

**THE CONCEPT OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN AKAN PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT**

BY

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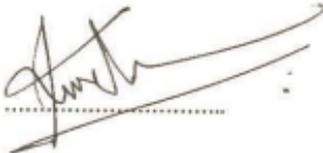
## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is as a result of my effort and ingenuity, with the exception of the references to other works which I have acknowledged. Henceforth, it satisfies the needed conditions required for the award of MPhil degree in philosophy.



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## ABSTRACT

I have made the attempt, in this thesis, to understand the concept of consciousness in Akan metaphysics. The analysis of the concept of consciousness has taken centre stage in most philosophical discussions in ancient and in modern times, but philosophers have failed to agree on the subject due to their own different views on the subject. This is particularly the case in Akan metaphysics where few literary materials exist on the subject.

It is my aim in this thesis to explore the possibility of understanding consciousness as an *amene* (brain) process or as an activity of the *okra* (soul) in Akan metaphysics. With the understanding that a person in Akan conception is composed of not only the *honam* (body), of which the *amene* is part, and *okra* but also the *sunsum*, we shall attempt to also understand consciousness as an activity or a function of the *sunsum*, a component that is not part of what a person is in other conceptions of a person, for instance, in the West.

In addition to the examination of consciousness and ascertaining whether consciousness is a physical or a non-physical or quasi-physical activity in Akan metaphysics, other pertinent notions related to the analysis of consciousness, the metaphysical significance of Akan terms for consciousness and a person (a subject of which consciousness is a feature), will also be discussed. The thesis will also discuss a possible relation between consciousness and personal identity in the context of the Akan belief in life after death. The relevance of this discussion is to inquire if consciousness has any definitive role to play in the determination of a person's identity in Akan metaphysics.



The concept of consciousness seems not only to be a difficult notion to analyze but a complex one as well. This is particularly the case in Akan<sup>1</sup> metaphysics where few literary materials exist on the subject. Despite the difficulty of the concept of consciousness, philosophers from the days of Plato to date have not given up in their quest to adequately understand the concept. Most of these philosophers have developed different and often contradictory views of what consciousness is. Descartes' definition of consciousness as *thought*, a purely non-physical activity,<sup>2</sup> has attracted several criticisms and rebuttals from several philosophers one of whom is Cairn-Smith, who is of the view that consciousness is part and parcel of the material world; hence, a physical activity<sup>3</sup>. In fact, in the Western conception of consciousness, philosophers, especially since Descartes, have worked with an understanding of consciousness which is radically different from the way consciousness is normally understood<sup>4</sup>. It must also be pointed out in this thesis that what consciousness is in Akan metaphysics seems not to have any definitive meaning either, since various Akan writers have understood it differently, often with contradictory views. Though the different views on consciousness provide different perspectives to the understanding of consciousness, these views also have the potential of making it difficult for us to have a brief and a concise understanding of the concept. These varied views on consciousness might give the impression that "the nature of consciousness is a mystery in the sense that it is beyond human powers of theory construction..."<sup>5</sup>. But this, as will be argued later in this thesis, is not the case.

Apart from the difficulties of understanding consciousness, philosophers are at logger-heads on the nature of the aspect of a person responsible for consciousness in Akan metaphysics. There are two well known positions on this subject. On the one hand are philosophers who are of the view that the aspect of a person responsible for consciousness is non-physical. This position is shared by philosophers like Gyekye<sup>6</sup> and Dennett<sup>7</sup>. On the other hand, some philosophers are of the opinion that the aspect of a person responsible for consciousness is physical. Wiredu<sup>8</sup> and Smart<sup>9</sup> also share this position in the Akan and the Western thought respectively. In addition to the analysis of these positions, other possible views of consciousness in Akan metaphysics will also be discussed.

I must state that the amount of literature on consciousness and related concepts in Akan metaphysics are not readily available as compared to the almost unlimited number of volumes in other conceptual systems like West. Nonetheless, the few materials on consciousness in Akan metaphysics have proven to be most relevant in the writing of this thesis. Apart from my general interest in the clarification of consciousness, which is sometimes translated as *anidaho*<sup>10</sup> in Akan, this thesis will offer a new perspective to the understanding of the notion of consciousness in Akan metaphysics.

It must also be stated that the Akan beliefs and proverbs used in this work have been very useful in writing this thesis. It is important for us to note that certain beliefs are held in Akan conception as part and parcel of the Akan metaphysical system, hence cannot be isolated from the set of things held as constituting the Akan worldview. In view of this, a clarification of certain concepts in Akan metaphysics cannot be adequately undertaken outside the context of some of these beliefs. For example, it is not an exaggeration to say that concepts like death,

morality and causation in Akan metaphysics can adequately be understood within the context of beliefs like personal survival (life after death), supernatural reward and punishment, and the existence of God, smaller gods, and other spiritual powers. It is therefore not an aberration to employ some of these beliefs in the analysis of consciousness and other concepts in Akan metaphysics. This, I think, is in fulfillment of one of the core objectives of philosophy; the conceptual analysis of concepts and problems that boarder on human existence, as well as or, in relation to the fundamental values, beliefs, and perceptions that people share or hold about the universe as a whole.

In addition to the pertinent literature analysed in the thesis, I have also given critical attention to proverbs, maxims, oral tradition, and some views of Akan sages as sources of Akan philosophy. The use of these sources in Akan philosophy is justified because they serve as the stock from which the philosophical ideas and concepts of the Akan can be objectively appreciated. The Akan did not develop the skill of writing and preserving their thought in a format which can be read, but this does not mean that they did not also develop concepts and notions about the material and the metaphysical world in which they lived. Such conceptions about their world and the problems or the questions they had about life, death, happiness, freedom, causality and other fundamental problems were preserved in other formats like proverbs, maxims, art works, music and dance and oral traditions. Concerning proverbs, Dzobo noted "...they are a vehicle used by our fathers and mothers to approach, apprehend and recollect reality in their experience"<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, contrary to the perception that some one may have that the Akan has no original philosophy except that which was bequeathed to them by their colonial masters, the analyses of these proverbs and other unwritten sources, sources which pre-date the arrival of their colonial masters, show that the Akan developed a highly sophisticated

and philosophical conceptions about death, God, life after death, immortality, morality, causation, consciousness, reincarnation, truth, knowledge and systems of government. Therefore, whereas written and documented materials serve as sources or evidence for philosophical enquiry in the West, unwritten data serve as the main evidence for philosophical enquiry in Akan thought. One therefore has to subject these unwritten sources to critical scrutiny in order to unearth the philosophical content that some of these sources contain.

It is important to note that both the written and the unwritten sources of philosophy are a legitimate evidence for philosophical enquiry. The major difference according to Jan Vansina is that one is first order evidence and the other is a second order evidence<sup>12</sup>. In most cases, the unwritten evidence precedes the written evidence and thus without the former the latter would not have any credibility as an authentic or acceptable source for philosophical investigations. This is because almost every written data was borne out of some unwritten sources; an observation, a report, a tale or some signs and symbols. Therefore, the direct use of the former, the unwritten evidence, as a source for philosophical enquiry cannot be dismissed as a non-evidence and should not also diminish the credibility given to enquiries that source or use such undocumented evidence as data for philosophical analysis and investigations. Therefore, my reliance on and critical analysis of the proverbs and oral sources for the examination of the concept of consciousness in Akan metaphysics is to allow me have access to the notions, beliefs and conceptions concerning the subject as well as the different ways in which the concept of consciousness has been formulated and understood in Akan thought. This method is very important to anyone who is undertaking a research into concepts that have not been the focus of many writers in Akan philosophy. Besides, it is important to note that the use of proverbs in philosophical discourse is not peculiar to the Akan worldview. A careful study of the *Tractatus*

Logico-Philosophicus will reveal that Wittgenstein relied heavily on aphorisms or short sayings in his philosophical analysis. Therefore, the analysis of some of these proverbs in the understanding of consciousness and other concepts in Akan metaphysics should not be considered as a non-philosophical approach, especially when it is considered that most of the philosophical discussions in Akan metaphysics were, in the absence of literacy, preserved in some of these short sayings<sup>13</sup>.

The arguments advanced above also hold for the use of sages as a source of philosophy or data in the examination of consciousness in Akan thought. The philosophical nature of the views of some of the sages has been pertinent to the discussion of consciousness despite the fact that they are unable to, due to illiteracy, write and document such philosophical views. However, it is important to mention that though none of the sages that I interviewed in the villages have been to school before and have not read the positions of well known Western philosophers like Descartes and J.C.C Smart, they seem to have a parallel conception to the positions that some of these Western philosophers hold. This demonstrates the philosophical perception that these sages have concerning certain concepts in Akan thought and philosophy in general. The inability to write therefore is not the inability to think, conceptualise and formulate a clear and a coherent thought. It is for instance, undeniable the indelible role that Socrates has played in Western philosophy and in philosophy in general. But it is also well known and interesting to note that Socrates never wrote a word of whatever he philosophized about. Most of the works of Socrates are known because Plato took an interest in such discourses and wrote them down. Yet, this has not diminished the status of Socrates as an astute philosopher. The fact is that there are many Akan sages like Socrates whose philosophical views must also be heard, recorded, analysed and published. Therefore, sourcing the views of some of these sages in the examination of

consciousness is not just a means to enrich the philosophical content of this thesis but also to bring to light some of the untapped philosophical positions and conceptions that these sages hold in Akan philosophy.

The thesis will be structured as follows.

## **Chapter One**

We shall examine the metaphysical significance of the various terms for consciousness in Akan worldview. In pursuance of our aim to understand the concept of consciousness, we will analyze the various Akan terms for consciousness in the context of some Akan beliefs and values like life after death, punishment or reward after death, and morality. This will enable us to ascertain whether the various meanings of consciousness implied by the Akan terms are correct or incorrect, and also whether consciousness is a physical or a non-physical or quasi-physical activity in Akan metaphysics.

