



**THE AFRICAN NOTION OF GOD: AN EXAMINATION OF KWASI WIREDU'S
QUASI-PHYSICALITY AND MATERIALITY**

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Declaration of originality

The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research, carried in the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg from February 2019 to December 2023.

I hereby declare that the content of this thesis is my work, unless specifically indicated to the contrary. This thesis has not been submitted in any form for any degree or diploma to any other University. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged.

Sign...



Date...19/11/2024.....

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(I) DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late mother Mrs M Ntshangase, my family;
Yakoob, Hamida, Agnes, Diona, and Zoeh (my siblings)

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I express my humble respect to Professor B Matolino who has been with me through this work as my supervisor. I also acknowledge the support from other scholars like Dr T Sitoto, Dr I Mutelo, Mr J. M Mboweni and others that have been always there to help me

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(III) INTRODUCTION

(IV) THE TROUBLED STATE OF A HUMAN MIND

The aim of this study was to explore Kwasi Wiredu's concept of quasi-physicality, as it plays a huge role in the African understanding of the existence of God and the spirits. Wiredu's concept of quasi-physicality appears to be more skewed towards naturalism or natural monism, which makes it seem highly opposed to the metaphysical view of supernatural. There is a philosophical divide among scholars which leaves philosophers as either spiritual monists, or natural monists (Harris, 2005; Krause, 2012). According to Krause (2012), spiritual monism is a metaphysical view that God is a supernatural being

which remains aloof from nature, and is unchanged (Agada, 2015). Simultaneously, natural monism is the physicalist perspective which holds that all existing beings are natural, and to some degree, they are subject to the laws of nature (Krause, 2012).

Wiredu (1992) somehow marks a middle ground with the African notion of God as quasi-physical and forming 'spatio-temporal totality' together with the whole nature. However, it is worth acknowledging that it was not within the aim of this study to classify which camp Wiredu belongs to among other different schools of thought. Schools of thought may refer to empiricists, sophists, metaphysicians, and others (Losev, 2019). Nevertheless, in Wiredu's narrative quasi-physicality is more inclined towards empiricism, and quite adverse towards metaphysics. The idea of the African concept of God as a quasi-physical reality requires exploration because it seems to be *prima facie*, dismissing both spiritual monism and natural monism, while Wiredu's further explanation seems more inclined towards natural monism.

Wiredu's notion of God as quasi-physical reality in the African thought poses many questions in the already troubled state of the human mind. According to Krause (2012) a human mind is troubled by different questions like (a) what is the origin of nature? (b) does God really exist? (c) does existence have a beginning and an end? (d) in what form does God exist? And many more unanswered concerns. Wiredu (1992) acknowledges that nature existed in the world with humans as the highest of existing species, endowed with reason which leads them to wonder about the origin of all things. Within that myriads of thoughts and views that develop in the human mind, there has always been a deeper and a most troubling one. The troubling thought is a two-fold question, with the first part that is interested on where the whole chimera of existing beings originated from. The second part is whether or not this natural realm that we surely know is the only realm of existence that there is. Wiredu's quasi-physicality concept of God seems to be a response to the second part of the troubling question, as it talks about the natural real existence. In addition to those already difficult questions, sophisticated thinkers such as Krause (2012) ask why there is something other than nothing. These questions about the notion of God

and spiritual existence pose a serious challenge whenever there is a discussion about existence among scholars, which might be the reason why Wiredu proposes the quasi-physical concept of God.

According to Sam Harris (2005), the serious challenge with finding answers to these questions is that whenever humans attempt to address them, there comes a plethora of other questions¹. When many unanswerable questions come to the mind as it keeps on producing more of them, the more humans discover their limitations as mere natural beings. However, the same human reason has revealed to some humans that within their natural state of existence, they can produce ways to explain that which cannot be absolutely known, like the nature of God's existence which Wiredu attempts to address. Richards (2018) gave some appraisal to the creativity that the mind produces when it undergoes some hurdles and trouble states such as trying to understand the existential nature of God. Nevertheless, within that appraisal, Richards (2018) seems to be fearful of what those people who have turned into victims of their mental creativity would end up doing. Considering the above, this study sought to explore the issues that are associated with the quasi-physical conception of God, which seems to be the complicated way of understanding the African thought system.

Existence seems to have always been a compounded trouble in the human mind which wants to know beyond the limitations of this natural world. Life itself is infested with many challenges that demand the mind to critically engage with the world and other beings in it (Agada, 2015), hence the exploration of the concept 'God' came about. Wiredu's quasi-physical concept of God contradicts the old concept of God as the supernatural being, while simultaneously seeking to locate God at a more superior level than other natural beings. This quasi-physicality concept of God leaves the mind confronted with troubling questions, for example, (i) was there a time where God did not exist with the nature? (ii)

¹ Harris S. (2005) *Reason in exile*. Is one of Harris' works that aims at critiquing the aspect of religion in relation to terrorism wars that came about when mankind used religion to explain existence. His view is that faith only puts reason on hold but does not answer the existential questions that a man has.

was the creation of the whole nature from nothing, or it was a mere fashioning of the readily available material? (iii) could there be a time when the ordering of existence was planned?

Within the thoughts on existence, there exists different concepts under the topic of cosmology. Osho Rejneesh (2012) talks about the conceptual perspectives of explaining existence in somehow a sarcastic way, saying that all are correct because no one is bound to follow others in the world of thought. In that view, Rejneesh (2012) seems to be right because all people have a chance to explain and understand the nature of existence in a way that suits their background. This might be the reason for Wiredu to coin a quasi-physical concept of God than aligning with the supernatural one. When trying to understand existence, a human understood him/herself as a limited natural being (Rejneesh, 2012); and from that line of thought, Wiredu's quasi-physicality or natural monism can be understood as a human acceptance that the whole existence is natural. Upon the inquiry on existence as monolithic, or the duality of nature and supernature, humans discovered a myriad of challenges within being natural as a state of existence (Rejneesh, 2012). Among the many challenges is explaining the nature of beings such as the supernatural or natural God, hence Hodgson (2018) enumerates them, starting from the physical limitations, psychological limitations, and many others, to the mention of mental or cognitive limitations.

In the human mind, when different views come on the nature of existence, there were some that seemed to make more sense than the others. Those were the views that were substantially defended by philosophers until some meditative philosophical concepts such as theism, atheism, agnosticism, paganism, naturalism, pantheism, and panentheism became accepted as explanatory of existential perspectives (Harris, 2013; Mall, 2013; Golding, 2017; Parrish, 2019)². It is at this point that the discussion becomes differentially

² This group of scholars have a common interest in explaining the terminology that always arise when people try to make sense of the concept of God. Their argument is that whenever people/ nations talk about God, they usually fall into one of the camps i.e theism, paganism, pantheism, panentheism, polytheism and so on.

perceivable and multifaceted. After some philosophers coined these concepts in their attempt to explain cosmology, the discussion changed to be more diverse than before.

To deal with the challenge identified above, the first chapter of this study focuses on the diversity of the conceptual perspectives of God, as well as how sophisticated they make the whole discourse to be. However, the core theme of this chapter is more towards explaining the narratives about the concept of God or the Supreme Being in the African thought. In this study, attention is drawn towards the conceptions that have been coined when explaining the nature of existence. In the reading of the quasi-physicality concept, the following questions arise: (i) in what ways have African philosophers engaged with the African notion of God? (ii) what is the meaning of quasi-physicality and its implications in the African view of God's existence? (iii) how does Wiredu's avoidance of dualism deal with the concept of creationism? (iv) how significant is Wiredu's African concept of God and spirits? These concerns thus become one's burden in searching for the critical views of scholars within the African system of thought. This would need scholars to engage with philosophers such as Danquah, Idowu, Mbiti, Bewaji, and many others through their philosophical contributions in African beliefs and philosophy. Therefore, this study attempted to provide a critical examination of Wiredu's notion of God, in which he views God as part of nature other than being a spiritual, supernatural being.

The notion of God has been of great interest to philosophers of all traditions. Most western philosophers conceive God as a completely nonphysical, spiritual being that exists above and beyond nature (Moore, 2008; Augustine, 2005). For Michael Parenti (2010), God is understood as a supernatural spirit that created all other existing beings, both the physical and spiritual. Although African philosophers have also engaged the idea of God, they have not produced a unified conception. Some seem to present something akin to the Western conception of God, while others want to present something uniquely African. For example, Mbiti (1973; 1990), Eke and Ekeopara (2010) and Gitari (2009:93-98) hold that God is a spiritual, supernatural being that is supreme and beyond nature. Similarly, Danquah (1968) adds that in African thought, God is understood as a supreme

supernatural spirit that created the whole of nature and pre-existed it. However, Wiredu, while working on the Akan traditional thought, proposed that God should be understood as part of nature that, together with the universe, forms 'spatio-temporal' totality (1998: 29).

Wiredu's aim is to sidestep the duality of existence where the beings are of two natures, namely, the physical, and nonphysical (mainly spiritual supernature) (Wiredu, 1998: 30). Wiredu's proposal appears to be lacking, as it holds that God is part of nature, while concurrently it does not deny that he created it. It also does not explain how exactly nature came to existence with God, the creator, as part of it. Furthermore, Wiredu's attempt to sidestep the duality of existence does not fully commit to materiality, in which he could argue that everything exists in a physical nature. It is for this reason that this study attempted to critically examine Wiredu's view of God, pointing out that the author reduces African thought to a mere naturalness or materiality of existence. This limits the understanding of spiritual supernatural existence through his special use of semantics. Therefore, the use of the 'quasi-physicality' idea (Wiredu, 1992; Eze, 1997) fails to address this problem of the duality of existence.

(V) A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 the first chapter of this study focuses on the diversity of the conceptual perspectives of God, as well as how sophisticated they make the whole discourse be.

Chapter 2 examines Wiredu's notion of God in the African thought. Wiredu clings onto the Tempelsian force thesis to argue that Africans have never had a concept of God as a supernatural being. This seems to mark a clear move towards the avoidance of the existential dualism of the physical nature and the nonphysical supernature.

Chapter 3 examines the extent to which Wiredu's notion of God might be compatible with the notions of God as a creator. The use of the phrase 'might be compatible' here is

because one may sense the difficulty of making that compatibility when quasi-physicality takes the Tempelsian force thesis with such importance. There is an indicative sense in which a quasi-physical God cannot be the creator because he/she (itself) is within either nature or part of nature.

Chapter 4 examines the implications of quasi-physicality as a tool to sidestep philosophical dualism within the issue of existence. This seems to be the point where Wiredu appears to be more controversial because he argues that Okra/soul is not considered as completely spiritual in the African thought. This is actually the crux of the quasi-physicality where Wiredu makes a serious argument that Africans never believed in purely spiritual existence. He argues that all that which is thought of as spirit and nonphysical assumes physicality when it needs to operate in the world. At this point, Wiredu seems to be guilty of rejecting metaphysics, and becomes a clear natural monist with his quasi-physicality argument.

Chapter 5 will examine Wiredu's avoidance of existential dualism through the quasi-physicality concept. The chapter discusses quasi-physicality as a form of natural monism, and the different views on the concept of God. While Wiredu avoids existential dualism, he surprisingly maintains that God remains above all other beings. Attention is, therefore, drawn towards the fact that quasi-physicality does not clarify what sustains the natural hierarchy in which Wiredu builds his quasi-physical concept of God.

Chapter 6: In the conclusion of the dissertation, the researcher provides some comments on the significance of Wiredu's concept of God. Wiredu coins the concept of quasi-physicality in order to escape the existential dichotomy which needs to be somewhat valuable. Within that notion of quasi-physicality, all spirits, including God, seem to be subject to the laws of nature. In addition, the implications of the study are highlighted, where the researcher argues that quasi-physicality can be viewed as a step towards the concept of God who is super-natural, as opposed to being supernatural³.

³ Supernatural denotes a status of a being that is above and beyond nature or downright outside nature and its limitations while super-natural in this study denotes a being from which the whole nature originated. As such, that being remains natural par excellence.

CHAPTER 1: GENERAL NOTION OF GOD FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

1.1 INTRODUCTION

At a time when Africa has been studied and conceptualised through the lenses of those who desired to study it although originating from other parts of the world, specifically the West, the question becomes whether the Westerners mean the same thing when they say 'African' as with the Africans. Following this question, scholars⁴ have taken it upon themselves to investigate the African aboriginal conceptions of entities such as God, spirits, and nature. Studying our own concepts and thoughts enable us to engage in a reflection that will unveil the true nature of being African people without being thought and conceptualised by others. The concept of God in the African thought is one of the metaphysical issues that have been subject to high debate and discussions. It is controversial because the African continent contains a variety of ethnicities which, therefore, might arguably have different conceptions of God, and spiritual beings. This difference in thoughts on the concept of God in the African philosophy has been in existence for a long time. In this study, the aim is to explore quasi-physicality and materiality arguments that build Kwasi Wiredu's notion of God, as he expressly seeks to decolonise the African philosophy and religion. This exploration then will justify the African notion of God as rather Super-natural than quasi-physical. Therefore, the researcher critically read the works of different African scholars in the analytic examination of how far the Wiredu's conception of God may be pushed towards developing a 'unitary African notion of God'.

The thought is that, beyond decolonising the African thought, there might manifest a united Africa, where the African people will have a unitarian philosophy in which they will also present a unitarian conception of God. The thought on the concept of God begins when human beings engage in the attempts to understand their origins and make sense

⁴ African scholars refer to those scholars from Africa who have done some works on the African thought like Wiredu, Danquah, Mbiti, Idowu, Soyinka, Magesa, Place and many others that have been mentioned in this work.

of the nature's existence in the world. The recognition of the existing universe with the whole of its content raises questions on the reflective and analytic minds of human beings. Some of those questions include, (i) how has the whole existence come into being? (ii) could it be the case that all has just happened or emerged from nonexistence to existence? (iii) is the whole of existence natural, including the being that brought all things into existence? (Nadis, 2013: 1). Within this analytical reflection, in the midst of the many explanations, the concept of God becomes the subject of discussion. Within religious circles, God is conceived as the creator who brought to existence all that exists in the world, both the known and the yet to be discovered (Al Kindi and Al Ghazzali, 2017)⁵. It is argued that for God to be logically conceived as the creator, his/her/Its⁶ existence must have preceded the existence of all beings in any form. The concept of God falls within the metaphysical grid of philosophy because it is the question of existence itself.

In this chapter, I set out to discuss the different accounts provided by various African philosophers on the philosophical notion of God in Africa. The researcher, therefore, examines the notion of God in the views of philosophers from different perspectives, including (i) monotheism, in which God is commonly supernatural, (ii) polytheism⁷, in which God is commonly natural, (iii) pantheism in which god is viewed as all natural objects, and (iv) other perspectives that sub-sectionally present the conceptions on God. Although it seems that Wiredu's quasi-physical concept of God may arguably represent a unified African concept of God, it is evident in the literature that the African continent is more diverse than one could imagine. The discussion starts with the African concept of God, using some concepts from the Western perspectives of those who studied Africans. Moreover, the argument develops into how the notion of God entrenched in the African

⁵ Al Kindi and Al Ghazzali are two Islamic philosophers that gained popularity during the age of Mu'tazilli school of thought in Islam which was the contemporary of the Al Ash'ari school and they were known of having serious differences in their theological views

⁶ In avoidance of gender bias in this study, God is at times referred to as "He/She/It" and in some parts where "It" appears alone it still refers specifically to God as an entity (specific entity).

⁷ Polytheism is the view that there are many gods existing in different forms than one supreme being (Shorter, 2009)

thought, and on the African concept of God in the perspectives submitted by African scholars on this subject.

1.2 DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES WITHIN THE NOTION OF GOD

The discussion on the notion of God might be as old as human existence, but in recorded history, it seems to have started in Western philosophy where the notion of the supernatural God originated. In the recorded history, the concept of God in Western philosophy has been a matter of debate from 3000 BC (Marbaniang, 2004). In their ways of arguing, the philosophers coined ideas such as theism, monotheism, polytheism, pantheism, and atheism in reference to the notion of God. Philosophers such as Chukwunyere (1990), Rejneesh (2012), and Al Kindin and Al Gazzali (2017) argue that when human beings started reflecting and meditating over their existence and the existence of the whole universe, they concluded that there is God. In this case, God, or the so-called Supreme Being was used as the explanation for both the beginning of the universe, and the completeness of the way in which it can be understood. Theism is the belief or an idea that there is God or gods who have created all other things that exist (Ferguson, 2015). As a concept, philosophical theism is the idea that is intertwined with religious theism or deism. According to Moffata (1997), the concept of theism refers to the idea or a belief that there is a God or a supreme being that exists somewhere (Chidester et al., 1997:257)⁸. On the one hand, the concept of theism is a general idea that refers to God's existence in whatever form, whether personal or impersonal (Chidester et al., 1997). Monotheism, on the other hand, takes a particular focus other than simply being a belief in the existence of God. Monotheism, as a concept in the Western philosophy and religions, suggests the existence of one creator and sustainer of the whole universe, with all beings that exist, even those that exist beyond the physical realm of existence (Quinn

⁸ Moffata R (1997) in chapter 5 of the edited book by many African scholars narrates about the religious beliefs of the Zulu people in South Africa. This is quite important in a sense that Moffata seems to support the perspective that all African people are by far theistic than atheistic because he also narrates about the similarities found in Zulu beliefs and other African nations.

& Charles, 1997). Along being the creator and sustainer of the universe, this view also understands that God is unlimited with regards to knowledge, power, extension, benevolence, and moral perfection (Mbiti, 1973). Scholars who hold this notion of God consider the Supreme Being to be beyond any comparison or limitation, and by that very understanding, they think of God as a very perfect being that is far beyond the understanding of the imperfect natural beings such as ordinary humans.

Among the ideas that have existed in the philosophical discussions on the concept of God is pantheism. Pantheism is the view that everything is God's manifestation or has God in it (Majid, 1957). The concept of pantheism then views the whole nature as God or divine (Majid, 1957), which means that when one seeks God, they should not think of something existing out there beyond or outside nature. There is a necessary conceptual distinction between pantheism and polytheism when discussing the notion of God. Polytheism differs from pantheism because it holds that there are many gods or powerful beings that have created the universe in unity – as a task team, or partnership (Shorter, 2009)⁹. As a concept, polytheism comes very close to pantheism based on that it does not view God as supernatural or being far and beyond nature. In fact, polytheism, in some way, argues that some parts of the natural world serve as gods or divine than the rest of the whole nature. However, this view suffers from the lack of proper logical explanation on what elevates some pieces of nature above the rest to the status of gods that should be viewed as supreme beings. Hill (2005:67)¹⁰ argues that “strictly speaking, polytheism holds that part of nature exists as God or gods that have a direct influence on the whole nature or over the rest of nature.”

⁹ Shorter narrates a very strange idea that it is possible that God does not refer to single being but some form of a special task team that works in unity towards making everything be as it is. This is a strange idea that may somehow support the quasi-physicality concept because it may allow that God be something else other than a supernatural spirit as it has been discussed by other scholars.

¹⁰ Hill J.D (2005) Divinity, maximal greatness. In this book, Hill expresses that divinity is so great such that no one can exhaustively explain it. To him it is more of a mystery

Contrary to the notion of God as a supreme being, some scholars coined the concept of atheism which calls for the abandonment of the whole idea of theism, or the idea that there exists a supreme being (Storms, 2016). Therefore, atheistic scholars use all kinds of logic, whether scientific or sceptical, arguing that the whole notion of God is unnecessary¹¹. Atheism, as a concept, entails that there is no supreme being that has created any other being. In fact, the concept serves as a complete negation of the idea that there is any conception of God that is better than the other. It also rejects any concept of God that has been presented both in philosophy and religion. However, this study was not focused on atheism, but rather on the African notion of God¹² within which Wiredu presents his quasi-physicality.

According to Chukwunyere (1990) and Moore (2008), the Egyptian images and statues were given some reverence, and considered as deserving high respect, which made them to be viewed as gods. Scholars like Chukwunyere (1990), Moore (2008), and others who argue that Africans have gods embrace the view that Africans, in their conception of God, are either polytheistic or pantheistic. As previously explained, these two concepts are somehow related and are close to each other in terms of their conceptual understanding, and that means a naturalistic idea of God may be coined around them. The polytheistic African notion of God would mean that Africans have lot of natural beings or entities that are revered and granted the status of being sacred than the rest of nature. At the same time, the pantheistic African notion of God would mean that Africans consider God to be in all things, or being everything in existence (Kombo, 2007)¹³. The problem with polytheism is that it does not seem to provide a single coherent explanation for the nature of God. As a concept, it gives an account of God as many things, usually natural things that change over time, and things that are similarly subject to the laws of nature like all other beings. Furthermore, polytheism is known from the ancient Greek pagans who had many gods made in different shapes and sizes (Chukwunyere, 1990). Many African thinkers have rejected considering the African conception of God as polytheistic. Hence

¹¹ Scholars like Sam Harris, Lawrence Krause, Daniel C Dennet and others

¹² The notion of God in African thought as engaged by many Scholars. *Supra* 5

¹³ Pantheism. *Ibid* 3

Idowu¹⁴, Mbiti¹⁵ and Uka¹⁶ have said that the word 'God', in African languages, is considered to have no plural. For them, the African concept of God is strictly monotheistic in that there is only one Supreme Being that brought all other things into existence and is also greater than all comparable and naturally limited beings. Those different gods in the Greek Pantheon were believed to possess different powers and perform different functions of nature. As Hesiod (2017)¹⁷ relates, in polytheism, God does not have a single conception, as "It" is usually within nature.

The polytheistic notion of God ideally suggests that God is some pieces of nature that are physically observable and remain nothing more than other natural beings. This view is, indeed, not in line with the conception of God as an eternal and omnipotent creator. Pantheism is closer to polytheism in that it does not view God as completely outside nature, but it rather considers God as within the nature or being the whole nature itself. According to Shahin Soltanian (2020)¹⁸, the significant difference between these concepts is that pantheism does not need images of some selected natural objects, because it views the whole nature as sacred. However, in both polytheism and pantheism, there seems to be no duality of nature and supernature. In both these concepts, there is no debate on the existence of physical and spiritual beings, and the talk about the creator of all things is largely insignificant. Being polytheistic, the African notion of God would not consider "It" as singular and would not conceive God as a creator of all beings. At the same time, being pantheistic, the African notion of God would not consider God to be the creator of the whole nature. It would not be sensible to view God as being the whole nature, or within nature, while at the same time arguing that God created the whole nature. In both the polytheistic and pantheistic notions of God, it would make more sense to

¹⁴ Idowu E.B (1973) *African traditional religion: A definition*. London. Idowu conducted a search that seeks to give a full narrative of the existence of religion within the African thought system

¹⁵ Mbiti J. S (1997) *African religion and philosophy* 2nd Ed. Oxford. Heinemann.

¹⁶ Uka E. M (1991) *Readings in African Traditional Religion: Structure, Meaning, Relevance, Future*. New York. Peter Lang inc.

¹⁷ Hesiod (2017) is a poet from Greece who was famous for having some written works on Theogony

¹⁸ Soltanian S (2020) is one of such written works that has endeavoured in explaining the concept of pantheism with a different view. According to Soltanian, pantheism is a step further than polytheism because it considers the whole nature sacred.

consider God and nature as having emerged from nonexistence to existence. Polytheism, in fact, does not explain how some objects within nature are considerable as gods while they possess nothing greater than the rest of nature. Similarly, for pantheism it seems hard to argue that God is a creator of nature when considering the whole nature as God. It can then be argued that both the polytheistic and pantheistic notions of God do not support existential dualism, nor the concept of the distinct creator of all beings.

As a response to the view that Africans are traditionally polytheistic in the notion of God, Ray (2000) and Bewaji (1998) seem to be, in some way, supportive of the possibility that Africans do have a polytheistic notion of God¹⁹. According to Ray (2000:7), the African traditional religions have, over the past, always referred to God as a very close reality that they actually get in touch within different forms. As Africans consider some natural objects with reverence as some sorts of demigods, that might seem strange to other people who always thought that monotheism cannot coexist with polytheism (Forest, 2016). However, in the traditional African thought, polytheism can, and in fact, does coexist with pantheism since there is one Supreme Being who is the beginning of all the existing beings, while at the same time, there are other representational objects that people revere. The African religion adopts some elements of polytheism when it holds that there are other divinities (Orishas) that exist as some sort of smaller gods, which people sometimes have shrines of (Chukwunyere, 1990). The African polytheism does not become a contrast to monotheism because all these spiritual beings that might be viewed as gods are the servants of the one supreme God. Although that might sound profoundly artistic and sophisticated, that is how it is. According to Bewaji (2016), all those servants completely act as agents to fulfil the will of the most high called 'Olodumare'. In this case, even if an African has other spirits that he would sometimes refer to as gods, he holds that they are lesser than the Supreme Being or God. Concepts such as 'Higher God', 'sky god', 'rain god', 'thunder god', and so on, come to existence based on the understanding that these spirits have been deployed to execute those phenomena in nature. It is in this line of

¹⁹ In Bewaji (1998) there seems to be a sense in which it remains open for discussion as to whether African people are monotheists like in Abrahamic faiths or polytheists as Keith Moore argues

thought that Olupona and Ray (2008) argue that in the cosmological accounts, Africans, particularly the Yoruba, do not dwell on the topic of how existence began. Africans seem to understand God as a mystery that is beyond human understanding, and which cannot be known. Therefore, God can only be thought of in the sense of understanding the functions of those minor spirits referred to as 'Orishas' in the Akan language. In that case, it is more sensible to sustain that there is only one supreme God who is above all the other existing beings, and who also cannot even be worshipped, as there are no temples for Olodumare (Bewaji, 2016).

After discussing the notion of God from the West, some scholars like Rattray, Westermann, Tempels, and Pichards sought to explore the world and learn more. However, within their exploration, they had an interest in spreading their Western philosophy in Africa, and a special interest in learning the philosophies of those that they encounter during their exploration. The Western scholars that came to Africa first had issues with what can be called 'African philosophy', and what it deals with if it exists. Scholars such as Rattray, Westermann, and Pichards came to study the African thought, and they did so with a particular interest in the way Africans view the world (Paris, 1995). In their findings, they were shocked to discover that Africans have a concept of God in their traditional thought. The African concept of God then became one of the topics to be investigated and critically analysed in the African philosophy. According to Danquah (1968), some Western scholars studied African spirituality and religion in order to compare it with their own. That could have been one of the reasons the scholars are accused of having written the African ways of thought in ways that present what they thought of Africans. In the early 1900s, African scholars did not engage Western scholars on the matter of the concept of God (Danquah, 1968). Therefore, the Western researchers had ample time to study and interpret the African concept of God and spirituality in their own way, or in a way that made sense to them. Unfortunately, no one could check if that which made sense to them was, indeed, making the same sense to the African people. This is due to the possibility that there might have been a difference in views from the reality of what African understanding truly is, with regards to what was being studied.

Studying the African concept of God here with reference to Western scholars means that those scholars had all the freedom to interpret the African thoughts in any way they deemed fit and satisfactory to them, since at that time, the only reports that were available were those that they collected. Danquah (1968: 20) makes it clear that Western scholars were viewed as both producers and authorities of what must be known on the African thought or understanding. The issue with them was not only to find out if there is God in the African thought, but to also find out how Africans conceive the idea of God. When the Western scholars had found that there was a concept of God in the traditional African thought, it became necessary for them to compare their concept of God with the African one (Okafor, 1997). However, that was not surprising at all, as it is a common phenomenon that when people encounter new ideas, it becomes difficult to comprehend them until they have made them resonate with their already internal thoughts and understanding. Many African scholars took the philosophical argument on the notion of God quite seriously and contributed to the discussion. John Mbiti is one of such scholars, who is an African, and presents the following:

The African knowledge of God is expressed in proverbs, short statements, songs, prayers, names, myths, stories, and religious ceremonies. All these are easy to remember, and pass on to other people, since there are no sacred writings in traditional societies [...] But God is no stranger to African peoples, and in traditional life, there are no atheists. This is summarised in Ashanti proverb that 'no one shows a child the supreme being'. That means everybody knows of God's existence almost by instinct, and even children know him (Mbiti, 1973: 29).

According to Mbiti (1973: 30), there are attributes for God that are known in all African societies, and there is no other being associated with these attributes. Among the many attributes given to God in the African thought are, that God is considered as omniscient, omnipresent, and all-mighty. Omniscience refers to the view that God's knowledge is unlimited (Storms, 2016). Omnipresence refers to the nature of God that he is

simultaneously everywhere, and all-mighty means that God's power is absolutely unlimited (omnipotent) (Mbiti, 1973; Storms, 2016).

Storms' (2016) argument on monotheism clearly states that God is omniscient, having the absolute knowledge of all things, which emanates from the view of God as the creator of all other beings that exist, including the entire nature. God, as the author or the originator of everything, should possess the full knowledge of all things till the end of existence. It then makes sense then to also consider God as a sole being that sustains and provides the whole of "His/ Her/ Its" creation²⁰. Within that line of thought, it is then believed that God is always closer and watchful over the affairs of all beings. The pantheistic idea of God as omnipresent can be understood by considering one of the traditional African perspectives wherein God is known to be in all places at once (Okafor, 1997). Africans are strongly spiritual such that they bring their worship or spirituality with them wherever they are; their religion is with them whenever they are (Mbiti, 1973). For Africans, since God is everywhere, it logically follows that he is all-seeing and all-hearing. Mbiti (1973: 31) argues that:

Other people visualise God as 'The Great Eye' (like the Baganda), or 'The Sun' which beams its light everywhere. Whether or not people literally think of God as having one or more eyes, or long ears, is immaterial: the point is that they regard him as the omniscient from whom nothing is hidden, since nothing can escape His vision, hearing, or knowledge.

From Mbiti's conception of God as omnipresent, it appears that God is not material, but rather "He/She/It" exists in another form that is greater than materiality, or at least different from being materially physical. Material existence would limit God's omnipresence because God would then have to take a certain form, and be located at a certain place, at a particular time, as any other material beings. However, God's omnipotence, in the traditional African thought, is understood in the sense that God has created all things, and

²⁰ The pronouns: her/his/its are used with reference to God whom according to Danquah does not have a particular gender

“He/She/It” remains in control of all beings (Barnet, 2004). In the traditional African thought, God is considered as the supreme spiritual being that is even above the spirits that exist in the realm beyond human beings (Hill, 2005).

God’s omnipotence is sometimes explained in a relative manner with other beings. In this sense, existence is viewed as hierarchical by Barnet (2004:20), preceded by Mbiti (1973:34), in the following manner:

“God is the higher being above all other beings. Under him, there are superhuman spirits like ancestors. Below such beings follow human beings; below human beings follow animate objects, which then below them, exists inanimate objects”.

This argument supports the view that God is considered as highly powerful such that there is nothing conceived as equally powerful or more powerful than him. Furthermore, within this idea of God as an omnipotent being, Mbiti (1973: 31) extends the argument to the point of the conception of God as transcendental, and not limited even by the issue of time. The argument is as follows:

“The attribute of God’s transcendence must be balanced with that of his immanence, since these two are paradoxically complementary to each other. That means that He is so ‘far’ that men cannot reach him, yet He is so ‘near’ that He comes close to men” (Mbiti, 1973: 31).

This notion of God suggests that “He/She/It” is considered as far beyond the natural limitations which humans cannot go beyond. However, at the same time, God is always very close to them, and making his existence be immediately felt. The idea of God being always understood as too closer or even involved in humans’ and nature’s affairs is known as God’s immanence (Mbiti, 1973).

Within God's omnipotence, there is a conception that God is eternal or beyond time, since before the known recordings of time, God was and today, "He/She/It" still is and He shall forever be existing (Okafor, 1997; Mbiti, 1973). Considering God as an eternally existing being means that God pre-existed all things, and will not go out of existence, die, or perish at any period in time. According to Quin and Charles (1997:34), God is "the one who was the first, who has always been in existence, and who never dies." This statement further explains the concept of God's eternity. At other times, being eternal can be explained as suggesting that something has always been there from the past till the present (Majid, 1957). This kind of eternity is what would be called relational eternity, which refers to the case where the existence of a being has ever been there, unchanged, due to the fact that other things that would make it change have not changed it till this time. In the case of relational eternity, it becomes clear that the being in question is considered as of such nature that it can change or has a perceivable possibility of being no more existing in the future.

Another sense in which the concept of eternity is used or can be interpreted is when something exists from now (present), till the unmemorable future (Hill, 2005; Paris, 1995). Both these ways of understanding eternity are minimal and limited, as they are usable when people talk loosely about the concept of eternity. However, God is completely eternal in the sense that "his/her/its" eternity of existence unlimitedly encompasses the past, present, and the future. This quality of being absolutely eternal strengthens the thought that God is unchanging because if "He/She/It" was a changing being, then the argument for "his/her/its" eternity would be weakened. It is hard to argue that a changing being is eternal because it is possible that the change may be so much significant to the extent of forming a new entity altogether. In the African thought, God is considered as a spiritual being that is beyond all life forms that are dependent on other things or natural things that are subject to change. It is logically a prerequisite to the eternity attribute of God that "He/She/It" must be a spirit, and not possess any material form that can be subject to natural limitations.

Danquah (1968), in his contribution from the Akan perspective, mentions that God is conceived as the supreme spirit. In his study of the Akan thought, Danquah (1968: 30) finds that Akans have many names for referring to the Supreme Being, such as Nyame or Onyame, Odonkoma, and Onyankopon. The argument in this study is that the great supreme God, known as Onyame in the Akan language, is that being who gave life to nature. Onyame by himself, is not known as a person, but rather the reference to him as an ancestor is because he is considered as the first being to have existed, and then begot all other things known as creation. Not only did he create all natural beings, but he also hewed them all into different shapes. In his discussion of the Akan conception of the Supreme Being, Danquah (1968: 30) mentions that the most important thing or salient feature in all these names is that they all contain that aspect of God as a creator. He does not seem to be supportive of the idea that God is part of nature in the African thought, but at the same time, he expresses problems with the explanations of how God created the world. It is clear, if one would argue, that God as the supreme spiritual being has even pre-existed the known nature itself, but the problem is how he would have created the whole nature from nothing. It seems appealing, or even sensible, to think that if God brought nature into existence, He must be outside nature, and not part of it. However, from that point, it becomes difficult for Danquah to defend the idea of creation *ex nihilo*, as this view is commonly rare in the African thought.

Danquah mentions that the Western philosophers were surprised to learn that African people know about God without having divine scripture like the Westerners who have holy books. These scholars from the West wrote about the African concept of God, highly expecting it to be somehow something new or completely different from what they knew about God in their thought (Danquah, 1968). According to Danquah (1968), Western scholars such as Rattray, Westermann, and others studied the African traditional thought, to the extent of even studying the languages spoken by the African people as they use language to refer to God. However, Opoku (1987) argues that these scholars cannot be completely trusted since they had conducted their study as foreigners who have to report back to their fellow Western nations and authorities. Some of them have

misinterpretations with regards to Africans having a belief in superhuman spiritual beings such as ancestors. They misinterpreted these spirits as some sort of gods that, altogether, form the African pantheon (Bewaji, 1998; Chuwkwunyere, 1990). This thought becomes evident with scholars such as Keith Moore (2008) who saw Africans having some images, as well as animal totems, and quickly assumed that all these beings are considered gods. Moore (2008)²¹ thus concluded that Africans have the concept of God, but not the high God.

