Sayings

The rationality of the Akan religion is, to some extent, inherent in some wise sayings of religious nature, especially those that seem to point to the rational origin of the Akan religion itself. But these sayings are unknown to many Western philosophers who continue not to see that some religions – in our case, Traditional Akan religion – could be rational.

It is well a discussed and established fact that Akan religion is natural. This being the case, it is also regarded as potentially comprehensible to every rational (human) being. This conception of the religion is also true of the Akan perspective on God. The maxim *Obi nkyere akwadaa Nyame* (literally, “Nobody needs show God to a child” [Sarpong, 1974, p. 9] or better still “Nobody teaches God to a child”) appears to indicate their belief that the child, being a rational being, will come to the realization of God as he or she matures and, thus, gains more awareness of himself or herself, the environment, and the nature of the world. Accordingly, without any special revelation from God as such, Akan thinkers were able to postulate that God must be spiritual and everywhere. Confirming this position is the saying that *Wo pεsε woka asem kyere nyame a, ka kyere mframa* (literally, “If you want to say something to God, say it to the wind”). The thinking behind this is that although God is not perceptible, He has metaphysical presence everywhere, just as the wind/air is everywhere.

Another reason why the rational basis for Akan religion seems plausible is that there is indeed a concept of rationality in Akan thought. A statement or argument is regarded as irrational if it contains contradictions. But if it is devoid of contradictions and is logically acceptable, it is said of it *Etɔ asɔ mu* (literally, “It falls [well] into the ear”). But the capacity to determine which arguments or statements “fall well into the ear” is regarded as a human attribute, for, only humans are believed to have the capacity to think (*dwen*). This is the reason why the human capacity to self-know God and the nonexistence of missionary work are such important features of Akan religion.

Finally, the humanistic character of Akan religion provides for its rationality. The religion is humanistic because it thrives on interpersonal ethics (or relationships) and the exploitation of spiritual entities (or their powers) for human good on earth. The Akan thinker may then argue that if one seeks the promotion of human well-being, then, one should accept religion. This way, religion becomes rational to practice because it is contradictory to seek human well-being (on earth) and, at the same time, reject a humanistic religion. It would also be inappropriate to withhold or refuse to assist an afflicted person, especially if one is in a position to do otherwise. The refusal to help in such a situation would be deemed as inhuman, for it would be as if one was oblivious of the basic human condition, i.e., the human being requires and deserves to be helped. This human conceptual entitlement to help is expressed in the saying *Onipa hia mmoa*...
“the Human being needs help”). No individual is deemed to be self-sufficient. One is therefore encouraged to relate well to every human being with the love and kindness that one would offer to a brother or sister. This ultimately generates fellow-feeling – a notion which is captured in the saying Onipa nua ne ’nipa (meaning, “The sibling of a human being is a human being”). Thus, if by virtue of one’s humanness, one ought to be treated kindly or humanely, it would be quite unreasonable if one should disregard the predicament of others. Another issue is that this might generate a situation where one would also be neglected by some in one’s time of difficulty. [I do not imply that one ought to be neglected in such situations.]

However, if one wills or initiates evil against another, it is regarded in the Akan culture as both inhuman and self-destructive. It is also understood that one may act badly not necessarily by initiating evil action, but by refusing to stop an impending danger when one is in a position to do so (or has the duty to do so). This refusal to act is also seen as self-destructive. Indeed, this teaching is implicit in the maxim Ṣkomfobone se kuro mmo a, ɛtemu bi (“If a bad traditional priest wills that his town be ruined, he will live in it as well”). In other words, if the traditional priest who is supposed to intercede on behalf of the people refuses to do so, but rather vaticinates or invokes the powers of the deity for the destruction of the town, he cannot logically expect the town to be habitable for him as well.

The three maxims above together suggest that if one permits, wills, or initiates the destruction of another, one will eventually suffer some consequences too. This seems to underscore the reasonableness in seeing oneself in the Other and being supportive of one another for communal and personal good. In Akan culture, one is usually advised Wo yonko da ne woda (literally, “Where your fellow human being lies is where you also lie” or “The situation your fellow human being finds him/her self in is what you [could] also find yourself in”). It suggests that the well-being of the community or humanity is not sought through selfish actions but by seeking the progress and interests of all. This way of ensuring the well-being of the community is always done in tandem with familial and communal performance of rites aimed at soliciting the help of the ancestors and deities. Such rites are usually performed on specific days of the week, festive occasions, and at public events. On the basis of the foregoing, the Akan thinker would advance that religion is not only useful, but it is rational to practice as well.