## **Chapter Two**

This chapter will be devoted to the examination of the Akan concept of a person. An adequate understanding of the concept of a person is linked to the understanding of consciousness in Akan metaphysics. This is because of the fact that consciousness is a feature of a person, and therefore in order to adequately understand consciousness we will also have to understand the nature of that which is the subject of consciousness. Hence in the course of our analysis of what a person is, not only will the attempt be made to clarify the nature, physical or non-physical or quasi-physical, of the various elements that constitute a person, but also efforts will be made to understand what mind is in Akan conceptions.

### **Chapter Three**

Here we shall discuss the concept of consciousness. Having indicated that consciousness is a non-physical activity, we will argue against the view that consciousness is an *amene* (brain) process. Analyzing the view that consciousness is a non-physical activity, we will examine whether it is an activity of the *okra* (soul) or a function of the *sunsum* in Akan metaphysics. The rest of the chapter will be devoted to the examination of a difficulty associated with the discussion of concepts like a person and consciousness, and ascertain whether such a difficulty, the mind-body problem, associated with Cartesian philosophy genuinely arises in Akan metaphysics.

### **Chapter Four**

The chapter will critically look at the relation, if any, between consciousness and personal identity in the context of the belief in personal survival in Akan metaphysics. With an initial discussion of personal identity, the thrust of this chapter will be focused on the analysis of the various theories of personal identity in Akan metaphysics.

### **Chapter Five**

This chapter is the conclusion of the thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

EXAMINING THE METAPHYSICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF AKAN TERMS FOR  
CONSCIOUSNESS

**1.0. Introduction**

The discussion of concepts like body, soul, and consciousness is not a modern phenomenon. These discussions have occupied the attention not only of modern philosophers like Descartes, but also ancient thinkers like Plato<sup>1</sup>. It is not an exaggeration to state that consciousness is a complex notion which is very difficult to define. In the view of Russell<sup>2</sup>, some philosophers conceive of consciousness as consisting in some kind of a relation existing between humans and other things, while others conceive of it as a property of the mental. Such variations in the meaning of the concept of consciousness have been common and more radical especially since Descartes and the philosophers that have come after him<sup>3</sup>. These differences in meaning regarding what consciousness is, as I will show, are also not alien to the Akan conceptual scheme. This will be demonstrated shortly through the analysis of the various words used for consciousness in the Akan language. I will, however, admit that the various meanings of consciousness have contributed to make the concept not only a difficult one to unravel but also a complex one, especially in Akan metaphysics where the concept is usually analyzed in relation to another complex concept, the concept of a person.

Before I delve into the analysis of the various words used in Akan to denote consciousness, I wish to make a very vital comment about the link between language and thought or philosophy. There seems to be no doubt that there is a relationship between language and thought and that the meanings and the understanding that one gets from his or her language, to a very large extent, influence the kinds of concepts one develops about the universe. According to McGinn, "normal human beings are gifted with mind and thought: in particular, they have thoughts which get expressed in speech,"<sup>14</sup> that is, through the language they speak. In trying, therefore, to understand the philosophical works of any philosopher, the language in which such thoughts are expressed cannot be cavalierly set aside. In examining the significance of the various Akan words for consciousness in Akan metaphysics, a considerable appreciation of the Akan language seems to be most relevant to the unambiguous clarification and understanding of consciousness, bearing also in mind that the various Akan thinkers had no other linguistic means to formulate and preserve their philosophical ideas on consciousness except in their own language, the Akan language.

However, it must be noted that the Akan language is not very rich in vocabulary, and because of this some of the words in it have other meanings in addition to their usual meanings. I know that this is not peculiar to the Akan language, even though this fact does not detract from the reality that when it comes to the Akan language as compared to other languages, like English, this seems to be a problem. This is so because there seems to be a lack of words for the description of certain phenomena like 'mental states' in Akan metaphysics. This linguistic deficit appears to have skewed the way the mental realm, as compared to the physical, is understood in Akan metaphysics. That is, while there are a lot of words expressing states of the physical, such explicit or express words referring to the mental (non-physical) seem to be scarce in Akan

language, making philosophical expositions of the mental in Akan metaphysics seem very difficult, if not impossible. Language, as we now know it to be and like any other element of a culture, did not emerge overnight but rather over a period of time through a process of development, hence there is no doubt that the Akan language, as it develops and 'grows', may also come to have more words purely for the description of the mental or the non-physical. Despite this promising hypothesis about language in general and the Akan language in particular, the reality is that there is a scarcity of words referring to the mental in Akan philosophy as compared to other philosophical traditions, like the Western. Nonetheless, in the course of my research an Akan sage mentioned *adwen* (mind) as an example of such a word used to express the mental in Akan metaphysics.

In critically examining the various words for consciousness in Akan metaphysics, I must mention that I have made an attempt not only to grasp their essential meanings as well as their philosophical import, but also to examine how such meanings bear on issues like the understanding of consciousness in Akan metaphysics, the aspect of a person, if any, responsible for consciousness, and the physical or the non-physical or the 'quasi-physical' nature of that aspect responsible for consciousness in Akan metaphysics.

In the course of my research, I came across four Akan words commonly used to refer to consciousness. It must, however, be noted that these words may not be exhaustive of all the words that we can possibly have in the Akan language to mean consciousness. Nonetheless, these four words will be the focus of my analysis in this chapter. The words which came up through research and my interactions with some Akan sages are *anikaŋ*, *anidaho*, *adwen*, and *ahonim*. These words can broadly be grouped into two main categories. The first group

consisting of *anikay*, *amidahō* and *ahonim*, seems to express a 'physicalistic' conception of consciousness, while the second group, which has *adwen* as the only word, appears, on the other hand, to give a non-physical understanding of consciousness. Despite this distinction, there is one thing that all these words have in common: the fact that each of these words, with the exception of *adwen*, consists of either two or more distinct words from their meanings can be appreciated.

It is important to mention that though the meanings of the various terms for consciousness in Akan thought seem to be linked to the analysis of their constituent words, such terms for consciousness, for the Akan, represent a complete thought or a concept and, therefore, are not in the same as idioms or in the category of idioms or some idiomatic expressions. To construe such terms as idioms in Akan worldview is to remove such terms and the thought they express from the category of concepts in Akan metaphysics. Besides, if the term consciousness is a concept, then its equivalent terms in Akan metaphysics are also concepts and not otherwise. The different expressions or wordings of the concept in either the English or Akan language should, therefore, not matter in so far as they both express a parallel concept.

I am of this view because there is the temptation to regard such terms expressing consciousness in Akan metaphysics as idioms merely on the basis that their meanings involve an analysis of their constituent words. But this is a mistake because the concept; consciousness, that these terms portray preceded the words that form them. In other words, the concept of consciousness in Akan metaphysics was not defined or given meaning to by the various words that constitute such term, but rather it is the kind of understanding that the Akan has regarding consciousness or the sense of consciousness in question that informed the choice of terms or

words to bear such understanding. Depending on the sense of consciousness that the Akan is referring to, corresponding terms like *anidahō* or *anikaŋ* or *ahonim* may be used to appropriately reflect the type of consciousness in question. In Western philosophy, the term consciousness is broadly used to represent different senses of conscious states. Fortunately for the Akan, some of these conscious states have particular names; *anidahō*, *anikaŋ*, *ahonim* and *Adwen* in Akan metaphysics. For example, *ahonim* is a term for consciousness and it also depicts a particular sense of consciousness. This is also true for the term *ahonim*.

Unfortunately, these terms are not atomic terms but are made up of different words which also have the physical or parts of the physical as their designate. This as mentioned earlier is due to the lack of appropriate terms to capture and express the conceptions of consciousness in Akan thought. However, the different words that form the terms for consciousness or the analysis of such words do not give such terms their original conceptual content. But, rather the analysis of the words forming *anidahō*, *anikaŋ* and *ahonim* only helps us to grasp or unravel the conceptual content of such terms. This is why the apparent physical references of such words do not necessarily determine or imply a physical conception or content of the various terms for consciousness in Akan metaphysics.

As part of the approach to unravel the nature of consciousness, I will first look at the words that suggest a physicalistic understanding of consciousness and consider possible arguments in support of them. Such arguments will be analyzed against the background of some basic traditional Akan values and beliefs, like morality, death, the hereafter, and ancestorship to ascertain their plausibility. After this analysis, I will clearly state my position on whether the



seemingly physicalistic interpretation of consciousness implied by some of the words is tenable in Akan worldview.

Perhaps one may inquire why the probable failure to render consciousness in physical terms should necessarily and directly lead us to the option of understanding it in terms of the non-physical instead of a 'quasi' or semi-physical sense, or even in a sense that totally denies the possibility of consciousness in Akan metaphysics. As regards these concerns, It must be stated that despite the difficulty or the impossibility that would be inherent in the identification and demarcation of the physical and non-physical parts of consciousness, the various Akan words give no indication whatsoever of any possible idea that implies, either directly or indirectly, a semi-physical conception of consciousness. In the light of the existence of Akan words that refer to consciousness the subject does not appear to be much of a problem in Akan metaphysics. What comes up as the problem is the nature of consciousness, that is, whether consciousness is a physical or a non-physical phenomenon. It is precisely this problem, therefore, that the analysis of the various Akan words for consciousness will, I hope, aid us to unravel.