The view that Moore advocates is more in line with the thought that the Western thinkers always had a clear understanding of God, while the Africans had an unclear conception of the Supreme Being. In fact, the notion of the high God and other gods has been used as a way of somehow showing Africans as incapable of perceiving God or the Supreme Being in anyway. One thing that is wrong about this understanding is that it is untrue, and it is also usable to the Western justification of colonising Africa. The justification would be that Africa had nothing before the Westerners came to discover it; it was a vacuum such that even God was absent or not known. "In Africa, there were images and statues which some still exist in Egypt; they resemble some physical natural objects, and not the high God," thus claims Chukwunyere (1990:10) in his colonial state of mind.

As Ray (2000) enters the discussion about the African notion of God, he refers to the Batammaliba people from Benin. According to Ray (2000), Batammaliba people believe in the supreme Kuiye (Sun god) and Butan (mother god/ earther) from which the whole creation comes to manifest. From the onset, the notion of God from the Batammaliba people seems more pantheistic than being closer to the Abrahamic traditions that emphasise the notion of the supernatural monotheistic God. To the Batammaliba people, God is viewed as the originator of all things, while "He/She/It" is the uncreated being that exists outside the whole of nature. They refer to God by the name 'Kuiye', and they

²¹ Soyinka W (2016) also gave a speech about this issue of Africans being viewed as the children of a smaller god. This is problematic in a sense that it suggests the same idea of a united group of gods as Shorter. Supra 7

consider Kuiye as the Supreme Being who has nothing that came before “his/ her/its” existence (Ray, 2000: 19). This notion has existed prior to the arrival of Western people in Africa. In their traditional thought, the Batammaliba consider God to be the being that pre-existed all things such that his/her existence may be viewed as the beginning of existence itself. They argue that the existence of Kuiye and his will be brought or created all the other beings to be the existing nature. In this notion of God held by the Batammaliba, God is more than the creator of nature, as he is believed to have originated the whole of nature as he wills (Ray, 2000). Saying that God created and formed nature as he wills, amounts to considering God as a very free being that acts due to its internal reasons, not because of the external influences; and at the same time, not facing any external limitations. This is considerably ‘external limitations’ because it is, indeed, thinkable that God can be limited, but in Ray’s consideration in the context of the Batammaliba, it seems that if God is limited, that limitation is internal.

Internal limitation might be because God does not want that kind of action to happen, or that kind of action is outside his intentions, but not necessarily because God has no means or capability, in any way, to carry out that action. This traditional understanding of God suggests that “He/She/It” is eternal, where every being has been created by him, and he was never created by any being. To the Batammaliba, God is completely non-physical and beyond nature because he/she was already in existence before any other being came to be. Materiality and physicality would limit God’s omnipotence and omnipresence which are some of the profound attributes of God in the African thought (Eke & Ekeopara, 2010). In Batammaliba thought, Kuiye did not create the world and the whole nature because He/She/It was, in any way, compelled by anything, but because He/She/It wanted, and has absolute power to create.

In this line of thought, God, in his wisdom and power, chose to exercise his/her/its artistic skills or qualities to originate all beings that exist in nature. It is sensible in the Batammaliba traditional belief to argue that God is beyond nature because if God were to be part of nature, then He/She/It would be subject to natural limitations. In addition, if it

can be agreed that God created nature because he wanted to, it also can be agreed that if “He/She/It” did not want to create, there would have been nothing created. Together with that condition, it would also be the case that God would not suffer if the creation did not come to existence because He/She/It is not, in any way, dependent on it. It seems logical to argue that if God created nature, then He/She/It must be more powerful than all its forces and influences. In Batammaliba thought, God is not even subject to needs as natural beings are. For example, natural beings are commonly subject to needs like shelter, nourishment, shape/size, a place to exist, and so on. The emphasis on the point that God is supreme beyond needs makes it clearer that God existed before all other beings, and that He/She/It created the whole nature without being in need of it. This might also explain why in the African traditional religious thought, there is no notion of nature having a certain purpose, and a particular date where humanity will be called to account as in the Abrahamic religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism²² (Negosian, 1987).

The Batammaliba people, in their traditional thought system, consider the idea of sacrifice as deeply symbolic. It is the way that natural human beings show reverence to their creator, and it is performed without any thought that God needs it from them (Ray, 2000). Similarly, Hill (2005) argues that if God was ever in need of something from nature, then there would be nothing that makes him absolutely greater than the whole of it. Considering God as the one Supreme Being who is above the whole of nature makes God distinct, and completely outside nature. According to Ray (2000), in the African thought, it would sound improper to think of God as limited as all other beings that exist in nature. I further argue that in the African traditional thought, God is known as within the essence of all natural beings to be limited by many things in various ways.

Similarly, Ferguson (2015) talks of nature being limited to forms, space, time, and conditions. Natural beings exist in particular forms like shapes, sizes, colours, and many

²² Negosian S (1987) *Judaism: The way of holiness*. Macmillan. New York. Although Rabbi Negosian is a Jewish and a passionate teacher about Judaism, but he also has interest in knowing other religions and that is what has made him a good source to refer when discussing Abrahamic faiths

things that make their essences. Essence refers to that form or component of a being that without its presence the being itself would not exist (Ozumba, 2004). In addition, Ferguson (2015) argues that all natural beings are limited even by their essence of being natural, and they cannot possibly exist without what nature gives. In this case, being natural emphasises that the being has no way at all to escape the demands and influences that nature imposes on a natural being. The demands and influences of nature refer to the powers of nature that subordinate every existing natural being. One such powers is the cause and effect; everything that naturally exists is caused and is as an effect from a certain cause (Majid, 1957). For Majid (1957), being caused is a direct limitation to any caused being; once the being is caused, it remains less powerful and dependent to that being that caused it. Ferguson (2015) argues that the kind of limitation put by the idea of cause is of two levels. Firstly, once a being is caused, it becomes intrinsic within its nature that it is not permanent. Secondly, once the being exists as caused, it logically follows that such a being is less powerful and dependent to that being that caused it than the former needs the latter.

Furthermore, the idea of being created or caused as a natural being means that the existence of that particular being is controlled, and dependent upon the existence of nature. The dependence upon the existence of nature can be seen by the change that nature imposes on that caused natural being. Flew (1984) and Armstrong (1970) argue that when a being is natural, it exists within nature, and not without its natural state of being, and that which forms its natural essence. The existence of a being as natural means that it forever remains subject to nature, and to the influence of other existing natural beings. The influence of nature refers to the changes that occur in the existing nature, and the influential drive of other natural beings upon any natural being. At the same time, once a being is a cause of another being, then it must logically follow that, by the desires of that cause, the caused can be removed from existence (Descartes, 1984). In fact, the African traditional religious thought makes it clear that the existence of all the created nature and the conditions around nature's existence is dependent on the creator.

This is clearly noticeable in the way that Africans read and understand natural phenomena like drought, famine, agues, and other natural disasters.

According to Knighton (1999), when African people are faced with atrocities, they consider it necessary to make some offerings to God and beg that the anger against them be appeased²³. Although it usually seems like the focus is paid to the ancestors, this is how a foreigner might see it, but an African knows that ancestors are the mediators that will convey the message to the Supreme Being, which will then change the existing conditions (Bewaji, 1998). However, when one being is considered a cause of another being's existence, it directly implies that the existence of the cause is independent and above the existence of that which is caused. This implication is raised by the fact that whenever there is a cause and the caused being, it becomes clearly conceivable that the cause existed and can completely exist without the caused. According to Solovyov in Kojève (2018), when a being exists as caused, it logically follows that its existence is of a lesser potency than the existence of that which caused it. Considering Solovyov's analysis, it is plausible to argue that the caused being can also be removed from existence without affecting the existence and potency of the cause.

According to Eke and Ekeopara (2010), Africans consider the universe as created by God whose existence is above and beyond the whole nature. In the African thought, God is considered as the being who existed before the existence of any natural being. Kato (1975) argues that for Africans, God is supernatural in that He/She/It existed before the world came to existence. Similarly, Hun (2013) presents a notion of God who is above all nature's limitations. Considering God as supernatural, for Hun (2013), means that God is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, and independent. The omnipotence (being all-powerful) means that God, in his nature, is more powerful than any other being. The idea of God as all-powerful is known from the view that he is the being that solely created

²³ Knighton B (1999) narrates that the art of appeasing the spirits has always been known in Africa and it is an old tradition. African people believe in offering for their good fortunes

the whole nature from non-existence to existence. When God is considered as having pre-existed the whole existence of all other beings, it directly follows that he exists as distinct and independent of the whole existence.

God's omnipotence seems to directly mean that in the African thought, God exists beyond the natural forms that nature is confined to. According to Hun (2013:37), together with omnipotence attribute of God, there is a second attribute that is, omniscience. Omniscience refers to the nature of God in the African thought as a being that possesses knowledge and an understanding of all existing things that he created (Moore, 2010; Hun, 2013). Therefore, God's omniscience is directly linked to his omnipotence because by his greatness, God has the power to know and understand the whole nature as he created it. In the traditional African thought, God is both feared and respected due to these two intrinsic qualities that he, alone, possesses (Knighton, 1999).

Considering God as all-powerful over the whole nature makes Africans always fear God's might and they ponder over the power that nature has. For an African, nature has power beyond the human powers because it even restricts humans, but God is the one who created it and is still the most powerful in comparison with the whole of it. In that case, Tempels' hierarchy may be challenged because at times, nature may even threaten the existence of human beings, which Tempels considers to be higher than the rest of other beings. God is considered more powerful than the whole nature because he is the power that created all other entities that exist in the world, as Edet (2009:26) argues. According to Edet (2009:26), an African sees the greatest power of God from the power of nature itself. This view alone suggests that in the African thought, nature is considered very powerful, and one needs not to go search for the supernatural to understand God. With a serious consideration of this view, it logically follows that since nature is powerful than human beings, and while God has created the whole nature, God must, therefore, be more powerful than the powers of the whole existence.

Eke and Ekeopara's (2010) argument in page 5 of this study shows that the greatness of God is beyond any measurement of nature. That God, in the traditional African thought, one needs not to look beyond nature to find God who is simply super-natural than being supernatural and evasive of natural limitations. Eke and Ekeopara (2010) corroborate the African notion of God with the Islamic notion of God, as presented by Al Ghazzali (1058-1111AD)²⁴ in his narrative of God as the greatest and unseen because nature cannot fathom that greatness. Al Ghazzali is an Islamic scholar who explained the concept of God in the Islamic thought. In the Islamic philosophy, God is considered as the Supreme Being that is above and beyond the existence and understanding of natural beings (Aslan, 1994: 80-86). In the Qur'an, God is referred to as Allah who has no beginning or ending, no birth or death, and has no parents or children²⁵. Within this understanding of God in Islam, God is all-great, all-high, and above all the knowledge and understanding of natural beings. Eke and Ekeopara (2010) compare the Islamic concept of God with the African notion of God. They conclude that in the African thought, God is conceived in the same manner as he is conceived in the Islamic thought. This conception of God suggests the duality of existence, where God is a being that exists in a distinct manner that is completely apart from nature. The notion of duality completely denies the case where God and nature are one, or both exist in a similar way. According to Ray (2000), nature can be studied and completely understood by human minds, but God is beyond the understanding of nature. Therefore, in Emeke and Ekeopara's thought, since human beings are natural beings, they can fully understand the existence of nature, but God remains beyond human knowledge and understanding which is itself limited to nature. In other words, nature cannot have the full understanding of God because God's existence is beyond any limitations and forms that the whole nature is subject to.

1.3 AFRICANS AS NATURAL POLYTHEISTS

²⁴ Supra 5

²⁵ Surah Al Ikhlaas. Quran Chapter 111 verses 1-4

While other scholars in the African thought consider God to be a supernatural being and nonphysical, as opposed to natural and physical, some Egyptologist scholars like Chukwunyere (1990) and Moore (2008) hold a completely different view from that. They consider the existence of physical images that were honoured and revered in African traditions as gods or goddesses and then argue that the African notion of God is bound to nature and physicality. For example, Kamalu Chukwunyere is one of the Egyptologists, who considers the reverence given by Egyptians to the images of gods and goddesses. Chukwunyere (1990:10) argues that for Africans, there is no other existence other than the physical one. In this point of view, God is not a kind of being that exists in some other form that is different and apart from what nature provides. The images of reference here are those of Egyptian gods and goddesses like Troth, Ra, Osiris, and many other revered images (Chukwunyere, 1990; Shorter, 2009).

Africans view the whole existence as completely physical and having nothing that exists beyond physicality. This view implies that Africans are not people who do not have a concept of God, but they are people who do not believe in the supernatural. For Chukwunyere and Moore, the existence of many images that are revered as God means that Africans do not view God as one Supreme Being, but rather, many natural beings. It then appears that their view of the concept of God is polytheistic. At the same time, this view is completely denying the duality of existence which runs totally different from the view of God as a nonphysical, Supreme Being. The duality of existence comes into this study because Scholars like Edet, Eke and Ekeopara criticised the naturalistic notion of God while projecting the supernatural one which then leads to duality. Simultaneously, the view that Africans have many natural beings which they consider as gods has many implications that are highlighted and further discussed in this work.

The first issue is that if Africans consider the whole existence as totally physical, they would be natural physicalists. In this point of view, Africans would consider the whole existence as one dimensional, and completely material (Chukwunyere, 1990). In its depth, that would also mean that in the African thought, there is nothing that is outside the

physical or material world. The second issue is that if Africans think of God as those physical images that they made in Egypt, then they would be polytheists.. According to Forest (2016), the notion of God as being many different things is also known as paganism²⁶.

The third issue is that if African thought has no notion of God as separate from nature and its forms, it then seems that God is not beyond the dictates of the natural laws. This view suggests that in the African thought, God is not supposed to be viewed as the creator of the whole nature because “She/He/It” exists as the subject of nature him/herself. In Eke and Ekeopara’s (2010) view, if God exists within the limits of nature, “He/She/It” is not greater than any element of nature, and the nature that has limitations that also apply to God has to be greater than God. The fourth is that if God is considered as part of material nature implies that the African concept of God is completely different from that of the Supreme Being known in the Abrahamic traditions²⁷. In that case, it seems that the idea that Africans have a different God from the God of other nations perpetrates the view that there are many gods. The last issue which seems quite obvious with the pagan idea²⁸ of God is that, considering God as part of nature entails that he/she logically cannot be conceived as having preceded nature. In taking this last issue seriously, the notion of God as a creator vanishes because once God is subject to nature, He/She/It becomes incoherent to hold at the same time that nature exists as his/her/its creation.

Since Moore (2008), Chukwunyere (1990), and Shorter (2009) give the account of images of God that exist in Africa in order to substantiate their view that Africans conceive God as completely natural and physical, this view needs to be critically looked at. One of the issues that immediately come to the mind when thinking of God as a natural and physical object as these scholars argue, is the rational account of the origins of the whole existence. It becomes difficult to explain the role of God in the cosmological discussion of how God is conceived as a creator of all other things that exist with him. At this point, it

²⁶ Forest C (2016) paganism is one of the most problematic notions of God because it considers some objects of nature as sacred while others are not. At the same time, paganism does not account as to what makes something sacred

²⁷ Abrahamic traditions hereby refer to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

²⁸ Pagan idea of God refers to the view whereby anything can be adopted for worship and be divine or a god

seems that these thinkers hold the view that either God and the natural world both emerged from nonexistence to existence at the same time, or God existed as complete before the world was complete. Considering God and nature as having both come into existence at the very same time would significantly mean that there is no way at all that an African would have a notion of God as the creator of the whole world. If God existed as complete before the world and nature was complete, that would mean that God is apart from the rest of nature. However, even though God would be outside and distinct from the whole nature, it would still deny God the status of being the absolute creator.

The concept of God as the creator logically requires the view that God pre-existed nature, and his existence is prior to the existence of the whole nature. This condition is necessitated by the conceivable incoherence that would arise if a person sought to argue that two things came to existence at the same time, while also holding that one of them created the other. Chukwunyere's position in this matter of the African concept of God exacerbates the question of how God differs from the rest of other natural beings. In addition to this issue is the significance of the notion of God as completely natural to the extent that there is nothing beyond natural physicality.

According to Egyptologists such as Chukwunyere (1990), Moore (2008), and Shorter (2009), the images of gods and goddesses in Egypt are the real presentations of what God in the African thought is. Within this line of thought, there seems to be a conviction that Africans completely see their God right in front of their natural eyes (Moore, 2008). In that sense, the images of Ra, Troth, Osiris, and all others are beyond simply connotations of something hidden, but they are the real African notion of God. According to Forest (2016), this idea of the existence of gods and goddesses really emphasises that in the African thought, God is completely understood as nothing more than the known nature. To the Egyptologists who hold such a view, the association of God's idea with the natural dichotomy of male and female (gods and goddesses) makes the African notion of God wholesomely limited to the physical nature. However, the issue that remains unexplained in this case is how Africans understand the concept of the creator or the origins of nature. This line of reason leads to the basic question of how God and the whole nature came to existence at the beginning of all.

In light of the worries raised by the views of different scholars, in this study, the researcher sought to defend the view that those images are the simple representations of something higher or greater than all of them. According to Awolalu (1976)²⁹, the presentation of something might be different from the thing itself or simply be lesser than that which it represents. For example, Naaman (2015) talks of an instance where a person draws a physical image that represents a particular nonphysical thing like anger, love, hatred, and so on. In this case, Awolalu (1976) and Naaman (2015) argue that there are instances when whatever someone puts forward is merely a presentation, but not in any way similar to that which is presented. A presentation is the standard way of conveying an idea from one person to the next. The presentation, in itself, is not the original being, and it should not be elevated to the status of the exact being (Awolalu, 1976). Beyers (2010) argues that in some cases, the representation of something might not even be the whole idea of the exact being that is represented³⁰. With that view, this study argues that the images in Egypt which the scholars make reference to might be incomplete representations of God. In other words, it is thinkable that the images represent how some people have tried to squeeze their limited ideas of what cannot be thought by limited minds when trying to comprehend that which remains beyond human comprehension.

1.4 WAYS OF REPRESENTATIONAL ERRORS

The representation of something is any idea of an image that provokes thoughts or conception of a being. However, it is worth noting that representations are ways of understanding the particular entity. The methodical ways to understand a particular entity can be understood as tools to lead the mind to the formulation of that perception, at least

²⁹ Awolalu (1976) narrates about instances whereby somethings get utterly misrepresented in the process of trying to relate them to the audience. He therefore points out that the images in Egypt must not be mistaken to be correct/ full representations of gods

³⁰ Beyers (2010) clarifies that it is not always true that the representation gives the whole picture of what is presented.

to a minimal level possible. However, the representations of things are sometimes not even authentic, let alone being exactly what the original being is. Obesekere (1997:49-53) mentions the apotheosis which is the idea of a certain historical character being presented in a particular way that is made for a particular purpose to the audience. Apotheosis is a type of presentation that seems erroneous in that a particular human hero of the past becomes represented as a god. In the Greek custom, some particular personalities that lived in long past were represented mostly in a modified version and were viewed as some gods and demigods in the pantheon (L'Orange, 1947).

Cooke (1740) gives long narrations on characters that are today known as the Greek gods and goddesses that were, in the past, humans. In a study called 'Theogony', there are different accounts of the origin of God. In the study, Cooke (1740)³¹ argues that in the ancient history, there were people who were living in this natural world with the whole nature who then later got elevated into the status of being gods and goddesses. The quite amazing feature in the stories of ancient heroes who got deified is that as time goes on, their presentation changes to include more things. According to Fallon (2017: 31-35)³², when some people have risen to the level of some status, their presentation to the audience changes drastically, and it sometimes even gives false information of the original person. When a first person presents the idea of the greatness of his hero, he just talks about the characteristics of the hero or heroine. However, those who have not seen the being that is narrated about keep the representation conveyed to them which, as time goes on, changes, until it changes completely (Lamberton, 1988).

Quite contrary to that way of representing a real historical person in some kind of mythological deification, there is another way of presentation that also misleads in a similar way. (Hesiod in Pwiel 2017: 31-50) writes on a theory called 'Euhemerism', where myths are re-presented by taking the characteristics of historical reality. Euhemerism is a

³¹ Cooke M.R (1740) shows interest on writing of a Greek poet Hesiod who spoke about Euhemerism and Apotheosis

³² Fallon D (2017) Chapter 2. Supra 19

presentation where a mythological god character is later presented as a real person who lived in the real world with other people in the past (Pwel, 2017). Within this idea, some aspects or characteristics of that mythological personality are made to appear as if they present a particular life and time in realistic history. For example, the Greeks had Zeus as a mythological being that was forever great and high above the sky (Fontenrose, 1971:20-23; Reubekas, 2016; Most, 2006: 3-9). However, in the later presentations, Zeus is shown to be more of a real historical figure that lived on earth and engaged in humanistic activities that are known in this world. It is thinkable that such a phenomenon happened with many mythological characters. However, the most noticeable thing about re-presented characters is that it somehow transcends the mythological realm into the historical reality.

The issue, at the same time, is that those who present this character still maintain some aspects that make it still sound mythological in nature. For example, even though a particular character has been made so much historically real, it still sustains those qualities such as being all-powerful, extraordinary, and being distinct from other natural beings. At some point, it even becomes difficult to differentiate the mythical part from the realistic part of the represented figure. According to Winiarczyk (2013: 23-30)³³, euhemerism makes mythological figures take a dual nature. While a figure existed only in myths, it then also takes another realistic character. To a higher degree, these presentations overlap, hence it ends up not clear whether the figure is a myth or real.

In the case of images in Africa, it may be that they are some limited physical representations of some aspects of God in a minimal understandable level. For example, Deghani (2016)³⁴ refers to the common idea where people choose to use the heart as a symbol to represent love, or a dragon to represent anger and hatred. Deghani (2016:7)

³³ Winiarczyk M (2013) Chapter 2 also takes from Hesiod, Same like Coke. Supra 29

³⁴ Deghani M (2016) as a specialist in representational language and interpretations has written many works trying to critically alienate representations from the ideas being represented. He argues that representations are miniature thoughts about what is actually represented

mentions that in reality, no one has seen love or hatred, but those imagery presentations are used as tools to visualise that which is nonphysical and cannot be seen. Having many images of God might not mean that Africans have many gods and goddesses. However, it simply represents the different ways in which some actional attributes of God might be presented in a physical manner. The point being made here is that quasi-physicality might be mistaking the presentation of God as the actual nature of God as a natural being.

Actional attributes include when God is spoken of as a creator, provider, keeper of the whole existence, and continuation. In this study, it was deemed better to refer to these attributes as 'actional' because they show God as an acting being in the world of existence. However, the mistake happens when those actional attributes are considered as constructive of the nature of God. For example, when someone wants to put up an image of a creating and providing being, he imagines a big person with many hands and owning many treasures. At the same time, another person from the same land or location may represent God in a way depicting other aspects, hence another image is created. The Hindu tradition which represents God in a more natural monist way as Wiredu's quasi-physicality does, has always differentiated between symbolism and actuality (Rejneesh, 2015). Nevertheless, while there are many images at the same time, they are all presenting one thing, and they all believe it as one thing that is far beyond any of those presentational images or statues. In this manner, all different images can be viewed as minor representations of one being that is far beyond the level that can be comprehended by natural means. In other words, Wiredu's quasi-physical concept of God might be a conflation of the perceivable actional attributes or representations of God with the nature of God. Within that understanding, it can still be held that in the African thought, God is one and is beyond the whole nature. It is only the representations that exist within the realm of the limited natural human understanding.

In the African thought, both apotheosis and euhemerism, which might have at least come closer to justifying the quasi-physical concept of God, are unknown ideas. The kings and queens in Africa were never elevated over time to become mythological characters. Since

the Egyptians have made images and statues of some natural beings or human figures, it would seem attractive to think that those images are of heroes that historically lived. At the same time, it would seem possible that those images represent the mythological beings that have been developed to be real historical figures. Nevertheless, the issue becomes more problematic when one gets to rationalise the possibility that Africans believe in the concept of the creator which Wiredu does not address. If the image represents a person who lived in the natural world, it then becomes clear that such a person is unthinkable of having created the nature while he himself exists as a natural being. At the same time, if the image represents a mythological being that has been developed into being as a real historical being, then the concept of a supreme creator vanishes. It is at this point that Wiredu's quasi-physical concept of God can be accused of either rejecting or dismissing the concept of one creator of all existing beings. The concept of the supreme creator vanishes because the image is clearly noticeable that it has been built by humans that are natural. In fact, the image exists very much natural as those who made it.

The concept of apotheosis is incompatible with the thought of God as the creator of the whole nature. If someone who historically lived as a natural human being, limited by the laws of nature like any other being becomes elevated into being a god, it becomes incoherent to consider that person as the creator of the same world that he lived in. Therefore, it is logically impossible to think that the images in Egypt are considered by Africans as real gods which play a significant part in the African concept of God. Similarly, the apotheosis and euhemerism are foreign concepts in the African thought, and it is surprising that Wiredu coins the quasi-physical concept of love without being aligned to these ideas.

1.5 AFRICAN CONCEPTION OF GOD AS MONOTHEISTIC

The Chewa are one of the Southern African traditional people who have a concept of God. In the traditional Chewa thought, God is considered as one Supreme Being that is above all other beings that exist (Amanze, 2002). They refer to God as Mulungu, Namalenga, Chauta, Mphambe, Leza, and Chisumpi (Amanze, 2002). The Chewa people respect God to the extent that their belief in him/her/it is expressed in their daily conversations. Although there is a written scripture or systematic theology, the Chewas have never forgotten or forsaken their belief in the Supreme Being (Chakanza, 2002). Many Western scholars who visited Malawi have expressed their thoughts, explaining that they firstly had a conviction that the Africans are polytheists, as Malawians use all the names that they use when referring to God. However, Dos Santos³⁵ (in Rowley 1888: 18) gives his account, stating that he found the people in Malawi already knowing about the one Supreme Being back in the early 17th century. For the Chewa traditional people, God is conceived as one Supreme Being who brought all other things into existence. However, more than that, God is also considered as highly involved and in the control of the daily running of the universal existence. The only thing that makes the Chewa look like polytheists on the outset is that they commonly refer to God with attributes. For example, they usually refer to God as the rain-giver, creator, light-giver, elder, almighty, and so on. However, the real names that the Chewas use for God are Mulungu or Chauta, which entail the supernatural greatness (Amanze, 2002).

According to Buchanan (1887: 144), Chauta is conceived as the invisible supreme spirit that exists above and beyond nature to such an extent that even thinking about it becomes difficult due to humans' natural limitations. To the Chewas, it is even rare or not quite possible to find people worshipping Chauta due to the difficulties that exist in explaining him (Buchanan, 1887). According to Mapples³⁶ (in Msiska 1995), the Chewas innocently argue that "no one knows Chauta, for Chauta is invisible and unknowable." In this case,

³⁵ Dos Santos J is one of those early Christian priests travelled to Africa with the aim to spread the gospel and to his surprise as written by Rowley (1888) in Chapter 1, he found Malawians already knowing about the supreme being and worship

³⁶ Mapples C also reports the same as Dos Santos according to Msiska (1995) and it seems that both these Western preachers expected Africa to be void of any concept of the supreme being/ God

the Chewas seem to be of the view that God can only be known by his actions, and then be referred to with attributes that are visible in nature's existence.

Similarly, the issue of images and statues can be interpreted as simple presentations of that which, in its wholeness, can never be comprehended by the limited minds of natural human beings. Therefore, it logically follows that the God of Africans is one. Africans are monotheistic, but they present God in different actional forms which natural humans can grasp. African traditional thinkers use some attributes to explain that which is unexplainable and unknowable in its wholeness. For example, saying that God is the creator is because he created, and saying that God is everywhere is because there is no one who could limit him to a certain location. Furthermore, for the Chewas, when God is considered as the Supreme Being, it is meant that he is above and beyond the whole nature. The notion of God as a creator for the Chewas exists, although it is difficult because it is not as the notion of God creating everything from nothing. The Chewas have a creation myth which, according to Schofeleers (1999:2)³⁷, is as follows:

In the beginning, there was Chauta and the earth. Chauta being a spirit roamed around the earth. There was no life, no water, and completely nothing of existence. At one time, darkness began to cover the earth, then lightning flared. The peals of thunder sounded by the power of Chauta. Then the sky appeared and opened, the first human pair and all species of animals descended from the sky to the earth.

This story is commonly known among the traditional people of the Chewa community. According to Schofeleers (1999: 1), in the Chewa perspective, God created the whole nature from water and the order-less mass of mud that seems to have been already existing with God. Therefore, it seems that in the Chewa traditional thought, Chauta is a creator that created all other beings to their complete forms with something that already existed with him before.

³⁷ Schofeleers M (1999) narrates one of the shocking things to the Western travellers that African people even had creation myths that have nothing to do with the book of Genesis in the Christian bible

Chauta, in the Chewa tradition, is conceived as a supreme being simply because it is seemingly difficult to account for anything that preceded him and showed some movement towards making other things. In other words, Chauta may be conceived as the creator on natural forms of all the natural beings as they exist, but not the creator of everything from nothing. According to Munyenembe (in Fiedler, 2011), the notion of creation from nothing is a later development that came with Christianity to change the traditional understanding, and it is hard to talk about it. The problem with the Chewa notion of God as a creator is that it seems that Chauta is not the originator of all things, but rather a fashioner of nature. In saying that God used water and mud to create nature seemingly amounts to two implications. Firstly, that Chauta forever existed with water and mud. This implication leaves the question of how Chauta with water and mud came to existence, open. Secondly, it may imply that Chauta firstly created water and mud from his existence in an earlier period, which he then used to create other natural things. Although it is difficult to explain the concept of creation from nothing, the second implication which the researcher gives here attempts to cover the question of where water and mud came from. Conceiving water and mud as having been initially created and then used to create other things makes it clear that God supernaturally existed before the whole of nature. However, the difficulty of the concept of creation of the whole nature from nothing is fully addressed in Chapter 2 of this study.

In West African religions also, there are some amazing things such as the different notions of supernatural existence, as scholars explore the topic of the African concept of God. Parrinder (1970)³⁸ writes about the “belief without worship,” explaining the concept of God in the Yoruba traditional religion where God is referred to by many names. The Yoruba people consider God to be so much great that their understanding of him/her/it is way much less than the level in which they can rightfully ascribe anything to him. In the same discussion, Idowu (1968) argues that the oldest name to refer to God in the Yoruba

³⁸ Parrinder G (1970) narrates that African people always had a fully-fledged concept of the supreme being but no particular way of worship. Therefore, according to Parrinder Africans were different from Westerners that came to study them in a sense that they did not have a systematic theology and places of worship. Perhaps that is what made the encounter interesting to the Westerners

tradition is Olodumare. This word is commonly used, although its meaning remains mysteriously vague and not known (Idowu, 1968). When people use the word Olodumare, they widely consider it to mean almighty or omnipotent being who is beyond any measure of greatness (Idowu, 1968). In the same way as in other African traditions, Olodumare in Yoruba is considered to mean the creator, provider, omnipresent, and owner of all things that are in existence of nature.

Scholars argue that even though there are no scriptures that are believed to have been revealed by Olodumare in any age, he is known over the ages in the Yoruba tradition (Idowu, 1968; Igboin, 2014). Igboin (2014) argues that the knowledge of Olodumare is kept and conveyed to the generations through proverbs, and being mentioned in general conversations. For example, Yoruba use a proverb that says, “only God is wise,” and in their greetings, they usually thank God for health (Idowu, 1962; Parrinder, 1970). Just like the Chewa people, they commonly refer to God by attributes such as “the creator, owner of breath or spirits, benefactor, merciful, living, lord of glory, judge”, and so on (Idowu, 1968). However, the core thing is that all these names depict the greatness of the Supreme Being than all other beings that exist in the world. Olodumare is believed to have authored the whole existence of nature.

In another perspective on the African notion of God, God is conceived as a higher force that operates at a higher level above all other forces that exist (Gathogo, 2017). As one investigates the African traditions from the different tribes, it becomes clearer that they all have an understanding of the higher being or God. For example, the Zulus call him uNkulunkulu, the Gandas call him Omukama, the Akans call him Nyame, and the Yorubas call him Olodumare (Idowu, 1962; Amanze, 2002; Ndebele, 2016). This is the consideration that led Schofeleers (1999)³⁹ to argue that in traditional Africa, there were no atheists; all people knew about God.

³⁹ Supra 35

In Yoruba, God is considered as the first being that existed and lived on earth. However, after some time, God had to withdraw from earth because he was so much a powerful force that the earth could not bear (Idowu, 1968). In this line of this thought, God is viewed and honoured as an ancestor of all the other beings that exist in nature. The term ancestor here refers to the being who existed first on earth before he could create other beings. For Africans, it is common to speak of ancestors as parents who lived long in the past and are now spirits. Therefore, an African could push an argument that since those parents lived in the past, they still live, although in the spiritual realm, hence they are revered for the power which they possess (Parrinder, 1970; Idowu, 1968). However, God is more powerful than all other beings because he existed as the first being which also created all other beings or forces.

In the Ghanaian traditional thought, God has been considered having a dual personality or dimensions of both male and female (Danquah, 1968). p'Bitek (2011) argues that in his traditional thought of the Luo people, there is nothing like a concept of the Supreme Being or God. He argues that when the Luo think about the world and existence in its entirety, they never found a space to put or locate the idea of a supreme mythological being in their thought. Rather than there being a particular being deemed supreme and having created all the whole universe, in the Luo traditional thought and beliefs, there are spirits or forces (p'Bitek, 2011). Those existing forces of the universe are considered to be always in interaction with human beings, and as human beings, some among them are good forces, while others are bad or 'religiously considerably' evil. However, in this system of thought, like any other belief system or thought, those cosmic forces that the Luo consider existing are known to be above humankind, and somehow more powerful than human beings. Therefore, instead of there being one superpower, all-knowing, all-pervasive, and an all-present entity, the Luo people of Kenya and Tanzania believe in the existence of Jogi (plural of jok) (p'Bitek, 2011).

The explanation of superhuman forces as Jogi seems to be completely sufficient without the supplementary of a one supreme being. With the absence of belief in the concept of

the supreme being, there is no existence of a being like God, no temples, churches, or anything of that sort. It seems that in the Luo thought, the existence of the world is completely natural in that there is no being that is considered to be outside nature. The Jogi forces are considered to be somehow needing the human beings to notice their existence, and they have ways to communicate with them. In terms of this communication, there are people who are like priests who facilitate the interactions between human beings and the cosmic forces (p'Bitek, 2011). The way the Jogi are considered is the same as with that of some natural forces on the other side of existence, or other the other form of existence than this physical one that human beings exist. This seems to suggest that the Luo people acknowledge the existence of another world or existence besides the physical humans' worlds. According to p'Bitek (2011), the Luo people have no space at all for God in their traditional thought for a supreme being, and the concept of creation, except as some inventions of Christian do not exist.

