

**THE APPARENT CONFLICT OF TRANSCENDENTALISM
AND IMMANENTISM IN KWAME GYEKYE AND KWASI
WIREDU'S INTERPRETATION OF THE AKAN CONCEPT OF
GOD**

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Abstract

In this paper I compare Kwame Gyekye's transcendentalist interpretation of the Akan conception of God with Kwasi Wiredu's immanentist interpretation. I highlight the tension between the two thinkers' interpretations of Akan religious thought within the broader conflict between transcendence and immanence. Using the analytic, critical, and interpretative method, I show how the reconciliation of Gyekye and Wiredu's divergent, yet paradoxically overlapping visions can be effected in the idea of panpsychism. In the process of effecting this reconciliation, I open up a new area of research in African philosophy of religion that African philosophers will find rewarding to engage.

Introduction

No one has seen God; yet belief in His existence as the supreme Creator of the observable universe is widespread. Over the centuries, philosophers have attempted, by force of argument, to summon God from His hidden transcendental sphere in what we now call arguments for, or proofs of, God's existence. The tension between immanence and transcendence has featured prominently in the thought of philosophers and theologians. The tension arises because the human experiential field is limited to the phenomenal world that we access through the senses of sight, touch, smell, taste, and hearing. The human mind struggles to make sense of the reality of a supernatural world not open to observable sensory experience. The limit of human experience thus casts doubt on the validity of transcendence. We may talk here of 'doubt', mindful of the pitfalls of a categorical rejection of transcendence. Such a categorical rejection rests on the assumption that the material universe is self-explaining and that human interests are all that count for humanity. Yet, the human gaze constantly seeks to go beyond the material sphere and glean 'something', however tenuous, from the transcendental or spiritual sphere. The human gaze increasingly focuses on distant horizons. Whether this focus is interpreted in line with a radical

immanentism that cuts man off from God or whether it is interpreted in more complementary terms that allow for the reconciliation of immanence and transcendence, doubt about the existence of God persists even as the idea of God remains firmly rooted in the human mind.

The belief in God's existence is just as widespread in Africa as it is elsewhere. Indeed, Africans are believed to respond positively to the question of religion: so much so that John Mbiti (1969) thinks that the African world is a highly spiritualized world. The non-materialization of God lends credence to the idea of transcendence, which invests God with superlative qualities such as omnipotence and impassability. Nevertheless, the immediacy of faith in the supposedly hidden God dilutes the transcendental standpoint by proposing the immanent standpoint. Thus, God who is remote and hidden is conceived as near and revealed in nature. In the African traditional setting where belief in the reality of multiple gods persists, the introduction of the idea of one Supreme Being helps order the cosmogony of the African peoples, with God at the very top of the hierarchy of supernatural and natural beings in a universe that can be described both in material and spiritual terms. Since humans make God a subject of worship by conceiving Him in anthropomorphic terms, we see the attempt to reconcile transcendence and immanence in the traditional thought pattern of Africans. This is the attempt to remove the mystery of God's hiddenness by positing His presence in visible nature (IDOWU 1962, 141; OLUWOLE 1995, 74–77, 80, 81).

This work focuses on Kwame Gyekye and Kwasi Wiredu's navigation of the problem of transcendence and immanence in their interpretations of the Akan conception of God. Neither philosopher expounded an elaborate philosophy of religion, but both discussed the traditional Akan conception of God in ways that impact the transcendence-immanence conflict and leave open the possibility of new ways of explicating the relation of transcendence and immanence in African philosophy of religion. While Gyekye's reflection on Akan cosmology highlights transcendence and comes down strongly on the side of theism, Wiredu's reflection reveals a certain preference for immanence in a way that dilutes traditional theism and problematizes the relation of God with the world. This work makes a contribution to the literature not only with the comparative analysis of Wiredu and Gyekye's religious thought but also with the suggestion of an underlying panpsychist conception of the universe in both philosophers even as the concept of panpsychism is presented as holding much promise for African philosophy of religion. In the first section, I present a conceptual overview of transcendence and immanence. The following

two sections provide an analysis of Wiredu and Gyekye's positions on Akan traditional religious thought. I then engage in a critical analysis of the positions of both thinkers in the fourth section and show how they can be reconciled.