## 1.1. Physicalistic words for Consciousness in Akan Metaphysics

### 1.1.1. *Anikaŋ*

*Anikaŋ* is one of the Akan words used to refer to consciousness. *Anikaŋ* is composed of two separate words, 'ani' and 'kaŋ'. The 'ani', refers to the eyes in Akan language, a physical component of the body used for sight. 'Kaŋ', on the other hand, means 'brightness'. *Anikaŋ*, therefore, literally, means the 'brightness of the eyes'. This literal meaning of *anikaŋ*

corresponds with Christaller's translation which is "being of bright or clear eyes"<sup>5</sup>. It is important to note that there are several ways of understanding *anikaŋ* as a word in Akan language and it is important for us to appreciate these ways if we are to grasp the philosophical import of what consciousness as *anikaŋ* means in Akan metaphysics. For example, the expressions 'me anikaŋ na me re twerɛo nea me re twerɛo yi' ('I am aware of what I am writing') and 'fa anikaŋ twa kwan ni mu' (be alert as you cross the street') portray consciousness-as-*anikaŋ* as awareness or alertness in Akan language. However, others like Christaller have also translated *anikaŋ* as being "alive or living"<sup>6</sup>, an understanding of *anikaŋ* which was also reiterated by an Akan traditional sage. In this sense when it is said that 'me anikaŋ na me nwu yɛ' (my eyes are bright and am not dead) one is actually implying that he or she is alive or living, and hence, there is a sense in which one could also say that being alive or living is another meaning of the word *anikaŋ*. I have so far looked at two different meanings of the word *anikaŋ* and thus, it can, therefore, be taken that there are two implications of what consciousness as *anikaŋ* means in Akan metaphysics: state of being alive or being aware of something.

I must state that consciousness as awareness which is one of the meanings of *anikaŋ* will not be discussed in this section but will be dealt with later in this chapter when we turn to the examination of *anidaho*, another word in Akan for consciousness. For now I wish to pay some attention to *anikaŋ* as meaning 'living' or 'being alive'. As an approach to understanding what it means to be 'alive' in Akan worldview I think that it is best if I start by stating what it does not mean when it is said that one is 'alive'. Thus, to say that one is 'alive' as implied in the meaning of *anikaŋ* does not mean that a person can engage in physical activities like eating, running, swimming, talking or even seeing. This is because it is possible for a person to be 'alive' without

necessarily being able to undertake any of the physical activities stated above. That is, not being able to undertake activities like running, swimming and eating may be due to other factors like not having limbs to run with, suffering from paralysis so cannot swim and having lost the appetite for food so cannot eat, rather than not being 'alive'. Therefore, the ability to undertake physical activities is not a necessary condition to being 'alive'. However, what is rather implied in the meaning of being 'alive' (*anikay*) in Akan metaphysics is the ability to undertake mental (non-physical) acts like remembering, thinking and understanding even if it means that one will not be able to undertake physical acts like talking, seeing, walking, running and dancing. It must, however, be understood that I am not under-emphasizing the importance of such physical activities to a person but only stating that it is the non-physical or the mental activities and not the physical activities that a person undertakes which are considered in Akan worldview as the necessary and the sufficient conditions to being 'alive'. This is because physical activities like swimming, running etc necessarily imply non-physical or a mental activity (the awareness that one is swimming or running) even though non-physical activities like thinking, remembering and others, on the other hand, do not imply (necessarily) any physical activity.

However, someone may inquire into the reason why a person in a coma is unable to undertake any of the non-physical activities mentioned in the above and yet he or she is also regarded as one who is not dead. Such a person may consequently come to the conclusion that having the ability to engage in acts like thinking, understanding or remembering does not also constitute a necessary and a sufficient condition to being 'alive'. But this objection is misplaced in Akan metaphysics. This is because even though a person in coma is not seen as a dead person or a corpse, it is interesting to note that such a person is not also regarded as one who is 'alive' (as implied by the meaning of *anikay*) in Akan worldview. This is because of his or her inability

to engage in mental activities. This explains the reason why such people are regarded as 'atease-awufo' (the 'living'-dead), which is also another way of saying that though one is not yet dead he or she is also not 'alive', where the 'alive' here means not having the capacity to engage in any mental activity. This, therefore, explains the reason why the word 'atease-awufo' which should have been a contradiction is, nonetheless, meaningful in Akan metaphysics.

But one may ask what then does the "living" refers to precisely in 'atease-awufo' if the 'bodily' and 'mental' activities are excluded and, consequently no life is deemed to exist all? It is important to note that the term 'atease-awufo' does not mean the absence of life or imply that a person in a state of 'atease-awu' is devoid of life. In fact, and on the contrary, it may denote the presence of life but the absence of both physical and conscious activities. The absence of physical or mental activities in the meaning of 'atease-awufo' should not, therefore, be confused with the absence of life.

On the basis of the above analysis, I think that what it means to be 'alive' or 'living' as implied by *anikaŋ* in Akan metaphysics is to be conscious that is, to be able to engage in a mental activity like thinking, remembering and understanding. Therefore, the reference to the eyes, a physical part of the body, by the word '*anikaŋ*' may give the wrong impression that consciousness is a physical activity. This is probably the reason why Wiredu held, though falsely, that "in so far as this can be determined from the Akan language...the feeling of a sensation (which is a conscious act) does not fall within the domain of the mental..."<sup>7</sup>. This, as I will show from the analysis of some Akan beliefs to be discussed later in this chapter, is a mistake.

### 1.1.2. *Anidahō*

Another word for consciousness, which I came across in my research, is *anidahō*<sup>8</sup>. The word *anidahō* is made up of three separate words. They are, 'ani', 'da', and 'hō'. As already stated, 'ani' is the Akan word for the eyes, a physical component of the body used for sight. The meaning of 'da' is not all that clear even though in this sense, 'da' means 'to lie' as in to 'lie down'. The unclarity of the use of 'da' stems from the fact that it could in some contexts mean day, time, or even to sleep. 'Hō', on the other hand, means 'there'. 'Dahō', therefore, means to 'lie there'. If one, therefore, puts 'ani' (the eyes) and 'dahō' (lie there) together, to get *anidahō*, it will, literally, mean "the eyes lying there". However, the use of the word *anidahō* in some expressions of the Akan language gives one the reason to believe that the word means the same as awareness in the English language. For example, expressions like 'me anidahō paa na me re yē nea me re yē no' (I am very much aware of what I am doing), 'nsēm nsēm a ɛrəkōdu nyinara me anidahō' (I am aware of all the prevailing matters) and others attest to the translation of *anidahō* as awareness in English. But if consciousness- as- *anidahō* is awareness, then one may ask that what is awareness or what does it mean to be aware? The etymology of *anidahō* which refers to the eye, a physical component of the body used for seeing, may give the impression that awareness (*anidahō*) is a physical activity that is, the visual experience of an individual as he or she perceives the phenomenal world with his or her eyes. But as I will argue later on in this chapter, the understanding of awareness as a physical activity in Akan metaphysics is not tenable. Besides, if to be aware means the same as to have a visual experience as the etymology of awareness (*anidahō*) in Akan language implies, then one should be able to replace visual experience with awareness in any sentence or circumstance. However, this cannot be done without sounding absurd or making the sentence difficult to be understood. For example, it is out

of place to substitute the statement 'I am aware of all that I am doing' with 'I have a visual experience of all that I am doing'. This is because what one may be aware of in a particular moment may not be subject to observation. For instance, if I am asked by a friend 'why are you not reporting an assault you have suffered at the hands of your colleagues to the authorities' and I reply that 'you don't worry I am aware of what I am doing', it cannot be taken to mean that I have a visual experience of the reasons why I have decided not to report my colleagues to the authorities. This is, therefore, how absurd it sounds when awareness is rendered as visual experience. Similarly, it is equally inappropriate for one to replace the statement 'I am aware of all the prevailing matters' with the expression 'I have visual experience of all the prevailing matters'.

Moreover, the rendition of awareness in terms of visual experience presupposes that individuals without sight for visual experience are not and cannot be aware. But this is false because the blind also experience awareness even though they are without sight. This, therefore, suggests that *anidāhō* does not denote a physical activity (as in a visual experience) and it is also not reducible to the function of any of the physical parts of the body.

But, if, as we have noted, it is absurd to replace the expression 'I am aware of what I am doing' with the expression 'I have a visual experience of what I am doing' but it is not absurd to replace it with the statement 'I know what I am doing', then there is a sense in which it can be said that 'to know' or 'to be in a state of knowing' is tantamount to being aware or awareness. However, someone can argue that the understanding of awareness as 'being in a state of knowing' does not necessarily mean that consciousness-as-awareness (*anidāhō*) is a mental act any more than it is a physical (brain) activity. The possible understanding of consciousness in

Akan metaphysics as either a physical or a non-physical activity will be extensively discussed in chapter three even though I will in this chapter also examine, within the context of some Akan beliefs, the difficulty that would be inherent in construing consciousness as a physical activity in Akan metaphysics. Therefore, the question of whether consciousness- as- awareness (*anidahō*) is a physical or a non-physical activity will not immediately be my pre-occupation as I examine the reason why someone may, on the basis of the word *anidahō*, hold a physical conception of consciousness in Akan metaphysics.

However, the concept of consciousness as *anidahō* portrays a certain kind of intentionality which must also be examined even if briefly. One will note that the conscious state of awareness implied in the concept of *anidahō* displays a propositional attitude that is, it has a particular propositional content. This is because consciousness is always consciousness of and awareness is also awareness of. Such conscious states like awareness therefore has content or an object that it intends or points to<sup>9</sup>. For example, the propositions 'I am conscious of my health' and 'I am aware that Ghana celebrated its fifty-fourth independent anniversary this year' are propositional attitudes because they express a mental state and the object or the content of such states. The content of the above mental states points to ones health and the independent anniversary of Ghana. Conscious states like *anidahō* displaying such attitudes or contents are also said to portray intentionality. This is because such states intend or point to something further than themselves<sup>10</sup>. Intentionality in this sense, therefore, does not have the same meaning in the English Language.