Wiredu (2009) acknowledges the originality and authenticity of p'Bitek's thoughts with compassion, although he expresses some suspicion that maybe all p'Bitek's thoughts and ideas are influenced by his scepticism. p'Bitek (2011) gives evidence of his Luo thoughts from the traditional language of the Luo people, in which he greatly argues that there is not any independent concept of 'creator, creation, or even creating'. In the traditional thought of the Luo people, human beings are born from their mothers without having been known to be products created by some omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and eternal being who is somewhere (p'Bitek, 2011: 12). This is a system of thought that imagines the world and nature that is already in existence, simply continuing to exist by the interaction of physical humans and the forces or Jogi. In his praise of p'Bitek's effort to decolonise the African thought and religion, Wiredu (2009) says that one of the ways in which Africans were misrepresented is in saying that they are spiritual, and forever believe in the supreme being, while they lack such concepts in their traditional language.

For Wiredu and p'Bitek, the traditional African thoughts got hijacked and were put to suspension while the missionaries were busy pushing their Christian ideas into the minds

of the African people, which they did with some colonial ideas. Wiredu (2009) relates an example of how much the Christian missionaries were never interested in hearing how the Africans thought. He speaks of the Luo elder who was asked about the being that moulds people. The elder, in his mind, was thinking of 'Jok Rubanga' who is considered to be the force that inflicts people with the tuberculosis of the spine, and thus moulding them to have some hunched backs. However, when the Acholi elder immediately said 'Rubanga', the missionary proceeded to say that Rubanga was the 'holy father' who is considered a creator of the Acholi people. Therefore, considering all such misrepresentations, Wiredu advocates the idea that the project of decolonising Africa thought should be taken seriously, and p'Bitek is right to even investigate the language itself.

In the entire study of the traditional African notions of God and spirituality, what becomes clearer is that there are themes that need strict consideration, such as 'creation, morality, and spiritual existence', since it is evident that in the African thought, there is no 'heaven and hell, Satan or devil, and book of commandments', except for the complicated Kemetic spirituality⁴⁰. It is then interesting to know if, in any way, there is any understanding of these themes in the traditional African philosophy. In this pursuit, the traditional African language becomes highly important because it is the tool in which thoughts are transmitted. According to Wiredu (2009), concepts cannot be presented, except being used in a particular language. In the Ghanaian language, God is known as Mawu-Lisa and is considered to be both genders in that *Mawu* presents the male, while *Lisa* presents the female part of one being (Opoku, 1978). When the Ghana traditional people talk in this way, their thought seems to be suggesting the concept of a balanced nature which can be traced back to have begun at the same time. With the existence of that balance of Mawu-Lisa, everything has come to existence as it is (Opoku, 1978). Within this line of thought, the creation can be spoken of as having a balance or having come to exist with Mawu-Lisa as a balance of any sense of 'natural' duality that can be known in

⁴⁰ Kemetic spirituality is one religious concept that has attracted lot of scholars like Jhutymys, Semahj, Obenga, Clarke and others to study Egyptology. Although it dates far back in history, but it has narratives of the afterlife

understandable terms. Therefore, the harmonious continuity from that duality is what can be referred to as the order of existence, life, and morality (Opoku, 1978; Sapong, 1974).

The existence of spirits or spiritual beings in this traditional thought may be considered to be the case, but not as 'supernatural'. This is possible since the spirits can be thought of as only above human beings, but however needing human beings who will interact with them through the channels administered by the 'fetish' priests. God is not thought of as a being that directly interacts with human beings, but rather as a being that uses these spiritual beings or ancestors to communicate with human beings through traditional priests and elders. In this traditional system of thought, it is rare to find people offering prayers and sacrifices to Mawu-Lisa, as they follow the order that by the blessings of their ancestors, Mawu-Lisa will be pleased, and in response, he/she will provide beneficial conditions for all existing beings.

Apart from crediting scholars such as p'Bitek⁴¹, Ben-Jochannan⁴², and Wiredu⁴³ for offering ideas of their own disbelief in God, it might be worth going further into the investigation of what can be known as traditional African theogony. Theogony is the concept that I have briefly addressed earlier on the Greek context, as a study that is concerned with the origin of God or of the idea of the existence of a higher or supreme being (Pewl, 2017). According to Pewl (2017), Hesiod, who explained the origin and existence of two concepts, namely, apotheosis, and euhemerism, at least shed more light on how the Greeks traditionally thought about God. However, in the African context where there are no traditional religious texts, there is no clear literature that explains how God (the idea that there is a supreme being), came to be known. It sometimes shows in

⁴¹ P'Bitek (2011) gives a different narrative of the Batammaliba people who seem to have never had the concept of the supreme being

⁴² Ben-Jochannan is one of the scholars who have investigated the concept of God. But, as p'Bitek he also refutes the concept of the supreme being that is spiritual. He gave series of lectures and discussions wherein he argues that it is not even necessary to think of God as a supreme spirit that stays far from nature

⁴³ Wiredu K is one of the African philosophers whom in their works seem to be more inclined towards natural monism when it comes to the concept of God and spirits. In his work of 1996, it is where the concept of 'quasi-physicality' appears as it triggers lot of thoughts that are discussed in this work

literature that other nations of people, including the traditional Africans, started from the wonder of how the whole nature began, and how it is being sustained. Ultimately, the thought that there is a greater being who is considerably the creator, originator, or the beginning of the whole existence, came into the picture.

By extension, the supreme being is considered to be greater and beyond all other beings that ever existed (Hill, 2005). That might be the reason that in the African thought, God is not spoken of as the completely known or exhaustively knowable being. For this reason, Beyers (2010) argues that Africa needs theosophers to come up with a solid definition of how to think about the supreme being, if it is considered as a serious topic at all. Kojeve (2018) submits that all of the available literature suggests that it is difficult to think about the origin of the creator, and the originator who pre-existed all things and brought all entities into existence. More necessarily, when one thinks of God as a supernatural being like John Mbiti, Augustine Okeopara, and Ogbenika, it becomes difficult to think of creation when one considers God to be part of nature like Wiredu. This might be the reasonable justification why other scholars such as John B Lartey⁴⁴, p'btek⁴⁵, and Yusuf Ben-Jochannan⁴⁶ simply chose to dismiss the whole idea or concept of God.

In the creation discourse there seems to be an old idea that God is considered to have existed as neither male or female, or both male and female in one (Idowu, 1968; Danquah, 1968). For example, in the Kemetic spirituality which can be traced back to the old Egyptian thought that has its inscriptions as 'medu netr' in the pyramids, god Atum is considered to have come to manifest as an ungendered being (Ben-Jochannan, 2014). According to Slick (2018), there was nothing that existed, except the disorder darkness from the dark ocean waters of 'Nu'. From Nu, there coiled the dark serpent 'Ra', where Atum (which in other narrations is Ptah) created him/herself from his/her thoughts, and

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⁴⁵ Supra 39

⁴⁶ Ben-Jochannan Y.A.A (2019) Dr Yosef Ben-Jochannan & George Simnds. This public symposium was held in Baltimore in 1987 as Ben-Jochannan was discussing the African concept of spirituality

the force of the will (Barnet, 2004). By Atum's will and thought existed a hill as the first thing after the time god emerged or became manifest. Atum, being the only existing being, was all-seeing because his eye was unlimited in any way (Slick, 2018). In the thought of God as omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and all-great, this way of thought may be useful because it considers god Atum to be the being that all-sees, which then is capable of knowing all things everywhere at all times.

Atum then joined with his shadow to produce 'Shu', the male god of the air, and 'Tefnut', the female goddess of mist and moist, which he/she spit out from the mouth (Slick, 2014). Further, according to Semahj⁴⁷ (2015), Shu and Tefnut had to make and separate the principles of law, order, and stability. From that orderly separation of principles and entities into their respective places, which has become known as 'ma.at', and from that order and balance of things, the sky, earth, darkness, water, land, human beings, animals, and plants existed as they do (Semahj, 2015). The most interesting thing in this Kemetic view story of universe creation is that one might read it on the surface and think of it as speaking of gods and goddesses that Keith Moore (2008), and Kamalu Chukwunyere (1990), are talking about. However, when read in some depth, it becomes clearer that the word 'god' refers to the principles of order. This observation comes when considering the part of the story where Atum became happy by the sight of his/her primary creations, and shed tears from his eye, in which the first ancestors of mankind came to exist.

1.6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, one may submit that it is arguable, according to the different African traditions narrated by different scholars, that there are many African concepts of God. Scholars such as Ogbenika, Mbiti, Okeopara, and others, presented a concept of God that considers the Supreme Being as supernatural, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient,

⁴⁷ Semahj H.B (2015) is one of those scholars that have been attracted by Kemetic spirituality teaching. Supra 38

and eternal in a way that closely resembles the known Abrahamic traditions. The Placide Tempels' notion of existence in an African understanding, as arranged in a hierarchical order, with God at the top, above the spirits that are above humans, who are above animals, plants, and inanimate objects, appears to be somehow not much in contradiction with the idea of a supernatural god. The Tempelsian force thesis⁴⁸ may be read in some agreeable way in meaning with the notion of God as a supernatural being, given that what gives God higher vitality than all other beings is his/her supernatural power. Apart from the above-mentioned scholars who have considered the notion of God as the supreme supernatural being, some scholars such as Keith Moore, Kamalu Chukwunyere, and others who posit that traditional Africans believe in some parts of nature as gods and goddesses, have been discussed. The scholars completely dismiss the idea that Africans considered God as supernatural in their traditional understandings, as they go to the extent of labelling Africans as traditionally polytheists. In this section, an account of God, with reference to the old written African traditional spirituality, has been discussed. For instance, the 'Kemetic spirituality', where creationist cosmology has been rendered in an African antique tradition (Slick, 2018). Within the Kemetic/Ptah philosophy, God is considered to be the centre and the beginning of all creation or life. It is arguable that although it appears that Atum came to manifest after having existed with other elements like darkness and water, he/she created all entities from, and including, himself. It is also interesting that the antique Kemetic notion of God has much similarity with the Ghanaian concept of Mawu-Lisa, because it shows no gender bias when traditional Africans think of existence. This is important as it leads the discussion in the next chapter, on the naturalistic notion of God, which Kwasi Wiredu advocates for.

⁴⁸ Temeplsian force thesis holds that everything is force. God is the supreme force followed by ancestors, human beings, animate objects, plants and then inanimate objects. Wiredu builds his argument of natural monism from this thesis

CHAPTER 2: EXAMINATION OF WIREDU'S NOTION OF GOD IN AFRICAN

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Wiredu's African notion of the Supreme Being takes much of its support or foundations from the Tempelsian force thesis. In this thesis Tempels argues that in the African thought, the whole existence is viewed hierarchically such that there is God, the ancestors, human beings, animals, plants, and inanimate objects at the bottom. As this thesis reads, there seems to be no strict account of the supernatural God as argued in other philosophies, including the Western one that appears in Christianity and other traditions. Wiredu's alignment with the Tempelsian thesis seems to be a vital tool for him to mark a clear avoidance of the existential dualism, in which there is a nonphysical supernature, and the physical nature.

It seems that Wiredu perceives the difficulty in explaining how the nonphysical supernatural being or any spiritual being interacts with the physical natural beings. In fact, this difficulty in rationally explaining the mystery of the interaction of the nonphysical supernature and the physical nature has existed, even in the Western thought. Hence, it is not a surprise that Wiredu perceives it before it arises in his account of African notion of God. However, relying on the Tempelsian force thesis brings problems, and complicates the argument further than it initially was. Furthermore, within his avoidance of existential duality, Wiredu seems to be more inclined towards the view of collapsing the whole argument of the supernature and remain with only natural monism. Once the argument on the African notion of God rendered by Wiredu takes the form of natural monism, it then gets marred by other kinds of issues that require special attention. Therefore, this chapter focuses on Wiredu's arguments for quasi-physicality and examines the necessity of avoiding the existential duality that gives room for natural monism.

2.2 CRITICAL ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

Wiredu's quasi-physical concept of God in the African thought requires a careful analysis using a method that represents his views as they are, before levelling either criticism or appraisals. It is with this idea in mind that this research sought a better methodology that may adequately examine the quasi-physical concept of God in the African thought as presented by Wiredu. This study used the critical analysis method which is commonly used by philosophers to analyse and interpret thoughts or theories. The critical analysis method is used in critically analysing the thoughts in philosophy from the writings of different philosophers with regards to a particular subject (Van Leewuen, 2008). In this study, this method was appropriate, as the focus was on Wiredu's 'quasi-physicality' concept of God in the African thought. According to Wodak and Meyer (2009), the critical analysis method is used by researchers to employ logical skills when looking at an academic issue or ideology in philosophical works. This method is associated with different scholars from the Amsterdam University, who also formulated a school of critical analysis, and found it useful in the critical academic writing (Van Dijk, 1993; Fairlough, 2011; Jager 1987).

The critical analysis method is characterised many principles because it acknowledges that every approach is problem orientated, and thus necessarily interdisciplinary and eclectic (Fairlough, 2011). Therefore, in this study, the critical analysis methodological approach became relevant because the aim was to explore and analyse the 'quasi-physical' notion of God in the African thought, while it is true that if one was to analyse a different problem, another approach would apply. According to Wodak and Meyer (2009), this method has a common interest in demystifying issues in academic research through the systematic and logical examination of philosophical and scholastic arguments. In their words, Wodak and Meyer (2009:13) argue that,

Rather than being a researcher who suffers from biasness and unfair reading of others, it is better to read other scholars charitably and respectfully with all

rationality. Critical analysis helps scholars to demystify issues in the academic research through systematic and logical examination of scholarly arguments. In many ways, being rational and applying objective reasoning while examining or reviewing literature clarifies the researcher in order to produce a proper analysis of the academic problem. Then, adoption of critical analysis in research is one of the ways in which a researcher may develop more skill to produce clarity of argumentation.

It is for this reason that this study adopted the critical analysis approach in order to demystify the argument on the African concept of God as 'quasi-physical', without bias towards the Western notion of the supernatural or spiritual God. Fairlough (2011) and Billig (2008:4) argue that the critical analysis method allows researchers to make their own positions and interests explicit, while remaining self-reflective of their own research processes. Van Dijk (1993:131) further argues that the many approaches of this method are commonly shared across many disciplines in social sciences due to the usefulness of their critical nature, hence this study also adopted this methodology owing to its critical and analytical measures. Billig (2008:4) argues that,

Critical analysis method allows researchers to remain self-reflective of their own processes as read through the literature. Self-reflection is the only thing that makes a researcher stay awake against biasness and subjectivity in matters that relate to academia. It is, therefore, quite important that one stays awake and reflective throughout the study in order to present ideas in an academically sound manner.

This study examined Wiredu's materiality and quasi-physicality which is a different conception of God in the African philosophy, since the common conception of God literature is the Western notion of God as supernatural, which Wiredu denies being African. The critical analysis method helps the researcher to stay focused on the logical question of what the African philosophers have done in the study on the African notion of

God. From that search of the African notion of God, with the application of critical logic, this study examined how Wiredu contributes to, or challenges other African notions of God. Due to the depth of the traditional African notion of God discussion, it is worth mentioning that the critical analysis method was also adopted when necessity arose. Criticality, in all presented arguments, it assisted in logically arguing that Wiredu's notion of God seems more logically inclined towards denying the idea of God as a creator. In this way, critical analysis helped in making a coherent argument that Wiredu brings an account which runs contrary to other African philosophers which, in itself, has some issues. As Wiredu writes his thought in the context of African understanding, the critical analysis method helped the researcher to focus on the African thought and avoid going overboard. Examining the development of Wiredu's avoidance of nature and supernature dualism requires the critical application of logical reasoning which the researcher achieves through using the critical analysis method. Critical analysis helps to bring logic in discussing Wiredu's concept of quasi-physicality, and its significance within the African notion of God. Moreover, the critical analysis method sought to justify the flow of arguments leading towards highlighting what the ideal notion of God in African philosophy should be, without being unfavourable to Wiredu's argument for quasi-physicality.

2.3 QUASI-PHYSICALITY: AFRICAN CONCEPT OF GOD

The discourse in African notion of God debate is relatively new as African philosophers show great interest in it. However, the belief and practices around the idea of God are as old as the philosophical enterprise. Danquah made some contribution from the Akan perspective where God is conceived as the supreme spirit. In his study of the Akan thought, Danquah (1968:30) finds that the Akans refer to the Supreme Being using numerous names such as Nyame or Onyame, Odonkoma, and Onyankopon. Danquah (1968) also argues that the great supreme God, known as Onyame in the Akan language, is the being who gave life to nature. Onyame, by himself, is not known as a person, but rather the reference to him as an ancestor is because he is considered as the first being

to have existed, and then begot all other things known as creation. In his discussion of Akans' conception of the Supreme Being, Danquah (1968:30) mentions that the most important thing in these names is that they all contain the aspect of God as a creator. However, the Danquah (1968) does not support the argument that God is part of nature in Africa, but rather that he is a supreme spiritual being that has even pre-existed the known nature itself. It makes sense then to think that if God brought nature into existence, then She/He/It must be outside nature, and not part of nature himself.

Mbiti (1975) has made a similar contribution to that of Danquah with regards to the Akan notion of God. Mbiti argues that for the Akans, the name for God is Onyame, who is regarded as the eternal spirit that is greater than all other beings. Barnet (2004) echoes Mbiti's view, that the Akans consider Onyame as a unique spirit that is all-pervading, acting as an uncaused cause of all existence, and an eternal one. Ogbenika (2008:28), an Igbo philosopher, considers the unanimity between Mbiti and Nwala's views, and argued that in many African traditional societies, it is believed that the universe is of dual formation, comprising of the physical nature, and spiritual supernature. However, this is the duality whose existence in the African thought is rejected by Wiredu's account. Ogbenika argues that within the Igbos' traditional beliefs, the supreme being is known as Olorun, the God who is the highest and the greatest in the spirit world. As a supreme spiritual being, Olorun has other minor spirits that are subordinate to him. Furthermore, within the Igbos belief system, it is held that the same supreme spirit is the one that has originated all things that exist. Ogbenika argues that this duality of existence extends to the physical forms of life, and that humans are conceived as having souls which constitute their spiritual dimension. His argument is that it is by that spiritual part of them that they are able to connect or be in a position to interact with the spirit world, where the supernatural is.

Apart from the notion of God, for Wiredu, the nature of Africans that they are also spiritual has implications for the ontological account of personhood. Firstly, it allows the notion of

duality whereby there exists the physical and nonphysical, whereby a person is viewed as a body and a spirit. This is important in this study because it shows that there are other things that endorse the parallel existence of spiritual entities and natural/ physical entities. Secondly, it raises a problem on how then the spiritual part connects with the physical part of a person. Gyekye (1984) views a person as composed of three parts, which are the body, Sunsum, and Okra. Okra is that spiritual part which, elsewhere, might be referred to as the soul. It is considered as the life principle that has come from God (Majeed, 2013). However, contrary to the belief that Okra is equivalent to the Western notion of the soul, Wiredu's ontological account of personhood regards a person as naturally physical. Okra is not completely spiritually invisible, but it sometimes takes physical forms (Majeed, 2013). His argument that Okra is different from the soul is that it is not outright as spiritual, as the soul is known to be (Wiredu, 1992). He further argues that some medicine men claim to be seeing it exhibiting some emotions exactly like those of an ordinary physical object, hence he employs the notion of quasi-physicality (Majeed, 2013). The quasi-physical being refers to the kind of entity that is not purely physical, known, and existing as a spirit, although it sometimes manifests as physical, given that it takes up the spatial qualities of existence (Majeed, 2013). Wiredu's view of spiritual beings seems to be more prone to the interpretation that Africans consider a person as completely physical, and not having anything that is purely spiritual and invisible. Similarly, it may be interpreted as akin to suggesting that in African thought, the spiritual soul that never becomes physical has no function.

However, Chukwunyere (2008) and Moore (2008) are two Egyptologists who similarly mentioned of the Egyptian symbols that were viewed as presenting God. Both scholars hold that there were gods and goddesses in Egypt, which still serve as evidence that Africans conceive God as part of the physical nature. Their arguments suggest that God, in African understanding, is part of physical nature to the extent that there are physical images of him. Before Moore (2008), Chukwunyere (1990) had observed the reverence given to the statues of the Egyptian gods and goddesses, including Troth, Ra, and Osiris,

among others. The author then concluded that the Africans perceive God as not supernatural or completely non-physical.

Moore's argument is that Africans view God as natural to an extent that they used to even deify their heroes. It is for that reason that Moore considers Mbiti's (1969) reference to ancestors as referring to the people who were made to be gods just like the Pharaohs of Egypt. For Moore, Africans consider God as purely physical and natural. Similarly, for Chukwunyere (1990), Africans do not consider God as a supernatural spirit that created the world. The argument further suggests that even the things associated with God in the African understanding are physical in nature. These things are naturally visible or were even dwelling among the African people at some age. Moore's view appears to support Wiredu's African conception of God, because it portrays Africans as people who conceive the existence as holistically natural and having nothing to do with the supernatural reality.

Contrary to other philosophers who have contributed to the discourse on God in the African thought like Idowu (1973), Mbiti (1969; 1975), and Danquah (1968), Wiredu's position markedly differs with what these thinkers hold. Since he is motivated by the decolonisation of African philosophy, he argues that Africans do not conceive God as purely a supernatural spiritual being who is above and beyond nature. Wiredu supports the idea that the African and Western philosophies have different perspectives with regards to existence of objects or the nature of beings such as God and spirits. In his account of personhood, Wiredu denies that Africans conceive a soul as completely spiritual. He argues that instead of conceiving the Okra as absolutely equivalent to the Western notion of the soul (purely spiritual), it should rather be referred to as 'quasi-physical' because there are accounts of people who have seen the Okra manifest in physical forms (Wiredu, 1992).

The notion of God in the African thought is as interesting as it unveils the Africans' ability to engage in the metaphysical existential debates. Through the passage of time, as Western philosophers produced different conceptions of God and spiritual beings, African philosophers also became involved in the debate (Chukwunyere, 1990). The ideas about the concept of God and the related spirits in the talk about religion falls within the main

grid of African metaphysics (Ozumba, 2004). While scholars such as Wiredu attempted to present a pure African concept of God, other scholars such as Eke and Okeopara (2010) still take the Western concept of God as the only rational one. To Eke and Okeopara, God is generally conceived as a spiritual supreme being that has pre-existed all other beings and has created all other beings that exist besides himself (Eke & Okeopara, 2010). In fact, Eke and Okeopara (2010: 3) seem to have taken their information from the Bible when they argue that:

God is the ancient of all things that has made all things come to existence by his will. God as a spirit of existence that came to existence by itself and its will then deemed it better to create all things that are now in existence. It is then clear that God Almighty is greater than all other existing beings, including those that are seen, heard, known, and unknown to mankind. The discussion or debate about the nature of God as whether he is supernatural or natural is for those who do not want to believe.

Similarly, Ferguson (2005) argues that God is traditionally viewed as a supernatural supreme being since the whole nature is known to have been created by God who is, in all respects, a supreme spirit. The philosophical contestations about God consist in his nature, and the way in which He/She/It is understood or conceived in various thought systems such as the Western world and the African world. In early 20th century, Westermann (1930) and Rattray (1923) both argued that Africans have no philosophy through which they could express the notion of God. This means that Africans had no notion of God. However, the African philosophers disputed this, arguing that Africans actually had a concept of God (Idowu, 1973; Uka 1991).

From the Afrocentric point of view, Wiredu (1998:29-30) suggests that one of the things to be revisited is the notion, that God is a supernatural spirit that created the world and the whole nature from nothing. Wiredu's account of God runs contrary to those of other philosophers who hold that God is a supernatural creating spirit, as Eke and Okeopara

(2010) argue. Wiredu's (1998) account is based on his Afrocentric philosophy, through which he intends to demonstrate that the African conception of God markedly differs from the Western notions about God or spirits and nature. It seems that Wiredu holds the same view that Ben-Jochannan holds (which will be discussed in the subsequent chapters), that when Africa was colonised, it did not only become politically colonised, but it was also spiritually colonised. According to Asante (2009), the Afrocentric philosophy is the system of thought that keeps the African views apart from other influences, such as those of the West. This is done with the purpose of treating the African views as unique, and incomparable. However, Asante (2009) does not seem welcoming to the possibility that the African thought system may, at some point, converge with the Western thought system, hence he does not provide any solution to the accidental possibility if it occurs. For Wiredu (1998:30), the dichotomy of spiritual supernature and physical nature does not exist, because in African thought, the whole existence is viewed in a hierarchical order where God is the first above all other nature, followed by spirits such as ancestors, then humans, and lastly, animals and inanimate objects. In discussing this hierarchy of existence, Wiredu takes a step further than what Tempels does in his force thesis, through which he shows that existence in Africa is ordered hierarchically with God at the top above all other existing levels of beings (Tempels, 1960; Coetzee & Roux, 2004). In discussing Wiredu's deeper arguments on a 'quasi-physical' notion of God in the African thought, this section does not exhaust the entire argument but will critically analyse some parts of the challenges encountered in reading Wiredu.

Wiredu (1998) disputes the idea that God created all things from nothing; he thinks that within the African thought, it makes little sense because creation refers to bringing together raw material and making up the world. To say that God is a supernatural spirit that is non-spatial is clearly problematic to Wiredu. Wiredu (1998:30-32) argues that in the Akan language, when one says, 'there is' something, he means 'somewhere', hence when one says there is God, he means that God exists somewhere. However, Wiredu does not explain how a spiritual being is located, and at the same time, he does not advise why an Akan person would not say "there is God" while meaning "everywhere", not

specifically somewhere. The possibility of saying 'there is God' without meaning specifically somewhere is, therefore, informed by the fact that even in the Abrahamic traditions, people do say 'there is God', while not necessarily meaning 'somewhere', but in fact, meaning "everywhere", as they also hold that God is omnipresent. It is for this reason that Wiredu argues that viewing God as a supernatural and non-spatial spirit who created everything from nothing does not make sense in the African thought system.

For Wiredu (1008: 29), it makes more sense in the African thought to view God as just being the higher being within the realm of existing beings which, together with the universe, form the 'spatio-temporal' totality. However, this conception raises some issues. Firstly, viewing God as part of nature that, altogether, forms 'spatio-temporal' totality means that God is limited by the laws of nature. It then becomes unclear how an African would speak of God as the greatest Supreme Being (Hill, 2005; Mosley, 1999), while God would be equally limited just like any other creation. Secondly, it is questionable to conceive God as having created the world using raw material as Wiredu (1998: 30-32) claims, yet no one knows the source of this raw material. Thirdly, conceiving God as part of nature while, at the same time, holding that God is the creator of that nature seems problematic as it suggests that nature is also self-created (Facchini, 2002).

As this chapter examines Wiredu's concept of God in the African thought, it is then dutiful of this study to charitably present Wiredu's views with respect, even if one may not agree with them. Wiredu argues that existence, in the African thought, is hierarchically arranged in a natural order, with God being above all other things that are known to exist. In that order God, is also an inclusion that, altogether, forms a 'spatio-temporal totality' of existence. In this study, Ozumba (2003)⁴⁹ seems to be of the view that the African system of thought has a space for the non-physical existence because he talks of the 'extra-sensory perceptions' which he refers to the perceptions or visions that go beyond the

⁴⁹ Extra-sensory perceptions seem to refer to far-sight or foresight whereby there are seers in the African thought like there are prophets in Christianity.

sensory, physical realm. If one speaks of the extra-sensory or non-physical things, there seems to be no way that he can do so, except by relating to the physical things which ordinary people will understand. It is within that spirit that the African people speak of Okra, and the so-called spiritual beings that they believe to be in existence.

Wiredu seems to ignore that even in other traditions, it has never happened that people talk of spiritual beings as purely spiritual elements or forward discussions that are qua spiritual, without allegorically referring to, or attributing to them some physical elements. For instance, in the common Christian Western tradition, there are stories where Angels, which are supposedly pure spirits, and even God, held conversations with people as though they were physical beings (Ozumba, 2004). Prior to Ozumba, Magesa (1997: 29), in his narrations, argues that,

Christianity has taught it as written in its books that there was a garden where life began, and that garden was guarded in its beauty and green by the Cherubins that had wings to flap as they fly around the garden. God is represented as a being that is more like a father that at some point associated with a woman and the son was born. In some verses we also find that some angels fought and wrestled like human beings, that all seems to be narrated in very physical terms. But; should anyone take it to be the case that God and angels are physical or natural beings like humans? Or should it be meaning spiritual existence in Christianity while in the African thought it is worth understanding with a different interpretation?"

Taking into account this argument, it becomes clearer that from the ancient times, people of all traditions used physical imageries to explain that which might not be physical in existence. Therefore, the idea of thinking that Africans talk of 'quasi-physicality' when they talk of these spiritually existing beings needs to be taken proper care of.

According to Overstreet and Yule (2021)⁵⁰, language can be deep and more diverse than some people think it merely is an easy medium to get the message across people. There are even stages of depth in a language. At one stage, the same language of natural human beings can be used to represent some states of existence beyond the natural physical human beings and the world. In light of this, Dickins (2012: 45)⁵¹ once argued that,

When the discussion about the ancestors arises, most people think that slaughtering animals in sacrificial rituals stems from the sure belief that the spirits of the dead do eat. That kind of thought was misguided from its roots, and it was never true. In the African thought, there is traditional symbolism, in some cases, what one physically sees might be less of what he or she should be seeing, and for a foreigner, it might even be the opposite of what an African sees. If one does not understand the basics of any act or ritual, his or her presence in there where the ritual takes place does not mean that he or she will be able to comprehend the symbolism properly.

To a certain extent, Dickins (2012) presents a similar narrative to that of Ward (2017) who narrates the expression of God and Angels in Christianity being represented in narratives as physical beings. Nevertheless, similar to the Voodun spirituality and its narrative of the Orunmila and ancestors, there is no person who has ever understood it to mean that Angels and a Christian God are 'quasi-physical' or natural other than supernatural. It, therefore, seems that Wiredu's view of 'quasi-physicality' is intentionally or unintentionally a way to assassinate both the concept of God and metaphysics in the African thought. The assassination of supernatural should then carry some value for his explanation of the African notion of God. This study ventures into the exploration of this value if Wiredu really brings it forth or excavates it if he does not provide it.

⁵⁰ Overstreet M and Yule G (2021) *General extenders: The forms and functions of a new linguistic category*. Cambridge University press. P 8

⁵¹ Dickins J (2012) *Language studies: Stretching the boundaries*. Chapter 2, p 45

The view that God is included within nature itself creates another form of a problem which is discussed at length in Chapter 3. The claim that the African thought lacks in terms of metaphysics would seem to suggest that Africans cannot think beyond what they can see, feel, hear, smell, or taste. According to Wa Wambui (2020), when David Hume in his epistemology and metaphysics referred to the seven relations of thought, he was using an available tool for him to justify colonisation. Hume in (Ntshangase, 2015)⁵² related that there are seven relations of thought or ideas, namely, (i) resemblance, (ii) space, (iii) time/memory, (iv) identity, (v) quantity, (vi) quality, and (vii) contrariety. By mentioning these relations of thought in his essay, he argued that Negroes or Africans cannot transcend the “common relations” which are: (i) resemblance, (ii) space, and (ii) time, which are at the same level as animals. Hume (1753:54), in defence of his view that Negroes or Africans cannot engage in metaphysical thought, wrote the following footnote,

“I am apt to suspect that the Negroes and in general all of the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of the whites, such as the ancient Germans, the present Tartars, have still something eminent about them, in their valour, form of government, or some other particular. Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction betwixt these breeds of men. Not to mention our colonies, there are Negroe slaves disperse all over Europe, of which none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity, tho’ low people, without education, will start up amongst us, and distinguish themselves in every profession. In Jamaica indeed they talk of one Negroe as a man arts and learning, but ‘tis likely he is admired for a very slender accomplishments like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly”.

⁵² Ntshangase M. X (2015) *A defence of Emmanuel Eze’s conception of reason*. University of KwaZulu Natal. P 3
This is in reference from Hume (1997) ‘Of national characters’. *Race and enlightenment*. Eze E. C (ed). Pp 298-299

It would be charitable to argue that if one wants to annihilate or criticise metaphysics, then they should criticise its existence in thoughts of all traditions besides doing it only in the African thought. For the sake of clarity, within the discussion in this study, there seems to be no direct link between the expression of God as locative, and Wiredu's idea of God as a natural or physical being. Sometimes, the expressions are to make something clear to the ordinary people who might not all be highly intellectually or philosophically inclined. The argument, therefore, is that rather than taking all expressions as literally meaning what they sound, some expressions should be understood as the limited and indirect means to express that which is beyond the explanations and understanding of ordinary human beings.

Mburu's (2019) narrative clarifies the argument of this study against Wiredu's argument regarding to the act of spilling drinks and offering food for the spirits. The physical symbolism used in explaining the metaphysical and epistemological aspects of existence in African thought should be understood as only symbolic than supporting the case of the quasi-physical concept of God or spirits. Surprisingly, when Hume (in Siebert 1990)⁵³ undermined and racially discriminated Africans, he falsely accused them of having no philosophy; as in his thought, Africans were people who cannot think of what experientially is not in their sight. It is then highly surprising that an African philosopher writes or utters words that seem to advance such thoughts. In fact, the argument that God in the African thought is quasi-physical seems to be, at the same, the basis for saying that Africans cannot think of any other world or realm of existence besides the naturally physical one in which they exist. More than anything, this argument on the quasi-physicality concept of God pays no respect to the ontological conception of beings because it leaves the matters hanging and posing the question of whether it is possible of one thing to have two natures at the same time.

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The most interesting part is that Wiredu sustains his argument as well, that although God is within the realm of nature, He/She/It remains on top of the hierarchy, as narrated by Father Placide Tempels (1945; 1959). Tempels (in Ntshangase, 2015:12), in his philosophical discoveries and narrative, argues that,

“There are different degrees of force in the African philosophy which can be categorised as (1) God (the higher force above all), (2) spirits of ancestors, (3) human beings, (4) animals, (5) plants, and (6) inanimate objects. In this hierarchy, it is clear that God is the higher force, followed by the ancestral spirits, then human beings, animals, plants, and inanimate objects follow, as they are all understood in relation to human existence and life in the African philosophy”.