**Conclusion**

This paper has argued for the rationality of Traditional Akan religion, with special focus on the belief in God and on some Akan sayings. The idea of God and His role in the religious and communal life of the Akan have been shown to have developed on the basis of reflection – particularly, on the basis of some conceptions of rationality inherent
in the Akan culture. In connection with this, some wise Akan sayings were explained. Also, since the supernatural (in this case, God) is an important element of Traditional Akan religion, this paper essentially is a presentation of the rationality of the supernatural in Akan metaphysical thought.
References


A Minor Historical Rule of GRAVE Concern in the Volta-Comoe Languages

Lawrence Addai Boadi
Professor of Linguistics and Consultant at the Faculty of Language Education, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

Abstract
The Volta-Comoe languages belonging to Greenberg's (1963) Niger-Congo undergo a historical change in which underlying labial /b/ is reflexed as velar [g] and labio-palatal [Ʌɥ] in their Central members and as [b] in their Eastern and Western subgroups. We maintain that this process can be accounted for naturally by positing the feature Grave proposed by Jakobson, Fant and Halle (1956) in their early work on distinctive-feature phonology. This permits one to say that a non-back grave segment changed to a back one in specified linguistic contexts. Other processes which help explain the change are palatalisation, vowel-labialisation, consonant-labialisation and velar fronting.

Keywords: Volta-Comoe, grave, dialects, acute, palatalisation

Volta-Comoe has a minor linguistic rule which accounts for a sound change from morph-initial /b/ in its Eastern and Western members to /g/ in its Central (Akan group) members. The rule operates on a relatively small section of the lexicon of Volta-Comoe as can be seen from an examination of the entries in Christaller’s Twi dictionary (1933) and also from the sample given on Table 1. Part of our interest in the data on the Table is to: (1) relate the apparently diverse phonetic forms [bʷ], [b̥], [gʷ] and [Ʌɥ], which derived from the same underlying form; and (2) to account for their distribution in the various Volta-Comoe languages and their development from Early Volta-Comoe.

1 Following Stewart (1971), we use the term Volta-Comoe to refer to a sub-branch of Greenberg’s Kwa languages of Niger-Congo in his classification of African languages (1963). For purposes of the discussion in this paper we divide Volta-Comoe into three genetically related languages as follows: (1) Eastern Volta-Comoe (EVC); (2) Western Volta-Comoe (WVC); and (3) Central Volta-Comoe (CVC).
Table 1
*Phonetic Reflexes of Early Volta-Comoe Grave Segments*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>E. Volta-Comoe</th>
<th>W. Volta-Comoe</th>
<th>Central Volta-Comoe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Efutu</td>
<td>2 Larteh</td>
<td>3 Nzema</td>
<td>4 Akuapem, Akuam, Fante</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheeps</td>
<td>bʷui</td>
<td>bʷuani</td>
<td>gʷaŋ/gʷan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>bʲe</td>
<td>bʲie</td>
<td>bʲia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urine / Urinate</td>
<td>bʷuru fɔ</td>
<td>bʷurw u</td>
<td>bʲie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathe</td>
<td>bʲɛɛ</td>
<td>(ha) bʲie</td>
<td>bʲie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Split</td>
<td>bʲie</td>
<td>ŋ</td>
<td>bʲia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market</td>
<td>bʲe</td>
<td>bʲi</td>
<td>bʲia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis will be restricted to initial phonetic [b] and [g] and their variants of CV structure.