There is, however, a problem concerning the nature, physical or non-physical, of the intentionality of these propositional attitudes. Though such propositional attitudes are generally



regarded as a mark of the mental and not the physical, Churchland, contrary to this position, thinks that such propositions need not to be restricted to the mental because “purely physical states such as brain states might possess propositional content, and hence display intentionality”<sup>11</sup>. It is important to note, however, that the nature of the intentionality of propositional attitudes seems not to be problematic in Akan metaphysics. This is because the nature of the intentionality of such propositions is, in fact, not dependent on the content of such propositions, but most importantly on the conscious states expressing such propositions. The difficulty of the nature of intentionality is actually the problem of the nature- physical or non-physical- of the conscious states that make such propositions. If one is, therefore, able to resolve that a particular conscious state is a brain state, then its corresponding object or propositional content will also be fundamentally physical in nature. Likewise, if it is also resolved that a certain conscious state is mental, then the intentionality of the propositional content of such a state will fundamentally be mental or non-physical in nature and not otherwise. It is interesting to note, however, that the nature of conscious states expressed in terms like *anidahō*, *anikaŋ*, *ahonim* are, as indicated in the analysis of such terms and in section 1.3 of this chapter, non-physical and would therefore express propositional attitudes which are fundamentally mental in Akan metaphysics. This is because such conscious states, *anidahō*, *anikaŋ*, *ahonim*, are, as mentioned earlier, not brain states.

The expression ‘I am aware’ (*me anidahō*) literally translated as ‘my eyes are lying there’ makes direct reference to the eye (which is a physical component of the body) and thus, creates the impression, from the expression ‘*me ani*’ (my eyes), that the ‘*me*’ (I), is the substantive element (body), that which the eye is a component of. On this view, the ‘I’ appears to refer to the physical<sup>12</sup> and not to anything non-physical as it is in Descartes<sup>13</sup>. This may be the reason why

someone may, erroneously, hold that *anidahō* is a visual experience and hence, a physical activity. But, a closer examination of the statement 'I am aware' reveals that there is nothing inherent in the statement that suggests that the 'me' or the 'I' is the body of a person. This is because when it is for example, inquired that who made the statement 'me anidahō' the answer that one will possibly give is that 'me na me kaa sē 'me anidahō (It was I who said, me anidahō, I am aware) and not 'me honam na ēkaa sē me anidahō' (it was my body which said I am aware). This, therefore, shows that the 'me' or the 'I' is not the same as the body and hence, the subject of the expression 'me anidahō' cannot also be taken as the body, which is only one of the components believed to constitute a person in Akan conceptions. The 'me' or the 'I', in my view, refers to a part of a person which is not bodily. The maxim "'Onyame nwu na mewu' or 'Onyame bewu na mewu', Onyame (God) does not die, I will not, therefore, die, or, if Onyame dies, I shall die, but since Onyame does not die, I shall, therefore, not die"<sup>14</sup> gives the indication that the 'me' or the 'I' refers to something non-physical and not the body. This is because even though it is believed that God does not die yet the body obviously perishes (dies) and hence, it would be absurd for one to claim that the 'I' which will never die because 'Onyame', who is considered as an immortal and a non-physical being, never dies is the body. That is, if the body perishes, then it is not the body that the maxim is referring to as that which will not die because of the immortality of 'Onyame', but rather an aspect of a person which, like some features of Onyame, is non-corporeal and immortal. Therefore, the 'I', in my view and, on the basis of the arguments advanced so far, refers to something non-physical and not a physical component of a person in Akan metaphysics. This is, therefore, one of the reasons why it is problematic to construe consciousness-as-'*anidahō*' as a physical phenomenon in Akan metaphysics.

### 1.1.3. *Ahonim*

Another word that may give the impression that consciousness is a physical phenomenon in Akan metaphysics is *ahonim*. *Ahonim* is composed of two separate words, 'aho' and 'nim'. 'Nim' means 'to know' in Akan language. Expressions like 'me nim me *ho*' (I know myself), 'me gye me *ho di*' (I believe in myself) all seem to agree with Christaller's translation of the 'aho' as the self in the English language<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, *ahonim* simply means 'to know one's self'. This suggests that Christaller's translation of *ahonim* as "self-consciousness"<sup>16</sup> is inaccurate. This is because the translation of *ahonim* as 'self-consciousness' begs the question because the word *ahonim* is an Akan rendition of the English word 'consciousness' and thus, to translate it as 'self-consciousness' does not really explain what *ahonim* means. It is like saying that the meaning of consciousness (*ahonim*) is self-consciousness. In view of this, I think that the right translation of *ahonim* should be 'self-knowledge' or 'to know one's self'.

Before we proceed it is important to note that what the *aho* (self) refers to is not very clear because it is used in Akan language to refer to both a bodily and a non-physical element. Let me now mention some of the expressions of the Akan language which give the impression that the *aho* is the body.

It is common to hear the following expressions in Akan:

"me *ho aye fi*", meaning, "I am dirty"

"obi di nsu agu me *ho*", meaning, "someone has poured water on me"

"pegya wo *ho so*", meaning, "lift up yourself" or "stand up".

As can be seen, all the three statements directly refer to the body. The reason simply stems from the fact that it is the body that gets wet or becomes dirty and this fact seems to be that which justifies the interchangeable use of the body and the self to refer to one and the same thing. It is the same reason that suffices for the third statement: “*pegya wo ho so*”, unless of course, one is willing to unsuccessfully argue that when it is said that “lift up yourself” or “stand up”, we are not, in expectation, looking forward to the body to be shifted or positioned in some other way different from how it previously was, prior to the pronouncement of the expression, “lift up yourself” or “stand up”.

However, there are other expressions of the Akan language which also give the impression that the *aho* (self) refers to a non-body. For example, when it is said in Akan that ‘*Me nim me ho*’, (I know myself), one is not implying that he or she knows his or her body. What is being said, rather, is that one knows or has an appreciable knowledge of his or her capabilities, potential, talents, weaknesses and strengths. The *aho* (self) in the statement does not, therefore, refer to something physical like the body, but rather to the non-physical that is, the psychological features of a person. Similarly, when it is said that ‘*me gye me ho di*’ (I believe in myself) one cannot be taken to mean that he or she believes in his or her body. Moreover, by the expressions ‘*owo ahobraseɛ*’ (He or She is humble), or ‘*oyɛ ahomasoɔ*’ (He or she is proud), one is not in any way describing the physical features or qualities of the body, but rather the non-physical or psychological features of a person. If these qualities (humility, pride, potential, talent and others like courage) being non-physical in nature cannot be said to be properties of the physical (body) in just the same way attributes like skin colour, height and shape are of the body then, there is a sense in which one can reasonably maintain that they are features of a non-physical element constituting a person in Akan metaphysics.

Thus, the linguistic analysis carried out so far suggests that the *aho* (self) in Akan worldview refers to something physical as well as non-physical. However, this does not also mean that consciousness-as-*ahonim* refers to a physical phenomenon as well as a non-physical phenomenon in Akan metaphysics. The reason(s) why this is not the case will be discussed shortly. It must, however, be noted that the reason why some may think that consciousness-as-*ahonim* is a physical phenomenon is, in my view, due to the “confusion” that is generated by the Akan language and thus, as soon as this confusion is cleared, in this particular instance through the analysis of *ahonim*, it will be clear why consciousness, as expressed in *ahonim*, is in my view not be a physical phenomenon.

The word *ahonim*, as stated already, means ‘to know one’s self’ or ‘self-knowledge’. But what does it mean to ‘to know one’s self’ or to have ‘self-knowledge’? Does it mean the same as ‘to know one’s body’ or what? Thus, it is clear that consciousness as expressed in *ahonim* as ‘to know one’s self’ does not mean that one knows his or her body that is, his or her skin colour, height, the heart and how it pumps blood to the rest of the body or how the kidney, liver or the brain functions. That is, there is nothing inherent in the word *ahonim* that points to the body as the subject of reference and hence, nothing physical is implied by consciousness as *ahonim*. What is, rather, implied by consciousness as *ahonim*, ‘to know one’s self’, is something non-physical- state of being aware (conscious) of one’s capabilities, strengths, weaknesses, potential, talents, likes and dislikes- which are the psychological features of a person. Since, these features are not physical features of the body it is reasonable to state that they are not and cannot be identified with the body. It is, therefore, a mistake to construe consciousness-as-*ahonim* as a physical phenomenon.



From the examination of the various words for consciousness so far one can note that all of them seem to make reference to a specific aspect of the body and thus, give the indication that the phenomenon of consciousness is a physical activity. This may be the reason why Wiredu is convinced that consciousness or the phenomenon of thinking in Akan philosophy is purely a physical activity carried out by the brain (*amene*) of a person<sup>17</sup>. This conviction that Wiredu holds may probably not only be as a result of the fact that most of the words for consciousness in Akan worldview refer to the body or parts of it, but also from his view that 'mind' as understood in the Cartesian sense as an entity and also used by some sages<sup>18</sup> to denote that which is responsible for consciousness in Akan conception is a falsity. This, in his view, is because while mind in Descartes is equivalent to the soul, *adwen* (mind) in Akan is not considered as the equivalent of the soul (*okra*) and hence, cannot be considered in the same sense as mind is in Descartes. Even though I also share the view that *adwen* (mind) is not mentioned as one of the constituents of a person in Akan conceptions as is the case in Descartes I, contrary to Wiredu, think that consciousness is not the activity of the *amene* (brain). This is because if mind and the whole phenomenon of thinking, understanding and remembering were *amene* activities as conceived by Wiredu, then certain fundamental Akan beliefs and values discussed in section 1.3 will be false. This, however, is not to be the case because the reality of these beliefs as held in Akan worldview seems to be beyond doubt.

I will in a moment examine, in the contexts of some Akan beliefs and values, why the physicalistic words for consciousness do not also imply a physicalistic conception of consciousness in Akan metaphysics. But, before I undertake to do this I will examine a non-physical word used by some sages to denote consciousness in Akan worldview.