This then leaves the question about what keeps God at that echelon or rank. In addition, why does it not happen at any time that another force among the existing forces rise to supersede him/ her? However, if we say that He/She/It is supernatural, the question of what keeps God higher above all other existing beings or forces vanishes as it is automatically answered. In fact, considering God as supernatural makes the argument of him/her being permanently the highest force than all others easy, and rationally making sense. It quickly makes sense because once it becomes clear on the outset that nature is set by its very own right to be forever under the control of supernature, then it becomes clearer that nature can never supersede God. Amanze (in Olupona 2014)⁵⁴ comprehensively renders an adequate narrative, arguing that the people of Malawi, in their traditional religious thought, have always considered Chauta the Almighty as above all beings. It is not only the African thought that has sometimes used some images to present God, as Chukwunyere (1990) capitalises on that fact in his ‘physicalist’ argument which seems to greatly support Wiredu’s thoughts. In the Indian thought where the topic of what God is has been discussed over the ages by different gurus, there are images that are still in existence, and are paid reverence to as presentations of God (Shankar, 2015). However, there is no one who has ever come up with a physicalist notion of God

⁵⁴ Olupona J. K (2014) African religions: A very short introduction. Oxford University press. P 22

based on that. The interesting part is that most gurus, including Guatama Sidarta (Budha), who saw all those different images, has never claimed to have seen God (Rejneesh, 2012)⁵⁵. Perhaps there is a need to compare the African quasi-physical concept of God with the Indian concept of God, as it may shed light to the argument on symbolic representation, which Wiredu takes to be revealing the true nature of God in the African thought.

2.4 UNDERSTANDING SYMBOLISM IN THE INDIAN NOTION OF GOD

Budha and other gurus (mystics) of the Indian tradition have always talked about the existence of the supreme force that is enlightening, and by its existence, other forces also exist, although these gurus have sometimes denied the existence of God (Sadhguru, 2017)⁵⁶. They always considered this enlightening force as existing and operating at a higher level than all other forces in existence to an extent that they considered all existing beings as having come because of that one force. For some reason, the Indian thought seems interesting in that it always considered this higher force as neither he or she, to the extent that through their images, it is presented or has been expressed to have appeared in many forms. In some images, it appears to be having both sexes, while in others, it appears to be multi-folds, with no gender (Subramanian, 2010). In the 2010 study, Subramanian's argument shows that the concept of God is quite deeper than being either physical or quasi-physical as Chukwunyere and Wiredu advance in those directions. The Hindu American Foundation (HAF) (2014: 2)⁵⁷ explains the concept of God in Hinduism as follows:

⁵⁵ Rejneesh O. B (2012) Understanding is the key. *Fear: Understanding and accepting the insecurities of life*. St Martin's Griffin. New York. P 4. Osho Bhagwaan Rejneesh was one of the Gurus (spiritual fathers) of the Indian traditional thought and he was well-known for his wisdom and commentary on the works of other gurus

⁵⁶ Sadhguru (2017) *Were we really created by God? – Sadhguru*. This is an extract from one of the videos published on Youtube. This is one of the talks from Sadhguru. One of the famous Hindu mystiques that travels around the world explaining and discussing with different people about matters of life and existence.

⁵⁷ HAF (2014) is a *Hindu Awareness Foundation*. This passage was taken from one of their publications on Hindu myths and their importance

Brahman is an abstract, but is believed to become manifest in murtis. The word 'murtis' is usually translated in English as "imageries" or "idols", but these images are limited. To Hindus, "murti" is a powerful visual tool used to contemplate the nature of, as well as the nature of, or communicating with God. It is also believed to be charged with the presence of God; thus Hindus may offer their prayers and devotions to a "murti". While Hindus God to be present in their "murti", they do not consider God to be limited into a "murti". Thus, the term 'embodiment' would be more apt. God is understood as both immanent and transcendent.

However, from this, the Indian thinkers and gurus never thought or taught that God is part of nature, or even physical sometimes. Within the spirit of comparing the Indian thought with the African thought, this study advances the idea that some things are represented in images in order to make sense to a particular audience. It is important to note that when people talk, they do so in order to communicate the message to others. Therefore, there seems to be no other way in which thoughts could be transferred from one person to the other, except through using a certain language which will be understood by both communicating parties (Sadhguru, 2003). It is, therefore, within that spirit that wise people used their artistic skills to cunningly convey the thought of the supreme being through images to their audience or non-philosophical masses. However, what stands out is that gurus always explained it clear that no one knows or has ever seen God because He/She/It is beyond what the ordinary can grasp (Shankar, 2017:17). In the light of Shankar's perspective, this study argues that the easy way to understand this aspect of metaphysics is to say God must be understood as beyond nature and physicality.

The role of language in human existence and communication is quite deep to the extent that one may count it as one of problems that limit humans in their interpretation of existential concerns and matters. Language, as discussed by De Jesus (2021)⁵⁸, refers to all means of communicating a message from one person to the next; it may be spoken,

⁵⁸ De Jesus D. M (2021) *What is critical in language studies: Disclosing social inequalities and injustice*. Chapter 2. In this book De Jesus and Barros are faced with language and justice issues concerning the issues of language as well as communication. They battle with issues of how justice understands women with regards to Gender Base Violence matters.

observed, sounded, written, or signalled. This definition goes beyond Wee's (2018)⁵⁹ definition of language, which only held that language is the means to be heard and possibly be responded to. De Jesus (2021) seemed to explain communication rather than language, because language is quite vast and not merely an exercise that gets to be heard as it is and be responded or reacted to. With this said, it is important to take note that the Indian gurus, Rishis and Awatars in India were trying to use the Indian language to interpret the concept of the supreme being to the common people of India who had to understand the message (Achuthananda, 2018:21). However, the intriguing part that needs to be understood is that explanations or interpretations that lose the language of the people become quite useless and fall short of any person who will understand it.

According to Le Guin (2019:34), one enlightened guru who tried to explain the supreme being beyond the language itself which he was using ended up not being understood even by some of those who followed him for regular teachings. In some antique narrations, a certain mystic named Lao Tzu, also known as Mozi, tried to explain the spiritual path of life and enlightenment in a deeper form. In a series of lectures and explanations that he gave, the question of what God is, emerged. In his response, Lao Tzu spoke about *Tao Te Ching*, and according to Le Guin he said,

“A Tao that can be named is not eternal; a name that can be called is not eternal. This is same as it is that the life that can be lived is not eternal, the explanation and forms that can be given are not eternal. The originator of all; the supreme is eternal; hence there will be no name I call it. Rather hold unto the ‘*Budh*’ (Enlightenment) and work on understanding your limitation so that you flourish rather than perishing” (Le Guin, 2019: 47)⁶⁰.

⁵⁹ Wee L (2018) The Routledge handbook of English language studies. In this edited book Leonel Wee attempts to give explanation of language, but since he is an English language teacher his explanation of what language is was limited into what is spoken and heard (in English). That was criticized by De Jesus and Barros as they considered language to be a very broad communication tool that goes beyond dictation and auditory.

⁶⁰ Le Guin (2019) Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching: A book about the way and the power of the way. Chapter 1. In this book Le Guin has translated and compiled the teachings of Lao Tzu, one of the Asian philosophers Mozi whose persona is like that of Confucious had written The book ‘*Tao Te Ching*’ in centuries ago.

Lao Tzu was trying to explain the nature or the notion of God as he understands it from the Indian tradition and spirituality, but his explanation was so deep and outside the normal way in which Indians use language to understand things. It seems that he was hinting to the revelation that for him, God is eternal and beyond human explanation that will be limited by the temporality of natural existence.

According to Le Guin (2019), when Lao Tzu spoke of Tao being eternal, it seems that he was referring to all the things in this world's existence being temporal, and thus incapable of grasping that which is eternal. In saying that "a name that can be called is not eternal", it appears that Lao Tzu did not even want to associate a name such as Onyame, Mwu-Lisa, or Olorun to the supreme, eternal being (Siedlak, 2021). Therefore, what becomes clearer in Lao Tzu's concept of God from the Indian thought is that God is conceived as a supreme eternal being that is beyond the human beings' limited understanding. Therefore, Le Guin (2019)⁶¹ says that the Tao Tzu was the paradigm of the teachings of a guru who transcended beyond the human language without any fear of being misunderstood or not understood. Those who became his followers did so out of utter amazement of his poetic sayings, and his unparalleled show of wisdom (Zi, 2020).

In an ordinary world, it is one of the normal things that when one communicates in any language, they do so with the intention to be understood, hence it is thinkable how difficult Lao Tzu must have lived his life (Zi, 2020). This narrative guides the understanding that language is a paramount and intricate part of human explanations, and it cannot be divorced; if at all, it is something which should be explored. With this understanding, it can then be easier to explain why the Egyptians ended up using images of the so-called gods in their Kemetic temples in Egypt. These images are artistic representational pieces of explaining a greater supreme being that cannot be exhaustively explained by the limited natural beings like mere humans (Fatley, 2018). In Chapter 3 of this study, the researcher analyses the use of a representational language, while at the same time, not in any way

⁶¹ Ibid

implying that the representation is equivalent to the one with being represented. This is important to take note of, because sometimes, imagery representations might even be totally different from what they represent, hence at times, misrepresentations happen.

According to Mueller and Jorgensen (2020:25), the serious misrepresentation of language was when it was represented as only limited to speech and auditory. This means that language is more than merely speaking and being heard, as Jerkins, McGahan and Richard (1994: 1-2)⁶² argue that,

Researchers have debated whether laypeople can detect covariation and have tried to identify conditions that might facilitate or retard this ability. Language, especially linguistic representation of variables, seems important to consider since misrepresentation appears to be relatively common in linguistic exchanges. In the present theory-based experiment, 16 subjects were asked to make judgements about the relationship between height and either weight (heavy or light) or body-fat (fat or thin). Data provided evidence of a powerful illusory association, that is, if tall, then thin; if short, then fat, and there was no compelling evidence to suggest that the subjects understood the relationship between height and weight.

This, therefore, means that misrepresentational errors happen in every level of explanations, and they do not discriminate whether you are innocent and honestly lost, or not. The reality of the matter is that suffering, in terms of representations, can lead to a serious mistake of thinking that what is said literally represents what is exactly in existence. Existence is quite broad when it comes to explanations and interpretations of existence, especially with regards to metaphysical issues such as the concept of God as it is for Wiredu. Among the already diversified and sophisticated concepts of God, Chawla

⁶² Richard R (1994) *Everyday creativity and healthy mind: Dynamic paths of self and society*. In the first pages of this book Richard explains how one particular thing can be misrepresented and even be distorted by different people as they all try to make sense of it in their report. This study holds more weight than others because it is more experimental in nature and it is more relevant for this study at this section

(2014: 1)⁶³ came up with another concept that further diversifies the concept of God in the world. In his explanation of the Hindu concept of God, he said that,

The unique understanding in Hinduism is that God is not far away, living in a remote heaven, but is inside each and every soul, in the heart and consciousness, waiting to be discovered. And the goal of Hinduism is knowing God in this intimate and experiential way. Hence it is arguably true that Hinduism is both monotheistic and henotheistic. Hinduism is not polytheistic. Henotheism (literally “one God”) better defines the Hindu view. It means the worship of one God without denying the existence of other Gods. Hindus believe in the one all-pervasive God who energises the entire universe. It is believed that God is both in the world and beyond it. That is the highest Hindu view.

From the above statement, it is noticeable that those who are foreign to Hinduism have misunderstood Hinduism as a pantheistic religion. The understanding is that henotheism is the belief in God, and refers to God as one being, although represented in many forms which may include even physical images or idols. This is different from pantheism where all the images of carved statues will be revered as equals and be considered as gods that are all powerful. However, Plumtre (2017) explains that the most critical part that has been a stumbling block for those who tried to interpret Hindu spirituality is that they have been getting stuck on interpretations that make them conclude that Hinduism is polytheistic or pantheistic.

This draws closer to the concept of ‘Quasi-physicality’ that Wiredu talks about. Wiredu and other African scholars⁶⁴, especially those who are Egyptologists, have been juggling with the sophistry of the existence of statues which they refer to as idols in Egypt and other parts of Africa. Their understanding is that the sculptures which they see in Egyptian

⁶³ Chawla’s view is in line with HAF. Supra 58 and they both affirm the existence of the Hindu notion of God as they argue that this view of God being very impactful in the whole universe cannot be ignored in the Indian culture and spirituality

⁶⁴ Scholars like Moore, Chukwunyere, Uka, Edet and others

pyramids and museums are the real gods that Africans were worshipping instead of worshipping the high God (Flatley, 2018)). However, Africans have never understood it that way. To them, God has always been the all-high and supreme, such that the concept transcends all the entire understanding of human beings, hence there were no confined areas of worship like churches or synagogues. To this effect, Ben-Jochannan 2021)⁶⁵ says that,

For we have been misunderstood and misinterpreted as African people in many ways, and I am to set it straight without any misunderstanding, that in African thought, God has always been with the people and beyond them. This is not to say that images and the so-called idols were never gods and worthy of worship, but the clear understanding for African people is that those images and sculptors were points of reflective representations as in reference to the attributes of God that is supreme. Then when Africans look at those images gathered in some pyramids, they do not go there and worship them because they know that those are not gods, and neither are they equals with God all-high. Therefore, it's by no surprise that the people of lower understanding, who were foreign to the African thought system, misunderstood and interpreted Africans as either pagans or polytheists. In reality, the African people believed in the supreme God rather than the Western philosophers' narrative that Africans believed in the lower god.

Ben-Jochannan seems to be highly condemning the colonisation of the African philosophy that went as far as arguing that Africans do not have the concept of God. He condemns the idea that Africans viewed the idols in the Egyptian pyramids as gods in highest of the terms. For him, henotheism might be a proper term to refer to the African concept of God that also accounts for the existence of those images, sculptures, or idols in Egyptian pyramids than declaring Africans as polytheistic. This is sensible and might be closer to explaining the origin of the idea that Wiredu calls 'quasi-physicality' in his explanation of

⁶⁵ Ben-Jochannan Y.A.A (2021) Dr Yosef Ben-Jochannan exposing the lies about African history. This is one of Yosef Ben-Jochannan's talks where he spoke like an African guru of wisdom. He used to have such discussions as an African thinker and a historian of the African origin in United States of America

the African concept of God. In Ben-Jochannan's explanation, it becomes clear that God is not far from the human beings, although at the same time, He/She/It transcends them. Therefore, it is for this reason that the idols and images should be viewed as representational explanations of the supreme being rather than them being the actual gods and goddesses. This is commonly the case in the African philosophy, because there is need for an explanation on why that part of nature (idols and sculptures) are gods, while the whole nature is not. This question may be asked differently; for example, what makes other pieces of nature to be gods while others are not? With these questions, it may then become apparent that the concept of the supreme God that is above the whole nature would collapse into being null and void.

The case of the Western scholars misrepresenting the African concept of God and other metaphysical entities is unethical and illegitimate. More so, the most unethical thing is using their ignorance to colonise and invade Africa such that even the African people embrace such brutality of rejecting or denying their Africanness⁶⁶. In view of this, Garrett (2019: 10)⁶⁷ made a distinction between the two kinds of misrepresentation, and reported that,

The American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) Code of Ethics prohibits engaging in a "...misrepresentation." This general prohibition is not limited to intentional misrepresentations. A misrepresentation is any statement by words or other conduct that, under the circumstances, amounts to an assertion that is false or erroneous, and not in accordance with the facts. A misrepresentation, therefore, may be intentional or negligent, which means a "fraudulent misrepresentation" or a "negligent misrepresentation." Unlike a fraudulent misrepresentation which requires that the person making the

⁶⁶ Africanness for Ben-Jochannan meant being aboriginally from Africa and feeling proud of it such that one carries that pride and honor wherever he/she goes

⁶⁷ Garret J (2019) The issues with ASHA. ASHA is a board of language and communication specialists the United States that deals with a variety of speech and interpretation issues. (American Speech-Language Hearing Association).

representation knows that it is false or incorrect and intends to deceive or mislead, a negligent misrepresentation merely requires that one fails to exercise reasonable care or competence to obtain or communicate information that is true or correct.

Although Garrett presents what has been ruled and held by the American Speech-Hearing Association, his argument is relevant in the case of some Western scholars and Westernised African scholars such as Keith Moore, who misrepresent African thoughts. Misrepresentation can be either intentional or unintentional due to the negligence of people involved in presenting thoughts. The intentional misrepresentation of the African thought system happened during the colonial era, where some Western scholars such as David Hume would represent Africa as a continent that is void of thought (Kopano, 2014). From the Westerners, some African scholars learned how to do well in misrepresenting the African people.

However, unlike African spirituality, Indian spirituality has a clear manifestation in various temples that are built as heritage sites and houses of worship around India. African spirituality did not need temples, synagogues, or churches because it just manifests in African existence. In Africa, one would see structures being built, and wonder where the churches to worship God are if people indeed believed in God the Supreme Being? Nevertheless, Ben-Jochannan (2019:17) presents the answer when he says that,

“While other nations had to demarcate some parts of land in their countries for the worship of God, Africans just had to live holy and worship the Almighty at all times. According to Henrik Clarke, this is due to the fact that Africans never believed that God is or can be located at some point and be consulted sometimes. So, it is clear that Africans had a wider understanding of the supreme being to the level that It does not have to be understood as located or limited anywhere. For an African, it has never been the case that people must consider

the Supreme Being as limited and worth of respect when in some places, and worth being ignored in some places. In fact, the concept of the church, synagogue, temple or any designated place of worship is common to those who have religions. Religion, by nature, divides people instead of uniting them”.

From this explanation, it is apparent that the African people, in their traditional thought had more than what is nowadays known as ‘a religion’. Similar to Ben-Jochannan, scholars such as Clarke (2011)⁶⁸, Nixey (2017)⁶⁹ and Sheedy (2022)⁷⁰ argue that religions sophisticate and diversify a simple concept of spirituality. Spirituality, as defined by Ephirim-Donkor (2021), is different from religion, because spirituality unifies mankind, while religion divides. In their understanding, religion makes people have designated places of worship, and different conceptions of the supreme being. At the same time, spirituality is different since it does not have or promote the creation of buildings or places of worship that connote a notion that God is in some places, and not in other places. The matter of the supreme being within a religious perspective, and the concept of God in a spirituality perspective requires further exploration, as it is within the confines of this study.

2.5 THE SPIRITUAL ONENESS OR UNITY OF ALMIGHTY

The discussion on the nature of God has existed for quite a long time now, hence different scholars have presented numerous perspectives on this topic. However, the focus of this present study was the examination of Wiredu’s concept of quasi-physicality in the African thought because it does not only sound new, but it is also interesting as it side-steps the duality of the spiritual supernature and the existence of physical nature. Wiredu’s

⁶⁸ Clarke J. H (2011) *Christopher Columbus and the African holocaust: Slavery and the use of European capitalism*. Eworld Incorporated. With esteemed contributors in the African studies i.e. Edward Scobbie and Leonard Jeffries

⁶⁹ Nixey C (2017) *The darkening age: The Christian destruction of the classical world*. Pan Macmillan. Pp 5-10

⁷⁰ Sheedy M (2022) *Religious symbols, culture wars, western fragility*. Routledge. Chapter 2. Similar to Nixey, Sheedy resents religion and blames it as the cause of all wars that the world has experienced.

consideration of God as quasi-physical seems to deny the spiritual oneness of God, and also makes his position at the hierarchy of all existing beings questionable. It is for that reason that this section is dedicated to exploring the spiritual oneness or unity of the supreme being in trying to posit that having one supernatural being is not bad to the extent of necessitating the invention of quasi-physical concepts as Wiredu does. The consideration of God as one being is a firm standpoint of the Abrahamic traditions which include Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Haghighat, 2021). Although nowadays the trinitarian Christianity seems to have either shifted from the consideration of God as one due to the invention of the trinity doctrine, it is hereby mentioned due to the fact that from its foundational beginnings, it had the consideration of God as the one distinct supernatural being (Tamer, 2020).

The complication of God's oneness by Christianity starts when trinitarian Christians coined the understanding of God as three beings, namely, (a) the Father, (b) the Son (Jesus), and (c) the Holy Ghost or spirit. This consideration deviated completely from the traditional root of Judaism which held the view that God is completely a single spirit that is supernatural such that it has never become physical or mingled with human beings in a physical state of existence. However, in the Christian perspective, God – the father, is considered to have mingled with human beings in a physical state to the extent of having produced some naturally physical marks such as begetting a son, Jesus, with the virgin Mary. The claim that God begot a son with Mary of Nazareth, by far, invokes the assumption that God, at one point in time, materialised in this natural world, and engaged in acts of natural physical human beings (Begg, 2021). At the same time, mentioning Jesus as either the son of God, part of God, or God himself further extends the idea of the naturally physicalist notion of God⁷¹. By this Christian narrative, it seems that different interpretations may make it possible that the Christian God is not more a single supernaturally distinct spirit, as it were in Judaism and later Islam.

⁷¹ Simnowitz A (2018) The Trinity: God's love as the father, son, and Holy Spirit. *Journal of Biblical missiology*. Pp 2-5. In this work Adam Simnowitz makes references to biblical chapters and verses that support the idea of trinity ie (1 John 4: 8 & 16, Mathew 22:34-40, John 3: 16, Romans 5: 8-10 etc)

In Judaism, God is considered one, in light of being one supernaturally supreme being that has never been in a state of physicality or mingled with natural beings to the extent of begetting natural beings. Rabbi Green (2020: 85)⁷² states that,

From the beginning of times, God has always been one, and one in a clear distinct sense of being a single spirit that is above all that which is in existence. From the Torah, there is no mention of God having come to be either one with nature, or physically interacting with nature. If it were the case that God would like to be one with nature or physically engage with it, then He would have forsaken the state of being God or the Supreme Being. The whole supremacy over and above the physical nature would have been lost, in which case, the whole Jewish concept of God would have collapsed altogether.

This implies that in Judaism, there is a clear concept of God as one spiritual Supreme Being, hence Judaism is considered as a monotheistic tradition or faith. However, the interest of this study is on monotheism, which speaks of the concept of God as one. If the Supreme Being is completely supernatural and nonphysical, then the problem that remains is the logical explanation of how the supernatural being connects and interacts with the physical natural beings. Furthermore, concerning the view that this nonphysical supernatural being is considered as the one that has created the whole nature, there is a need to explain how it happened.

The concept of God as the nonphysical Supreme Being that is above the whole nature is the cornerstone of monotheism, but at the same time, it becomes more complicated when

⁷² Green A (2020) *Abrahamic faith and the world*. Macmillan. United Kingdom. P 85. This is a passage from the major works of Rabbi Arthur Green who has travelled around the world explaining aspects of Judaism from the concept of God, Angels and holy war in Judaism

discussed with the notion of creationism. Incidentally, this notion of creationism seems to be avoided by Wiredu when he dismisses the issue of existential duality that gives rise to the discussion of the nonphysical supernature and the physical nature. In the Islamic viewpoint, there exists the same problem of the spiritual monotheistic approach to the concept of God. Shaikh Naik (2020)⁷³ said that,

The Almighty is one, supreme, and has no partners. He alone has created all that is in existence, without any need of help from any other being. There is untruth in anyone that either associates partners with Almighty or equates any other being. With reference to the Holy Quran, the Almighty has created all things from spirits, and the whole nature has to acknowledge Almighty as one.

The Naik (2020) meant that the Islamic concept of God is that of pure monotheism which considers God as the nonphysical supernatural spirit that always remains above the whole nature. The point being made in these two Abrahamic traditions is that God is one distinct being that is above nature in all forms. Then the clear assumption when one hears this is that existential duality is inevitable, and it is central in the discussion on the notion of God. In this case, given these narratives, it becomes apparent that if ever God is to be deemed above nature at all times, then He/She/It must be both nonphysical and supernatural. In fact, this ascertains the argument that God will not be subject to both the laws of nature, and the limitations of physicality.

Closer to the charitable hermeneutic approach of the Christian notion of God with the consideration of trinity, the unity of the Supreme Being may become manifest as the complex notion of God. Although it was not the intention of this study to explain the idea of trinity, it seems to be a helpful entry to the discussion of the concept of God as spiritual

⁷³ Naik Z (2020) *The concept of God in Islam*. This is an extract from the public lecture by Dr Zakir Naik about the concept of God in Islam. Naik is a renowned Islamic scholar and a specialist in comparative religions as he has gotten famous with engaging in debates with scholars of different faiths

supernatural unity. A strange as it may sound, the supernatural unity of God here would refer to the notion where the supernatural being is not distinct as a singular, but a conglomeration of united beings that make the whole sphere of supernatural existence (Hinlicky, 2016)⁷⁴. In the case where the argument would be much complicated to delve into issues of differentiated beings that form a unit which then becomes known as one supernatural body that oversees the affairs of existential order, a spiritual unity of God may arise. It is possible to perceive a situation where the concept of God may be referring to a cluster of the supernatural spirits that, altogether, become the supernatural order, but still be knowable as different beings that manifest as parts of the same body. Although this is difficult to comprehend due to its complex nature, Dornyei (2018: 98)⁷⁵ rendered a narrative that reads as follows:

It could be possible that God is not one distinct spirit as monotheists claim, but rather many things. From pantheism, for instance, God is considered to be a cluster or combination of all things that exist. Perhaps there might be many spirits that are above the human level. Given that being spirits, they may be not much limited as physical nature, then it is possible for them combined to be supernatural. But this makes it possible as well that rather than being spirits, it is a combined intelligence of the natural beings that forms that existence in the realm above the general nature and dominate the whole nature.

The notion on the unity of God seems to bring in a different dimension to this complex argument of Wiredu's notion of the supreme being which seeks to avoid the existential

⁷⁴ Hinlicky P. R (2016) *Divine simplicity: Christ the crisis of metaphysics*. Baker Academic. Washington DC. Right in Chapter 1 of this work, Hinlicky narrates about the Regnon thesis which entails the claims of differential possibilities in the supernatural and the natural realms. In a deeper sense, he attempts to say man must not be sure of whether his knowledge of the logic in the natural world applies in the supernatural one

⁷⁵ Dornyei Z (2018) *Progressive creation and the struggles of humanity in the bible: A canonical narrative interpretation*. PICKWIK publications. Pp 45. Similar to Hinlicky, Dornyei argues from the pantheistic view, but he seems to be reaching the same conclusion that it is possible that God is many things than just being one as monotheists claim

duality. By merging the seemingly incompatible views, Peckham (2019) ⁷⁶ seems to have come closer to the avoidance of existential duality without explicitly reducing the argument to either spiritual monism or natural monism. Peckham (2019) argues that although God is spiritual, nature has the spiritual formation which then enables the connection between the spiritual supernatural realm and the physical natural realm. The quasi-physicality notion of God that Wiredu espouses, in part, seems to be maintaining that there is no purely spiritual or nonphysical realm of existence which is above the physical nature. Saying that God and the whole nature form the spatio-temporal totality seems to even advance the argument that seeks to refute the idea of the eternity of God, as the monotheists would argue. At the core of the idea, there seems to be a sense in which Wiredu gives an account of the African concept of God as not eternal, which reduces the whole claim of the superiority of God over nature.

Eternity is worth protecting in the case where one argues for the supreme being because it would never be clear what makes God mightier or supreme than nature if He/She/It suffers the same limitations and alterations as the whole nature. In this regard, Duke (2021:104) states that,

If ever there is a supernatural being that is above nature, there would not be any argument for the defence of that superiority while acknowledging the role of natural limitations over such a being. For the concept 'supernatural' to apply well in reference to any being, it must include supernatural attributes such as omniscience, eternity, impeccability, non-changeability, and omnipotence. All these qualities are the means to render a clear qualification of a being as supernatural and totally different from anything natural or merely existing in the natural realm. Therefore, it makes more sense to argue that a being is supernatural

⁷⁶ Peckham J. C (2019) *The doctrine of God: Introducing the big questions*. Peckham enters the discussion by asking a question of "How can God be one and three?" and for him it seems that polytheists, pantheists and monotheists have something in common there. At that point, he gets to the argument that maybe the three groups are all right and they need to come together.

only when there are supernatural attributes given to qualify it as existent outside and above nature.

With natural limitations in place, even the superiority of such a being over others in existence would not hold. As Duke (2021) argues, the issue of eternity as unchangeable and sovereign needs to be discussed, without leaving out the necessary requirements that come with it. In fact, Magezi (2022) also corroborates Duke's argument when he discusses the difference between the 'oneness' and 'unity' of God as a being. For Magezi (2022), oneness refers to God as one entity that exists and needs no other supporting beings like those that have been discussed in the earlier section, for instance, Angels and other spirits, as he says,

Let it be known that the talk about God being one means the oneness as an indivisibly one spirit that, by itself, everything else has come to existence. That one being came to existence by itself with no other beings to assist by their own will. Therefore, it must be understood that the oneness of God is different from the unity of beings that some have spoken about. When one speaks of unity, care must be taken, because that person might be talking of God as a being that is linked with other beings from whom He needs some help to do other things. In here, when the talk is about the unity, it is well understood that it might refer to the multiplicity of beings that work in harmony to reach a particular goal known and desired by all of them. In the case of Almighty God, oneness is that for which there is no consultation, no company, but the one spiritual being"⁷⁷.

From these words, it can be said that the oneness of God as the supernatural being is understood as different from the unity of forces that, altogether, form one team. It is

⁷⁷ Magezi C (2022) The church as God's agent in unifying immigrants and natives: A case from Ephesians 2:11-22. *Verbum et Ecclesia Vol 43(1)*. In this work, Magezi points some of the good things in the holy bible that explain the oneness and unity of God that seems to have been desired by God for humanity

understandable that oneness is linked to the view of greatness that supersedes all other beings. The point is that, for God to remain absolutely above and independent of nature or any other existing being, there is a special need for him/her/it to be only one. Therefore, unity, if God is one falls away, so does the idea that God might be sharing the will to exist with some beings like Angels and other spirits. It is at this point that language becomes immensely important than being a mere tool of message conveyance as one wishes. At the same time, it is worth noting that some of the truths do not appear to thinkers as they would want them to, but in some way that they might not like. According to Flavius (2022), sometimes in matters of metaphysics like God and spirits, the more one looks, the less they see. Perhaps this may apply in the case of scholars such as Tempels who came to Africa with the aim to spread their own Western teachings, and in the middle of their mission, they discovered that they could present some African thought to their fellow Westerners. At this point, one may inquire about the clarity and honesty that scholars such as Tempels and his companions had in their presentation of the African thought since they had the colonial aim in their whole existence in the African continent.

2.6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study argues that the concept of God as arguably within nature or part of nature is not defensible, and to some degree, it compels some thinkers to argue that it is incorrect. Thinkers such as Mbiti (1969)⁷⁸, Egberobe (2009), and Ephirim-Donkor (2016) completely deny that the African concept of God can ever be congruent with the idea of paganism, naturalism, natural monism, or even idolatry, hence it seems that 'quasi-physicality' does not hold as an admissible conception. In fact, the arguments of the scholars who argue for a natural or material account of the concept of God are much

⁷⁸ Mbiti J. S (1969) *African religions and philosophy*. Praeger. New York. Mbiti has always been one of the illustrious African philosophers that possess a deeper and sound knowledge of the African thought and theology such that at times some have referred to him as the founder of African theological studies

incorrect as the argument for a moon to shine on a daylight. If Gautama Sidarta⁷⁹ never came with a physicalist concept of God in his whole adventure, then that should reveal something to anyone who wants to subscribe to that idea or advance such an argument.

This study posits that there might be some gaps that should be taken into consideration on the notions that God is a non-physical supernatural being, and that God is quasi-physical. However, it is charitable enough to hold that maybe God might be nonphysical or might completely be out of any capability to be understood by human beings due to the natural limitations that all humans suffer from. With the quest that scholars engage in, that is absolutely within scholars to understand what that incapability to grasp might entail. However, this chapter has fairly represented the research's core views and position in order to not misrepresent or be biased in the presentation of what scholars have said against what this study holds.

Much care has been taken to ensure a fair representation of all views and positions in order to avoid bias in the presentation of what scholars have presented forth. However, this study sustains that the 'quasi-physicality' notion of God might need to be explored further as the researcher does so in the next chapter. Essentially, the quasi-physicality notion of God seems to shrink the presentations towards physical reality, and that seems to be the problem to anyone or anything that seeks to explain reality. In the next chapter, the aim is to delve further into this issue with the goal of establishing if there is any benefit in Kwasi Wiredu's quasi-physicality concept of God, or not.

⁷⁹ Choudhury P (2005) *The mystery of the Chinese dragon: Budha, the Indian dragon, the founder of the Yadu race (Scythians) to which Sri Krishna belonged, was also the progenitor of the Chinese.* Sangnik Books. India. Pp 30 - 78

CHAPTER 3: EXAMINING THE COMPATIBILITY BETWEEN WIREDU'S NOTION OF GOD AND THE CREATIONIST NOTION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the extent to which Wiredu's notion of God is compatible with the view of God as a creator. The aim of this chapter contributes to the thesis because it compares quasi-physical notion of God with the creationist notion of God, as it seems that Wiredu wanted to dismiss the whole idea of the creator. Since this thought about a creationist notion of God has been discussed in bits, this chapter fully discusses it from different perspectives. When Wiredu argues that God is part of nature, he also argues that God used raw material to fashion the world (Wiredu, 1998). However, he surprisingly does not explain where the raw material came from, and he does not clearly say the material just emerged with God from nothing, as creationists would say. Having looked into the arguments made by other scholars such as Eke and Ekeopara, who argue strictly that God pre-existed the whole nature, and created it from nothing, it becomes critically interesting to analyse Wiredu's argument for a 'quasi-physical' God. However, as the argument grows deeper, there seems to be an incessant desire to assume that Wiredu risks falling into the colonial Western argument that Africans have a lower god than the supreme God. This assumption or accusation is because if Wiredu is taken seriously that, in the African notion of God, God did not create but merely fashioned things with the already available material, it may support the view that Africans refer to a smaller god. It is worth noting that Wiredu's argument, in its depth and proper understanding, does not rule out the possibility of Africans knowing the lower god who might be a creation of the supernatural and supreme God (with a capital 'G'). Given the challenges to the concept of 'quasi-physicality' in explaining the African notion of God and the African thought, this chapter starts by the underlying assumptions within Wiredu's argument and then engage creationism.

Wiredu's notion of God as part of nature raises concerns which this study pursues, while at the same time, subjecting them to logical analysis. Argumentative clarity assisted in critically examining the motivations of Wiredu's materiality and quasi-physicality while operating within the limits of ordinary language. In line with the research methodology adopted by this study, Wiredu's philosophical argument was broken into simple basic premises to enable the researcher to examine how his natural monism improves the African notion of God. The analytical framework helped in keeping this study analytic and reflective, rather than ideologically aiming to reach a certain goal. This framework also helped the researcher to examine the consistency in Wiredu's notion of God, as he sidesteps the duality of existence. At the core, the analytical approach assisted the researcher to examine the logical compatibility of Wiredu's notion of God as part of nature, with the idea of God as a creator of the whole nature. Overall, this framework aided this study in maintaining argumentative clarity and logic in examining the extent to which Wiredu's materiality and quasi-physicality of spirits fail to capture the ideal nature of God that is at odds with the creationist conception.