The Idea of Transcendence and Immanence

The idea of a supreme reality beyond the physical world which may be rationally intuited (and spiritually experienced in an extra-sensory way) features prominently in the thought-systems of Western philosophers like Plato (1892), Thomas Aquinas (1920), Descartes (1952), Spinoza (1910), Kant (2005), Hegel (1954), and Kierkegaard (1968). In the years following the Enlightenment disillusionment with religion and the rise of Western secularism, transcendence as a philosophico-religious concept began to lose ground to immanence. While transcendence opens up the field of human experience to a God-world which humans yet cannot directly experience, immanence highlights the illusion of the belief in the existence of a super-sensible world and seeks to shut out the transcendental, spiritual dimension from human experience.

Yet, the retreat of religion and transcendence in an increasingly secular world has not been a total surrender to immanence. Religion has remarkably reinvented itself, not only surviving in the West but also flourishing in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (WANDUSIM 2015; HESLAM 2015). The constant quest by humans for better existential conditions, for newer experiences, and the seeming insatiable character of human desires persuaded agnostic and atheistic philosophers like Martin Heidegger (1962) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1966) to reformulate the question of transcendence and reposition it as a thesis of a going beyond of the self, a going beyond which is nevertheless still within the phenomenal world. Transcendence thus becomes 'transcendence-in-immanence' since the theological dimension of transcendence is denied and its worldly dimension affirmed.

Approaching the conflict under study from a more theological angle, Charles Taylor (2004, 3–4) acknowledges the steady disappearance of the "enchanted" or religious sphere in the Western orbit even as he admits that God remains alive in the social consciousness of the West. For Karl Jaspers (1971), the human being is not only an empirical self (dasein) whose horizon is the boundary of immanence but also a transcendence-seeking self (existenz). Existenz is the ground of selfhood and authenticity, with all the possibilities that goes with selfhood and authenticity. Jaspers leaves the door open to transcendence, having understood human reality as a witness to otherness and, ultimately, the *Encompassing* – the transcendental

horizon beyond the immanent horizon which, as ultimate source, is immaterial. Immanence not only downplays the value of the sacred but also seeks to hoist the supremacy of the mechanical view of the universe (TAYLOR 2004, 5–6).

But Africa is not the West. The African setting reverses the march of total immanence, what Jeffrey L. Kosky (2004, 14) calls the death of God. The African complementary and panpsychist perspective of the universe (GYEKYE 1995; DUKOR 2014; AGADA 2015) favours the harmonization of opposites in theories of complementation. Hence, in traditional African thought, God is conceived as far and yet near (MAJEED 2014a, 2014b; MBAEGBU 2015; ANYEBE 2015, 581; NEGEDU 2013, 121). The focus of this paper is theological transcendence. Immanence is conceptualized in terms of the material world while transcendence indicates the supernatural sphere.

Kwame Gyekye and the Transcendentalist Bias

The worldview of many African ethnic groups favours transcendence. For instance, the Idoma (AGADA 2015; ANYEBE 2015), the Igala (NEGEDU 2013), the Yoruba (IDOWU 1962), and the Igbo (NJOKU 2002) all endorse the idea of a Supreme Being who subsists in the “without” or “beyond” but whose effects radiate into the “within” or the sphere of sensory experience, the sphere of reason, feeling, and action.

In the work *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*, Gyekye (1995, 69) notes that “the Akan universe is a spiritual universe, one in which supernatural beings play significant roles in the thought and action of the people. What is primarily real is spiritual.” Therefore, humans cannot deny the reality of the spiritual dimension of the totality of existence. Gyekye does not deny the reality of the material world when he submits that for the Akan reality is basically spiritual. He is rather asserting that the spiritual dimension is magnified when humans are confronted with questions thrown up by circumstances that appear to be beyond human control. For Gyekye, the primacy of the spiritual realm makes it the foundation of the material realm. Strict borders between the two realms collapse without completely vanishing. Yet, the qualitative difference between the two realms is no cause for agnosticism as this difference is merely in “the perceivability of one and the unperceivability of the other” (GYEKYE 1995, 69).