## 1.2. A non-physical word for Consciousness in Akan Metaphysics

### 1.2.1. *Adwen* (Mind)

*Adwen* (mind) is another word which is also used by some sages to refer to consciousness in Akan worldview<sup>19</sup>. In the view of an Akan traditional sage<sup>20</sup>, the mind is that which was given to a person by God before coming into the world. In his view the mind, that which enables one to think that is, to be conscious, is the same as the *okra* (soul), which is non-physical and this according to him explains why “the departure of the *okra* from a body also leads to the departure of one’s mind”<sup>21</sup>. He, therefore, concludes that consciousness is a non-physical phenomenon definable only in terms of the *okra*, since without it one will simply not be able to think<sup>22</sup>.

This position is, however, doubtful. The doubt is not over the non-physical nature of consciousness, a position I will also argue for, but it is about the equation of *adwen* (mind) to the *okra*. That is, there seems to be no basis for one to equate *adwen*, that which is not considered as part of the constituents of a person in Akan conceptions, to the *okra*. This is because while it is appropriate to maintain in Akan worldview that ‘the soul has departed from a person’, ‘the soul goes to God to receive its destiny’, the soul is the embodiment of life, it would be absurd in the same worldview to say that ‘the mind (*adwen*) goes to God for its destiny’, ‘the mind has departed from a person’ or the mind is the embodiment of life. This, therefore, explains why *adwen* (mind) and the *okra* (soul), unlike in Descartes, are held as two different entities in Akan metaphysics. It must, however, be noted that I have only denied the equation of *adwen* to the *okra* without implying, as Wiredu does, that *adwen* is a function of the *amene* (brain)<sup>23</sup>.

According to Wiredu, 'mind' in Akan conception, unlike in Descartes, is not a thing that can exist on its own, hence it cannot be responsible for consciousness, since mind (*adwen*) is "the noun form of the verb 'dwen' which means to think"<sup>24</sup>. In his view, therefore, thinking or *thought* is a physical process because it is an activity that is undertaken by the brain (*amene*)<sup>25</sup>. What we, therefore, call consciousness, in Wiredu's view, seems to be nothing over and above the normal functioning of the *amene* as it goes about its daily activities.

It is clear from the above that Wiredu is not denying that thinking or 'thought' is an act of consciousness but is only asserting that such acts like thinking, doubting, understanding and remembering are physical processes undertaken by the 'amene' (brain). However, Wiredu's view that consciousness is a physical activity undertaken by the *amene* is problematic. This is because if consciousness and the whole phenomena of thinking, understanding, memory, and so on were brain processes, then certain beliefs and values like accountability after death and ancestorship in the Akan worldview will be false. But this, as argued in section 1.3 of this chapter, is not the case. The brain we know is a physical component of the body and therefore, if consciousness is defined in terms of the brain, then the question remains as to how this can be reconciled with the Akan belief that the a non-physical aspect of a person understands and even remembers the destiny it receives from God before inhabiting the body. It would be inconsistent, therefore, to hold this belief in Akan worldview and at the same time regard conscious acts like thinking, understanding, feeling, remembering and thinking as brain activities. The pervasiveness of the above belief in Akan metaphysics, therefore, seems to give plausibility to the view that consciousness is an activity that cannot be explained in physical terms.

There are others who are of the view that the ambiguity of some of the expressions concerning the word, *adwen* in the Akan language makes it possible for one to develop two different conceptions of mind in Akan metaphysics. Proponents<sup>26</sup> of this view think that when it is stated that 'wo adwen nyē adjuma' (your mind is not working), the *adwen*, in this sense, is referring to mind as something which exists and is responsible for certain mental activities in a manner which seems to be similar to the way 'mind' is conceived in Descartes<sup>27</sup>. On the other hand, when it is said in Akan that 'kã wo'adwen' ('express your mind', or thought or views), the *adwen*, in this second sense, does not refer to a thing that exists but rather refers to something abstract like thought<sup>28</sup>. The *adwen* in the first sense is comparable to a manufacturing plant whilst in the second sense it is comparable to smoke, a consequence of fire. On this view then *adwen* (mind) can be a thing that exists on its own (comparable to the status the *okra* is believed to have in Akan conceptions) as well as something like a mental act<sup>29</sup>.

But I think that this dual view of *adwen* (mind) in Akan metaphysics is contradictory and, hence, mistaken. That is, if *adwen* is regarded as that which exists (like the *okra*), then it cannot also at the same time be regarded as a mental act. That is, either *adwen* is regarded as a thing that can exist on its own like *okra* (souls) do or are believed to do in Akan conceptions or as a mental act. It is therefore, logically inconsistent, in my view, for one to imply both in Akan metaphysics.

We have so far, in this chapter, examined two sets of words for consciousness in Akan metaphysics. That is, those that suggest a physicalistic view of consciousness like *anikay*, *amidahō* and *ahonim*, on one hand, and *adwen* that which suggests a non-physicalistic conception of consciousness, on the other hand. I think it is now time for us to examine these words and

their implications in the context of some Akan beliefs and values to ascertain which of the conceptions of consciousness (physical or non-physical) is tenable in Akan metaphysics.

### 1.3. Consciousness in the Context of Akan Beliefs and Values

#### 1.3.1. Morality

Morality can be defined as a set of social rules and principles that serve as a guide for human behavior in a society. It is an empirical fact that religion permeates the lives and activities of the Akan people including their moral codes, rules, principles, rewards and sanctions<sup>30</sup>. That is, apart from the social norms established for the regulation, protection and the punishment of evil acts committed by individuals in a society, it is also believed that there are supernatural sanctions, especially from 'Onyankopon' (God) and other powers, like smaller gods<sup>31</sup>. This belief has been very instrumental in shaping the moral behavior of individuals, since it is also believed that everybody will give an account of his or her life here on earth to the supreme judge, God, who will severely punish those whose lives on earth have not been morally worthy. It appears, therefore, that there is some kind of a link between morality- how individuals live their lives here on earth, and religion- the belief in the existence of a supreme God and the worship of Him<sup>32</sup>. Consciousness is, therefore, very crucial in this whole phenomenon of judgment, because the ability to remember one's deeds after death seems to imply that what consciousness is cannot be physical, since, if this were so, one will not be able to remember any of the past deeds to even enable him or her render an account to God. The act of giving such an account of one's life on earth must, to my mind, be a conscious act, because the one giving the account must be *aware*

(*amidahō*) of what he or she is undertaking and must also *know* (*ahonim*- self knowledge-) that it was him or her (the same self) who undertook all those activities that he or she is now accounting for. This aspect of the judgment seems indispensable if the trial is going to be fair and just for it is a just or a fair trial, that gives God the basis to punish or reward individuals after death according to their desert. The belief in the after-death-accountability of one's life on earth to God<sup>13</sup> is one of the main reasons why it is tenable to regard consciousness as a non-physical phenomenon. This is because if one, after the demise of the body, can still engage in conscious activities like remembering, awareness, knowing and understanding, then consciousness is essentially a non-physical activity and not physical (an *amene* activity). To regard consciousness as an *amene* activity will not enable individuals to account to God for their punishment or reward after they are dead.

### 1.3.2. Death and the Hereafter

In Akan worldview, death is not considered as the end of life for any individual. It is just the beginning of one's journey to either the endurance of sorrow and pain as a result of one's immoral behavior on earth, or the enjoyment of happiness as a result of one's worthwhile character on earth. The belief in life after death cannot simply be something that can be ignored or simply considered to be false because there are several maxims that underlie this belief. For an example, "onipa wo bebi ko", meaning "a person has somewhere to go" is one of such maxims that express the reality of the belief in life after death. I will like to state that by 'somewhere to go', one is not saying that this 'somewhere' is in a particular space and time in this physical world but rather, somewhere meta-physical, that is, out of this physical world. The maxim,

“onipa wu a na onwui”, meaning, “when a person is dead, he or she is not really dead” also demonstrates that death is a physical attribute of the body and not of the non-physical aspect of a person which is believed to survive death, a condition that the body suffers. As is the belief, God will reward or punish each and everyone after death, but this cannot be possible if a conscious act like feeling (sentience) is regarded as a physical phenomenon. This is because the idea of punishment or reward involves some form of discomfort and pain in the case of punishment on one hand, and joy and happiness in the case of reward on the other hand. If feeling is, therefore, regarded as a function of the *amene*, then it would be impossible for disembodied persons (without *amene*) to feel the effect of the punishment or the reward which will be given by God. That is, the idea of punishment or reward makes sense only because of the belief that the recipients feel the effect thereof. If there is, therefore, the belief that individuals (after the demise of the body) do feel the *pain* of punishment and the *joy* of reward from God in Akan metaphysics, then a conscious act like feeling cannot possibly be as a result of the functions of the *amene* ( a component of the body) in Akan metaphysics.

These are some of the reasons why I am of the view that consciousness in Akan metaphysics cannot be grounded coherently on any physical basis since, as noted already, this will be inconsistent with the belief in life after death and the judgement that is believed to follow. The inconsistency is in the fact that if consciousness is defined in physicalistic terms, as words like, *anikaŋ*, *anidaho* and *ahonim*, seem to suggest, then one would upon death also die with his or her consciousness and hence, will simply not be conscious of his or her past deeds to account for them.