Onyame, by himself, is not known as a person, but rather the reference to him as an ancestor is because he is considered as the first being to have existed and begot all other things known as creation. In his discussion of Akans' conception of the Supreme Being, Danquah (1968: 30) mentions that the most important thing in these names is that they all contain the aspect of God as a creator. He does not support the argument that God is part of nature in Africa, but rather as a supreme spiritual being that has even pre-existed the known nature itself. In fact, it necessarily makes sense, therefore, to think that if God brought nature into existence, He must be outside nature, and not part of nature himself. Being outside nature then lays a foundation to argue that God is in the realm of supernature that has power and the will to create nature, whether from nothing as Eke and Okeopara (2010) argues, or fashioning nature from the already existing material as Wiredu argues. Considerably, at a deeper sense, the concept 'quasi-physical', which relates to God being part of nature, seems to be not compatible with the creationism concept which treats God as a supernatural and completely spiritual being. This observation can be seen in this chapter, as the arguments for 'creationism' are analysed

and measured against the 'quasi-physicality' concept of God as presented by Wiredu in African philosophy.

The similarity between the African and Western conceptions of God lies in a clear distinction made between the two forms of existence, namely, the supernatural spiritual existence, and the natural physical form of existence (Quinn & Charles, 1997). Both these traditions do not claim that existence is made up of one kind, either as natural physicality, or as supernatural spirituality. Explaining the astonishment on the convergence of the two systems of thought, Quinn and Charles (1997: 52) relate that,

“The so-called enlightened Western scholars had never had a thought crossing their minds that the uncivilised Africans could know anything about God. They came to notice that although Africans do not have churches and synagogues for worshipping in, they do believe in the supreme God. This came much as a shock to those who were highly convinced that Africans cannot think beyond the physical nature which they see among them. Then, as time went by, it became surprising to the Western missionaries that all they came with was the Bible and churches, but God was already known in the African thought system”.

Besides the notion of God, for Wiredu, the nature of Africans that they are so spiritual also has implications for the ontological account of personhood. Firstly, it allows the notion of duality where a person is viewed as a body and a spirit. Secondly, it raises a problem of how the spiritual part connects with the physical part of a person. Gyekye (1984) argues that a person as composed of three parts, namely, the body, Sunsum, and okra. Okra is the spiritual part which, elsewhere, might be referred to as the soul. It is considered as the life principle that has come from God (Majeed, 2013). However, contrary to the belief that okra is equivalent to the Western notion of the soul, Wiredu's ontological account of personhood regards a person as naturally physical. Besides the view that okra is not completely spiritually invisible, Wiredu advances the argument that Sunsum sometimes takes the physical forms (Majeed, 2013). Wiredu's (1992) argument that Sunsum is different from the soul is that it is not outright as spiritual as the soul is known to be. He argues that some medicine men claim to be seeing it exhibiting some emotions exactly like those of an ordinary physical object. Wiredu then employs the notion of quasi-

physicality to explain the nature of spirits known in African thought (Majeed, 2013). The quasi-physical being refers to the kind of entity that is not purely physical, known, and existing as a spirit, but at times, manifests as physical in that it takes up the spatial qualities of existence (Majeed, 2013). Wiredu's view of spiritual beings seems to be more prone to the interpretation that Africans consider a person as completely physical, and not having anything that is purely spiritual and invisible. Similarly, it may be interpreted as akin to suggesting that in African thought, the spiritual soul that never becomes physical has no function.

However, Chukwunyere (2008) and Moore (2008) are two Egyptologists who similarly mentioned the Egyptian symbols that were viewed as presenting God. They both hold that there were gods and goddesses in Egypt, which still serves as evidence that Africans conceive God as part of the physical nature. Their arguments suggest that God, in African understanding, is part of physical nature to the extent that there are physical images of him. Before Moore, Chukwunyere (1990) had observed the reverence given to the statues of the Egyptian gods and goddesses such as Troth, Ra, Osiris, and many others. Chukwunyere then concluded that Africans perceive God as not supernatural or completely non-physical. Moore presents an argument that Africans view God as natural to the extent that they used to even deify their heroes. It is for this reason that Moore considers Mbiti's (1969) reference to ancestors as referring to the people who were elevated to the level of gods, just as the Pharaohs of Egypt. For Moore, Africans consider God as purely physical and natural. Similarly, for Chukwunyere (1990), Africans do not consider God as a supernatural spirit that created the world. The argument further suggests that even the things associated with God in the African understanding are physical in nature. These things are naturally visible or were dwelling among the African people at some age. Moore's view appears to support Wiredu's African conception of God, because it portrays Africans as people who conceive the existence as holistically natural and having nothing to do with the supernatural reality.

Contrary to other philosophers who have contributed to the idea of God in African thought such as Idowu (1973), Mbiti (1969; 1975), and Danquah (1968), Wiredu's position

markedly differs with what these thinkers hold. Since he is motivated by the decolonisation of the African philosophy, he argues that Africans do not conceive God as purely a supernatural spiritual being who is above and beyond nature. Wiredu supports the idea that the African and Western philosophies have different perspectives with regards to existence objects, or the nature of beings such as God and spirits. In his account of personhood, Wiredu denies that Africans conceive a soul as completely spiritual. He argues that instead of conceiving the *okra* as absolutely equivalent to the Western notion of the soul (purely spiritual), it should rather be referred to as 'quasi-physical' because there are accounts of people who have seen the *okra* being manifest in physical forms (Wiredu, 1992).

Wiredu's notion of God in the African thought has shortcomings which the researcher pursues and addresses in this study. Wiredu (1998: 30-32) argues that in the African understanding of God, it makes no sense to speak of a supernatural God who created everything from nothing. Africans conceive of God as someone who used raw material to fashion the world to be the final product that we see. For Wiredu, God is not supernatural to the extent that He/She/It is outside nature, but rather a part of nature which, together with the nature, form a spatio-temporal totality. This begs the question of how God became the creator of the natural universe when He/She/It is, at the same time, part of it. Perhaps Wiredu would respond to this question by saying that in the African thought, God is not perceived as the creator as in the Western thought, and being the supreme being at the top of the hierarchy of all existing forces does not necessarily demand that God be the creator of the world or nature. However, if God gathered parts that were already created or in existence, that begs the question of where that material came from. At the same time, this study does not present the thought by Wiredu (2008: 267) that, the material just emerged from the space with God who saw it useful and made the world with it. The understanding which conceives God as part of nature so much such that He/She/It is among spatial beings sidesteps the duality of nature and supernature, which sounds more consistent with the idea of God being omnipotent. Wiredu's notion of God, together with his notion of spirits as quasi-physical, portrays Africans as unlikely to conceive of

beings that are purely spiritual or nonphysical. Considering Africans as people who cannot grasp any thought of the supernatural spirit may amount to Africans having different kinds of God from the one who is a creator of the world.

3.3 THE POSSIBLE BASIS OF WIREDU'S QUASI-PHYSICALITY

The discussion on the nature of God, and specifically the African notion of God, is critical in the African thought, because it is within the Africans' description of themselves and their own spiritual existence. God is the force that, in many traditions, is believed to be most powerful to the effect that some traditions even believe that nothing would have come to existence without God (Thorpe, 1992). According to Placide Tempel's discoveries in the African tradition, Wiredu (1980) notes that God is believed to be the highest force above all other forces that include humans, animals, and inanimate objects. This view seems to be not only exclusive to Africans because in the Indian philosophy, but they also have similar thoughts on considering God as the highest force to the effect that the whole existence is unthinkable without God (Charlotte, 1963). The difference between the African thought system and other traditions is that Africans seem to not have the common concept of religion and systematic ways of worship, which would include having books or scriptures and sacred buildings such as churches or temples (Bergland, 1976). Within the view of this study, that is why scholars such as Bosch (1975) and Moore (2014), in some ways, describe Africans as not religious or as traditionally uncivilised people who knew nothing about God and religion. Nevertheless, the argument here is not whether Africans are religious or not, as Wiredu is one of the scholars who attempt to reveal that African people have a quasi-physical concept of God. With the possibility that there might be some benefits in conceiving God that way, this study endeavoured to explore if there is any benefit or avoidance of danger in arguing in the line of Wiredu's 'quasi-physicality' in this chapter.

It is arguable that Bosch's claim about the non-religiosity of the African people seems to be founded on the justifications of the Westerner's invasion and colonisation of Africa. As African people today struggle with redefining Africa in all aspects, it is the findings within this study that Africa was not only colonised politically and economically, but also spiritually (Adeline, 2001). Wiredu explains the African concept of God as not supernatural, and together with that, he argues that Africans consider the whole existence as absolutely natural. In that sense, he seems to also argue that the African thought system is purely monolithic towards natural monism. According to Seligman (1932), natural monism is the belief that it is not only the case that nature is the most important existent, but nature is the only thing that exists and shall exist till eternity. Eternity, in this case, may encompass the past, present, and future, in which case, Seligman's monism may be interpreted to mean that nature is the only existing thing that can ever be discussed. Within this line of thought, Wiredu seems to declare that the concept of the supernatural God is an imposition upon Africans that came from the foreign lands with foreigners who were violent enough to force it on the African people. However, Wiredu's view seems not totally mean and false because there are recorded writings from other Africans and Africanist scholars such as Carl (1925), Bosch (1975) and Bergland (1976) that support it. Carl (1925:25) argues that,

As the colonial forces came to settle in Africa, with the claim that they discovered it with the unenlightened groups of people, they then viewed their thoughts as superior on the land. With their superiority of thought and enlightenment, it was then their duty to enlighten those unenlightened people who inhabited Africa. Part of that enlightenment was to give them a proper concept of God who is supernatural as that made more sense to them than anything an African would say to them. In fact, with the superiority of their enlightenment, their perspective of existence and nature could not be inferior or equal with the African people's perspective in any way possible.

Having that thought in mind, Wiredu's concept of God in the African thought as 'quasi-physical' might be rightly understood as a way of presenting an undiluted African notion

of God that is not tainted with the colonial views. Nevertheless, in reference to other narrations, one may not ignore the fact that Christianity might have not only been a colonial package, but it somehow seems to have been attractive to some African people. To buttress this view, scholars such as Torday (1911), Colenso (1932) and Dalforvo (1990) rendered a full narrative of some African countries, specifically Ethiopia, which was never colonised, but history records it as one of the oldest Christian states⁸⁰. The deep issue when thinkers talk about the concept of God nowadays is that some have a view of a being that by its existence and will, everything then came to existence. Therefore, in this study, the researcher critically examines the concept of creationism, which seems to be more unsettling with Wiredu's notion of God in the African thought system.

In this study, the notion of creationism refers to the view that a supernatural being brought into existence all that which exists as nature. The nature, as it exists in whatever form, is known as authored with the laws that govern it by a supernatural being which is referred to as 'God'. In this sense, God should be understood as the absolutely powerful being above the whole nature, natural laws, limitations, and any defect (Hatcher, 1982)⁸¹. In terms of knowledge, God is thought of as possessive of all proper and accurate knowledge of all that is (Long, 2000). With God viewed in this way, qualities such as omnipotent, omnibenevolent, eternal, and impeccable become befitting attributes of God (Lienhardt, 1988; Leeming, 2009). Scholars such as Seligman (1932) and Turaki (2013) who went deeper into the metaphysical thoughts about God hold the view that for God to be amenable with these creationists' views, He/She/It should be supernatural.

With regards to the question of how God can be known, Doebler (2021) argues that God can be evidently known from the existence of nature itself because nothing would naturally exist without being brought to existence through the process of creation. Some Christian

⁸⁰ Historians like Torday, Colenso, and Dalforvo also argue for the possibility that Ethiopian king Haile Selassie I might indeed have had a direct link with King David and Queen of Sheba. In that case it would have been easier for Ethiopian people to accept the message of the messiah and be Christians or Jews

⁸¹ This is the same argument in Descartes meditations that God must be beyond all natural blemishes like limitations that make natural objects/ beings be not considerably greatest.

creationists even cut the arguments short by purely saying that God created everything from nothing through a demanding voice that commanded the whole nature to come into existence, and so it all began (Knighton, 1999). It is clear that this kind of thinking does not seem attractive to philosophers like Wiredu, Chukwunyere, and p'Btek, because they are aware of the problems that it comes with. Given that creationism has faced many problems that, to a highest degree, make it indefensible, it, therefore, had to somehow evolve over time as scholars try to rethink and work around the idea. In the subsequent section, some of the ideas on creationism are discussed, from its notable proponents to the challenges that it comes with.

3.4 INCOMPATIBILITY OF CREATIONISM WITH QUASI-PHYSICALITY

The concept of creationism has been discussed from the beginning of this chapter as one perspective that is arguably foreign in the African thought system, according to Wiredu, who argues for a 'quasi-physical' notion of God. All along, the quasi-physicalist notion of God, which seems more inclined towards natural monism, seems to be not compatible with creationism, with the view that God pre-existed nature and then created it as it now exists. It is worth noting that creationism has always been a topic of discussion from the Western philosophy, as it also has some open gaps that seem quite difficult to cover. The issues within it are, (i) could it be possible that there was a time where there was nothing in existence? (ii) where did God come from with his/her/its strength to create the whole nature? (iii) could it be the case that God is the only being that came to existence by its will from nothingness? (iv) what might have influenced God to create nature and fashion it the way it is? These are some of the basic questions that anyone discussing or arguing creationism should be willing to delve into and answering them seems to be not that easily achievable. Despite the difficulty in answering these questions that remain lingering in the troubled state of human mind, scholars such as Price (1923), Spuhler (1985), and Ayala (2008) seem to be supportive of the creationist concept of God. Although their ideas seem to be more influenced by Christianity that also does not give answers to the

abovementioned questions, they are worth exploring as they raised many scholarly debates in the West.

According to Montgomery (2012), the roots of modern creationism can be traced back to George McCready Price (1870-1963), who was an amateur geologist without any formal training. In a book supposed to be a geology textbook, Price (1923) keenly argued that there was no order to the fossil record. In some sense, he was rejecting the idea of fossil succession. He advanced his argument, saying that the succession of organisms that geologists read in the fossil record was merely a faulty sampling of communities that lived in different parts of the antediluvian world (Montgomery, 2012). He seems to have, by far, considered the fossil record much insufficiently to the extent of confidently reconstructing the past by citing the occasional discovery of animals thought to be extinct and known only from fossils. Although this had its critics, according to Spuhler (1985) and Aayala (2022), the leading fundamentalists praised Price's book⁸², calling it a "great and monumental" work of an "up-to-date scientist", among other praises (Numbers, 1992: 98). This view of a geologist was quite shocking, as Montgomery (2012) says that although the book earned much praise, some of Price's most ardent supporters had questions on his new flood geology.

Furthermore, in 1924 in a review, the editor of an evangelical journal, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, credited Price, saying that he is "a wrench into the smooth-running machinery of the evolutionary theory" (Knighton, 1999). However, the editor wondered why the fossils were found in the wrong order, as it seemed as if they were always in exactly the reverse of what the geologists predicted (Numbers, 1992: 95). Given this situation of a new discovery of ideas, Delgado (2005:58) ended up asking: "how could strata have gotten flipped upside down after Noah's flood laid them down, if the Bible did not mention the subsequent catastrophes?" However, despite such qualms, the fundamentalist

⁸² Price G. M (2016) *God's two books: Or plain facts about evolution, geology, and the bible*. Bibliolife DBA. New York

proponents of Noah's flood geology were inclined to assess Price's credibility through the conclusions which he reached, besides the strength of his arguments or evidence.

While scientists are always looking for answers to the world's problems and challenges within the human thought, the matter of creationism seems deeper than science can give answers to. Even in this section of the study, it is clear that creationism, as discussed by Price, starts from the part where it should have been continuing. Price begins to talk about the evidence of creationism at the point of Noah's flood, which is where he should have discussed the origination or the metamorphosis of the being that pre-existed the flood, and perhaps even created the flood. To some degree, what brings trouble to the human mind is the desire to find more answers, and not knowing where to start looking for those answers, which also seems to have been the case for Price too. Given this, the main job of scientists and scholars, in general, is to produce logical and legitimate explanations of issues within existence, then the whole enterprise becomes somehow worthless if it fails to respond to the real concerns of people. It is for this reason that Leupold (1892-1972) regarded the arguments against Price's contribution with his "The Deluge Story in Stone" as a worthless exercise, because both Price and his critics could not answer the basic questions about creationism. In fact, some scientists are atheists, which means that they do not take interest in discussing the metaphysical matters that may seem to be not providing answers to the currently existing lives. This issue of creationism somehow falls in the scheme of things that atheists have many hanging questions about, while at the same time, there seems to be no one who rationally discusses them. As the story of Noah's flood has its basis from a religious book, a person who does not believe in any religion already becomes sidelined, and has nothing to argue from, hence a greater part of the problem in Price's work.

Nelson (1893-1972) who was one of Price's flood geology disciples reviewed the historical thought about flood geology in "The Deluge Story in Stone" (1982)⁸³. Spencer (2012)

⁸³ Nelson B (1982) *Deluge story in stone*. Baker Books. USA

recalls, in some sense, of praising Buckland as an esteemed 19th century catastrophist, and overlooking his famous recantation of Noah's flood. Nelson⁸⁴ glossed over the reasons that the mainstream geologists abandoned the flood geology in the first place. He blamed the demise of flood geology on education having passed into the hands of men who were "more or less lacking in religious convictions" (Young, 1995: 252). Other fundamentalist theologians joined in firmly defending Price's global flood. Leupold (1892-1972)⁸⁵ dismissed all criticism related to the distribution and migration of animals to and from the ark as a useless exercise. Leupold⁸⁶ (in Huitt and Robinson, 2003) thought that the eruptions of vast amounts of subterranean water caused huge waves that deposited the entire fossil record, drowning mammoth, dinosaur, and man alike. He illustrates how wide the communication gulf had become between geologists and fundamentalists by the mid-20th century. Leupold wondered: "when will geologists begin to notice these basic facts?"

According to Leupold (in Huitt and Robinson, 2003), such ignorance of how geologists had already considered and refuted a global flood, assisted in keeping flood geology alive in the 20th century. Despite Price's efforts and his followers during the first half of the 20th century, the majority of Christians and evangelical fundamentalists continued to endorse the attempts of reconciling geology and Genesis. Even the staunch anti-evolution crusader, Harry Rimmer (1890-1952), acknowledged that earth was quite ancient, and thought that the Biblical flood was a local affair as opposed to a global catastrophe⁸⁷. The 20th century fundamentalist circles were divided into two groups – one being the young-earth creationists who defended a global flood; and another being the old-earth

⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ Huitt W and Robinson J (2013) *An introduction to spiritual development: Applied psychology in education, mental health, and business*. Vadosta GA. This is one work that briefly gives a narrative about the thoughts of Leupold and his criticisms against some geologists

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ Whitcomb J. C and Morris H. M (2011) *The genesis flood: The biblical record and its scientific implications*. Rimmer is referred to as one of the sources that contributed to this work with his critiques of the world's catastrophes

creationists who acknowledged the geological evidence that life is on an ancient planet but maintained that God fashioned it for eventual human use (Gehman, 2005).

At this point, it seems that the creationist concept of God always had its own problems that remain unsolved, since the discussion becomes more problematic as it develops from one scholar to the next. It is interesting that this conception of existence as having been created by a supernatural being in some time started troubling from the West where it originated before it got carried into Africa, as Wiredu would believe. However, there are scholars like Knighton (1999) who believe that God, as a supernatural being, created nature, and fashioned it to be the way it is from nothing due to his/her internal will. It is understandable why Knighton would defend such an argument because his faith and existential ideas rely on the acceptance that God created the nature with all that is in it. The concerns such as those mentioned in the beginning of this section can then be regarded as disturbances that seek to challenge his faith, and lurk him to infidelity.

According to Astley (2022), it is believed by almost all religious people that opening up to some arguments or questions risks throwing someone into non-belief or outright atheism. Sanchez (2022) corroborates this view, arguing that some thoughts or beliefs become so much embedded in some scholars to the extent that they form part of the scholars' identity, hence rejecting that idea risks the demolition of the scholar's life. It is, therefore, reasonable that the idea of creationism is difficult to be abandoned by religious scholars like Knighton and others, who also want to protect themselves from change. At the same time, there are scholars such as Gehman (2005), who talk about creationism in a perspective similar to Wiredu's because they abstain from the word 'creation' and talk about the fashioning of the world and the existing beings in it. Therefore, the basic core of creationism, with reference to the concerns mentioned at the beginning of this section, remains untouched. This is because it is held in this study, that this discussion on creationism started at a later stage, as if it developed somewhere, instead of starting right from the levelling of basic concerns. However, as the argument continues into the next

section, one may know that the conception of existence has its own problems just as the quasi-physicalism does.

Therefore, Wiredu's quasi-physical concept of God side-steps the notion of God as a creator of all existing beings but leaves the question on where all creation came from unanswered. In other words, Wiredu might not be interested in solving the creationists problem of where God came from, and what informed him/her to create nature. It is, therefore, worth exploring how creationist philosophers have reasoned around the concept of creation and God over the ages, because the idea of creationism has long been in existence more than Wiredu's quasi-physicalist conception of God. Creationism, with its basis of God as the supreme being who is also a creator of all other existing beings, holds a better justification of God as a supreme force over the whole nature because if God pre-existed and created the whole nature, it then becomes clear how God remains superior to nature. The exploration of creationism in its developmental stages may give enlightenment on the reasons why it has remained problematic, and attracted different criticisms, just as with Wiredu's quasi-physicalism. Therefore, the idea of creationism, as discussed here, has pre-existed Wiredu's quasi-physical concept of God, hence it is necessary to explore it as one conception that has developed over the ages with the aim to better the understanding of God vis-a-vis nature. Therefore, this study considers Wiredu as bringing another problematic concept that completely avoids the existence of supernature, and God as a creator of the natural world.

3.5 THE BIRTH OF MODERN CREATIONISM

As is common, the argument for a certain point of view does not demise with its proponents, hence the argument on creationism also never died, but it reshaped and re-emerged. It is within nature of scholarly debates to last longer than initially expected when there are scholars who still have an interest in the ideas (Honey, 2015). Given that the issue of creationism focuses more on the faith of some scholars, there is a sense in that

letting go of such an idea would make some scholars feel robbed of their own identity. According to Rothgangel (2019), an argument that did not sound right in the beginning might come with a different taste that will be more digestible to everyone under a different formatting and shaping, including those who rejected it at first. Taking Honey's (2015) and Rothgangel's (2019) argument in this case would mean that the creationism concept should have been presented either to the wrong audience or presented in a wrong manner. Therefore, with a different audience, if improved, there might be a different outcome. However, this study argues that there seems to be the same kind of error, even in the argument of those who might claim to be improving creationism because their argument starts somewhere except from the origin of God. Starting the argument from the same erroneous point might be the same downfall for the improvers of creationism because they risk being haunted by the same barriers as those who invoked the discussion. Whitcomb and Morris (1961) find themselves being the revivers of the creationist argument, emanating from the same religious perspective of their predecessors and, to some degree, face the same problems. Their intention to improve the creationist position can be lauded, but they exposed themselves to be the inheritors of their predecessors' problems by using the same methodology of research and argumentation, instead of revising the whole debate. Whitcomb and Morris's style of approaching creationism became ridiculous because it sounded like an emphasis and an activist revival of a disbanded thought which has nothing in it, except religiosity and emotions (Montgomery, 2012).

Curiously, the founding scholars of modern young-earth creationism base their unorthodox thoughts in an alarming perceptive critique of the pre-plate tectonics geology (Montgomery, 2012). John Whitcomb and Henry Morris (1961)⁸⁸ wrote "The Genesis Flood" which gave birth to the creationist revival and resurrected the evangelical faith in a global flood. Whitcomb was an Old Testament teacher, while Morris, as a hydraulic engineer, embraced the literal biblical interpretation to argue that the world was a few thousand years old, and that Noah's flood had laid down all the sedimentary rocks before

⁸⁸ Ibid

carving nowadays topography (Hatcher, 1982). Their lack of geological training did not hinder them from claiming that a global flood offered a better explanation for the geologic record than the theories of geologists.

Similar to Price⁸⁹, Whitcomb⁹⁰ and Morris⁹¹, Niekerk (2018) argues that the stratigraphic column worked out by the geologists was fictitious. They seem to have believed that it was primarily based on the illusion of fossil succession; and point out that if one stacked up the greatest thickness of sedimentary beds in every geological age, the pile would reach more than 100 miles high (Spuhler, 1985). According to Pennock (2003), these scholars held this ridiculous height to invalidate the conventional geologic column. To reach this conclusion, they breezed by the facts that the average thickness of the rocks of any geological age is only a fraction of its maximum thickness, and that only a fraction of earth's dynamic history is preserved in any one region of the planet (Knighton, 1999). Whitcomb and Morris did not go as far as suggesting that Christians reject geological facts, but they maintained that the lengthily complex history of the planet that the geologists read in the rock record was unrealistic. According to Spuhler (1985), the creationist scholars' zealous dismissal of conventional geology was described in proper terms as "procrustean interpretations, pure speculation, and dogmatic authoritarianism – a system purporting to expound the entire evolutionary history of the earth and its inhabitants, yet all the while filled with innumerable gaps and contradictions" (Whitcomb & Morris, 1961: 212)⁹².

Seemingly, in Whitcomb and Morris's (1961: 118)⁹³ view, the plain meaning of God's words outdid anything that science could bring up. Whitcomb and Morris (1961:118) say

⁸⁹ Niekerk B. V (2018) What is religion. *Religion and spirituality: What are the fundamental differences?* In this work Niekerk critically reads geological works and as a religious person he tries to make sense of what is religion and spirituality. His main starting point is that the spirit revealed things that geologists and scientists are now trying to verify. At that point he spends his time reading works of Price, Whitcomb, Morris, Leupold and many

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Supra 87

⁹² Ibid

⁹³ Ibid

“The instructed Christian knows that the evidence for full divine inspiration of scripture is far weightier than the evidence for any fact of science”. From Whitcomb and Morris (1961), it seems that they read the Bible to determine the geological history, and thus looked for scientific support for their views, while dismissing or ignoring contradictory evidence. In a proper analysis, the creationist scholars based their evidence and arguments in a religious text with an aim to bypass those who do not believe in the Christian faith. Although it is not clear whether they did this intentionally or otherwise, the remaining fact is that their methodological approach seems to have been deeply biased beyond redemption. Muzorewa (1985) argues that a rational argument should be able to encompass the whole audience populace without shunning the possibility of the engagement for others, and this might be the same argument against using the English language in explaining the thoughts of the ordinary African people.

According to Spencer (2012), Whitcomb and Morris argue the case of creationism in a way which seems that they assume that God created nature because it exists. However, this argument sounds more religious, and based on faith, without any explanation of why God should be supernatural by not being part of the nature. Explaining the study of rocks and minerals does not seem, in any way, suggestive of the argument that God created all things from nothing without any help or influence by another being, as their bible would declare. This study admits that creationism is one perspective in the argument that God is above and beyond nature, but there seems to be unexplainable parts in the idea of creationism, which add to the challenge of discussing the nature of God.

The creation with the word, as it appears in the book of Genesis in the Bible, seems to be more of declaring than providing a proper argument on why it was necessary for creation to come to existence than remaining non-existent. Therefore, using that as the basis for the academic argumentation leaves more space for criticisms than rendering a clear account of God’s supernature and spirituality in the whole idea. The better point of starting this creationist argument would have been at the beginning of the supernatural God’s origin and existence while He/She/It was alone. Perhaps, the argument would move to

the point of creation quite effortlessly. By the time the reference to the deluge flood is made, everyone would be on par with the rendition of the story. As it stands now, Price and his companions, including Whitcomb and Morris are simply preachers that spread a Christian thought system with the exclusion of anyone who does not subscribe to their faith.

Whitcomb and Morris (1961) were clear about it as they said, “we take this revealed framework of history as our basic datum, and then try to see how all the pertinent data can be understood in this context” (Whitcomb & Morris, 1961)⁹⁴. It is, therefore, evident that their view of the earth history was based on a literal interpretation of the Genesis of the Christian Bible. In the beginning of creation, God made earth’s core and some kind of crust. Rocks then display evidence of internal deformation, such as folds or minerals that form only at high pressures or temperatures, which date from the first moment of creation (Spencer, 2012). Over the following week, a marvellous amount of geological work was accomplished when mountains were thrust up, and ocean basins were carved out in a great rush of water, as the planet was re-fashioned into a proper dominion for man (Turyatunga, 2019). Ultimately, all this erosion and deposition gave rise to the non-fossil-bearing sedimentary rocks, and carved mountains into them. Many years later, the flood ripped up the entire surface of the planet, killed everything besides the ark, and laid down the fossil-bearing sedimentary rocks. The present geological era subsequently began after a brief Ice Age which was caused by the snow accumulating on the freshly uplifted mountains (Aayola, 2008). Resultantly, seemingly, after this occurrence, the world was created to seem old. In that view, Whitcomb and Morris (1961: 457) easily dismissed fossil evidence for a long history of life “on the basis of overwhelming Biblical evidence,” and imposed the idea that it was impossible to learn the age of the world through studying the operation of natural laws that exist now.

⁹⁴ Ibid

Montgomery (2012) argues that one of the many strange facts facing the advocates of a global flood is that, although most of the world's sedimentary rocks are found on continents that a global flood would have deposited sediments in small amounts, there is no evidence of that. It appears that most flood geology proponents adopted the Ecological Zonation Theory of Price's student, Harold Clark⁹⁵. The Ecological Zonation Theory held that the geological strata with distinct fossil assemblages represented antediluvian ecological zones (Pennock, 2003). This line of reasoning seems flawed, as it begs the question of how the whole ecological community of organisms and coral reefs could be transported intact without mixing across the great distances to be deposited, and preserving their original ecological zonation (Tangi, 2002). The flaws in this argument re-echo those in the quasi-physical notion of God, as Wiredu leaves some questions unanswered. Hence the quasi-physical concept might be still going through some stages of development just like creationism.

3.6 CREATIONISM TODAY

Although creationism has been developed in different ages, it has not reached the level of being fully defensible from criticisms, and to fully answer the questions of existence, with God being supernatural. Wiredu's quasi-physical concept of God seems to be an adequate attempt to drift away from creationism, but it similarly remains problematic. However, although creationism and quasi-physicalism have similarities with regard to defensibility, they both remain incompatible with each other. When the 19th century geologists shelved the idea of a global flood as the central event in earth history, even the original fundamentalists accepted that the opening book of the Bible could not wholly explain the past. Later, in waging war on evolution, the reactionary evangelicals resurrected the discredited 17th century ideas to explain topography, rock formations, and

⁹⁵ Harold Clark founded ecological zonation theory as he could not defend the claim of flood geologists that say Noah's flood was a global phenomenon as they refer to Genesis chapter of the bible. For him it makes more sense to argue that the flood was a local affair than being a global issue

earth history, invoking a mysterious vapour canopy which they believed fell from the sky to trigger Noah's flood (Leeming, 2009).

The displays at the Creation Museum in Peterson, Kentucky, USA, explicitly reject reason, branding it the enemy of faith, and invoking a century-long, ongoing conspiracy of scientists to mislead the faithful about the nature of the world. Despite centuries of geological research that contradicts creationist claims, Gallup (2012)⁹⁶ tracking polls from 1982 to 2012 have consistently found out that more than 40% of Americans believe that God created people fewer than 10,000 years ago. While struggles over the geological implications of Biblical interpretations date back to the earliest days of the church, the story of how naturalists wrestled over reconciling the Biblical flood with a growing body of contradictory geological evidence shows that the 20th century revival of flood geology recycled the ideas which were previously abandoned in the face of compelling evidence. In light of the 19th century scientific discoveries, it appeared reasonable to read the Biblical account of the flood as either allegorical, or a story told from the perspective that the whole world appeared flooded from the ark.

Repeatedly, Christians accommodated geologic findings by reinterpreting Genesis to preserve the integrity of the natural and scriptural truths. Of course, there were significant holes in conventional geological theories when Whitcomb and Morris⁹⁷ laid out their biblically inspired views on earth history. Plate tectonics did not yet provide an explanation on the origin and distribution of mountains and other geological problems, such as the presence of fossils of temperate and tropical creatures entombed in rocks at high latitudes. However, when the plate tectonics revolution swept through the earth sciences and explained the previously perplexing observations, creationists ignored what they

⁹⁶ Gallup G (2012) Now a new era has to begin. In; Campbell W. J (ed) *Lost in a Gallup: Polling failures in U. S presidential elections*. University of California. California. Gallup is an American journalist who has always been so keen in finding public opinions and write his critiques about it. In his work of 2020 Campbell has used many of Gallup's opinions as they serve as a raw data from the public

⁹⁷ Whitcomb J. C and Morris H. M (2011) *The genesis flood: The biblical record and its implications*. P & R publishing company. New York. Pp 36 - 49

considered yet another misguided geological theory. While geological thought has evolved over the past several centuries, Christianity has too, to the point where several varieties of creationists now argue bitterly amongst themselves. Young-earth creationists believe that the world is below 10,000 years old, and that Noah's flood remodelled it into the topography that we know today in one fell swoop a few thousand years ago. Old-earth creationists accept geological evidence and endorse ideas such as the gap or day-age theories, and progressive creationism, also known as theistic evolution, through which God guided evolution in creating the diversity of life (Evas, 2009).

The latest step in the evolution of creationism is based on repackaging as the 'intelligent design' of the inherently untestable assertion that God designed the world with a particular purpose or goal in mind. Today, after losing repeated court battles over efforts to teach the creationist views in science classrooms, the creationist strategy appears to have shifted to promoting efforts to question evolution. Generally left out of the resulting "debates" is the simple fact that creationists lack any independently supported geological evidence to support their views. The late Harvard palaeontologist, Stephen Gould (1982:12, 10)⁹⁸ described a global flood as "the only specific and testable theory which the creationists have offered," noting that "the claim that creationism is a science rests above all on the plausibility of the Biblical flood." Moreso, the geological case for a global flood that creationists offer as an alternative to evolution was discredited before Darwin set foot aboard *The Beagle*. Geologists assess theories by how well they fit data, and creationists evaluate facts by how well they fit their theories. This simple distinction frames an unbridgeable intellectual rift. Nowhere is this divide deeper than over how to interpret the story of Noah's flood, as the ideas invoked to explain such an event have been refuted time and again, and there is no geologic evidence of a global deluge. Following Whitcomb and Morris, today's creationists continue to pick and choose evidence to support the beliefs which their faith inspires. Given the ongoing conflict over what to teach in science classrooms, perhaps teaching the historical evolution of creationism offers a fresh way for

⁹⁸ Gould S. J (1982) Darwin's legacy. Nobel conference Vol 18(18). In; Hamrum C. L (ed). Harper & Row. California

students to learn about the history of geology, and thereby learning the knowledge of the world, and how it works.