The Supreme Being is honoured by the Akan with names expressive of His superlative qualities and indicative of His transcendence. Some of the Akan names for God that Gyekye identifies are Odomankoma – the Infinite, the Boundless, the Eternal, Brekyirihunuade – the All-knowing, Otumfo – the Omnipotent. Based

on Gyekye's interpretation, the Akan obviously conceive God as omniscient and omnipotent. To underline God's omnipresence as a spiritual essence, Gyekye invokes the popular Akan saying: *wope asèm aka akyeré Onyame a, ka kyerē mframa* (If you want to say something to Onyame, say it to the wind). If this saying indeed underlines Onyame's immateriality and thus His non-locality, it also exhibits the transcendence-immanence tension, for Onyame is infinite and immaterial, yet everywhere. How is the transcendent God immanent in the world? According to Gyekye, Onyame's eternity puts Him above the category of change and, therefore, of causality; yet He is the foundation of the world, the sustainer of the universe. Placing God above change and causality throws up the old philosophical problem of how a Being outside time is the creator of a world that subsists within the time series. If God is the creator of the world, then He is part of the causal series. Since the world He created manifests characteristics of imperfection, God must be in some way limited. If He is limited, then He is neither omnipotent nor omniscient. This line of reasoning limits God's transcendence which Gyekye favours.

Certain concepts of importance to this work appear in Gyekye's thought. These concepts are dualism, monism, pantheism, and panpsychism. Gyekye (1995, 75) explicitly rejects pantheism, overlooks monism, and endorses dualism in the African universe. However, Gyekye's dualism is a kind of property dualism since he believes that reality exhibits both spiritual and material characteristics although the spiritual characteristics take precedence. Gyekye endorses panpsychism, convinced that nature is not passive since everything in existence possesses *sumsum*, or spirit. Before taking a critical position on Gyekye's transcendentalism, I will proceed to briefly highlight Wiredu's immanentist position.

Kwasi Wiredu and Immanentism

While Gyekye asserts that Onyame is a Being outside time, Wiredu interprets Akan traditional conception of God in a way that advocates His full immersion in the time series. Wiredu (1998, 38–39) hinges his assertion on the fact that in Akan cosmology existence is spatially bounded. Since space is inseparable from the time series, Wiredu feels justified to hold that the notion of a God outside time is incoherent. He insists that for the Akan, "God is the creator of the world, but he is not apart from the universe. He together with the world [sic] constitutes the spatio-temporal "totality" of existence" (WIREDU 1998, 29). We see here a certain pantheistic tendency – even if not clearly defined – in Wiredu, a tendency absent in Gyekye who is not willing to go beyond panpsychism in the transcendence-immanence reconciliation project.

H.M. Majeed (2014b, 132–133) endorses Gyekye's transcendentalism, but Wiredu is wary of this tendency. Wiredu has no problem with the status of the Akan God as the creator of the world, but he opposes any attempt to conflate the Akan God with the Christian God who creates a world out of nothing. Wiredu's interpretation of Akan religious philosophy makes God essentially an architect of the world, Plato's Demiurge. For Wiredu, the Akan God is not an omnipotent Being prior to time who creates the world out of an absolute nil. Immanence, therefore, takes precedence over transcendence.

For Wiredu, Onyame is limited by the spatiality of His own nature and the material tools at His disposal with which He makes things. Yet, whether we embrace Gyekye's measured transcendentalism or Wiredu's immanentism, the question of the relation of God with the world, and the attendant question of the reality of physical and moral evil, sticks out prominently. Wiredu tackles this problem in his essay "Toward Decolonizing African Philosophy and Religion". Transcendentalism upholds the traditional conception of God as omniscient, omnipotent, and benevolent while immanentism subverts this conception of God, taking the concept of God through the stages of scepticism, cynicism and ultimately radical nihilism as expressed in atheism. Radical nihilism is total immanence, the death of God.

Critical Perspective on Gyekye and Wiredu

Wiredu's position on the relation of God with the world gives us something of the suffering God of Miguel de Unamuno (1954). Wiredu (1998, 41) suggests that for the Akan God is like a father with good intentions who, nevertheless, contends not only with the wayward individual tendencies of his children but also the "grossness of the raw materials he has to work with." Wiredu, the advocate of a quasi-physicalist interpretation of the Akan understanding of the person,¹ extends his anti-dualist perspective to the question of the relation of God with the world. Wiredu conceives a God so intimately bound with the world that agnosticism threatens theism. This is the case because, having proposed the idea of a limited God who is part of the physical series, this God fails to materialize. The non-materialization of God will

¹ Wiredu (1987, 160–163; 1983, 113–134) favours a semi-materialistic understanding of the relation between the okra (soul), the sumsum (ego or spirit), and the honam (body). It is, therefore, not surprising that Wiredu betrays a certain monistic pantheism in his philosophical theology. On the other hand, Gyekye's transcendentalism is consistent with his dualistic and interactionist perspective on personhood in particular and cosmology in general (see GYEKYE 1999, 215–225).