**The Grave Segments /b/ and /g/**

The two morph-initial segments, /b/ and /g/, whose phonetic reflexes alternate in the major Volta-Comoe languages, are opposed in the phonetic features [Backness] and [Linguality]: the former is [-Back, -Lingual], and the latter [+Back, +Lingual]. If account is taken of the fact that both segments are ‘peripheral’ in the Jakobsonian sense, linguality can be predicted by a rule of redundancy. The two sounds may then be referred to as *Grave*, following Jakobson, Fant & Halle (1956). Grave sounds ‘have an ampler and less compartmented resonator than the corresponding [Acute] sounds (palatal and dental)’ (Jakobson & Halle, 1957, p. 235). They are further distinguished from the dental and palatal by a concentration of energy in the lower frequencies (Jakobson, 1957, p. 106).

In present-day Volta-Comoe languages, the two morph-initial segments [b] and [g] are reflexes of underlying [b]. These occur, respectively, in Eastern-Western and Central Volta-Comoe and develop labialised and palatalised variants, [bʷgʷbʲgʲ] in
specified phonetic contexts. In some of the Central dialects \[g^w\] is further fronted and affricated, first to \[j^w\], and then to \[j'^i\]. These changes may be diagrammed as follows

\[
\begin{array}{c}
/b/ \\
\text{[b]} \\
\text{[g]} \\
\text{\[b^w\]} \\
\text{\[b^j\]} \\
\text{\[g^w\]} \\
\text{\[j^w\]} \\
\text{\[j'^i\]} \\
\end{array}
\]

These changes will be discussed fully in the next sections.

**The Feature Grave**

The two segments, labial \[b\] and velar \[g\] were, in the 50s, classified by Jakobson and others (1952) in their feature theory as \ [+Grave\] in contrast to the dentals, alveolars and palataals which were specified as \ [-Grave\] or \ [+Acute\]. The grouping of these sounds as Grave is based on acoustic and auditory properties which they share (Jakobson, Fant & Halle 1956; Jakobson 1957). The classification is also backed by evidence from historical and morphophonemic changes found among the world’s languages. For example, in both Hausa and Japanese there is a morphophonemic alternation between the grave sounds \[h\] and \[f\]. The two sounds alternate also in Effutu of Eastern Volta-Comoe.

As pointed out by Ladefoged (1971, p. 44), ‘the acoustic (and hence auditory) similarities between corresponding sounds made in the labial and velar regions are often considerable.’ This similarity ‘led to the historical changes whereby \[x\] which occurred in Old English at the end of words such as rough and cough changed to \[f\].’ Boadi (2009) discusses and illustrates the alternation of the grave sounds, \[b, w, y\] in Central and Western Volta-Comoe.

The basis for the introduction of the feature Grave into phonology has been questioned by Chomsky and Halle (1968). They argue that a feature approach to phonology should account for ‘independently controllable aspects of the speech event’ (Chomsky & Halle, 1968, p. 298). Control in this context is interpreted to mean control.
by the speaker of the speech organs during the production of the speech event. It is argued that the postulation of the feature Grave is motivated by acoustic considerations; but speakers perceive sounds not directly in terms of speech waves (Stevens, 1972).

The attention of proponents of this view has been drawn to a requirement of morphophonemic alternation evidence of which is available in languages of the world, not only in their synchronic grammars but also in their processes of sound change. As stressed by Sommerstein (1977, p. 111), morphophonemic alterations ‘are in large measure the debris of past phonological changes’. These changes are motivated in different ways, one of the significant of these being the perceptual. Two sounds that are not easy to distinguish auditorily may merge. Alternatively, such a process of merger may be blocked as a result of one of the two sounds acquiring a new feature, which makes the distinction easier to perceive. The distinction perceived at this stage is at the acoustic level and not auditorily based (Sommerstein, 1997). It is in consideration of such factors that a number of features, including grave and sonorant, whose status is questionable judged from the purely auditory point of view becomes relevant as soon as the requirement of morphophonemics is taken into account.

The choice of features for a theory of phonology, while guarding against indiscipline and arbitrariness, should at the same time be comprehensive enough to account for data in all natural languages. It should also satisfy criteria based on synchronic and diachronic knowledge at all levels of linguistic study, including the morphophonemic, articulatory and acoustic levels.

There should even be room ‘for seeking insight into universal speech and hearing mechanisms’ (Fant, 2006, p. 175; Ladefoged, 2007, p. 190). It should not be forgotten that some of the early work on features by Jakobson benefited from insight into studies of aphasia and child language learning.