3.7 THE CONCEPT OF GOD AS NATURAL OR PART OF NATURE

Having looked at how the scholars of creationism present their thoughts and defend their views; it becomes apparent how they faced many challenges with regards to how scientific scholars empirically discover things about nature and existence. Therefore, it is not surprising that some empiricist philosophers such as Wiredu turn away from the concept of the existence of the supernatural being called 'God', because if they align themselves with such metaphysical thinkers, they will somehow inherit the challenges that haunted creationists. Creationist scholars face a basic problem when they ought to answer the questions, "where did 'God' come from? Where did he take the idea of creating from? What was that 'nothing' that He/She/It had to make the whole nature emanate from?" From these questions, scholars have to look again at the authenticity of the creationist argument. It is, therefore, where the idea of supernatural gets invoked, as it thus leads to the point where one may dismiss these questions as irrelevant and seeking the natural out of the supernatural.

Wiredu argues that in the African thought system, there was never a talk about the supernatural, but rather the natural existence has always been thought of as made of a hierarchy of forces that naturally range from inanimate objects to 'God' who is the highest force above all (Wiredu, 1999). However, Wiredu also holds that 'God' is eternally enjoying the higher position above other natural forces, which seems to be a challenge because if God is part of nature or is natural, it is then not clear what eternally keeps him/her above the whole nature.

For a creationist, it would be easier to address this issue because they would simply argue that since God is supernatural, then He/She/It has the superlative status and power over

the whole of nature that He/She/It has created. In fact, a creationist would immediately remind one that if God created the whole nature, then it is easily thinkable that He/She/It created it with lesser power in order to be always in control of it and keep it subservient to him/her at all times. In this case, it would seem that among the laws that govern the natural forces, one is the law that the order of the hierarchy should never be disobeyed or altered by any being as God made it so. In other words, when God created nature, He/She/It created it with no ability to will for one element of it to disturb the settings of the hierarchical order that He/She/It fixed during the time of creation. However, while Wiredu does not seem to render a clear answer on what keeps God as permanently a superior force than all other forces of nature, he also seems to reject the concept of creation in the African philosophy.

Like Averroes⁹⁹ (in Long 2000), Wiredu perceives a greater problem in saying that there was a time or moment when there was God and nothing else, to the effect that for all other things to exist, God had to create them from nothing. Averroes from a Mu'taziliy school of thought¹⁰⁰ surprisingly offered an account of cosmology which is different from other Islamic scholars. While the common Ash'ariy Islamic scholars¹⁰¹ embrace the notion of God creating all things in existence from nothing, Averroes argued that God is a force that arranged the existence to be as it is (Frank, 2016). Averroes read the Qur'an in part where it says that God created the world from darkness and created some spirits from smoke of fire (Malik, 2021). Therefore, for him, the concept of creationism that argues for God as having created everything from nothing by the word 'be' and it all became, was profoundly indefensible, hence he avoided it. Moreso, this is where the Islamic scholars differ; those from the Mu'taziliy school of thought give cosmological arguments in an Averroesian perspective, while those from Ash'ari give a creationism perspective that argues for God

⁹⁹ Averroes as he is known in Greek is Ibnu Rushd and he was a contemporary of the renowned Islamic philosopher Avicenna (Ibnu Cinna). Long W.M (2000) is a narrative about these great Islamic scholars as it also includes philosopher like Al Farrabi and many other illustrious scholars

¹⁰⁰ Khan M. S and Saleem M. A (1994) *Muslim philosophy and philosophers*. Ashish publishing house. Delhi. In this book, Khan and Saleem have compiled the knowledge of all Islamic schools of thought as well as their philosophers.

¹⁰¹ Al Gazzali, Abd Al Salam, Shaikh An Nawawi and many others

as creating everything from nothing. In this case, Wiredu, from the Akan tradition, seems to be doing what Averroes did. Therefore, it is not surprising that they both suffer from the lack of answer to the question of where the material to fashion the world and the whole existence came from. Having that hanging question in mind, it then seems that while creationism bears some logical problems, the Averroesan approach that Wiredu seems to embrace also has unanswered questions that both Averroes and Wiredu avoid.

3.8 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter establishes that the compatibility of quasi-physical notion of God and creationism holds only as far as the talk is about nature being created. Other accounts of God as a creator of all the existing beings have been discussed in their conceptual frameworks, for instance, creationism. The startling fact in Wiredu's argument concerning the African notion of God is that he does not consider the creationism argument necessary. Seemingly, in his view, the question of creation in the African thought does not arise. Maybe when African people talk of creation, they merely talk of emergence and formation, in which case it would be argued that God emerged with the material that He/she/It later used to fashion the world and existence as it is. Understood in that sense, the argument of God creating everything from nothing becomes unnecessary as Krause (2012)¹⁰² would even render it useless. Therefore, it seems quite apparent that Wiredu takes an Averroesan stance in saying that there was no time where

¹⁰² Krause L. M (2012) *A universe from nothing: Why there is something other than nothing*. Simon & Schuster. Chapter 2. Lawrence Krause is a quantum physicist who is part of **Atheist International** in America presided over by Aron Ra. Among his works, he has debated with different theologians and religious scholars of different faiths. He commonly argues that religion and faith is nothing else other than suspension of reason as well as antithesis of science

there was completely nothing in existence. For both Averroes¹⁰³ and Wiredu¹⁰⁴, God is a force that existed with the raw material to fashion the world and give form to all the existing beings. It is, therefore, clear that both these scholars kept avoiding the question of where the raw material that God used to fashion the world and the whole existence came from. At the rock bottom, Wiredu's quasi-physical notion of God is not compatible with creationism because creationism accepts that there was time where there was nothing while quasi-physicality argument rejects that idea.

¹⁰³ Najjar I (2014) *Faith and reason in Islam: Averroes' exposition of religious arguments*. Oneworld publications. London. In this book, Ibrahim Najjar translates and to some degree interprets the philosophical thoughts of Averroes. However, more work of interpreting Averroes' thoughts can be found in Adamson P and Giovanni M.D (eds) (2019) *Interpreting Averroes: Critical essays*. Cambridge University press. United Kingdom. Pp 27 - 44

¹⁰⁴ Wiredu K (1996) *Cultural universals and particulars: An African perspective*. Indiana University press. Michigan. This is one of Wiredu's works, which adds on his work of 1980 "*Philosophy and African culture*". Wiredu has always been consistent about his view even in his work of 1998 "*Towards decolonizing the African philosophy and religion*" he truly believes that African philosophy does not have this supernatural spiritual existence and natural existence duality.

CHAPTER 4: QUASI-PHYSICALITY AND AVOIDANCE OF EXISTENTIAL DUALISM

4.1 INTRODUCTION

One important feature of recent African philosophical works is the attempt by the writers to interpret key concepts from within the context of specific African cultures (Majeed, 2013). However, the interpretations of writers such as Bewaji (1998) and Wiredu (1998) among others, particularly in connection with the Akan thought, have not been able to provide clarity. One such concept is the concept of 'spirit existence', where Kwasi Wiredu (1980; 1983; 2009) strictly coined the notion of 'quasi-physicality'. When some scholars generally hold the position that a person is completely physical as inconsistent with the Akan cultural beliefs, then the definitive explanation of the non-physical constituent of the human being cannot be discussed without falling into a great controversy.

An expression that has contemporarily been presented by Wiredu and other philosophers such as Gyekye as a descriptive concept of that constituent is the 'quasi-physical'. According to Majeed (2013: 20), "the notion of quasi-physicalism is the brainchild of an Akan philosopher, Kwasi Wiredu, and is strongly held by Safro Kwame (2004) as well, another Akan philosopher". This criticism is important for this study because it points out that Wiredu's quasi-physical concept of God might be the beginning of something that can be developed to be better than it currently is. This chapter attempts to produce a critique of the 'quasi-physicality' and argues that it conceptually calls for serious criticisms in diverse ways; and as such, under critical examination, it becomes indefensible due to its epistemological implications.

It is always noticeable that the philosophical ideas of any culture, including the Akan, are mostly contained and carried within language, beliefs, and practices of that particular culture. In this chapter, the researcher critically examines some Akan cultural beliefs and language, that should aid in the understanding of the Akan concept of a person and

'spiritual existence'. In the Akan language, the physical "human body is referred to as 'Honam', but there are two other expressions, 'Okra' and 'Sunsum' which, together with 'Honam', seem to suggest the belief in the existence of two distinct components of the human being" (Gyekye, 1995: 89)¹⁰⁵. Majeed (2013) thus explains that these two expressions are sometimes translated as 'soul' or 'mind' and 'spirit', respectively, and are considered as being spiritual part of a human. The Akan thinkers who conceive as 'spirits' of these entities include Asare Opoku (1978), Peter Sarpong (1974), and Kwame Gyekye (1995; 2008). In fact, Sarpong (1974) comfortably and directly translates Sunsum as "spirit," although he regards it as deriving from the father. This view has shown its controversial nature when Sarpong had to be corrected by Gyekye (1995).

Traditional Akans also hold the thought that the Okra is totally different and superior in nature; it is not merely similar with the Sunsum which forms part of the brain or the body. Nevertheless, due to its complete spiritual nature, the okra stays separate and distinct from the brain and body, which might be one of the reasons some philosophers have chosen to translate it as an equivalent of 'soul'. However, the Okra is believed perform a role in the human's living ability, as it seems to be considerably held as a life force with non-physical, spiritual attributes. In this chapter, the study delves in further analysing and critiquing the spiritual notions of okra and Sunsum that Kwasi Wiredu (2009) and Safo Kwame (2004) hold a strong sense of rejection to. For reasons they submitted in their writings, they argue that Okra and Sunsum are not spiritual, but rather quasi-physical. The study attempts to explain these reasons, and subjects them to a philosophically logical critique which will then enable him to state the strengths and weaknesses of their position. Majeed (2013)¹⁰⁶ rightly asserts that,

¹⁰⁵ Gyekye K (1995) *An essay on African philosophical thought: The Akan conceptual scheme. (Revised edition)*. Tempel University press. Philadelphia. P 89. This is one of Kwame Gyekye's works on the African philosophy, before it, he wrote "The Akan concept of a person" which makes a chapter in Wright A (ed) (1984) *African philosophy: An introduction*. Gyekye also wrote another work related to these work on 2008 "*Relationship between religion and science: An overview*" which he presented at Kwame Nkrumah University of Technology and Science in Ghana.

¹⁰⁶ Majeed M (2013) Quasi-physicalism: A critique. "A critique of Quasi-physicalism in Akan philosophy". *African studies quarterly Vol1 &21*. This is one of the works in which Majeed analyses the Akan philosophy and he finds

Assessment of beliefs as evidence for the existence of these spiritual entities by contemporary Akan philosophers has chiefly been based on the logical implications of specific cultural beliefs regarding the activities of those entities.

A philosopher who is truly committed to presenting the views of the African people should, at least, be linguistically fair to the people whose views are being presented. When Wiredu set out to discuss the African concept of God as quasi-physical in the African thought, he should have started from producing a well-framed explanation of what it is in the Akan language. Currently, his concept of quasi-physicality is in English, and there are no clear Akan maxims that clarify this thought to an ordinary person. This creates a disconnect between the philosophers and the ordinary people, while a philosopher claims to be representing the people. It is, therefore, in light of this that Majeed (2013) expresses discomfort with Wiredu's concept of quasi-physicality, because while Wiredu is trying to produce an African idea, he does not make any effort to deliver it in ordinary African terms.

The short and simple move from supernatural to natural seems interesting, but due to the brevity of its justification, it ends up not plausible. Although quasi-physicality seems to be an improvement from a mere adoption of the Western concept of God, it seems to be not as clear as something that the African philosophers would agree on. This study holds that there are more unexplained issues within the rendition of the African concept of God entailed in Wiredu's quasi-physical approach to this subject. Wiredu uses the concept 'quasi-physical' without any noticeable effort to explain it at a basic level in the ordinary Akan language. For clarity's sake, the non-explanation in the ordinary language seems more mysterious, if not outright suspicious or questionable. In other words, Wiredu might be accusable of using a strict philosophical language that is not reducible to the ordinary language of the Akan people – the same thing that makes philosophers out of touch with the real-world issues.

that Akan philosophers are divided in the issue of Quasi-physicality that Wiredu introduces. In this work he closely reads the works of both Gyekye and Wiredu, surprisingly he discovers shocking differences as Gyekye holds that those things like Okra which Wiredu deems quasi-physical, Gyekye on his works talks of them as purely spiritual

According to Luhmann (2022), philosophers create a particular problem, and instead of relating it to the real world within the ordinary language, they invent a special language or jargon that will allow them to engage with strange verbatim. Wiggins (2022) corroborates this view, arguing that philosophers seem to have a way of posing their thoughts in some artificial language that is above and beyond the ordinary people's language. This study's argument is that if Wiredu adopts this creativity in his rendition of the African concept of God, then he stands accused of strange conduct that stains the philosophers' works. Nonetheless, it was indeed not the object of this study to delve into issues of the Akan language, but Wiredu seems to have been advantaged by the English language to coin the 'quasi-physicality' concept of God in the African thought system. So far, the argument in this study is that Wiredu's method of argumentation seems to be aloof from the ordinary language disposition known to the Akan people.

Scholars such as Majeed (2013) may argue that Wiredu merely adopted the English expression of 'quasi-physicality' to discuss the common view of the Akan people about God. However, the issue still lies in the question of why Wiredu did not render an explanation, or a phrase within the ordinary Akan language which relates the same thought as the 'quasi-physicality' concept. According to Valdoen (2021), if one needs to interpret a certain phenomenon in a foreign language than that of origin, there should at least be a phrase of resonance from the original language known by the people to whom that phenomenon is attributed. On the one hand, Wiredu's method of forsaking the traditional Akan language and rely on English seems to be different from the one used in this study because it appears to be more creative than discussing what the ordinary Akan people know or may ordinarily present. The methodology adopted in this study, on the other hand, is that of reviewing literature and discussing the ideas as they can be interpreted in English.

It is worth noting that the aim here is not just to philosophise and sophisticate issues that should be understood by the ordinary people. Although it might be understood that Wiredu considered it more feasible to use English expressions to discuss the Akan views about

the subject of metaphysics, there is a risk of misrepresentation in his methodology. According to Asokan (2020), sometimes, misrepresentation may happen due to the methodological use of language, especially when one becomes more creative to the extent of using terms that are out of reach from the ordinary people. Furthermore, it is questionable that Wiredu abruptly embeds quasi-physical notion of God to the Tempels's force thesis. Tempels narrated his observations about the African notion of God, but as a bystander he could not know better than his force thesis regarding the African thought. This can be known from the fact that Tempels never considered himself as an African or upheld the African concept of God as what he also subscribes to.

In searching for truth, it is not laudable for the seeking to create it if they cannot find it and present it as she/he would want to (Ning, 2022). Ning's thoughts seem to be quite acceptable in this study as he sounds more motivational in the quest for truth than the construction of non-existent truths when one cannot find one. With regard to Wiredu's concept of the 'quasi-physical' God in the African thought system, this study argues that Wiredu seems to have hastily reached the quasi-physicality in English more or less than he may have presumably reached it in the ordinary Akan language. It is presumable that he may have found enough evidence to make his conclusions based on other sources (sources best known to him) except from the ordinary language and expressions from the Akan thought. However, according to Majeed (2013: 30),

“It is these same sources of evidence (language, beliefs, and the practices that those beliefs underlie) that have ironically led some to argue against the metaphysical conceptions of *okra* and *Sunsum*”.

Wiredu and Kwame, to be specific, explain that these entities are spoken of in physical terms, and are capable of partially assuming spatial properties. Therefore, *okra* and *Sunsum* should accurately be described as “quasi-physical,” since they are not believed, in these philosophers' view to be purely physical either.

Perhaps some critique of Wiredu may provide a resolution to the controversies around the interpretations that metaphysical theorists and the quasi-physicalists have given in connection with the matter of Okra and Sunsum. This section of the study is a critique of Wiredu's notion of quasi-physicalism, as it is considerably suffering from grave discrepancies. In fact, one may be tempted to affirm the metaphysical, although this study may not have enough strength to directly do so. Wiredu's (In Majeed, 2013:31) argument is due to the following reasons: (i) for Wiredu, the Okra is closer to the physical realm, although some people place it in the realm of "the so-called spiritual", (ii) the same okra is believed to sometimes require and accept (physical) offerings, (iii) it sometimes manifests or renders itself visible to the (physical eyes of) medicine men, (iv) therefore, the okra is thought of as a person's double.

At the end of this chapter, the researcher will finally argue that some aspects of the doctrine of quasi-physicalism suffer serious incoherence with some traditional African or Akan beliefs. Therefore, rendering the spiritual conception of okra as absolutely wrong is not satisfactory or even an ideal position to take. Majeed (2013) argued that the task of investigating African spirituality is not surprising at all because it links up with the African metaphysics which has been a real topic in philosophy. Majeed rightly stated that it also engages as a subject of study even in other academic disciplines besides philosophy and religion. Among those disciplines are psychology, anthropology, and comparative cultural studies (Armstrong, 1970).

According to Gbadegesin (2002: 175-191)¹⁰⁷, the spiritual part of the person, which is believed to survive death (Okra), is often mentioned in the traditional Akan religious practice of libation pouring. Majeed (2013) also submits that Okra is believed as possessing the capability to act as a morality enforcing agent in the (physical) human community.

¹⁰⁷ Gbadegesin S (2002) "Eniyan: The Yoruba concept of a person". Coetzee P. J and Le Roux A. P. J (eds) *Philosophy from Africa 2ED*. Pp 175 – 191. In this work Gbadegesin brings a narrative about the Yoruba concept of a person and that helps Mohammed Majeed to actually have a proper comparison of thoughts from African philosophers so as to assess Wiredu's argument for quasi-physicality

There is more reason for one to agree with Majeed (2013:1)¹⁰⁸ on saying that,

The postulation of quasi-physicalism, amidst its many problems, is an interesting exercise in contemporary Akan philosophy. It even offers some ideas that compare with aspects of Western philosophy. Its rejection of the spirituality or, rather, part-spirituality of the human being is, in some respects, consistent with the conventional attitude toward the metaphysical in some Western conceptions.

It is the case that the modern Western philosophy discussions on personal identity commonly trace their way back to Descartes¹⁰⁹, who postulated a metaphysical mind as an addition to the body. However, some 'anti-metaphysians' such as Armstrong (1970) and Place (1970), consider the mind as not different from the brain functions which, to them, is totally physical. According to Armstrong (1970: 67)¹¹⁰, "the mind was not behind the behaviour of the body; it was simply part of that physical behaviour." This is the material or physical conception of the mind as he called it the "materialist or physicalist" account of the mind (Majeed, 2013). It then seems that the difference that Wiredu and Kwame have with the Western anti-metaphysians is their clear admission that the Okra is, indeed, an entity distinct from the body, and capable to exist after death.

However, although Gyekye accepts the immortality of the Okra, at the same time, he suggests that during death, Okra and Ounsum survive as a unified entity which constitutes one spiritual dimension of a human being. It, therefore, seems that although not necessarily Cartesian, Gyekye's position is ultimately dualistic, and one may find it more acceptable than Wiredu and Kwame's position. Therefore, to avoid some misconception

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁰⁹ Descartes R (1984) "Meditations on first philosophy". Cottingham J et al (trans). The philosophical writings of Descartes Vol 2. Cambridge U

¹¹⁰ Armstrong D M (1970) "The nature of mind". Borst C.V (ed). *The mind-brain identity theory*. Macmillan. London. In this work Armstrong is used by Majeed to clearly argue the case that even if an entity can be explained by its impact to the physical world but reducing it to the physicalist terms may conflate the reality of its nature and to a higher degree amount to misrepresentation

of terms while trying to solve other misconceptions, it is important to clarify the difference among the terms that are used in this work. From the above criticisms, firstly, Armstrong and Place reduce the mind to the physical or material; secondly, they regard the mind as fundamentally bodily and perceptible. For a moment, Armstrong and Place sound as if they subscribe to Wiredu's quasi-physicalism. However, it is imperative to note that materialism may not mean the same as physicalism. Therefore, conscious efforts to mark that difference between these concepts will help researchers not to conflate them or cause more difficulties as the quasi-physicality has already done.

According to Majeed (2013), Armstrong also realised the need to explain the difference that exists between these two concepts, although at first, he used them interchangeably. The doctrine of physicalism is consistent with accepting as affirmatively existent anything which is "a physical object" or, at least, describable "in a language of physics" (Armstrong, 1970; Majeed, 2013). Wiredu's quasi-physicality then is, thereby, acknowledged as avoiding the consideration of the material concept of God, which would directly lead to natural monism, but somehow paving the way towards physicalism in the African thought. The implication of this description is that in some cases, an intangible object would pass for the physical classification, provided that what is said about it has compatibility with the laws of physics. Materialism, on the other hand, "misleadingly seems to conjure up a Newtonian account of matter," which admits of only the tangible, as inherent in Newton's theory of gravitational fields, where matter attracts matter (Majeed, 2013:26). This espouses the need to critically examine the extent to which Wiredu marks the end line of quasi-physicalism, and how close he comes to being a pure physicalist.

4.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN QUASI-PHYSICALITY AND PHYSICALITY

Quasi-physicalism has been defined as the philosophy that regards existing objects as "belonging to a category between the realm of the obviously physical, for example, those objects that obey the known laws of physics, and the realm of the so-called spiritual or

completely immaterial objects” (Wiredu in Majeed, 2013:1)¹¹¹. In the same vein, the okra of a living or dead person is classified by philosophers such as Wiredu and Sarprong as belonging in the quasi-physical realm. Their argument is that this is the form in which the Okra, particularly of a dead person, when it reveals itself to the living people, is perceived to be. Contrary, Mbiti (1997) and Gyekye (2008) would vividly seem not to consider such “perceptions” of the Okra (of the dead person) as quasi-physical in any way. For example, although Mbiti writes about instances where people happen to be “seeing” and “hearing” certain figures such as *mizimu*, which are the living-dead among the Baganda people, he sustains referring to them as “spirits,” or spiritual beings (Majeed, 2013). Gyekye (2008:28)¹¹² similarly argues that regardless of the belief or possibility that such spiritual beings “can make themselves felt in the physical world”, and that “by the operation of their powers assume spatial properties,” they should neither be granted physical nor quasi-physical. It is quite amazing that philosophers of the same region can hold such controversial views about things that seem to be common and interesting to all of them.

It appears that Gyekye’s position is somehow that of accepting the Sunsum as being quasi-physical in some way as, in his argument, he speaks of it being perceivably taking up physical qualities, while at the same time, it remains a spirit. Contrary to Mbiti and Gyekye, Wiredu prefers his coined term “quasi-physical” because he bases the strength of his argument on the fact that Okra is “perceptible” or possesses the capability of becoming perceived in the physical real. Wiredu is also known for maintaining that there are other qualities commonly attributed to parts of a person which seem to be quasi-physical as well. In support of his argument, Wiredu¹¹³ cites the common practice of the traditional Akan belief that when someone consumes some type of food which the Okra has a negative reaction to, she/he will fall ill; and this symbolises that “the Okra might require some form of pacification where it will be presented with offerings of suitable food and drinks” (Wiredu in Majeed, 2013:2)¹¹⁴.

¹¹¹ Wiredu. Supra 104 and Supra 106

¹¹² Majeed. Supra 106

¹¹³ Supra 104

¹¹⁴ Supra 106

Wiredu further suggests that the Okra is depicted as an entity that possesses some number of physical desires, like the ability to choose and enjoy food, as well as the ability to receive. However, with his evidence granted, his conclusion still cannot hold under some reflection. It is arguable and reasonable enough that since a person's okra is considered to be linked or incorporated with his/her body, as the person lives in a world which is both physical and spiritual, in the physical realm he cannot be prevented from reaching to the nonphysical side (Teffo & Abraham, 2002; Majeed, 2013). However, the serious problem perhaps lies with the matter of explaining "how" this reaching occurs. Concerning the provision of such explanation, Majeed (2013:3) rendered the following cautioning words:

It would be difficult not to start with or, at least, include the most obvious such as the physical realm, in the exploration or explanation of the spiritual realm, if the explanation is to convince anybody of the existence of a spiritual entity or event. In any such case where the metaphysical is postulated, the rationality or acceptability of the postulation would most likely be based on the possibility of a mutual, cross-realm affectation or causation. That is, the strength of the evidence for a causal relation between the physical and the purported metaphysical realms would be crucial for a possible understanding of the metaphysical. But this role played by the physical does not, in any way, call for the description of a metaphysical entity itself as para physical. If it is granted, for the sake of argumentation, that an illness originates from the okra or that the okra is badly affected by the eating of food, it appears that only a cross-realm causation is implied, not necessarily the quasi-physicality of the okra.

According to scholars such as Majeed, when people lack the understanding of the last point, it is where they sometimes start asking the wrong questions in the analysis of the traditional African beliefs. For Majeed (2013), it is quite easier to question and stop at the extent of whether some material objects have been used, or whether some reference has been made to any kind of physical substance in someone's explanation of a spiritual event

or experience. However, Majeed (2013) opined that such an enquiry is commonly conducted with one-sided hope that an affirmative response would make the existence of the supernatural be unlikely. For scholars like Wiredu, it seems awkward why it is still hard to regard everything as 'physical', or at least, potentially physical, while even the supposed metaphysical realm fails to be explored without any assistance drawn from the physical world.

Thinkers like Majeed (2013) and Bodunrin (2013)¹¹⁵ consider such attitude as not only reducing the advancement of this study's willingness to take into account the metaphysical dimension, but it also blocks their opportunity of developing an interest to investigate the reality or non-reality of the "spiritual." In order to be reasonable and open to learn, Majeed (2013) suggests that the right questions to ask would be, firstly, whether there is anything beyond this known phenomenal world, and secondly, whether and how such realities have capabilities to cooperatively connect and produce some effect. In fact, this manner of approach would show that the researcher is ready to accept the existence of spiritual if it can be found. At the same time, Majeed (2013)¹¹⁶ holds that with any supposed 'cross-realm generated' effect, there would be a need to firstly examine whether one specific situation obtains; that is, whether the effect is drastically opposed to what the physical objects used in the process can produce on their own, both individually and collectively. This, then, is indeed a rational approach, if the bringing into being of the effect would logically, or in any understandable way, be traced to the nonphysical 'spiritual' component. This is a useful and applicable method which John Stuart Mill (Majeed, 2013) referred to as the "method of difference," while Majeed (2013) refers more specifically to having known it as the "method of residues."

¹¹⁵ Bodunrin P (2013) "Seeing through the concept language of others". Brown L. M (ed). *African philosophy: New and traditional perspectives*. Oxford University press. New York. In this work, Brown presents Bondurin's views that converge with those of Majeed. Bondurin also contributed in the book by Mosley A. G "African philosophy: Selected readings" wherein Bondurin revealed special terminology that encompasses telepathy, clairvoyance, metacognition, and so on in his explanation of African spiritual perspectives

¹¹⁶ Supra 106

However, in some part of his works, Majeed suggests that such an attribution to the 'spirit' may not necessarily mean that the physical objects were not in the set of things that were considered to be the cause of the effect, in exception that they were not the probable cause. This is the reason to consider following Safo Kwame's (2004:34) recommendation as quite out of place: "to test the existence or non-existence of completely non-physical entities and methods, the traditional African healers would have to be barred from employing any physical entities or methods in their therapies and procedures". In fact, Majeed (2013: 3) argues that the usage of improper tools may yield incorrect results and therefore the traditional healer would be deceptive if he/ she engages in that kind of act.

According to some African scholars, it is regarded of little value to ignore the claims of a cross-realm effect or interaction, only to confirm the obvious fact that (i) "the metaphysical and material are completely different in constitution, and (ii) some amount of the physical is involved, at some stages, in the art of reaching to the spiritual realm" (Majeed, 2013:4). In addition, suggesting that medicine men do not understand that the concept 'spiritual', by its own (primary) definition, entirely excludes all that is 'physical', shows a great effort of how the Wiredu is impoverished in understanding the worldview of medicine men. This position can be defended by following this line of logic: when medicine men believe an object to be capable of being inhabited or occupied by an invoked spirit, it is still not the case that they mistake or suffer from misunderstanding the object to be the spirit itself. At the same time, neither is the spirit believed to have transformed and become material. Rather, it is the case that medicine men do believe that there is an interaction between the spiritual and the physical, or that some events in one realm can affect the other realm. According to Wiredu (2008), this is evidently noticeable in their use of objects in many of medicine men's healing techniques. It is, therefore, possible that they would agree with Perry (1975) who argues that for the material world to form the "evidential base" of something that exists beyond the physical or material world, there would be a need for special intervention. Resultantly, the belief that, in a person, there is a spiritual component which can, at times, affect the body, and which can be affected by it, renders untrue as it is the case in Kwame's view that the mind-body problem does not even come to arise in

the Akan concept of a person (Safro, 2004; Majeed, 2013:4). The advanced argument about the near physicality of the okra, on the mere basis that it requires and receives offerings of sacrifices of food and drinks, would not be denied.

Similarly, the irrational act, according to Wiredu (1983), which is the pouring of libation to the living-dead, would hardly be denied if only it is understood within the parameters of the ordinary context that these offerings are meant to be consumed by the spirits. Majeed (2013: 4) argues that “it would be irrational, indeed, for a traditional Akan thinker to believe that a drink just poured on the ground, food placed at a section of the house, or an object left on a crossroad have actually been eaten or taken by the spirits.” For Majeed¹¹⁷, it is clear and obvious to any rational person that the offered items do not necessarily vanish as would be in the case where they are actually devoured by the spirits. However, it is a known and a rational fact that the drinks sink into the ground and dry out, while the food remains in the container until gets taken away or removed by human beings. The same applies to the items left on the crossroads as sacrifice, it remains there until it becomes rotten and eaten by insects, or merely displaced by unintended humans or natural action.

Clearly realising this reasonable fact, scholars such as Teffo (2002) and Majeed (2013) thus argue that the significance of such sacrifices could only serve symbolically as means to show human efforts to commune with the spirits. The effort of offering sacrifices to the ‘spiritual entities’ would be symbolising the peoples’ willingness to return some favours, as they witness the premium or ancestral human beings’ place on the relationship with them (Majeed, 2013). Therefore, to the Akan traditional thought, when the latter human beings (offspring) part with those items in memory of the premium being(s), there would be a break in connection which would cause calamities. In the case of pacifying the okra, there seems to be no basis for suggesting that it engages in any physical or quasi-physical action such as eating of any food and drinks that are seemingly offered to it. It is in this

¹¹⁷ Supra 106. This is a part where Majeed’s reference to John Stuart Mill converges with that of Courtney W. L (2015) *The metaphysics of John Stuart Mill*. Fb&c Limited. London

line of thought that Majeed (2013: 3) argues that the “alleged pacification sometimes involves nothing but the eating of a particular food by the individual to correct some imbalance in his system.” It is amazing that scholars find Wiredu and his companion, Sarpong, so much strange in their position. In fact, Sarpong (1974)¹¹⁸ adds to Wiredu’s position, when he argues that, in most cases, the imbalance is believed to be between a person’s okra and honam, which is caused by the consumption that was bound to disturb the body, as well as its harmony with the okra. However, Wiredu wrongly makes reference to Debrunner’s statement, that the *ōkra* is a person’s duplicate which may be conceived as having her/his material image with a complete head, hands, legs, and all that a human being has (Debrunner, 1969).

With this said, Majeed (2013) submits that Debrunner (1969), in this claim, either misrepresents the traditional Akan beliefs, or is considerably inaccurate. It somehow seems that Debrunner has been probably misled by the personal or rationalistic explanations, in which the okra is described as holding the conclusion that it comprises the same parts as the physical person. However, thinkers such as Teffo (2002) and Majeed absolutely reject the existence of this notion in the Akan language and thought. Majeed (2013: 5) rejects it so much that he further argues that “it makes no sense to use phrases like “my Okra’s leg,” “my okra’s head,” or even say that “her Okra’s chin is like this” or that “his Okra’s hand has done that.” Therefore, accordingly, it is entirely incoherent to consider the okra as being a person’s double, which is composed of human parts as claimed by Debrunner. The only way in which it would make some sense to consider the okra as a person’s double is when it is interpreted as a spiritual dimension of a human being who has a particular physical shape.

It is obviously clear that this kind of argument is far from holding that the okra has shape. Following this, Wiredu’s argument in support of his quasi-physicality when he refers to the

¹¹⁸ Sarpong P (1974) *Ghana in retrospect: Some aspects of Ghanaian culture*. Ghana Publishing Corporation. Tema. Majeed referred to this work in his 2013 writing

case of medicine men who are able to see the Okra does not remain unshaken. For instance, when Wiredu suggests that the okra is 'visible' to medicine men, it still begs an unavoidable question of whether or not that okra 'appears or manifests' in a human form. Although Wiredu (1980; 1983; 2009) seemingly holds that this is the case, it still remains not quite clear whether the shape is the authentic shape of the okra.

Some expressions in the Akan idioms compartmentalise the okra in a way that would seem to be close to favour Wiredu's position. However, there is no certainty of whether the Akan thinkers would actually consider any such shape, under the assumption that the okra is indeed seen, to be its own shape. In the case of considering other probabilities, one may argue that is conceivable that the okra embodies the shape of the person which it was known to inhabit in the physical realm in order for its bearer to be easily identified (Majeed, 2013). Contrary to all such thinkers who hold that the okra is 'spiritual', Wiredu (2009) and Majeed (2013:5) reject the spirituality of the okra to the extent of saying that "any theory of souls or spirits can only be an empirical theory", because "if a determinate and coherent definition can be given, the question of whether such things actually exist can only be answered by empirical research" (Majeed, 2013:5).

This study has shown its acceptance of, and limitations on, the role of the empirical evidence in the study of metaphysics. However, this was because this role is a matter of procedural assistance which can be observable in both explanation and impact in the physical world. The direct aim is to show that the empirical evidence may be gravely inadequate, or utterly deficient in explaining certain phenomena of existence. This is clearly not suggesting, by any means, as Wiredu does, that only empirical research is capable of confirming the existence or nonexistence of things, including 'spirits'. Wiredu furthers the argument that, "to say everything is spirit, even if only ultimately, is to advance a wild empirical claim which any slight empirical reflection must discourage" (Majeed, 2013:5). In view of this study, Wiredu should have explained why it can never be right or acceptable to conceive the spirits existing as essentially nonphysical beings. Otherwise,

this same inquiry may be phrased as why the theory of spiritual existence must be or has to be “an empirical theory”, which might encompass quasi-physicality.

It seems as if Wiredu puts the investigation method ahead of the object to be investigated, rather than doing otherwise. This observation is made because Wiredu takes a particular method of investigation, and aims it to be the object of investigation, hence it becomes easier to reach the quasi-physical concept of God. Given this, it is worth agreeing with Majeed (2013), who argues that the method of investigation cannot be a determinant for a researcher to find the nature of what it is that she or he wants to investigate. The reason for this argument is that every researcher should be open to the fact that any object of human enquiry is expected to be either of two things. It may admit of one’s chosen method of investigation, or it may not (Majeed, 2013). It is certainly not the researcher’s argument that the existence of a thing is only independent on its being as an object of investigation, but it also depends on a selected method of investigation.