then reinforce the belief that if there is a God, He does not concern Himself with the affairs of the world, and if He does not concern Himself with the affairs of the world humans cannot know Him. While agnosticism will appear the logical conclusion of Wiredu's thinking, the Ghanaian philosopher himself does not endorse agnosticism. Gyekye, on the other hand, is inclined to using superlatives to describe God, an inclination that also threatens theism on account of its capacity to promote agnosticism as the idea of God vanishes into absolute transcendence. Yet, Gyekye's transcendentalism is not absolute, in the same way that Wiredu's immanentism is not absolute; for, Gyekye clearly states that Onyame who is outside the world is also everywhere in the world. If Gyekye's transcendentalism is not absolute and Wiredu's immanentism is not radical, we can reconcile the two celebrated Ghanaian philosophers.

Wiredu's solution to the problem of the relation of God with the world cuts through pantheism while Gyekye's solution involves the dualistic conception of the universe. But do the notions of pantheism and dualism feature prominently in the Akan understanding of the relation of God with the world? In interpreting the worldview of their ethnic group, Gyekye and Wiredu have no doubt perceived elements of pantheism, dualism, and panpsychism in the Akan universe. At this stage, however, the conceptual determinations (philosophical ideas) of the Akan taken as an ethnic group become less significant. We must now look away from the collective worldview and examine the individual intuitions of Gyekye and Wiredu and see how far we can go in reconciling both thinkers. For Gyekye, God is at once remote and near. For Wiredu, this position is valid but also problematic. Since it is problematic it is our duty to investigate the claims of transcendence further. For Wiredu, the outcome of any such investigation involves limiting transcendence. Transcendence is necessarily limited when we grapple practically with the question of the relation of God with the world, a question which places an epistemic burden on theodicy given that God is not accessible through the normal human sensory channel. The limitation of human knowledge of God ensures that the attempt to imbue God with transcendental qualities raises difficult questions for theodicy in general and Akan theodicy in particular.

Wiredu (1998) recognized that any solution to the question of the conflict of transcendence and immanence must necessarily incorporate the question of evil in the world, as we will soon see. If Onyame is omnipotent and exercises supreme power over the lesser deities as Gyekye (1995, 72) asserts, why is there evil in the world? Or is He omnipotent and omniscient but not supremely good? This question throws up the dilemma of theodicy. Gyekye (1995) favours the free will

solution that features prominently in Western theodicy. Wiredu, who favours a less transcendental conception of God, attempted a solution to the question of evil in the world in relation to the existence of God in a way that opens up rich possibilities for the development of an African theodicy within the field of African philosophy of religion.

Wiredu seems to have gone farther than his illustrious compatriot in the quest to explicate the relation of God with the world and throw light on the reality of evil which challenges transcendentalism. Wiredu is not satisfied with the positions of Busia and Gyekye, which invoke the idea of interceding deities and free will respectively to explain away the reality of evil (see WIREDU 1998, 39). For Busia, God has no direct responsibility for the evil in the world; it is the lesser deities mediating between God and humans that bear responsibility for the evil that befall men and women. Gyekye proposed the free will defence to explain away the reality of evil, an argumentative form that features prominently in Western theodicy (see HICK 1985; PLANTINGA 1975; YARAN 2003). But if the free will defence substantially solves the problem of moral evil by attributing wicked conduct to human exercise of choice, it does not fare well in explaining physical evil understood as the harm that follows from natural activities and events like earthquakes, hurricanes, and flooding. Even if we assume that some of these catastrophic physical events are outcomes of the destructive exploitation of nature, for example, the ozone layer depletion which brings about climate change, we are still faced with the question why God did not create humans in such a way that the exercise of their freedom will always be for their own good and the good of physical nature. The basis for taking this position is the transcendentalist conception of God as supremely good, omniscient, and omnipotent. Majeed (2014a, 17) thinks that this line of thought is an over-simplification of the matter. Shrugging off the challenge of rigid determinism and granting humans some latitude for the operation of freedom, Majeed invokes the analogy of car manufacturer and driver: we cannot justifiably blame the car manufacturer for the bad judgment of the driver that leads to an accident.