**Analysis of the Data**

The phonetic data on the Table show that the Eastern and Western Volta-Comoe languages (EVC and WVC) have morph-initial voiced palatalised and labialised labial plosives, \([b^j]\) and \([b^w]\), while some of the Central dialects have the labialised velar plosive, \([g^w]\). Labialised \([g^w]\) in the Central dialects has in certain cases fronted to palatal, resulting in \([j^w]\) (or \([\text{j}u]\)). The \([b]/[g]\) change involves a shift from one major point of articulation of a grave sound to another, accompanied by the secondary articulations of palatalisation and labialisation. These two minor processes occur extensively in all present-day Volta-Comoe languages (Aidoo, 2010; Boadi, 2009; Dolphyne, 2006; Eminah, 2010). Below we give brief formal accounts of each of these secondary articulations.
Palatalisation

In general, Volta-Comoe consonants are palatalised when followed by a high-front vowel (Boadi, 1986, 2010). More formally, the generalisation may be expressed as Rule 1 below:

**Rule 1: Palatalisation:**

\[
\text{C} \rightarrow [+\text{Pal}] \text{ in } \left[ \begin{array}{c}
+\text{Syll} \\
-\text{Cons} \\
-\text{Back} \\
+\text{High}
\end{array} \right]
\]

Examples of the application of the rule of palatalisation can be seen in Columns 1-3 of the Table and below

1. i) /bie/ → [b\text{̃}je] chair (Larteh)
   ii) /bie/ → [b\text{̃}ie] bathe (Larteh)
   iii) /bia/ → [b\text{̃}ia] chair (Nzema)
   iv) /bɛɛ/ → [b\text{̃}ɛɛ] chair (Effutu)

Labialisation

Volta-Comoe vowels and consonants are lip-rounded in the appropriate phonetic context. These processes are referred to as consonant labialisation and vowel labialisation, respectively. By the rule of consonant labialisation, Volta-Comoe consonants become rounded if followed by a rounded (or back) vowel (see Table 1). This is expressed formally in Rule 2.

**Rule 2: Consonant Labialisation**

\[
\text{C} \rightarrow [+\text{Round}] \text{ in } \left[ \begin{array}{c}
+\text{Syll} \\
-\text{Cons} \\
+\text{Round}
\end{array} \right]
\]
The following examples are taken from Table 1.

2. i) /buru fɔ/ \(\rightarrow\) [b\(^w\)ur\(^w\)uf\(^w\)ɔ] urinate \((EVC: \text{Effutu})\)

ii) /bui/ \(\rightarrow\) [b\(^w\)ui] sheep \((EVC: \text{Larteh})\)

iii) /guani/ \(\rightarrow\) [g\(^w\)uanĩ] sheep \((CVC: \text{Akyem, Akuapem, Fante})\)

In a number of cases, front (unrounded) vowels become rounded or backed if preceded or followed by a labial consonant. This rule, though not much commented on in the literature of these languages, accounts for a number of changes in the synchronic grammars.

For example:

3.

i) \text{Fante} [betumi] \(\rightarrow\) [botumi] \(\rightarrow\) (b\(^w\)otumi) will be able to

ii) \text{Twi} [afia] \(\rightarrow\) [afua] \(\rightarrow\) [æf\(^w\)ua] Afua (personal name)

iii) \text{Twi} [fam] \(\rightarrow\) [fæm] \(\rightarrow\) [f\(^w\)ʊm] on the ground

iv) \text{Fante} [fam] \(\rightarrow\) [fem] \(\rightarrow\) [f\(^w\)om] on the ground

v) \text{Twi} [aŋʋamansa] \(\rightarrow\) [aŋʋʊmansa] Adwoa Mansah (personal name)

vi) \text{Fante} [k\(^w\)ajʊ] \(\rightarrow\) [k\(^w\)ajʊ] \(\rightarrow\) [k\(^w\)oʃʊ] Kojo (personal name)

vii) \text{Fante} [k\(^w\)abɪna] \(\rightarrow\) [k\(^w\)ɔbɪna] Kwabena (personal name)

This rule is crucial in accounting for some of the changes which occurred in the development of the lexical items on the Table.