In account of this argument, this study may reasonably assert that Wiredu’s method or criterion seems to be not admitting of the essential nature of the okra. It is on that realisation that Majeed (2013:6)¹¹⁹ declares that, the “empirical means is not the sole or permanently exhaustive medium for humans to acquire knowledge because there are other credible ways of knowing.” By ‘means to acquire knowledge’, he includes different forms of investigations that encompass both the logical deductions from ‘self-evident propositions’, and paranormal cognition. According to Majeed (2013) and Anthony (1984), proclaiming panpsychism is to bring all beings, even the mutest, whether empirically and metaphysically inclined to some kind of investigation, or not.

Majeed (2013) points this out when he says that, firstly, quasi-physicalists like Wiredu find themselves being coerced to recognise that certain existents like the okra, do not

¹¹⁹ Supra 106

subscribe fully to physical laws. This then raises problems if they regard those laws as the sole arbiter of truth or reality. Secondly, dualists also find themselves in a situation where they have to admit that the spiritual can be physically perceived or perceivable. Therefore, it would be logically creditable to ask why the quasi-physicalist cannot prefer to be quasi-metaphysician, for which then the metaphysician will be considered as some kind of physicalist. It seems that there is not any indication that the two camps of philosophers really classify themselves in this manner as suggested by Majeed (2013). As the Majeed (2013) has provided that argument in mind, he, therefore, considers this a time for presenting suggestions that might guide this study in such critical matters. According to Wiredu (1980; 1983), the 'spirit' (Okra) is believed to be capable of transforming itself into visibility, and be seen by medicine men, although it is not material or concrete.

Under the assumption that this argument is true, resorting to it by scholars such as Saforo Kwame and Kwasi Wiredu who propound that it is quasi-physical, makes their interpretation seem somehow ignorant of the essential quality of spirits. For example, it still remains unclear whether from the infrequent visibility of okra, the quasi-physicalist arguments describe it, or any spirit, only in terms of features manifested on those occasions, or even otherwise. This might be one of the things that triggered a thinker such as Majeed (2013) to suggest that,

With the traditional Akan belief in the potential visibility of spirits, and possibly on multiple occasions, it is only fair to ask what the identity of those spirits are when they have not allegedly revealed or are not revealing themselves to human beings. Are they nonexistent? If they are, how possible is it for nonentities to know when and who to appear, or even reappear, to? How can medicine men, for instance, receive inspiration from, and be able to invoke nonentities in their practices?

For Wiredu, within the basic ideas of the temporal revelation and visibility of certain spirits, as argued for by quasi-physicalists, which is due to the invoking of particular 'spirits' in different cultural contexts, and the existence of such concepts as the 'living-dead', suggests that spirits are considered as always existent. Their existence does not depend on whether they are being felt by humans or not. It would indeed be unacceptable to dispute that at that instance when a 'spirit' is believed to have become manifest, it is most thinkably in quasi-physical. At the end, it becomes thinkable that it can be, least "seen", through the use of whatever means.

However, granting the physicality due to sight alone seems too hasty, and not presenting seriousness to the matter alone does not define the physical. In this study, the argument then is that it is not proper to regard the okra as quasi-physical based only on momentary visibility. Majeed (2013:30)¹²⁰ submits that "whereas a hologram can be described as quasi-physical, the same description cannot be given of okra, because its category of existence does not, by nature, admit of physical attributes." The reason for this argument is that the okra is non-physical by nature, and generally remains so, at least for most of its normal times. Furthermore, in crediting the general belief that 'spirits' do not die at some time like physical human beings do, something more can be added to this. That is, there seems to be a few, if any, strong reasons to reject that a being that becomes quasi-physical would occasionally 'ceteris paribus' return to its original form at any time that quasi-physical manifestation terminates (Perry, 1975; Majeed, 2013). It would seem quite acceptable then to argue that 'spirits' such as the okra are fundamentally nonphysical in nature, even though they are capable of assuming the 'quasi-physical' manifestation. There is a huge difference between the 'essential' nature of spirits, and their capacity, which is the real issue here, to become quasi-physical. For instance, it is argued that the similitude of this can be that of water and ice. Water is, in its essential form, liquid, but under the fulfilment of certain conditions, it has the capacity to turn into ice.

¹²⁰ Supra 106

It seems then that any candidate who would propose that water should be considered as solid or semi-solid merely because of the fact that ice, which water occasionally turns into, is solid, should be critically stopped from continuing with such inadequacy. It is, indeed, inappropriate to pay attention to the occasional actions of transformation, and the many aspects to the extent of forgetting or intentionally ignoring the essential nature of a 'being'. For this study, it seems that the quasi-physicalists such as Wiredu are some forms of disguised physicalists. There seems to be more reasons to agree with Majeed (2013) who argues that Wiredu's claim to allow for things that are not 'absolutely' subject to the laws of physics has some elements of being misleading. On the outset of it, Wiredu's 'quasi-physicalist' claim seems to acknowledge the existence of metaphysical realities in the similar way that many Akan thinkers actually consider the okra to fall within. However, when the quasi-physicalist speaks of something not being "entirely subject to the laws of science", he seems to mean that it is something "which laws of physics thus far do not explain but will possibly be proven by physics in future" (Majeed, 2013). Kwame (2004) one of the confident quasi-physicalists who might be classified as some form of a 'neo-quasi-physicalist', asserts that,

"The modern or contemporary quasi-physicalist does not deny that, as our discovery of the physical laws proceeds and our scientific knowledge increases, we may come to accept some or all the quasi-physical objects as bona fide physical objects. The quasi-physicalism of today may then turn out to be the materialism or physicalism of tomorrow" (in Majeed, 2013:6).

There are all forms of indication in the above quotation that the currently claimed 'quasi-physical' entities would never have been affirmed as real if they were not, at any time, capable of transforming, and be known as physical objects in future. Therefore, Majeed's (2013:7) observation that, "given that all physicalists, quasi or not, already affirm the reality of physical objects, the quasi-physicalist becomes both today's physicalist and tomorrow's physicalist today", sounds quite sensible. This means that as Wiredu (or whoever) is now a physicalist that has the foresight and the ability of knowing what might become physical tomorrow, he thus becomes some form of a 'prophetic being' who keeps

hoping that in the future, his predictions will come true. In this case then that in this study, as it is always the case in any act or promise of prophesy, one would suggest that failure (to be fulfilled) is a necessary possibility to be never ignored.

The basic claim itself that “the Okra is a quasi-physical object” (Wiredu, 1980)¹²¹ is one which, in the mind of quasi-physicalists, would be regarded as physically confirmable on empirical grounds. Otherwise, given that “metaphysics” is objectionable to quasi-physicalists, and the claim not ‘a priori’, one should conceive of no other way in which he/she can claim to know such an object. In this study, therefore, it becomes affirmed that the nature of being physicalist has already begun to show symptoms already; it is not only what will happen in future.

Unlike this study, scholars such as Majeed argue that Wiredu might have used an incorrect method, criterion, or interpretation to end up with the quasi-physical conception of spirits. According to Majeed (2013), it may conclusively be held that the physical standard or criterion of knowledge, with regards to both entities perceived at present or ultimately in the future, is necessarily beneficial to sustain a quasi-physicalist. However, this must not be respectively interpreted to mean that quasi-physicalists like Wiredu would want to be regarded as empiricists. It seems that for being a person that brings to evidence the empirical character of the traditional Akan belief system, Wiredu would prefer to be at least regarded as an ‘empiricalist’, rather than an ‘empiricist’. It should, hereby, be explained that an ‘empiricalist’ would thus be someone who brings to witness something that is believed to exist, like ‘spirits’ (Majeed, 2013). At the same time, it seems that which can be interpreted as defying the “laws of science” in the quasi-physicalists’ scope cannot also be seen as coherent with the Akan conception of the spirit, because supernature remains incapable of being subject to ‘scientific proof’.

¹²¹ Supra 104

My view in this study is that, if quasi-physicalists admit that a spirit is incapable of scientific proof, it will continue to be metaphysical, even in the future, because it is not promising that one day it will yield to proof. That is what bears more problem for the quasi-physical concept of God that Wiredu presents. It is ridiculously doubtful that the spiritual beings will, one day, become subject to the 'physical laws' which the quasi-physicalists like Wiredu suggest. Majeed seems to be correct when he asserts that the tension between metaphysics and science can essentially be seen as tension between the belief in the reality of spiritual entities, and the requirement of scientific proof. Wiredu's quasi-physical concept of God seems to be faced with that tension and attempting to overcome it. The tension between spiritual existence and the requirement of proof is that one of them cannot be expected to collapse into the other. It is, however, possible to have a little bit of both, as found in such experience as the manifestation of the Sunsum (Majeed, 2013). In this case, it seems that it would be beneficial to recognise that the existence of spiritual beings like God, soul, and angels, as held in Akan, and of course, by people of other religions, harms or removes anything from the distinct role of science and its importance. In other words, it can be reasonably granted that even though their interpretations commonly differ, these two, religions and science, share the same concern about human understanding and the interpretation of reality. This study takes Majeed's (2013:7) suggestion that "reality should not be explored from the scientific or metaphysical angle only, but it ought to be understood as "a complex phenomenon that can be grasped from different approaches." This suggestion sounds coherent because the different approaches include the physical, metaphysical, or, rightly so, a combination of both.

Wiredu's notion of quasi-physicality has been acknowledged by Asuquo and Musa (2022) as opening as space for traditional Africans' self-definition. From that perspective, Asuquo and Musa (2022:103) assert that "there must be a way in which Africans retrieve themselves from the West which once colonised them". According to Asuquo and Musa (2022) Wiredu takes decolonisation seriously as one of the ways in which Africans can start to develop themselves as particularly African people. Although Wiredu does not explain quasi-physicality in Akan language but in his dialogue with Kresse, he

acknowledges the importance of language development¹²². In part, Wiredu (2020) acknowledges the definition of African thought as challenging due to diversity of Africans themselves. This study also acknowledges that diversity in African traditions, but this study argues that there can be a point of convergence towards agreeing about a unitary notion of God.

4.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter has been dedicated to examination of the implications of Wiredu's notion of 'quasi-physicality' as a tool to sidestep the philosophical dualism. For Wiredu (1998), the soul or Okra is not absolutely considered as a nonphysical spirit in the African scheme of things. Wiredu (1992) argues that spirits have to assume physical forms before being functional and interacting with other beings in this world. This leaves the question on how the African people think of the spirits' existence as necessarily pure spirits, or if it is the case that Africans do not, at any time, think of pure spirits that are beyond physicality. Well, these matters were carefully discussed in this chapter. It seems that scholars such as Majeed (2013), from the same Akan tradition, seem to disagree with the quasi-physical notion of God that Wiredu presents, with the argument that there is no spiritual or supernatural existence in the African thought system. Nonetheless, if it can be argued that God maintains the hierarchical order of existence, and remains supreme in the hierarchy all the time, there seems to be some sort of compulsion to accept that God is supernatural and remains above the natural limitations. Scholars such as Majeed, Eke and Ekeopara seem to understand this issue as they seem to be highly distancing themselves from Wiredu's conception of God as quasi-physical in the African thought system.

¹²² Polyloque: Forum for intercultural philosophy 2 (2000).

CHAPTER 5: QUASI-PHYSICALITY'S DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS AVOIDANCE OF EXISTENTIAL DUALISM

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to explore the philosophical development brought by Wiredu's avoidance of existential dualism. Wiredu's notion of God as quasi-physical, which considers God as part of nature, tends to be more of natural monism than dualism. It is with this understanding that within this study, natural monism and dualism seemed worthy to be discussed as it is done in Chapter 6. While other African philosophers view God as a supernatural being, Wiredu presents a different perspective that considers God as part of nature. With his notion of God, Wiredu (1998) rejects the duality of nature and supernature. This leads to the question of what makes the God to be considered as a supreme being while He/She/It is equally limited by the laws of nature like any other natural being. However, it seems that Wiredu does not want to argue that God is limited by the laws of nature, as he firmly holds on the Tempelsian force thesis which considers God as the forever supreme force than all others in existence.

This chapter is, therefore, intended to highlight the dangers of clearly arguing that God is supernature, while at the same time trying to argue that there might be some benefits in arguing for quasi-physicality as Wiredu does. The argument begins from the point that perhaps there are some benefits in arguing for the quasi-physical concept of God, and not the supernatural one as they did in the Western thought systems, and it proceeds to address the ways in which the argument can be viewed. So far, the noticeable development brought by the quasi-physical notion of God is that it rejects and stands beside the notion of the supernatural notion of God, as it argues that such is the superimposition from the Western philosophy. In other words Wiredu's notion of God is considerably decolonising the African thought.

5.2 DECOLONISATION BROUGHT BY QUASI-PHYSICALITY

Wiredu brings in a different dimension to the discussion on the concept of God through coining the word 'quasi-physicality'. Quasi-physicality, as an explanation of the higher being in the African thought, should bring a better understanding of how the traditional African people always viewed the world and interacted with it. Wiredu's engagement with the African thought to the extent of explaining the conceptual existence of such beings as spirits in African philosophy bears significance for both the Africans, and those who have an interest in Africa. With the colonial forces, Viaene (2020) has noted that the dominant religions anywhere, including in Africa, have always been of the Abrahamic faith or traditions¹²³. The similar thing in these religions, which include Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is that they all have a concept of God as a supreme supernatural being (Cohen, 2020).

The concept of a supernatural being has always been the most common concept of God in the world over the ages. Different scholars such as Eke and Ekeopara (2010) have dedicated their efforts and time towards the defence of this concept both in the West and here in Africa¹²⁴. It is not surprising that the Western scholars' thoughts become dominant in the whole world due to the fact that Westerners had an advantage during the colonial era. p'Bitek (1976) and Bewaji (1998) make it clear that the African people always had a clear understanding of God and spirits before the Westerners came to impose their own unnecessary one. As p'Bitek (1976) narrates on the concept of God held by his tribe, it is

¹²³ Viaene V (2020) "International's, religion and the Congo question: An introduction, 1875 – 1905". Viaene V. Et al (eds). Religion, colonization and decolonization in Congo, 1885 – 1960. Leuven University press. Belgium. In this work Viaene narrates about his findings which entails that one of the important tools which perpetrated colonization was religion. For him religion is one way to legalize oppression of one nations by other nations

¹²⁴ Eke E. C and Ekeopara C. A (2010) "God, divinities and spirits in African traditional religious ontology". *American journal of social and management sciences*. These are some of the African scholars who may be accusable of having been converted to the Western thought and theology by philosophers like p'Bitek and Wiredu

evident that his people would not have taken Christianity with its notion of God if it was not forced onto them.

Perhaps the concepts of colonisation and coloniality should be clarified before going further with this discussion. Colonisation can be defined as a process where a particular country, due to greed for power or the desire to have more global hegemony, forcefully assumes governance of another country (Millet, 2017; Ntshangase, 2021). In addition, the colonising state also sends some agents or settlers who will honestly report and monitor all the operations of the colonised state to the governing state, from the adoption of colonial policies, systems, and so on, to the rebellion actions against the colonial rule (Rodney, 2018). Soyinka (2016:6) argues that during the colonial era, it was neither a negotiation nor a discussion on whether the colonised should be even listened to or considered with their ideas; everything was imposed on them. Within that state of understanding, Soyinka (2016:6) says,

“Colonial masters came to Africa with no other agenda except making sure that an African child embraces the Western thoughts as fast as possible. Questioning those ideas and arguing with the Westerners trying to convince them that there is any thought system existing in Africa was either a delay of the process or straightforwardly a waste of time. Rather than learning honestly from the Africans, they deposited their concept of God and demonised our concepts, calling the statues which they saw in our land ‘devils’. Such names that would be repulsive to anyone who hears them”.

Then colonised Africans had no choice but adopting Christianity or any of the Western concepts of God and religion. According to Soyinka (2016), although Christianity or the Western concept of God was not free from indefensibility and logical inconsistencies, the African people had no choice besides adopt or embrace it with its problems. This serves as the reason some Africans now no longer even see themselves reverting to the African concept of God known by their ancestors. It seems that among the philosophical developments brought by Wiredu’s quasi-physicality, it seeks to create some deviation from the colonial concept of the high God or supernatural God. Perhaps with the manifest

of the quasi-physicality concept by Wiredu, some of these Westernised African thinkers will have a chance to search themselves and embrace African-ness with value.

Ben-Jochannan (2021) relates that the notion of God as a supernatural being that created all other beings from nothing has been unquestionably adopted even by some of the African scholars. For Ben-Jochannan, it is deeply unsettling that scholars would follow the Western scholars with their foreign worldview of existence, with less or non-questioning of them. Ben-Jochannan finds it as some form of brainwashing that the African scholars embrace when they happily find themselves following some Western concepts when they seem to be having no clue of their own. Although it is not clear enough whether Ben-Jochannan advocates for a total rejection of the Western philosophy in the African space, it is clear that he rejects the comfort that the Westernised African scholars embrace. On that note, Wiredu becomes relevant as one of those scholars who decisively opted for the non-acceptance of the foreign concepts and worldviews.

Bewaji (1998), Semahj (2000), and Ben-Jochannan (1998) conceive the Western concept of supernature as carelessly delivered, and enforcing its acceptance onto the African people without questioning it as a brutal colonial project. Therefore, in his critical investigations, Wiredu came up with findings that are not only different from the Western thought, but that are totally uprooting, in the African mind, all the Western invasions. The concept of God, spirits, natural, and supernatural has been discussed in the Western philosophy, and it gave rise to many concepts like polytheism, pantheism, monotheism and so forth due to the controversies that come with it. Scholars such as Soayman¹²⁵, Afua¹²⁶, and Leewing had to delve into the use of concepts such as theism, atheism, pantheism, panentheism, animism, and many others in the struggle to address the challenges that come with Western notion of God. Despite having all these viewpoints,

¹²⁵ Soayman W. A (1997) *The African proverb in the 21st century*. University of South Africa press. South Africa.

¹²⁶ Afua Q (2000) *Sacred woman: A guide to healing the feminine body, mind, and spirit*. One world House publishing. New York

Wiredu considered it chiefly important that he comes forth with some other revelations that led him to the concept of quasi-physicality.

One of the revelations from Wiredu's writings is that there is no universal notion of God. With that notion, it is apparent that there are many ways in which God is conceived in different cultures and nations. This study asserts that it is not strange to know that there are different ways of understanding things other than thinking that there is only one. Every viewpoint of any individual is subjectively historicised and experientialised within a particular environment¹²⁷ (Ntshangase, 2015). On that note, it is undoubtedly clear that there is no universal mind in any particular person. In that sense, everyone explains and interprets things according to his/her understanding which is usually based on their history and experiences within a particular environment. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is a need for different philosophers and scholars in general to write their views as understood in their context. Within that perspective, it seems important that Wiredu deemed it better to develop the concept of quasi-physicality in explaining the African concept of God.

Quasi-physicality develops the idea of God because it attempts to explain the link that Africans have with their spirits. Spirits, in this case, refer to the ancestors or spirits of nature that are subordinate to, and always of service to God (Capiberibe, 2018). Terminology seems to play a crucial role in transmitting thoughts and, if that is ignored, the thought might lose context or be totally misrepresented. When Anderson (1991) referred to the spirits with the Western name 'angels', Bewaji (1998) reacted with a clarification that there was never such a term as 'angels' in the African thought. Therefore, the avoidance of the colonial term 'angels' here is due to the fact that in the African thought

¹²⁷ Ntshangase M. X (2015) *A defence of Emanuel Chukwudi Eze's conception of reason*. In this dissertation Ntshangase argues that everyone's view is subjective and it can never be true that there is unencumbered self that can truly produce a universal reason

system, such a word never appeared. Its non-appearance thus makes its use a risk of misrepresenting the real African idea that needs to come clean.

The concept of quasi-physicality seems to have a different dimension than the general view that people have held on to the notion of God and spirits. There also seems to be a way in which this concept brought some value in the discussion of the African thought system. It came up with questioning the presentation of the African thought by scholars who are, in themselves, foreigners in Africa (Agang et al., 2020). This discussion also showed that Africans can, indeed, explain themselves within their own understanding, without embracing what has been deposited by the colonial settlers to them, as Mutua (2003)¹²⁸ talks about it.

5.3 A DUALISTIC APPROACH

Although the idea of God as a supernature that is completely a distinct and aloof from nature has been advanced and buttressed in different arguments, some African philosophers have not taken it seriously. This includes scholars such as Kiwasi Wiredu, Okot p'Bitek, Yusef Ben-Jochannan, Baba Heru Semahj¹²⁹, and Credo Mutua¹³⁰ who are unapologetic about bringing out and reviving the traditional African thoughts. This notion of God as the spiritually supernatural being seems to have been an interpretation of nature's existence in the Western thought, which became forcefully infused into the minds of the African people during the colonial era. Wiredu and other scholars such as p'Bitek and Soyinka, have argued in different platforms that existential duality that entails the dichotomy of nature and supernature is part of the colonial project (Soyinka, 2016). This existential dichotomy that came with uninvited foreigners in Africa is enshrined in the

¹²⁸ Credo Mutua is one of the African elders that is celebrated for being a vessel of knowledge in issues of culture, heritage and African spirituality

¹²⁹ Baba Heru Semahj is one of the Kemetic preachers like Jhutym, Lartey and others that pay serious attention to the issue of Egyptology and African spirituality

¹³⁰ Supra 128

Abrahamic traditions or religions, as Idowu (1973) submits that Christianity became dominant during the colonial era. For Idowu (1973), Soyinka (2016), and Wiredu's arguments, Christianity is one of those foreign colonial elements that have fully diluted the African purity and clarity of thought. The most detestable thing about the Christian metaphysical explanation on the supernatural conception of God is that it comes with some sense of shaming the African spirits. Soyinka (2015; 2016; 2019) explains in some of his lectures, that when the Western missionaries came to talk about angels, they told the Africans that their ancestors were demons.

When the Christian ideology of the West came to Africa, it came as a superpower to overcome any other system of thought, and for Soyinka, that was the worst thing it did for the Africans. This study uses the concept of duality to refer to the understanding of existence as a dichotomy that entails the physical nature and the spiritual supernature. Wiredu seems to perceive some dangers or indefensibility of that viewpoint, which might be the core reason, among others, that made him come forth with the concept of quasi-physicality. Quasi-physicality denies the existential dichotomy, because Wiredu presents an argument for the existence as the hierarchy of forces from God, spirits, humans, animals, to the inanimate objects (Wiredu, 1996). In this sense, Wiredu seems to be arguing towards the concept of God that is more monolithic than dualistic in nature.

It seems that there has always been a need for Africans to express their own interpretations of existence and nature of their thoughts in the world. Thoughts that have singularity or exact similarity would not be much compelling to be all expressed and explored (Ursic, 2018)¹³¹. It is within this understanding that Ursic (2018) considers it good to hear people of different backgrounds expressing their thoughts while being open to critical scrutiny of any other person. Within that purport, it seems that the quasi-physicality notion of God bears some worth, as it calls for the critical examination of the whole African

¹³¹ Ursic M (2018) *Shadows of being: Four philosophical essays*. In this work Ursic argues that if everyone were to be thinking the same, then thoughts would not be interesting at all. For him, it is best that Africans produce their subjective thoughts and Europeans do the same without claiming any universality

thought. Wiredu's concept of God and spirits seems interesting in different ways, and given the era of decolonisation that we live in, it becomes even more exciting. One of the things that make quasi-physicality interesting is that it turns attention to the African thought, and away from the Western notion of a supernatural God. According to Maponga (2019)¹³² a notion of God as supernatural which was pushed into the minds of Africans forcefully and does not necessarily have to be adopted by Africans.

Dualism, as a view proposed and held by the Christians, may be traced from the Aristotelian teachings that entailed dualistic metaphysics (Chimakonam & Ogbonnaya, 2020). According to Golitsis (2022), Aristotle understood existence as of two natures, namely, the physical, and spiritual. From that dichotomy of existence, the Western theologians and metaphysicians coined a deeper understanding of the natural, and the supernatural. For Dewey (in Gutek, 2013) it seems that the Aristotelian philosophers took a little shift from Plato's spiritual monism. A monism that committed a greater evil of neglecting the apparent physical nature that is always in touch with human beings, the natural thinking things then, according to Quarch (2018), is not worth considering. For Dewey¹³³, neglecting the physical nature is evil or non-beneficial in that it appeals more to faith and hopefulness. That very negligence then makes it more unrealistic in relation to the daily lives of human individuals as existential challenges occur within their environment. Faith-based arguments commonly exclude some facts of reality, and are marred with some claims of belief that are seemingly not expected to be accessible to others. In fact, Krause (2017) argues that faith and logical reasoning do not meet because if one adopts faith, then he/she must compromise their logical reason in order to avoid clash. Therefore, Laurence Krause (2002) and other scholars such as Coyne (2015) and Hitchens (2017) argue that faith is a way to either ignore or suspend critical thinking and logic. Nonetheless, it is quite apparent that the supernatural concept of God cannot

¹³² Maponga J (2019) *African spirituality*. This is an idea taken from Joshua Maponga's public talks as he shares his wisdom with different people. He is one of interested scholars in the matters of African spirituality and ethics

¹³³ Dewey J (2013) philosophy of pragmatism in education. In: Gutek G L (ed) *Philosophical, ideological, and philosophical perspectives on education*. In this book, Gerald Gutek compiled the views of different philosophers for the purposes of having their educational perspectives in one book like an anthology

divorce faith-based arguments and claims when it comes to the question of how this supernatural being understands and interacts with the physical natural beings.

5.4 SOME CRITICISMS AGAINST DUALISTIC AFRICAN SCHOLARS

The dichotomy which is sometimes referred to as dualism in this study, is only one step from Platonic monism, and from which natural monism arose. According to Alvarado (2020), Plato, a student of Socrates from Athens, came up with strong arguments for the monolithic metaphysics that entail that everything in existence is true at a non-physical existential level. Taking Platonic philosophy seriously, Alvarado (2020:30) argued that,

For it is true that all physical forms do change, get altered, and cannot be permanent. It is a clear and defensible view that no physical is real in its true sense. The physical existence of things serves as a mere deception that may blind the unwise and unthoughtful to think that it is the completeness and reality, while in fact, there is no such. It is, hitherto, better to hold that the ultimately true existential nature of all beings is mental, spiritual, and non-physical¹³⁴.

Therefore, Wiredu seems to suggest that for Africans, those extremes such as the Platonic monism and naturalistic monism, did not exist at any point. The reason for non-existence of these extremes is that Africans subscribe to the concept of God as a quasi-physical being rather than being purely physical or qua spiritual (Majeed, 2013). Duality is fully undermined by Wiredu's quasi-physical concept of God in the African thought. For Wiredu, scholars that either delve in arguments of Platonic monism or Aristotelian dualism have fallen into discussing the Western thoughts which are totally foreign to the African thought systems. With reference to Bewaji (1998), the argument can be taken further to

¹³⁴ Alvarado J. T (2020) *A metaphysics of Platonic universe and their instantiations: A shadow of universals*. This is one piece of work where Plato's thoughts about the world and its content are discussed as untrue and alterable illusions. When Plato talks about macrocosm, he refers to it as the only unchangeable thing because it is not physical while all physical things are subject to change

clarify that even the language used in the Western world when talking about spirits tends to be different from the African verbatim. Bewaji (1998) makes examples of words such as 'angels' and 'demons', which are also viewed as supernatural and completely nonphysical. It seems that there has always been a series of problems when Western scholars attempt to explain the African notion of God and spirits. In that case, it seems quite difficult to trust the African presentational views that come from the Africanist¹³⁵ scholars.

The African philosopher is different from the Africanist scholar because he/she has a lived experience of what Africans present to the world that includes them and their fellow Africans (Ben-Jochannan, 1998). According to Ben-Jochannan (1998), Africanist philosophers cannot be trusted because in the little that they present, there might be a series of misrepresentations. Misrepresentations may sometimes be due to two reasons. Firstly, a scholar may simply choose to misrepresent the African thought due to his/her desire to show inferiority of the African thought systems compared to the Western ones (Ben-Jochannan, 1998; Monderson, 2018). This can be done mostly in cases where a colonial scholar has desires to justify colonisation as a necessary move to assist the African people. Secondly, an Africanist scholar may misrepresent the African thoughts due to his/her failure to comprehend them in a way that an African understands them. It is on this note that Monderson (2018: 342) argued as follows:

It is time to shift away for a while from what is commonly called 'universal thought', and be specific to the subjectively ordinary that we are in touch with. It is always better and beneficial to understand that some things are very subjective to some group of people, and may only be profoundly understood by that particular group of people. It is on that backdrop that anyone who wants to honestly present African thoughts must be an African first, and not only be interested or be a self-declared African.

¹³⁵ In this study, Africanist scholars are those who come from the West to study African thought with the aim of reporting back to the West such as Tempels, Rattray, and others. Those are the ones that can be doubted, and their ideas/ interpretations be questioned.

This narrative is due to the fact that some thoughts demand experience for them to be correctly interpreted (Brown, 2004). It is due to those personal limitations that an African philosopher carries more weight in terms of reliability than an Africanist philosopher does. In other words, whenever one wants to purely know the African thoughts, it is advisable to opt for an African scholar than the Africanist scholars.

Among other things that created the idea of duality in the African thought was the invasion of the African thought by the Western scholars who came and became very cunning in forcing their ideas onto the African people. Ratele (2019) argues that when the African thought was pure and undiluted, there was no idea of duality of spiritual, nonphysical supernature, and physical nature. Chazvemba (2022) further argues that Africans always lived and explained things in a very unitary manner which excludes unnecessary division between spiritual existence and physical existence. Along this line of thought, Chazvemba (2022:89) argues as follows:

“When Westerners came with their theology that includes fairy stuff like angels and demons, they made sure that Africans will not rest until they have adopted Christianity, Judaism, or any of the Western religions. In the process, as that whole thought and cultural invasion was happening, some Africans lost their Africanness and became confused in thoughts. Even the worship of God in Africa was not an event thing that is done in churches and synagogues, but it was an everyday thing in which people knew God in different ways. Therefore, in the African thought, this idea and belief in the supernatural God who is beyond the skies is both strange and foreign. If one wants to see its strangeness, look at how much hatred and wars it has created; this idea of a spiritual and supernatural God perpetrates religions that separate people, while African spirituality unites people”¹³⁶.

¹³⁶ Chazvemba R (2022) *Kemet awakening: A resurgence of African thought*. P 89. This is one of the works that is dedicated to the talk of African spirituality as the works of Semahj, Jhutym, Lartey, Ben-Jochannan and many Kemetic scholars who argue that in African spirituality knowledge is paramount than faith

Both Ratele (2019) and Chazvemba (2022) are not only critics of the adoption of the Western thought by African scholars, but they also have serious issues with scholars who adopt those thoughts at the expense of the African thought. For them, the Western thought can be studied in order to be known and understood with its problems as a matter of knowing what others think, but not to be adopted by Africans. The main problem with the unquestioned adoption of the foreign thought, according to Lanfranchi (2022), is that Africans end up facing philosophical problems that are not their own, while at the same time, they are much drifting afar from their own thought and its problems. For Lanfranchi (2022: 157), the argument against the Westernised African scholars with regards to the concept of God is as follows:

In Africa, people always knew God in a way that unites them than dividing them into some small sects called religions. But when the Western settlers came with their bibles and religions, African people got compelled to adopt the notion of God that is aloof from them. At that point, African people became godless as God became a supernatural spirit that stays far from them and somehow has no interaction with them in any way. From that perspective, it becomes clear to all those who are observant that the concept of God in the African thought is not a new thing, but this of the supernatural God of the West is the new one. It is then a mandatory exercise that African philosophers scrutinise and thread carefully over the conceptions of those who are more inclined towards the acceptance of the western models of thought.

In reading such thoughts from the African scholars, there seems to be a sense in which it is believed that these African scholars who write Christian views in African philosophy are looked at with disdain. In a clear sense, for the concept of God as a spiritual supernatural being to hold as an African concept, it would need to have come from the African philosophers who have not been influenced by the colonial confusions of different kinds. At the end, it can be concluded that the supernatural concept of God, which originates from the West, arouses some discomfort when adopted by African scholars. This,

therefore, leads to the investigation of some possible reasons that may account for Wiredu's quasi-physical concept of God in the next section.

5.5 CRUCIAL REASONS FOR QUASI-PHYSICALITY

Quasi-physicality happens to be crucial in this work because its aim is to critically investigate the concept of God in the African thought system. This work is within the scope of journeying away from the colonial worldview towards the Afrocentric views. Wiredu uses the concept of quasi-physicality as an attempt to interpret the African understanding of their Africanness, and their relation to God and spirits. The African system of thought seems to be drawing from both physics and metaphysics. Quasi-physicality is an explanatory concept of God who has been explained as supernatural in relation to that contrast to nature. Therefore, the most valuable that Wiredu brings is that for an African, there has never been a disconnection nor disjoint between the two realms of existence. Bewaji (1998) puts it clearer in his writings that there were never such words as 'angels' and 'demons' in the African thought. From that view, it is apparent that it is the duty of the African philosophers to present explanations of the African thoughts as they are understood by Africans within their Africanness¹³⁷. The concept of quasi-physicality reveals a crucial idea that Africans always had a clear understanding of the supreme being (Soyinka, 2019).

The mystery of God's existence arises when a quasi-physicalist thinker explains God's highness above all other existing beings in the hierarchy of forces. This becomes mysterious due to the fact that it is known that the nature of the physical or natural beings' changes (Judson, 1994), and if God's existence is intertwined with nature as spatio-temporal totality, God might change as well. Furthermore, a being that is natural or within

¹³⁷ Soyinka W (2019) How to define good and evil. This is a talk where Wole Soyinka was enlightening the Western scholars that Africans always knew about God, and the only thing that western colonial scholars did best was to demonize the African beliefs and point devils in them

nature should change and be limited by the governing laws of nature. In the case where God changes and becomes governed by the laws of nature, it thus becomes unclear what makes “He/She/It” remain the supreme existent above all other beings in existence. Perhaps it is within the centre of these difficulties that a Greek philosopher, Aristotle, had to speak of the “unmoved mover”, “unaltered changer”, and other terms that he used to explain the supreme being (macrocosm) (Judson, 1994). Speaking of God in such terms did not create any problem for Aristotle because he was a spiritual monist who believed, like Lao Tzu¹³⁸, that the true existence cannot be physical. For Aristotle and Lao Tzu, the physical is so much limited such that it can never be truly existing without any limitation. Therefore, these two thinkers argue that since God is the first true existent from which all existing beings came from, He/She/It must be non-physical in order to sustain the status of being the supreme being.