The car manufacturer – in this case, God – is supposed to possess transcendental powers of omnipotence and omniscience. Wiredu suggests a speculative way forward that, yet, puts a great strain on transcendence. He declares, against Gyekye, that the Akan have no concept of an omnipotent and absolute Being. By making God intimate with the world, Wiredu limits transcendence and expands the reach of

immanence. He does not explore the pantheistic trajectory fully,² but the direction in which he moved the transcendence-immanence conflict indicates the complexity of the transcendence-immanence question. Wiredu himself acknowledges that the Akan seem to accept the doctrine of Onyame's absolute omnipotence at the theoretical or speculative level while at the same time limiting it at the practical level (WIREDU 1998, 41).

Wiredu attempts to construct an Akan theodicy without abandoning the monistic perspective of the cosmos. His monism is a pantheistic monism because not only is God a part of the world but God and the world constitute the totality of existence (WIREDU 1998, 29). His pantheistic monism paints a picture at once different and identical with the picture Gyekye's dualism paints. For, in truth, Gyekye is not a strict dualist. His dualistic conception of the material and spiritual spheres is problematic to the extent that he grants primacy to the spiritual sphere. His dualistic perspective is under the constant strain of the transcendence-immanence conflict, which can be resolved in the simple Akan belief that God is the creator of the universe as a Being outside the world who yet interacts with the world by manifesting Himself in visible nature and in human reason (MAJEED 2014b). But how can this assumption be philosophically justified?

Gyekye himself admits that there are elements of monism in Akan ontology (1995, 76). Gyekye's admission is hardly surprising since he has already acknowledged the validity of panpsychism, in which case the spiritual and material are already plural entities subsisting as an interconnected whole. Gyekye's dualism, then, will appear as a methodological tool rather than an ontological distinction between the material and the spiritual, an epistemological instrument for structuring a totality that reveals itself as a plurality, for which the term "interconnectedness" does little justice. If Gyekye concedes a point to monism, then he cannot completely reject Wiredu's implicit pantheism. As long as we are discussing theism, there can be no monistic conception of the universe that utterly cuts God off from the world. Here, we see both Akan thinkers moving towards compromise in the idea of what we may call moderate immanentism. The basis for this agreement is panpsychism.

Wiredu rejects panpsychism, convinced that it has no place in Akan traditional thought. On the other hand, Gyekye believes that panpsychism has its place in Akan metaphysics. Conflating

² Wiredu does not explicitly develop a pantheistic doctrine, but his conception of God as a Being that merges with the world to form the spatio-temporal totality of existence reveals an element of pantheism.

panpsychism with animism and superstition, Wiredu (1998, 31) dismisses the idea that Africans conceive the universe in panpsychist terms. His anxiety to sound ‘scientific’ is only justified if panpsychism is crudely understood as the belief that everything has life *actually*. However, the main thesis of panpsychism is that the world is a field of experience and consciousness is integral to experience (STRAWSON 2009; SEAGER 1995). In other words, panpsychism proposes that everything in existence has mind or consciousness and that if conscious beings have already emerged in the world, that which seems lifeless now in fact possesses consciousness to whatever degree and is *potentially* alive.³ Thus, it is reasonable to speculate that matter is active. Gyekye (1995) repeats this claim when he endorses the panpsychist perspective in Akan ontology. As we saw in an earlier section, Gyekye believes that all things have *sumsum*. While it can be argued that Wiredu does not explicitly deny Gyekye’s assertion, it is noteworthy that Gyekye’s enthusiasm about inanimate things possessing a vital force is not matched by Wiredu who insists that: “Among the Akans a piece of dead wood, for example, is regarded as notoriously dead and is the humorous paradigm of absolute lifelessness” (WIREDU 1998, 31).

For Gyekye, upholding the panpsychist thesis in African ontology is premised on the claim that material objects (what we call non-living things) are not passive, that they have *sumsum* just like human beings who are endowed with advanced consciousness. These material objects may not possess the intense interiority, the pronounced subjectivity of humans, but they certainly are active in a way that supports the idea of dormant interiority. For, these material objects obey the laws of nature. The internal events taking place in the nucleus of an atom, for instance, are orderly and predictable. Wiredu’s belief that panpsychism is superstitious and not rooted in the African thought-system is mistaken (see DUKOR, 2014; AGADA 2015). Njoku (2014, 14) asserts that everything in existence has a *chi*, or spirit, in Igbo cosmogony, a position in perfect agreement with Gyekye’s belief that the Akan view everything as possessing *sumsum*. Even in Western philosophy, panpsychism is fast gaining recognition, especially in consciousness studies (CHALMERS 1995; STRAWSON 2009).