This generalisation is expressed as Rule 3 below.
Rule 3: **Vowel Labialisation**

\[ [+\text{Syll}] \rightarrow [+\text{Round}] \]

\[ +\text{Cons} \]
\[-\text{Syll} \]
\[ +\text{Round} \]

4. i) /biru/ \rightarrow [buru] \rightarrow [b^wuru] urine \text{ (EVC)}
   
   ii)/bìanì/ \rightarrow [buanì] \rightarrow [b^wuanì] sheep \text{ (EVC)}
   
   iii)/biri fᴐ/ \rightarrow [buru fᴐ] \rightarrow [b^wur^wuf^wᴐ] urinate \text{ (Effutu (EVC)}

**Positing an Underlying Morph-initial Grave Segment for Volta-Comoe**

Before stating the Gravity Shift Rule, there is at least one question to be resolved, and that has to do with the underlying form of the two grave segments under discussion. In making this decision, one should be guided by the fact that from independent comparative evidence, Western Volta-Comoe languages (Nzema, Ahanta, Aowin, Sehwi and Anyi-Baoule) have more in common with Central Volta Comoe (Akyem, Asante, Akuapem and Fante) than they do with Eastern Volta-Comoe (Effutu and Larteh) in terms of the number of shared cognates and phonological rules required to link underlying and surface phonetic forms. The relationship may be represented diagrammatically as follows:

![Diagram of the relationship between Early Proto-Volta-Comoe and Eastern and Western Volta-Comoe](image)

**Early Proto-Volta-Comoe**

Eastern Volta-Comoe

(i) Western Volta-Comoe and
(ii) Central Volta-Comoe

Since both Eastern VC and Western VC have morph-initial [b] in the synchronic phonology of the lexemes under consideration we can assume that Early Volta-Comoe also had [b] morph-initially before it split into Eastern and the rest.

Eastern and Western retained [b] while Central changed [b] to [g]. Central dialects like Akuapem and Fante retained [g]. Dialects like Akyem, Akuapem, Asante, Dankyira and Kwawu, on the other hand, changed velar [g] (grave) to palatal [j] (acute).
These changes were accompanied in most cases by processes of secondary articulation. In addition to the rules of palatalisation and labialisation which apply in all the Volta-Comoe languages, we need a rule which accounts for the change of front grave [b] to back grave [g]. We refer to this rule as Gravity Shift.

**Rule 4 Gravity Shift Rule**

\[ [+\text{Grave}] \rightarrow [+\text{Back}] \] (Central Volta-Comoe)

This rule is to be interpreted to mean: [b] in morph-initial position changed to back grave [g] in Central Volta-Comoe. For example

5) i) [bianå] → ........ [guianå] sheep (Fante, Akuapem)
   ii) [bia] → ........ [gua] market; split, chair (Fante, Akuapem)
   iii) [bia fa] → ........ [gua (nsì)] (urinate) (Fante, Akuapem)

The dots indicate that a number of rules are to apply prior to the change to [g]. Below we illustrate the order of application of the rules discussed so far.

6. **Underlying Form:** bianå (sheep) bia (split, market) bia(nsì) urinate
   **Vowel-Labialisation:** buanå bua bua(nsì)
   **Cons. Labialisation:** b^wuanå b^wua b^wua(nsì)
   **Gravity Shift:** g^wuanå g^wua g^wua(nsì)
   **Phonetic Form:** g^wuanå g^wua g^wua(nsì)

**Desyllabification**

There is a rule in the synchronic grammar of Akan Central Volta-Comoe by which a high-vowel is elided in the environment of the low vowel /a/. This rule is referred to by Schachter and Fromkin (1968) as **U-Deletion** and **I-Deletion**. The explanation seems to me to be that, in the environment of the most sonorous vowel /a/, a high vowel loses its syllabicity and becomes a (consonantal) glide. This is a more satisfactory explanation from a phonetic point of view. For this reason, we refer to the process as **High-vowel Desyllabification** (Boadi, 2010). The rule may be stated as below.
Rule 5: **High-Vowel Desyllabification**

\[
-\text{Cons} \left( \begin{array}{c}
+\text{Syll} \\
+\text{High} \\
\end{array} \right) \rightarrow \left( \begin{array}{c}
-\text{Syll} \\
\text{in C} \\
+\text{Syll} \\
+\text{Low} \\
\end{array} \right)
\]