When Wiredu seemingly overcame the issue of dualism imposed by the Western thought, he faced a different problem of how the whole existence came into being. Wiredu (1996) argued that God existed with a raw material which “It” then arranged into some formation that we now see in the world. However, for any thinker to take this idea seriously, it becomes a compulsory prerequisite to assume that by the time God started to exist, “He/She/It” came at once with all other things. Quasi-physicality seems to necessitate a thought that God must have existed at the same time with raw material, for which “It” then, at some time, decided to fashion all of it into forms. This further explains that the same God considered it necessary that “He/She/It” locates “Itself” in a higher rank above all other existing beings. When Wiredu (1996) adopts Tempel’s force thesis, he argues that for an African, the whole existence is the range of forces starting from the higher one (God), humans, animals, to the abiotic objects. Nevertheless, with his profound arguments on the force thesis, the question of what suspends every existing being in its position or rank of forces remains unexplained.

¹³⁸ Lao Tzu is also known as Mozi in the Chinese philosophy and was one of the illustrious spiritual gurus. In his book “Tao Te Ching” he deeply argues that Tao cannot be physical and known. His arguments complement Platonic ones in a sense that they both talk of the supreme being as nonphysical/ spiritual supernature

Quasi-physicality plays a huge role in simplifying the relationship between God and other existing beings, which include human beings. Although it does well in soliciting that aspect, it, however, fails to explain the essence of God as an existing being. It seems that when one investigates deeper the concept of quasi-physicality, it shifts more towards natural monism. To a charitable degree, it arguably supports a panentheistic view which posits that the most important part to be thought about is the natural or physical one, besides the spiritual or supernatural one. Therefore, to some extent, quasi-physicality seems to gravely disregard metaphysical views or notions on the African thought. Since quasi-physicality denies the supernatural concept of God as a Western colonial concept, or even an interpolation into the African thought, it thus remains without any aspect of creationism. Within the concept of quasi-physicality, there seems to be no place for God to be viewed as a creator. It seems that Wiredu left out the concept 'creator' because it leads to the notion of the 'supernatural' God. According to Ra¹³⁹ (2016), creationism is the notion that God, as a supernatural being, pre-existed all the existing beings, and He/She/It is the one that brought the whole nature into existence. Wiredu's (1996) argument, supported by the Tempelsian force thesis, seems to bypass the argument of creationists by forthright saying that God existed with raw material from the beginning. The raw material which "He/ She/It" arranged formatted and fashioned into the hierarchy of forces as they exist till now. It, therefore, seems clear that quasi-physicality evades the creationist argument right on the onset, and it takes a detour through the Tempelsian force thesis.

While engaging in the debate about the traditional African notion of God, Attoe (2022:90) argues that God is perceived by most metaphysicians as the author and the sustainer of the universe. Although this view is supported by other scholars like Wiredu (1998) and Nkulu-N'sengha (in Asante and Mazama, 2009), and some who argue that God is supernatural, this study does not consider this view to strictly project a supernatural idea of God. Wiredu (1998) cites Tempels force thesis but come up with a quasi-physical notion of God which this study critiques with a different goal of seeking a unitary African notion

¹³⁹ Ra A (2016) *Foundational falsehoods of creationism*. Pitchstone publishing. North Carolina. This is the work from the leader of **Atheists International** based in the U.S. An organization of atheists like Lawrence Krause, Daniel Dennet, Sam Harris and many others

of God. Within the thought of a unitary notion of God, Attoe (2022:90) talks about a pantheistic approach to the notion of God, and he argues that many African philosophers personify God in order to attribute rationality to him/her/it. On that regard, Metz (2023) is guilty of the same efforts of personifying God as he seeks the meaning of life from God's authorship. This study chose to use 'It' as the pronoun for God in order to avoid the suspicion that the traditional African notion of God aligns with the biblical idea of "father" God. Metz (2017) enters the discussion about traditional notion of God which comes out clear in his 2023 article¹⁴⁰ as he seeks the meaning of life in the world. Then Metz (2023) argues that the search for meaning in life reaches the transcendent being which transcends all life forms in the cosmos. However, this study sees Metz (2023) as supportive of Temep's force thesis which makes him (Metz) be similar to Wiredu. Metz (2023) seems to reiterate his 2017 article wherein he argues that nature's purpose is to exist in harmony as per the design of the Supreme Being. What Metz (2023) still does not explain is why harmony is important for God, besides his/her/its legitimisation in the world.

At this point, this study has examined the notion of quasi-physicalism from the traditional Akan perspective of thought. It is worth to pay attention to the arguments of scholars of physicalism such as Wiredu, being the first and a staunch one, Sarpong (1974), and Kwame (2004). Reading them closely provides logical reasons to argue for the case that considering the okra as quasi-physical, and in a way, denying the spiritual nature of it, does not have sufficient basis to be convincing. This study puts it blatantly clear that the very nature of the Okra seems more spiritual than physical or quasi-physical. Therefore, this study sustains that to the understanding of the Akan cosmology and person, which are both not completely 'physical', God remains creditably relevant. This is what Majeed (2013) meant when he claimed that the Akan expression "sunsum mu nsem and sunsum mu ahintasem" translates respectively as "matters of the spiritual realm," and "the secrets or mysteries of the spiritual realm"¹⁴¹. He further explains that the first part of this saying refers to questions concerning the metaphysical, while the latter is generally used in

¹⁴⁰ Metz, T (2017) *Meaning in life*. Palgrave Macmillan. UK. Pp 353-370

¹⁴¹ Supra 106

connection with the mysterious nature of the objects and events taking place in the metaphysical realm. As far as this traditional thought of the Akan is concerned, there seems to be evidence for the Akan belief from the existence of a spiritual realm in both parts of the idiom, or the aforementioned saying. Furthermore, it would be better to bear in mind that in the Akan belief, the 'onipa' (human) has a 'sunsum' (spirit), for which by the "sunsum mu nsem", She/He remains not excluded in the entirety of existence. It may be observed that some intrinsic discrepancies in quasi-physicalism resulted from inability to advocate for it in the traditional Akan thought.

In general, it seems quite unacceptable to argue that the spirit part of a human being eats or drinks like the physical body. Therefore, the arguments that the soul requires such nourishment has to be symbolic and not necessarily physical as Wiredu advances. It is in that understanding that Majeed (2013) seems more relevant, and painstakingly provides a sensible argument against Wiredu. It is possible in any tradition to have some figurative references to some occurrences, which can be hermeneutically explained by those who know the tradition better. The surprising thing here is that Wiredu is using such references to support the argument that is unlikely to have even been the case. It is quite unclear why the African thought would hold some things as spiritual, while at the same time, arguing for such things to be considered physical. In a sense, although one may argue that quasi-physicality does well as the only way to avoid duality while talking about spiritual existence and physical existence, there occurs special problems as someone delves deeper into the issue. In other words, quasi-physicality arguments either diversify the problem of duality, or further complicate the explanation of God's existence in the African thought.

If the thinkers from the same tradition disagree about the same conception, there should be a major problem with the concept of quasi-physicality, even though the objective seems clear. This begs the original question of whether it is necessary to avoid the existential duality of the nonphysical spirit and physical nature of existence in the African thought, or not. This is due to the understanding that there seems to be a sense in which

Wiredu seeks to avoid existential duality at all costs to the extent of not worrying about defensibility of his claims. Within charitable limits, it is thinkable that there would be some gains in avoiding duality, as Wiredu seems to be doing. However, physical monism seems to be directly assimilating and imposing empiricism upon the African thought without any clear reason. Although it might be the case that some aspects of the African thought have never been thoroughly dealt with, there is some level of justice that thinkers owe to the task of dealing with those aspects without utterly damaging the original notions. Since it seems indefensible to argue that the spirit refers to the same entity that Africans also refer to as physical, one can argue that Africans are capable of differentiating between the spiritual and physical realms.

It seems that the Akan thought system conceives of spiritual existence, and this study perceives no legitimate reason to deny that. It may, therefore, be argued that the medical men's capacity to "see" the sunsum due to their spiritual powers does not, in any way, negate the notion that the sunsum is essentially a 'spirit'. The arguments of quasi-physicalists such as Wiredu who claims that there is nothing completely spiritual in the Akan thought, are quite indefensible. In any case, it is surprising how the quasi-physicalist would deny the 'reality' of the spiritual realm but would approve or adopt the claim of a possible perception of the sunsum by the medicine men, whose capacities were, in the first place, developed by spiritual means. According to Majeed (2013), the spirituality of any being suggests that it cannot accept and eat offerings, as the quasi-physicalist suggests. Although, the sunsum might be spoken of in personal terms, Wiredu's argument of the idea that it is a person's "duplicate" has been found indefensible because of the complete nonexistence of any references to parts of the spirit in the Akan language (Majeed, 2013). This study, therefore, submits that quasi-physicalism does not sound convincing in such areas of the Akan thought as discussed in this chapter. In other words, Wiredu's argument that the African concept of God is quasi-physical can be considered as merely being a ploy to sidestep existential duality. However, the efforts to sidestep existential duality in the African thought amounts to the denial of metaphysics in the African thought which then, by extension, seems to suggest some agreement with

scholars such as Hume in arguing that Africans cannot reach the metaphysical level of reasoning. This has been discussed by scholars like Chukwunyere, Ben-Jochannan, Larney, and many others, considering other people as a mentally weak race amounts to racism.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter examined the implications of Wiredu's avoidance of dualism. Dualism, as discussed in this chapter, has been understood as the view that there are two realms of existence that include the supernatural, and the natural. Arguments raised by Wiredu's notion of God that regards God as part of nature tends to be more of natural monism than dualism as discussed in this chapter. While other African philosophers view God as a supernatural being, Wiredu presents a different notion that considers God as part of nature. Therefore, this chapter expressed concern about Wiredu's quasi-physicality which deeply seems to embrace natural monism, and even raises political issues. With his notion of God, Wiredu (1998) rejects the duality of nature and supernature. Hence, he seems to somehow embrace Hume's view that Africans lack the relations of thought that serve as enablers towards deeper philosophical thinking. Wiredu's notion of God as quasi-physical leads to the question of what makes the God of an African be referred to as a supreme being while He/She/It is equally limited by the laws of nature like any other natural being. However, the depth of the contestation here is that, if God is quasi-physical (inclined towards naturality), then it would either mean that He/She/It is limited by the natural laws, at least for that time when He/She/It is material. At the same time, the concept of God as supernatural suggests the possibility of God as operating outside the interference or limitations of natural laws. Therefore, the argument seems to be hanging in between quasi-physicality as inclined towards material naturalism, and the supernatural conception of God as inclined towards spirituality and physics, from which existential dualism originates.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUDING REMARKS AND JUSTIFICATION OF A SUPER-NATURAL CONCEPTION OF GOD

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Natural monism, as defined by Guardiano (2017), is the phenomenon which holds that existence is only natural, and there is nothing otherwise than being natural. At the same time, according to Mutubwa (2019), monism simply refers to a situation where scholars argue for one kind of existence, whether natural or supernatural, which seems to suggest that there are scholars that see the world as strictly black or white. This view somehow accommodates scholars such as Wiredu with his quasi-physical concept of God in the African thought, as he seems to have a sense in which he seeks to sidestep dualism. Dualism, according to Maung (2019), is the notion that existence is of two kinds: one being the supernatural existence, while the other is the natural existence. In this chapter, these views are examined on the extent to which they seem to address the argument either for or against Wiredu's notion of the quasi-physical notion of God in the African thought system. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, quasi-physicality seems to be more inclined towards natural monism, as it argues that the so-called supernature is, in fact, part of nature. It is critical to view God as part of nature, without agreeing that He/She/It is bound within natural limitations. For the purposes of a reflective understanding, this study is not biased towards any view, whether natural monism, or dualism, but the idea is to find rational arguments for both camps.

6.2 NATURAL MONISM AS OPPOSED TO DUALISM

Wiredu seems to have understood the problems that come with the notion of a supernatural God, and he thought it wise to avoid it. In doing that, he then coined the notion of 'quasi-physicality' which somehow advocates for natural monism. Natural

monism refers to the idea that the whole of existence is viewed as nature, and completely natural other than being anything else (Gadalla, 2016; Mendie, 2017). Monists are of two types; first, there are spiritual monists which can also be referred to as Platonic monists, and second, there exists natural monists [Empiricists]¹⁴² (Ra, 2016). Spiritual monists consider the entirety of existence to be spiritual rather than being anything else. In Wiredu's views, spiritual monists seem to be purely metaphysicians in that they only delve on matters of spiritual existence as the only reality, or at least the only reality that can grant a full explanation of existence. As Plato (in Gutek, 2013) believed that the physical existence is alterable and not real, spiritual monists also hold that the only thing to be considered real is only that which is spiritual and operating beyond physical realm. In the notion of God, a spiritual monist would emphasise that there is no way God would be natural or physical, because by so doing, 'It' would lose 'Its' true existential condition. This study regards Platonic or spiritual monists as fully fledged philosophical adversaries of Wiredu, because while Wiredu argues for all existents to have that physical naturalness, Platonists use the ideas of macrocosm and microcosm (Gutek, 2013). Macrocosm refers to the idea of a universal intelligence that is nonphysical, universal, eternal, and unchanging, while microcosm refers to the idea that human beings are smaller pieces that come from some form of unity with macrocosm (Gutek, 2013). Therefore, for the Platonic monists¹⁴³, being physical comes with a myriad of limitations that include alterability, non-universality, mortality, and others that temper with omnipotence.

It seems that since God or macrocosm is the truest reality of all existing realities, He/She/It can only be spiritual and supernatural. Furthermore, spiritual monists use the concept of microcosm to argue that even that which naturally exists as a physical matter has, at core, some spiritual component that forms its existential reality. Their metaphysical understanding of existence entails that the existence of the world is only real, if viewed as something nonphysical, which has always existed, and still shall exist as it is. This view directly stands contrary to Wiredu's, that nature and physical reality is the most vital thing.

¹⁴² Supra 138

¹⁴³ Supra 133

For Wiredu (1996), even that which is considered spiritual needs to condense into the physical realm before it could be, in any way, effective in this world. The concept of 'quasi-physicality' is a monolithic understanding of existence in the same way as Platonic monism which serves as one extreme, while physicalism or empiricism is the other. Since it seems to be the fact that spiritual monism is one extreme whose extremism assimilates that of natural monism, there seems to be reasons to hold either of these views. For Platonic monists, it is easy to argue that for God to be always existing as powerful, eternal, and universal, He/She/It must be nonphysical or spiritual, and beyond nature. This is sensible because there is a compelling view that God is considerably the highest force than all other existing forces. Therefore, Wiredu's views seem to be congruent with this point, as he refers to the observations of Placide Tempels' force thesis¹⁴⁴. However, Wiredu seems to disagree with Platonic monists beyond the point of God being the omnipotent or higher power than all other existing powers or forces. As Wiredu notices how indefensible it shall be if he transparently argues that God is purely natural and physical, he thus coins the concept of 'quasi-physicality' which is not, in any way, far from the physicalist monism.

6.3 POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE OF QUASI-PHYSICALITY

At this point in age, African scholars have a serious duty of undoing what the Western colonial scholars did, which was colonising Africa (Sesay, 2022). Although scholars such as Robinson and Heldring (2013) have argued that decolonisation is a scholarly concept that needs a deeper explanation before it can be taken to be a matter of discussion in the public human discourse, this study holds that decolonisation is, by far, a necessary

¹⁴⁴ Force thesis holds that the whole existence in the African thought is made of forces for which God is the higher force above humans, animals, plants, and inanimate objects. So, in that sense existence is hierarchy for which at the top is God.

discourse that cannot be left out in any space. It is within this line of thought that Ocheni and Nwanko (2012:47) argue that,

It is clearly noticeable that during the colonisation era, it was not only the learned that were involved in perpetrating that mission. Therefore, decolonising cannot only be a topic of the learned in Africa. Since colonisation was a paramount discussion in the West, in Africa, as well, it impacted both the learned and the unlearned the same. The argument that the discussion about decolonisation must only be sounded in the university corridors seems not only unfair, but ignorant as well. There is a dire need for decolonisation discussions to reach all spheres of life, and everyone that is involved in any way thinkable.

Taking into account these words, it seems that Wiredu and scholars such as Ben-Jochannan (2021) have not missed the point when they involve the issues of decolonisation into the theological space. This study takes interest in the discussion on the 'quasi-physicality' concept of God in the African thought, as Wiredu presents it as part of engaging in the mission of decolonisation. Colonisation, by definition, would mean any form of one state or group of people forcefully and greedily taking charge of other people, not only politically, but also in any sphere of their lives (Sterwart et al., 2022). Ben-Jochannan (2021:19) argues that the African people had to learn the theology of the Western people that has absolutely nothing to do with them. Ben-Jochannan's (2021:19) argument is that,

"A horrible situation whereby the African people get to learn the theology of the white man, and be demanded to understand it as the white man is quite one of those things that do not need forgiveness, but undoing. It is noticeable that in Africa now, there are black theologians with no black theology, and that makes one wonder why the black theologians exist at all if they spread theology that is not of their own. This wonder and other wonders like it make it more necessary to question the status of decolonisation and the embrace of the African[ness] by the African people. As this issue impacts both the learned and the unlearned,

there is a need to not leave anyone out unenlightened, the discussion's subject matter of spirituality includes all people than only the elite"¹⁴⁵.

As a scholar, Ben-Jochannan (2021) acknowledges that academics can be seen as the elite since they are regarded as more knowledgeable than the ordinary people, but at the same time, he argues that singling academics out as the worthy to decolonise might be unfair. This view suggests that liberation struggle must be for all people, and not be reserved for some elite class of people.

Within the same spirit of involving all people in the decolonisation struggle, this study holds that inclusivity of all people in terms of language is important. Therefore, the critique of Wiredu's methodology in Chapter 2 becomes more concerning, and worth a review because if the methodology would include both the learned and unlearned, then the African scholars would be doing justice to all the people involved. It is, indeed, a political move that supports the idea that Africans knew less about God and worship to argue that the African people had no churches, synagogues, and temples. Arguing that Africans had no places of worship and considering that to mean that they have no concept of God, ignores that the African concept of God is not locative. To this effect, Kaunda (2020:70-71) argues as follows:

“It was never an issue for Africans to argue and justify where God stays, because God has always been viewed as the omnipotent spirit that dwells all over and with no limitations like human beings. At some point it seems that these Western theologians wanted to specify a certain place where God should abide, and that is never the African perspective. It is somehow a concerning factor that Western theologians that are supposedly enlightened make or adopt such a silly conception of a located God while at the same time arguing that God is a

¹⁴⁵ This is the potent message even in Ben-Jochannan's lectures that are recorded in videos. His argument has always been that there was nothing wrong with the African spirituality, and as such, there was never a need for Christianity in Africa.

supernatural being that is beyond any limitation. The African concept of God acknowledges the non-locative[ness] of God by having no such institutions, as it is a fact that African people deemed it worthy to acknowledge the presence of God wherever they are”¹⁴⁶.

By far, this argument seems to sustain that it is a political idea to support colonization and argue that since Westerners came with the invention of designated places of worship, they had a better concept of God than the African people. In fact, Africans seem to have understood politics as the matter of human beings wanting to exercise power, rather than being a thing that must be implemented, even when discussing matters of the supreme being. Unless one wants to argue that the supernatural being has some interest in the affairs of the world and power exercise, there should be a clear understanding that God is, and remains as was, and shall forever be, regardless of people wanting to demonstrate dominion over others (Charnock, 2020)¹⁴⁷. In that case, the desire of scholars such as Hegel, Hume, and Vico (Pompa, 1990) to argue that the African thought system has no metaphysics should not be accommodated to say that the Western philosophy has always been better than the African philosophy.

The important part of this discussion is that Wiredu seems to present the African system of thought which holds a different notion of God besides the common one known in the Western philosophy and theology. Its difference mysteriously hangs on the acceptance of the view that God is a most vital force above all other (natural) forces. However, Wiredu does not, at any point, bother to explain how is this possible, if God is merely a part of nature. Moreover, the concept of ‘quasi-physicality’ seems to be some sort of an ambush to empiricism or physicalism than anything else. It is, indeed, thinkable that one would argue that the African notion of God has a totally different existential nature to the Western

¹⁴⁶ Kaunda is one of the contributors to the book edited by Bongmba E.K which looks more like a theological anthology of the African people. This book contains contributions from scholars like Amaze, Magesa, and many others.

¹⁴⁷ Charnock Stephen’s book is from a hard-core Christian tradition that believes in the eternal supernatural God that remains supreme regardless of the political status quo. So, the book is rich in arguments about eternity, supernatural existence, theism, atheism, power and afterlife.

one. In fact, it is revolutionary that an African philosopher takes a stance that seeks to decolonise Africa and challenge the extremes of spiritual monists. Nonetheless, Wiredu cunningly does so while being careful not to fall into other extremes that suffer similar problems of indefensibility.

Although there seems to be no particular reason why God should be considered as the higher force than any other in both the African thought and Western thought, this seems to be a vivid point in both thought systems. In his thought that the African thought system is, in some way, different from other thought systems, Wiredu (1998) seems to consider existential dichotomy as unnecessary, and not worthy of pursuit. Existential dichotomy refers to the idea that there must be an existential realm besides this natural and physical one that Africans occupy (Maponga, 2019)¹⁴⁸. Those who believe that there is a supernatural and nonphysical or spiritual existence seem to be suffering from some sort of paramount love of existential dichotomy which Wiredu does not want to delve into. Wiredu's argument highlights the thinking that in the African thought, there is an emphasis of the 'natural existence' above all other things (Majeed, 2013).

The existence of nature is quite noticeable throughout Wiredu's thoughts as he even takes Okot p'Bitek's (1976) argument, saying that the idea of the supernatural God came with the Christian colonial West. It comes clearer in p'Bitek's thoughts as it does in the thoughts of Mutua (2003)¹⁴⁹ that the idea of the supernatural God or Christianity came with the Western settlers, and there is no way it would have originated from the Africans. Although Wiredu agrees with the Tempelsian force thesis which holds that God has always been considered as the higher force above all forces, he sustains that God was never thought of as existing in another realm. This is totally contrary to the idea that since there is this natural and physical world, there should be another one of opposite nature where God then rightly exists. On one hand, Wiredu's perspective completely undermines both the

¹⁴⁸ Supra 132

¹⁴⁹ Supra 128

idea of existential dichotomy, and its importance. On the other hand, for the Platonic monists, the existential dichotomy seems to be very important for the defence of God's permanence and omnipotence above all existents (Lugira, 2009; Mligo, 2013). With Wiredu's rejection of existential dichotomy of nature and supernature, there seems to be some sort of difficulty in arguing for the eternal superiority God above all the existing forces within nature.

In some way Wiredu's notion of God in the African thought reveals that African thinkers have never thought beyond nature, or the physical realm of nature. This explains what is meant by natural monism and puts an emphasis on purely natural existence that excludes the supernatural or spiritual existence. The naturalistic notion of God, as it is clear in Wiredu's philosophy, undermines the Africans' engagement and delving into strictly metaphysical thoughts. It is quite understandable that Africans never bothered thinking and talking about ideas such as heaven and hell, but it does not come clear that they never thought of the other realm of existence in which the existence of supernature could be imagined. In other words, it seems that Wiredu decisively chose to engage and emphasise the thought that it is not only the case that Africans never thought of supernatural or spiritual existence. However, the supernatural existence has never had any importance in the African thought system. Together with this view, the existential dichotomy becomes a mere unnecessary.

The concept of 'quasi-physicality' seems to deeply emphasise that everything in existence is natural, and operationally physical and not spiritual. When Wiredu (1996) argues for the Templesian force thesis, which talks of existence as a natural hierarchy of forces that include God as a higher force above all in the hierarchy, he seems to imply that God might be subject to the laws of nature. The laws of nature involve physicality, changeability, and temporariness, as he even says that nature and God are "spatio-temporality of existence" (Wiredu, 1996:30). In that sense, Wiredu seems to reject the idea that God is omnipotent, eternal, and unchanging, because once God becomes subject to natural laws, 'It' can no longer sustain these qualities. Furthermore, if God is subject to the laws of nature, it becomes apparent that God is less powerful than nature. By its implication, having God

subject to natural laws somehow indicates that nature is highly powerful to the extent that it even dictates on the existential state of God. That is to say that Wiredu's 'quasi-physicality' seems to be strictly advocating for a natural or physical monism than anything that ever existed. In this study, this view becomes favourable because Wiredu's arguments seem to be laden with suggestions some kind of rebellion against the metaphysical views (Adegbindin, 2017). Wiredu seemingly holds the view that metaphysicians delve into issues that are not linked with the knowable or known reality in the actual existence. In that very manner, Wiredu's philosophy resembles the views of John Dewey (in Gutek, 2013)¹⁵⁰ who strongly believed and argued that reality is a tentative experience that people live and interact with (Gutek, 2013). For Dewey (in Gutek, 2013), anything that does not seem to have a feature in a physically natural and lived experience should not be taken serious to the extent that people have to bother about it.

In the views of Wiredu, it undeniably seems that there are many notions of God that exist in the world, and the African notion of God happens to be one of them. Wiredu makes it apparent that 'quasi-physicality' is a concept that is coined necessarily to express the African understanding of spirits, including God. It is thus clear that he reveals the idea that the being called God has been viewed differently in different parts of the world to the extent that God has turned to be like many existing entities. Bewaji (1998) makes it clear that the issue of spirits has different presentations and understandings to the extent that it always takes the nature of the one presenting it at that time and space. Within this line of argumentation, Ben-Jochannan elsewhere argued, with reference that Europeans with their Christianity have forced their notion of spirits and God onto Africans such that they can be accused of spiritual colonisation. According to Soyinka (2015), that would be to say that Western thinkers/ missionaries brought a foreign notion of God with a religion which they forced into or imposed upon the African thought system as the most real one¹⁵¹. The Western Christian conception of God is that which poses a dichotomy of existence as nature and the supernatural, and Wiredu considers that to be profoundly

¹⁵⁰ Supra 133

¹⁵¹ Supra 136

problematic than being praiseworthy. Therefore, Soyinka (2015) considers it significant for the African philosophers to discuss their (African) notion of God in the public domain of philosophical discourse.

6.4 THE CORE SIGNIFICANCE OF QUASI-PHYSICALITY

Having respectfully noted all the contributions by different scholars of the East, West and African origin, there is a need to explore the significance of Wiredu's notion of the quasi-physical notion of God in the African thought. Although Wiredu agrees with the Western scholars like Hegel and Kant who argue that African thought system has no metaphysics there is however a reservation that quasi-physical notion of God has some significance. This study agrees to the view that quasi-physicality is sensible since it seems to support the notion that Africans are natural monists, that cannot perceive the supernatural notion of God like the Western scholars. If, at all, one would argue that quasi-physicality successfully suggests that the African thought system entails only empiricism and natural monism, that would need to be corrected. In fact, the claim that the African thought is devoid of metaphysics was argued by Western scholars who wanted to justify colonisation of Africa. Hence it is so surprising that Wiredu argues his case with evidence taken from their works. Betty (2014) argues that if all people may argue that there is a realm of existence besides this physical world, there seems to be a sense in which they believe in the metaphysical point of view or existence. It would, then, be somehow unfair to argue that the African thought lacks in that level, while Africans seem to have a lot of the nonphysical stuff in existence. It is a problem in both the Western and African philosophy to establish a relationship between these realms of existence for which one is purely supernatural, while the other is purely natural.

Although one may argue that Wiredu invented the quasi-physicality notion of God since he seems to have issues with the Western concept of the supernatural and spiritual concept of God, there seems to be some significance in his quasi-physicality argument.

It is true that someone may have a philosophical concept that he cannot successfully and skillfully articulate in the traditional language of the African people, and this seems to have also been the case in Wiredu's case, as argued in Chapter 2. However, this study does not condemn the whole thought of quasi-physicality to be worthless since it has been expressed in English rather than the Akan language, because there is a possibility that the one who expresses it has better English oracy than the Akan. Silvera (2015:4) explains the situation of a necessity to express thoughts in English than the home language, stating that,

For many people in different parts of the world, English has totally replaced the mother-tongue to such an extent that it would be a mistake to look at a person and directly diagnose what they speak fluently. With the overspread of the English language, some people can only express themselves better in English, regardless of where they come from or where they live. It is for that reason that one should not be silenced because he or she chooses to express his/her ideas in English than what might be his/her mother-tongue. This is due to the fact that every thought can be expressed by any person in their choice of language, because language itself might be just a tool to convey thought without being necessarily being part of message¹⁵².

Taking this understanding into consideration, and reading Wiredu's argument respectfully can only be questionable, but not rendering his usage of English in arguing an escape from the real Akan thought. The issue of using English and showing no effort to coin the equivalent concepts in the Akan language only becomes questionable because of argumentative methodology. Using English which, at first, was used by the colonial agents to misrepresent the African thought seems somehow excluding those ordinary people who are being represented. To emphasise the argument that using English or any foreign

¹⁵² Silvera A (2015) *More happy than not (Deluxe edition)* is a novel that is concerned with how English language can be easily learned and seem to be having easier expressions than some languages. Silvera as an English teacher and author explains how some people feel better in expressing themselves in English than their home language.

language may risk misrepresenting the very people that the researcher wants to present, Posel and Zellow (2011:1) argues as follows:

For it is a noticeable fact that some concepts are not easily interpretable in a direct manner to English language, one must take a special care when translating some issues. Among all, those that are relating traditional thoughts seem to be somehow profound to the level that they have no equivalents in the English language. In fact, even English itself has some words or concepts that cannot easily find equivalents in other languages, in which case translation becomes necessarily difficult. Therefore, it is important that one acknowledges this difficulty before it can lead to some misrepresentations of what someone needs to present in his or her academic thoughts¹⁵³.

The African conception of God as quasi-physical has some credibility given that Africans believe that God created nature to serve him/her in this natural and physical realm of existence. Considering that God has some existential value in nature's existence, this study can then perceive the reason why Wiredu coined the concept of quasi-physicality. Furthermore, taking into account that Africans consider God to be working with some subordinate spirits known as ancestors, it is then befitting to claim that the God of Africans is natural or semi-physical, if not wholly physical. However, that can only be said due to the lack of explanation or interpretations of the interconnectedness of the physical nature with the nonphysical supernature. At this point, this study argues that the concept of quasi-physicality bears some significance in explaining and interpreting the African thought with regards to the existence of God and the spirits. It further bears some level of explanation with regards to the way in which Africans view their actions and rituals pertaining to their existence. For instance, it is one way of understanding actions such as pouring libations, and performing animal sacrifices to the spirits, as those rituals bear some significance in the existence of the African people. The only issue which remains as seriously

¹⁵³ Posel D and Zellow J (2011) *Home language and English language ability in South Africa: Insights from new data*. This is one of studies from the language and interpretation scholars and it also shows the difficulty in directly translating and interpreting other languages into English as this is done in South Africa.

problematic with Wiredu's quasi-physicality that is it argues that God is part of nature, without explaining how is that possible if God will remain the highest in the hierarchy of existence. Therefore, within the concept of quasi-physicality, there seems to be a strong sense of the rejection of metaphysics in the African thought system which might be difficult to accept. To argue that the African system of thought only ends at the physical realm and does not transcend beyond, will be putting untrue limitations.

In the view of this study, what makes African philosophy to be 'African' is purely the fact that it is the philosophy from Africa, as presented by the African people in their own understanding. It is not African philosophy because it should lack or even reject other concepts or perspectives that exist in philosophy. Therefore, although this study considers the concept of quasi-physicality praiseworthy to some extent in interpreting African understanding of God and spirits, there is sufficient evidence that it bears some discomfoting views within it. Those discomfoting views have a potential to attract criticisms which may even misrepresent the African thought system instead of fairly presenting it. This study suggests that the African thought must, as other thoughts anywhere else, be presented as pure as it is in the minds of the African people. Forwarding this point is important because there is a reasonable doubt that any African person thinks that the spirits physically come and drink libation or eat the goat meat during ritual sacrifices. However, in the rejection of the Western conception of God as a supernatural being, this study submits an interpretation of the African notion of God as a 'super-natural' force.

As it becomes two words, 'super' and 'natural', it also changes in meaning, and this serves a particular purpose in this study. A super-natural concept of God entails that God can be viewed as natural only because the nature comes from Him/Her/It. In that case, the word 'super-natural' refers to the status of a being that, by its existence and will, the whole nature came to exist and manifest. This line of argument arises no compulsion to defend the view that God must be within nature, equal to nature, or even be part of nature. The supernatural concept of God leaves it open as interpretations to argue that God is a

supernatural being, natural being, or even a quasi-physical being. In some sense, this view considers and accommodates both the spiritual monists, and natural monists without, in any way, despising one in defence of the other.

This study considers both spiritual monism¹⁵⁴, and natural or physical monism¹⁵⁵ as two sides of the same coin, hence there is an argument for a middle path in which we all can see both sides of the coin without any adversity. In this study, the argument for a middle ground is put forth because there is some discomfort with Wiredu's rejection of metaphysics in the African thought system. There is an arguable but somehow convincing argument in this study which holds that all that exists has its existential coordinate. For instance, for a day to be properly known, well understood, and appreciated, there is a need to transcend to the knowledge of the night as the state beyond the day. Therefore, in that vein, this study deems it proper and fair to argue that whenever there is a serious consideration of physics, there is no way that thinkers will not transcend it and reach the metaphysical realm. Overall, this study argues that any skewed presentation should be seen as somehow, either the means of limiting the depth of African thought, or merely misrepresenting it.

6.5 IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY

This work has explored the African concept of God. Wiredu presents the quasi-physical concept of God from the Akan perspective which has, by far, rejected the notion of God as a pure supernatural spirit. For Wiredu, it is not only the concept of God that has never been supernatural, but all things considered spiritual, such as souls and spirits take physical forms at times. Wiredu argues that the whole nature and God form a 'spatio-temporal totality'. Since Wiredu seems to sidestep the existential duality, and clings on

¹⁵⁴ Spiritual monism is the notion that all truly existing things are spiritual and non-physical

¹⁵⁵ Physical monism is the inverse of spiritual monism

either natural monism or downright physicalism, it remains a matter to be investigated if he argues that there is no metaphysics in the African thought. His argument that African people consider the Tempelsian force thesis as explanation of existence motivates the need to investigate what exactly maintains the order that keeps God on top of the hierarchy over time.

In the attempt to have a unitary African notion of God, with all scholarly arguments considered, in this study, it is argued that God is super-natural¹⁵⁶. This is the argument that the whole nature comes from God or with God, rather than arguing that God is supernatural, a conception that Wiredu rejects. Saying that God is supernatural has a sense in which it sets God above and outside nature, while super-natural simply clarifies that the whole nature comes from or with God. That argument entails that since everything natural came from or with God, then God should be par excellence natural. This view seems to charitably accommodate the different conceptions of God presented by many African philosophers, including that of quasi-physicality or natural monism that Wiredu presents. In addition, in this study, it has become clear that some African scholars have a dire need to express the African views by themselves than hearing them being related by non-African scholars. It is because of that view that this study finds Wiredu's reliance on Tempels' force thesis being problematic and requiring a critical examination in this decoloniality age.

¹⁵⁶ Supra 3

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