### 1.3.3. Ancestorship

The belief in ancestorship is one of the cardinal tenets of the Akan worldview. This belief seems to confirm the non-physical nature of consciousness. Ancestors are incorporeal beings who are believed to reside in the land of the dead. The ancestors, though not members of the physical world, are held in Akan worldview to wield influence and authority in the physical world. An important aspect of their influence is the administration of justice in the affairs of men, either in the immediate family or in the larger community<sup>34</sup>. The ancestors are believed to be *aware* of all that is and has been going on in the land of the living. The administration of justice by the ancestors, to my mind, will only happen after the full knowledge and understanding of all that has occurred, which will then be followed with the passing of judgement and subsequently, the giving out of punishment or reward. Such conscious acts like understanding and judging, cannot, in my view, be said to be an activity of the *amene* because if they were, the ancestors, who are not corporeal beings, shouldn't be able to have and experience them. To deny this is to deny ultimately that there is a belief in ancestorship and that they do administer justice in the land of the living.

These beliefs and values that I have briefly examined support the position that consciousness is essentially a non-physical phenomenon. It seems plausible, therefore, in my view to maintain that the physicalistic interpretations given to consciousness as suggested by the terms *anidaho*, *anikaɲ* and *ahonim* are inaccurate.

There are other reasons, I believe, why the preponderance of the physicalistic terms for consciousness did not or cannot lead to a physicalistic understanding of consciousness in Akan metaphysics. Thus, despite the fact that the Akan worldview is replete with physicalistic expressions, it does not by any means make it a purely physicalistic worldview. This is because the belief in the mental or the non-physical is just as real as the belief in the physical. That is, in both the English and Akan languages, words are believed to have meanings and the particular things that they denote or refer to. For example, in both the Akan and English languages, the word 'efie' or 'house' can be taken as a place where people consider as their home. This in no doubt can be taken as that which constitutes the meaning of 'efie' or a 'house'. But, apart from this meaning, a 'house' in both Akan and English also denotes something concrete or physical, a structure, as its referent. The same is the case for words like 'chair', 'table', 'smoke' and 'rain'. All these words refer particularly to something physical, that is, something that can be seen or touched. Therefore, there is no doubt that these words, due to their designata, can be, and in fact, are considered as physical expressions about the state of affairs and the phenomenal world.

However, it is important to state that not all words have physical objects as their referents. This is more characteristic of the English language than of the Akan language. Such words, like 'joy', 'happiness' and 'pain' are taken in English to be more of the expression of the mental than of the physical because they do not refer to anything physical. That is, they do not have physical referents. This, in my view, suggests that in the English language there are words that seem to describe both the physical and the mental, and that the mental realm appears to have its own mentalistic expressions purely and solely for its use. Therefore, the distinction between the mental and the physical on one hand and their 'mentalistic' and 'physicalistic' expressions on the other hand seems to be very clear.

But the situation is not the same with the Akan language. As has been noted already, words expressing conscious states or the mental in Akan metaphysics do refer directly to the physical, that is, the body or parts of the body, in just the same way physicalistic expressions, like tables and chairs, refer to physical things. As has been sufficiently shown by Gyekye in the following illustration, non-physicalistic or mentalistic expressions with no reference to the physical in English, for example, actually become "physicalistic expressions" with reference to the body or some parts of the body in Akan<sup>35</sup>. For example, mental expressions in English like;

"I am happy

I am patient

I am jealous/ covetous

I am humble

I am in despair

I am courageous

I am generous

I am arrogant"<sup>36</sup>,

when translated into the Akan language refer directly to a specific aspect of the body and thus, give the impression that they are physical rather than non- physical or mental expressions. That is, the mental expressions above read like this in Akan language;

"*M'ani agye* (My eyes are brightened)

Me wo abotare(*boaseto*.) (My heart subsides)

M'ani da so (My eyes are on it)

M'ani abere (My eyes are red)

Me wo ahobrease (I have brought my *body* down/low)

Mehome te me ho (My breath is breaking/tearing apart)

Mewo akokoduru (I have a heavy/ weighty chest)

Me yēm ye (My stomach is good)

Mema meho so (I raise my *body*)<sup>37</sup>

This obviously gives the impression that the Akan worldview is oriented solely to the physical and that the mental or the non-physical does not exist. It is not only wrong, as I have argued above, to hold this view but it is also a mistake for one to conclude from the seeming physicalistic understanding of the mental in Akan metaphysics to a monistic conception of the Akan worldview. This is because the belief in the non-physical is as real as any other thing in the Akan universe.

An impression is created on the basis of the analysis of the above expressions in Akan that there are not enough words for the description and the expression of the mental. Nonetheless, the dual nature of the Akan ontology readily becomes obvious with the belief in the existence of 'spirits' and the analysis of some Akan concepts, like 'causation'<sup>38</sup>. A careful appreciation of some of these concepts will not only reveal how fundamental the non-physical or the mental is in the Akan worldview but also lead to the realization that it is false to understand consciousness in

purely physicalistic terms as words like *anidahö*, *ahonim* and *anikanj* seem to suggest. This is not to say, however, that in such a dualistic world, where the belief in the non-physical seems almost inherent in most of their theories and conceptions, there cannot be a purely physical account of theories without having a non-physical interpretation or connotation. I believe that a concept like education is an example of a theory that can be understood purely on physical basis. However, consciousness seems not to be one of such concepts. The reason why consciousness is an exception seems to have been amply demonstrated with the analysis of some of the values and beliefs like, morality, death and the life after and ancestorship in Akan metaphysics.

At this point, I will like to correct a false impression that might be held that there is a general lack of words for the expression of the mental in Akan metaphysics. I believe I have already stated that the physicalistic expressions for consciousness do not mean that the mental realm does not exist in Akan worldview. This is because words like *Onyame*, *okra*, *sunsum*, *saman* and others do not refer to anything physical; hence, one is inclined to believe that such physicalistic expressions which are used for the mental might have been the only viable means available by which the mental could be described in Akan metaphysics. This may, therefore, explain why there is an impression that there are more words in the Akan language for expressing physical phenomena but almost none for the non-physical, in Akan metaphysics. But this general impression is false because the problem of finding terms that clearly refer to the non-physical seems to be peculiar to consciousness and not to all non-physical concepts in Akan metaphysics, since, as stated earlier, concepts like *Onyame*, *okra* and others seem to have words that express their non-physical nature without necessarily referring to the physical. There seems, therefore, not to be any identifiable reason why the problem is characteristic of consciousness except that when we refer to consciousness in Akan metaphysics it is simply rare to have words

that do not refer to the physical for it. Therefore, the use of physical terms for consciousness was not, in my view, meant to replace the non-physical conception of consciousness, neither was it meant as a process of reducing the mental to the physical, but only that such words seem to have been the only means by which the concept could be expressed and understood in Akan metaphysics. Thus, the mere fact that terms denoting physical things are used for the expression of consciousness does not, in my view, justify a physicalistic notion of consciousness. I will argue to show that consciousness is a non-physical phenomenon in Akan metaphysics.

But there is a sense in which someone can erroneously say that if there is any relationship between language and thought, as stated earlier on at the beginning of this work, then the physicalistic view of consciousness, as suggested by *anikay*, *ahonim* and *anidahō*, need not to be regarded as a mistake. That is, if thought is what is expressed in a language, then there is a sense in which one can falsely hold that there is no basis for asserting that the conception of consciousness held in Akan philosophy by some as a physical activity is erroneous. This is because a proponent can maintain that the conception of consciousness, or how consciousness is understood, in Akan metaphysics is exactly how it has been expressed in words, with physical reference, like *anikay*, *anidahō* and *ahonim*, and hence, one cannot just abandon the view of consciousness that these words seem to imply for a non-physical view; a view which is not directly implied by these terms.

Actually, Wiredu shares a similar view on the nature of the terms or propositions expressing consciousness in Akan metaphysics. For him, all propositions- physical or metaphysical- in Akan metaphysics are empirical in their "conceptual constitution"<sup>39</sup>. That is, such propositions or terms are relevant and meaningful only in experience; hence without

experience all such propositions or terms will have no conceptual meaning. By conceptual constitution or meaning, he means the expression or materialization of such terms in experience. Wiredu uses the proposition 'All brothers are males' to explain his position. Even though Wiredu concedes that the truth value of the above proposition is dependent upon the analysis of the terms of the proposition, he however maintains that the proposition or the terms of the proposition are concepts that are "formed and can only be formed through experience"<sup>40</sup>. In other words, it is only through experience that one can meaningfully grasp what the concepts 'brother' and 'male' represent or mean, and therefore until such concepts are actualized or brought to light in experience they will remain as mere words without any conceptual meaning in Akan metaphysics.

I partly agree with Wiredu in the sense that some concepts are meaningful in experience or in their conceptual constitutions as Wiredu may put it and, hence without reference to experience these concepts would not be understood. But this does not hold for all terms or propositions in Akan metaphysics. This is because there are some concepts in Akan metaphysics which are intelligible but are inexpressible in experience or in their conceptual constitutions. One example of such concept is the concept of consciousness or conscious states expressed in the various Akan terms in this chapter. Of course, the traditional Akan thinker can demonstrate in experience the concept of a 'brother' or a 'male'. For instance, an empirical definition of a brother can be given as another son of one's parents or, in the traditional Akan sense, a son of a sibling of one's parents. But when the Akan is, for instance, asked to demonstrate in experience conscious states like think, doubt and remember he will be unable to demonstrate such states because there is no empirical framework in Akan metaphysics to express or define such states in experience. For one cannot portray in experience what conscious states like think, doubt and

remember look like. Such states expressed in Akan terms as *anikaŋ*, *anidahō* and *ahonim* simply lack or do not have empirical reference and, hence have no conceptual constitution.

I do not, therefore, think that the view that all terms and propositions in Akan metaphysics can only be formed and demonstrated in experience is necessarily true. There are some which are not expressible in experience. Concepts like *anikaŋ*, *anidahō* and *ahonim* expressing conscious states or activities fall in this category.