As a result of the application of this rule the final phonetic forms in the derivations of (6) become (7):

7. i) \[g^w\text{wanì}\] sheep
   ii) \[g^w\text{wa}\] market, split
   iii) \[g^w\text{wa(nsì)}\] urinate

In (7) above, it is important to distinguish between the superscript \[w\], which symbolises secondary articulation of lip-rounding, and the symbol \[w\], which represents the non-syllabic back glide. The difference between the two representations is theoretical: labialisation of the initial consonant is predictable from the presence of the following back glide.

**From Grave to Acute**

In dialects, such as Akyem, Asante, Dankyira and Kwawu of Central Volta-Comoe, velar \[g\] which resulted from the application of the Gravity Shift rule was fronted to the palatal point of articulation possibly after being palatalised. The process may be summarised as follows:

i) \[g^w \rightarrow g^{jw}\] by Palatalisation
ii) \[g^{jw} \rightarrow j^{iw}\] by Velar Fronting (Palatality)

One has to assume that palatalisation is conditioned by the presence of a front vowel in underlying structure. By a series of phonological rules already discussed, the phonetic forms in Akyem, Asante and Kwawu are derived. Below is one example of derivation.
8. **Underly Form:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>biani</th>
<th>bia</th>
<th>bia(nsɔ)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(sheep)</td>
<td>(split)</td>
<td>(urine/urinate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Palatalisation:** b’ianɪ → b’ia → b’ia (nsɔ)
- **Vowel-Labialisation:** b’uanɪ → b’ua → b’ua (nsɔ)
- **Cons.-Labialisation:** b’iwanɪ → b’iwa → b’iwa (nsɔ)
- **Gravity Shift:** g’iwanɪ → g’iwa → g’iwa (nsɔ)
- **Velar Fronting:** j’iwanɪ → j’iwa → j’iwa (nsɔ)
- **V-Desyllabification:** j’iwana → j’iwa → j’iwa (nsɔ)

**Final Phonetic Output:** j’ia → j’ia (nsɔ) j’iw (nsɔ)

The rule of **Velar-Fronting** (our *Grave to Acute*) is widespread among languages. It is found in Russian, Ancient and Modern Greek and several others (Chomsky and Halle 1968; King 1969; Newton 1972; Sommerstein 1973). In Akan, it accounts for the changes below. In all cases, a palatal plosive changes to an affricate.

Eg.

9. i) gɪ → g’ɪ → ji → jzi (receive)
   
   ii) gia → g’iia → jia → jzia → jza (fire)

It is not intended to group lexical items for *fire* and *receive* in Example (9) with those on Table 1. Their underlying forms are different. The relevant point is that Velar Fronting is as much a major phonological process in at least some of the Volta-Comoe languages as they are in languages, such as Czech, Russian and Greek.

We now return to the data on Table 1. To explain the change in morph-initial position in the Akyem, Asante and Kwawu forms of Akan in Column 5, we say the original Grave sound [g] shifted to Non-Grave [j]. More, formally, this may be expressed as Rule 6.

**Rule 6: Grave-to-Acute Rule**

\[ [+\text{Grave}] \xrightarrow{\text{Velar Fronting}} [-\text{Grave}] \quad \begin{cases} +\text{Pal} \\ +\text{Lab} \end{cases} \quad \text{(Akyem, Asante, Kwawu, etc of Central Volta-Comoe)} \]

By this rule, [g’w], [g’j] change to palatal sounds. The changes from Grave to Acute are natural processes.
Conclusion

In this paper, we have sought to show the relevance of the feature *Grave* to an explanation of one historical process in Volta-Comoe. We have not attempted to compare the Jakobson-Halle-Fant feature-system with any other. However, we think the feature *Grave* explains the historical change from /b/ to [g] in Volta-Comoe as simply as any other set of features (eg. The Chomsky-Halle System). This is not to claim that the feature *Grave* should replace Chomsky's alternative features. We take the view that there is a pool of features from which languages select to account for phonological processes, and the feature *Grave* is one of these.
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