Without positing panpsychism it becomes difficult to reconcile immanence and transcendence and uphold monism. Wiredu directly affirms monism and Gyekye indirectly embraces the doctrine. For, to

³ Agada (2015) has argued, in defence of panpsychism, that the theory of evolution is incoherent if we reject the possibility of panpsychism.

say that everything in existence has *sumsum*, as Gyekye does, is to admit that everything is related through the possession of consciousness, no matter how dim in certain entities which we like to call “non-living things”. If everything is related, there is a common ground for all entities. If God is posited as the common ground by virtue of His status as Creator and the ultimate consciousness, then God is that transcendent principle whose effects are yet distributed throughout the universe. Thus, transcendence and immanence are reconciled in moderate immanentism. We have already seen that Akan ontology as expounded by Wiredu and Gyekye reveals aspects of panpsychism, monism, and pantheism. What we have endeavoured to accomplish is reach a synthesis of these concepts in a moderate immanentist formulation with panpsychism as the basis of this synthesis.

The complete rejection of pantheism renders the reconciliation of immanence and transcendence impossible. To reject pantheism is to assert the impossibility of the reconciliation of dualism and monism, difference and sameness. Dualism does not always have to prevail as the rigid commitment to two kinds of entities, or spheres, radically opposed to each other. Dualism can serve a merely methodological purpose. As an epistemological tool, it helps us structure the many characteristics of objects in an interconnected universe, a universe remarkable for what Robyn Horner (2004, 61) calls immanent excess. Immanent excess does not directly appeal to theological transcendence; rather, the concept captures the problem associated with the profusion of entities and meanings in the phenomenal sphere with their multiple characteristics, a profusion so pronounced that total immanence fails to satisfactorily account for multiplicity. Accordingly, humans make what Agada (2015, 147–148, 169–171, 173) has termed “the transcendental appeal” – the stubborn insistence on expanding the horizon of experience in degrees from total immanence to absolute transcendence.

The acceptance of panpsychism need not indicate the acceptance of superstition or the lowering of objective intellectual standards. The thesis of panpsychism can find its validation in both empirical and metaphysical observations. In the empirical dimension, supposedly “inert” objects are active at atomic and sub-atomic levels in obedience to natural laws.⁴ Metaphysically, the panpsychist view

⁴ Philosophers like Antony Flew (2008), Robin Collins (2009) and W.L. Craig (2004) who are sympathetic to theism have argued rigorously that physical constants and quantities like gravity and the weak and strong nuclear forces are fine-tuned. According to these philosophers, the constants of physics not only obey the laws of nature but were fine-tuned by a supreme mind at the Big Bang.

supplies us with insight into the origin of the universe and human life. If evolution is to be plausible at all, panpsychism must be presupposed. If one life-form develops from a lower and different life-form, it makes sense to assert that some form of consciousness runs through the diverse life-forms. If we are to accept the proposition that the universe emerged through a purely mechanical process called the Big Bang, it makes sense that panpsychism should be invoked as the only conceptual bridge between life and non-life.⁵ This line of reasoning advocating for a moderate immanentism also shows that both Wiredu and Gyekye remain faithful to the Akan conception of God regardless of their subtly differing but ultimately overlapping interpretations of Akan cosmology.

Conclusion

The biggest argument in favour of transcendence is the persistence of what Agada has aptly called the transcendental appeal. This appeal arises from the abundance of empirical significations that oppress us with the intellectual and emotional suspicion, perhaps even conviction, that further vital significations remain hidden from our gaze. I showed in this paper that Gyekye betrays his sympathy for a transcendental interpretation of Akan religious thought while Wiredu favours immanentism. Analyzing the stance of both philosophers while noting their references to concepts like monism, panpsychism and dualism, I showed how transcendentalism and immanentism can be reconciled in moderate immanentism. I asserted that this reconciliation is already implicit in the thought of Gyekye and Wiredu. Nevertheless, there is still room for further research on the relation of God with the world and the fundamental question of evil in the world. Wiredu was moving in the direction of an original African philosophy of religion that pulls transcendence back into immanence. He did not pursue this project to its logical conclusion. African philosophers can take up Wiredu's challenge and transform the intuition of the ethnic group (ethno-philosophy) – in this specific case, the monistic, dualistic, and panpsychist perspectives in Akan religious thought – into a more sophisticated and complete system of thought.

⁵ The complex implication of this stance for philosophical theology is beyond the scope of this paper.

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