Also, the objection above did not take into consideration an important aspect of the language-thought relationship. Thus, the objection ignored the aspect of this relationship which suggests that other factors are related to thought apart from language. That is, there is also a relationship (a direct one) between beliefs and values, on one hand, and thought, on the other hand. Thus, the beliefs and values of a person do not only influence the kind of concept that one subscribes to but also how one understands certain concepts and theories. Therefore, if language expresses thought and if thought is also influenced by one's beliefs and values, then it seems that there is a sense in which one can also say that there is a relationship between beliefs and values and what is expressed in a language (thought). However, it is interesting to note that even though language expresses thought it does not necessarily also express the beliefs and values that may have influenced that thought. That is, language, in my view, only equips us with the linguistic means to express our thoughts but not necessarily with the concept that is buried in the thought and hence, inferring from the language alone without taking into consideration other factors, like the beliefs and values, that also bear on the thought is inadequate. For example, *anikaŋ* is an Akan word for consciousness which literally means 'brightness of the eyes'. In this sense, if we are led by linguistics alone to construe consciousness-as-*anikaŋ* as a physical phenomenon just

on the basis that the word makes reference to the eye, a physical component of the body, without also analyzing the word in the contexts of beliefs and values, like death and the hereafter and morality which might have contributed to the conception of *anikay* as a word for consciousness, then I think that the full or the real thought that the word *anikay* should express will not be appreciated. Thus, I am not denying that there is a relationship between language and thought but I am only emphasizing that using language alone as a guide to our thought is misleading. This, therefore, explains the reason why I think it is implausible to render consciousness, on the basis of the physicalistic terms, as a physical phenomenon in Akan metaphysics.

The consideration of consciousness as a non-physical phenomenon in Akan metaphysics is, in the view of Gyekye<sup>41</sup>, similar to the Cartesian conception of consciousness as *Thought*. The seeming equation of the Akan concept of consciousness to that of Descartes is captured in his assertion that; "consciousness which is equivalent to the soul or mind in Descartes can be a translation of the *okra*"<sup>42</sup>. It seems, rather, clear in Gyekye's view that the *okra* is what is responsible for consciousness in Akan philosophy. A detailed analysis of consciousness in terms of the *okra* in Akan metaphysics will be undertaken in the next two chapters.

All my arguments have aimed to suggest that consciousness in Akan worldview is a non-physical phenomenon. I must, however, state that even though there seems not to be any doubt over the non-physical nature of consciousness as the analyses of some of the Akan beliefs seem to suggest, it is, in my view, doubtful whether *sunsum*<sup>43</sup>, rather than the *okra* is that which is responsible for consciousness in Akan metaphysics. Exploring the possible relationship that may exist between *sunsum* and consciousness in Akan metaphysics might give us a new perspective on consciousness which may not have been conceived under either the physicalistic (*amene*) or



the non-physicalistic (*okra*) view of understanding consciousness in Akan metaphysics. It is, however, important to mention that the examination of the possible relationship which may exist between *sunsum* and consciousness cannot be done in isolation but rather, within the broader framework of the concept of a person. And it is to this topic I now turn in the next chapter.

THE AKAN CONCEPT OF A PERSON

**2.0. Introduction**

The concept of a person is basic to the understanding of the concept of consciousness. But the discussion of consciousness at the levels of animals, trees, automata's and computers in recent times seems to have reduced that special interest in human consciousness and the attention that the latter had in philosophical discourse and writings. It is important, therefore, for me to stress that in discussing consciousness in Akan metaphysics I will basically be concerned with consciousness in human terms rather than in terms of animals and other inanimate things.

Discussing human consciousness is the reason why the analysis of the concept of a person becomes necessary and indispensable. This is because the concept of a person serves as the framework within which the concept of consciousness can meaningfully be analyzed and understood. Consciousness is a feature of a person and hence, a careful analysis of the concept of a person will be most relevant to the adequate clarification of the concept of consciousness. Thus, one cannot properly understand consciousness in Akan metaphysics without an understanding of the concept of a person.

For a careful analysis of the concept of a person will not only aid us to understand the difficult concept of consciousness but also assist us to clarify the specific aspect of a person responsible for consciousness and the physical or the non-physical or the 'quasi-physical' nature of that aspect. If we can, therefore, have a clear understanding of what a person is, then it seems that all the difficult questions associated with consciousness in Akan metaphysics can adequately be dealt with.

### 2.1. The Concept of a Person

It is believed in Akan worldview that a person is made up of the *okra*, *sunsum* and *honam* (body)<sup>1</sup>. With the exception of the *honam*, the *okra* and *sunsum* are subjects of disagreements in Akan metaphysics. That is, while the body is known and accepted as a physical element, there are different points of view on the nature (physical or non-physical or quasi-physical) of the *okra* and *sunsum* and how different or similar they are.

Before I take a critical look at these different points of view relating to the nature of the *okra* and *sunsum*, I will consider a purely materialist view, held by a traditional sage, which seems to contradict the general view that a person is made up of the *honam*, *okra* and the *sunsum*. According to Nana Boafo Ansa a person is just a physical being that is, *honam* (body), and that the other elements like the *okra* and *sunsum* purported as the non-physical components of a person are illusions because they do not exist as parts of a person<sup>2</sup>. In his view all such elements including *Onyame* (God), who is regarded in Akan worldview as a non-physical being, are fictions of our imaginations<sup>3</sup>. It is clear from the above that Nana Boafo Ansa totally denies

the existence of the non-physical in Akan metaphysics. This is because for him neither the *okra* nor the *sunsum* exists and thus, cannot be responsible for any mental phenomena that may be attributed to them. Therefore, he may be of the view that all such conscious phenomena like thinking, remembering, willing and doubting are bodily phenomena (or brain activities). In what follows I will argue that this materialist position is problematic in Akan thought and give reasons why it is also inconsistent for one to argue for the non-existence of the *okra* and *sunsum* as components of a person in the Akan metaphysics.

The view that mental phenomena are bodily phenomena results in absurdities when the attempt is made to explain how the body is or can be responsible for mental phenomena. For example, it is absurd to claim that when a person is deceived it is his or her body which is deceived, since it is our understanding that it is not the body that one has in mind when it is asserted that one has been deceived. But, this traditional sage can claim that the phenomenon of deception is of the *amene* (brain), which is obviously part of the body and that there are evidences in modern science to show that deception is an activity of the brain.

It is important to note, without casting doubt on the potential of modern science in this respect, that it is still not clear how the brain is responsible for certain mental phenomena such as deception and imagination. Moreover, it is interesting to note that scientists have not considered themselves as having said the last word on how some of these mental states can be accounted for; hence, it is a bit premature for one to appeal to science as the evidence to show that a mental activity, like deception, is an *amene* activity. Besides, it is also not the *amene* of a person that one refers to as deceived when it is claimed that one has been deceived. It seems that when one

claims that he or she has been deceived, one is not referring to any physical component of his or her person.

The view that a person is just the body we see and touch is inconsistent with certain proverbs and maxims in Akan worldview. If in fact a person were to be only a body, then such maxims like “onipa wo bëbi ko”, meaning, “A person has some where to go” and “onipa wu a na onwui”, meaning, “when a person is dead, he or she is not really dead” will have no meaning in Akan metaphysics. But this can hardly find any acceptance in the Akan worldview. For instance, the last maxim “when a person is dead, he or she is not really dead” only makes sense if there is something more to a person than just the body. This maxim, on the surface, sounds illogical because when a person dies the impression is that he or she is no more because the body which is visible is buried and decays after some months.

But it is wrong for one to assume that the maxim is illogical because a person in Akan worldview is believed to be essentially *okra* and that *honam* is just a container of this *okra*, that which is an aspect of *Onyame* in a person. The *okra* coming from *Onyame*, a non-physical and an immortal being, is also held as non-physical and immortal in Akan metaphysics. Hence, when a person dies it is believed that it is only the physical and the mortal part of him or her (body) that dies and not the unseen and the immortal part. It is, therefore, incorrect for one to assume that the maxim “when a person is dead, he or she is not really dead” is contradictory because, as already indicated, it is only the body which dies but his or her non-physical part(s) survives and goes back to *Onyame*. This suggests that the body, contrary to the views of Nana Boasfo Ansah, is not held as the only element that constitutes a person in Akan metaphysics.

Besides, it would be difficult for a person with such a materialistic outlook in Akan worldview to explain how the universe was formed, that is, the existence of other material objects like trees, rocks, rivers, skies and the whole phenomenon of creation without also appealing to the existence of a non-human creator or some unseen power behind such creation.

A proponent may, however, object to the view that trees, stones, flowers and humans have a creator. He or she may, as some theories of creation indicate, be of the view that such objects and everything in the universe evolved from a very simple substance over a period of time. But this position begs the question. This is because it fails to account for the source of the so called simple substance from which everything else evolved. To say that the simple substance itself evolved from the simplest substance would lead to an infinite regression. For one may have to keep on answering that the simplest substance also evolved from the very simplest substance which in turn evolved from the more simplistic substance and so on and so forth ad-infinitum.

However, it is possible for a proponent to avoid this infinite regression by maintaining that the more simplistic substance from which everything else evolved did not by itself evolve from anything but just appeared from nowhere. But, if we grant this argument, then we must also grant the arguments for the existence of *Onyame*, *okra*, *sunsum* and all the other non-physical elements believed to exist in the Akan universe. This is because if we accept the view that the more simplistic substance from which everything else evolved did not by itself evolve from anything and that it just appeared in the universe, then we must also accept the belief that *Onyame* did not also evolve from anything (uncreated) and that He also just appeared and is the source (the creator) of everything including the *okra* and *sunsum*. This is why, I think, *Onyame*,

regarded as the uncreated being, is believed to be the creator that is, *Odumankoma* and *Oboadee*, of everything in the universe<sup>4</sup>.

Therefore, the existence of non-physical elements such as *Onyame*, *abosom* (smaller gods), witches, *sunsum* and *akra* (souls) cannot be brushed away as fictions, especially in such a spiritualistic environment where it is almost impossible to make a clear cut distinction between the physical and the non-physical realms<sup>5</sup>.

From our discussions so far I think that it is appropriate now for me to delve into the analysis of the different elements believed to constitute a person in Akan metaphysics. I shall first begin with the *honam*.

## 2.2. *Honam* or *Nipadua* (body)

There is no doubt that the body, which is one of the components of a person in Akan conception, is a physical element. It is, therefore, not surprising to note that, in spite of the several disagreements concerning the nature (physical or non-physical or quasi-physical) of the constituents of a person, the body unlike the *okra* and the *sunsum* can be singled out as the only element that is not a subject of disagreement by philosophers in terms of its physical nature. This is because the body is that aspect of a person which can be easily seen and felt and, as such, it is the aspect which is subject to spatio-temporal factors. In this regard the concept of the *honam* in Akan metaphysics can be likened to the Cartesian conception of the body which is also considered to be locatable in space and time<sup>6</sup>.

The reason why the body is held to be an important element of a person is because it is the main channel through which every physical activity is expressed and it also serves as the temporary house for what is believed to be the most essential element of a person in Akan conception, the *okra*. The body is believed to be “a mere ‘konkro’<sup>7</sup> that is, a container which lasts in so long as the ‘content’ (*okra*) also lasts but becomes unimportant immediately it is without the content, that which epitomizes life and upon whose presence in the body gives life. A philosophical analysis of the *okra* will be discussed shortly but for now I will consider how the Akan conception of the body differs from that of the Cartesian conception.

In Cartesian philosophy a person is held to be made up of two distinct elements, the body and soul<sup>8</sup>. The body in Cartesian philosophy is considered as “...a machine made of earth”<sup>9</sup>. The understanding of the body in Cartesian philosophy as a machine made of earth is different from how the body is conceived in Akan metaphysics. The Cartesian likening of the body to a machine gives the impression that the body, which is distinct from the soul, can function on its own without necessarily depending on the soul. In fact, this impression is confirmed by Descartes with his assertion that “there occur physical processes and mental process: that there are mechanical causes of corporeal movements and mental causes of corporeal movements”<sup>10</sup>. This view, which implies that apart from the mental causes of certain physical movements there are also physical (bodily) causes of certain physical movements, is not the case in Akan conception. This is because the body, unlike in Cartesian philosophy, cannot be responsible for any physical movement without having to depend on the *okra* (and its presence) in a person. This view is captured in the maxim: “*okra no na ěma nipa yĕ oteasefo*” (it is the soul that makes one a living being). This indicates that without the *okra* (that which embodies life) in a person all the physical activities including bodily movements that characterize living persons will be

impossible. What this means is that it is the direct presence of the *okra* in a person which enables one to have life and to also undertake all such physical activities. I am not denying that physical activities like running and clapping are a function of or are carried out by the *honam* or some parts of it like the legs and hands, but only stating that without the *okra* that which is believed to sustain the *honam*, the *honam* would not be able to undertake any of these physical activities. Thus, even though physical acts like clapping and running are not the activities of the *okra*, but the *honam*, it is the *okra* and its presence in a person which enables the *honam* to exist to undertake such physical activities. Meyerowitz is, therefore, right in stating that the “*okra* is the great force that keeps man alive, the source of his energy, his great reservoir of strength, and his sustenance”<sup>11</sup>.

### 2.3. *Okra* (Soul)

The *okra* is one of the most difficult concepts to analyze in the Akan metaphysics. The *okra* is considered to be a divine element<sup>12</sup> because it is believed that it is an aspect of *Onyame* (God) in every person. It is also believed that the *okra*, before inhabiting the body, was with God to bid Him farewell and to receive a person’s destiny<sup>13</sup>. The belief that the presence of the *okra* in a person results in life while its absence causes death makes the *okra*, like the soul in Cartesian philosophy<sup>14</sup>, to be the essence of a person. This explains the reason why, I think, a person (*onipa*) is considered as “*okrateasefo*”<sup>15</sup> (a living soul) and not as ‘*honam-teasefo*’ (a living body).

Some philosophers have argued that the *okra* is a non-physical element of a person. This is because, in their view<sup>16</sup>, the *okra* is a divine element from *Onyame* and thus, as a part of *Onyame* (who is a non-physical Being) in a person it is also non-physical.

But the view that the *okra* is non-physical has been rejected by Wiredu with his assertion that "...any theory of souls or spirits can only be an empirical theory"<sup>17</sup> in Akan conception. What Wiredu means by this statement is that there cannot be a non-empirical or a non-physical justification for the explication of the concept of the *okra* and that any attempt to understand the *okra* in Akan metaphysics can only be plausible in near-physical terms. In Wiredu's view the *okra* is not the same as the soul in Cartesian philosophy because to him "the soul is supposed in Western philosophy to be purely immaterial entity that somehow inhabits the body; the *okra*, by contrast is quasi-physical"<sup>18</sup>. By quasi-physical what Wiredu means is that the *okra* is not "straight forwardly physical"<sup>19</sup> which also means that the *okra* is seemingly physical though it is not really physical. The *okra* is not physical because for him the *okra* has certain "para-physical properties" which can only be seen by diviners or "medicine men" with "heightened perception"<sup>20</sup> and never with the ordinary human perception. This, as stated, does not imply that Wiredu considers the *okra* to be non-physical. Thus, in the view of Wiredu the peculiar nature of the *okra* explains why he considers it as inappropriate to draw any similarities between the *okra*, which in his view is quasi-physical and the Cartesian soul, which is non-physical in nature.

But the quasi-physical view of the *okra*, as has been demonstrated by Gyekye<sup>21</sup>, is not plausible. This is because it entails an inherent contradiction on one hand and it is inconsistent with certain basic beliefs like ancestorship and life-after-death in Akan worldview on the other hand. If by quasi-physical the *okra* is considered as that which is seemingly physical, then it

must be understood that Wiredu is not maintaining that the *okra* is a physical element and neither is he also stating that it is a non-physical element. This is because, as stated above, Wiredu has denied such interpretations of the *okra* in Akan metaphysics. The only option left for the understanding of the *okra* is to consider it as partly physical and partly non-physical. However, it must also be stated that this is not what Wiredu means with the rendition of the *okra* as quasi-physical.

The difficulty with Wiredu's quasi-physical (seemingly physical) view of the *okra* is that there seems to be no philosophical position (physical, non-physical and partly physical and partly non-physical) for the explication and understanding of the *okra*. This has made it very difficult if not impossible for one to really understand what the *okra* is (in terms of its nature) on Wiredu's interpretation.

But Wiredu may say that 'quasi-physical' is itself a philosophical position and it is only in terms of this that the *okra* can best be interpreted. This response leads to circularity. This is because by quasi-physical, Wiredu means that the *okra* is seemingly physical and by seemingly physical he does not intend to say that the *okra* is physical or non-physical or partly physical and partly non-physical. But by seemingly physical, he means that the *okra* only appears to be physical and this, in his view, is the same as saying that the *okra* is quasi-physical. Therefore, as demonstrated, the quasi-physical view of the *okra* is circular and hence, it is not reasonable to admit it as a coherent philosophical position for interpreting the *okra*.

Also, the rendition of the *okra* as a quasi-physical element in the context of certain fundamental beliefs like life-after-death and ancestorship leads to absurdities. For example, an ancestor in Akan worldview is believed to be someone (an incorporeal being) who is no more living in this physical world, but is residing in *asamandow* (the land of the dead), which is believed to be a non-physical world for non-physical beings. In the light of this, it is absurd to describe an ancestor (incorporeal being) as quasi-physical or as that which appears to be physical. This is because the description that is given to an ancestor in Akan metaphysics is that of a non-physical being and not that which seems to be physical. Hence, the characterization of the *okra*, that which may become an ancestor, as a seemingly physical element in Akan conception is inappropriate.

“‘Onyame nwu na mewu’ or ‘Onyame bewu na mewu’, Onyame (God) does not die, I will not, therefore, die, or, if Onyame dies, I shall die, but since Onyame does not die, I shall, therefore, not die”<sup>22</sup> is one of the Akan proverbs that underlies the Akan belief in the incorporeal nature of the *okra*. It must be noted that the ‘I’ in this sense is referring to the *okra* and not the body, which obviously dies. The import of this maxim is that spirits or non-physical beings, like God, are above death, a condition that affects only the body. If the *okra*, like God, shall also never die as the maxim indicates, then it suggests that the *okra*, is also a non-physical and an immortal element; hence, cannot be regarded as that which is seemingly physical.

The relationship implied between God and the *okra* in the maxim is relevant also because of the belief that the *okra* is a part of *Onyame* in a person. If *Onyame* is held as a non-physical being and not as that which appears to be physical, then the *okra*, a part of this *Onyame*, can also be construed as a non-physical element and not as that which appears to be physical. This is

because it would be inconsistent to consider *Onyame* as a non-physical being and at the same time consider a part of Him as not non-physical.

Besides, it would still not be a plausible position to hold if we even grant that by quasi-physical Wiredu meant that the *okra* is partly physical and partly non-physical. This is because if the *okra* is rendered as partly physical and partly non-physical, then by implication one is also affirming that there is an aspect of the *okra*, the physical part, which, like other physical things—hands, and tables—, can be seen or felt. However, this appears not to be the case with the *okra* because the part of the *okra* which is supposedly physical is not seen or felt as part of a person. This seems to betray the position that the *okra* is physically constituted in part.

But a proponent of the partly physical and partly non-physical view of the *okra* may argue that the fact that a part of the *okra* cannot be seen with the eyes does not mean that that part is not physical because there are other physical things like germs and electrons that cannot be seen with the ordinary eyes except with special instruments by some specially trained people. Similarly, one can also draw the parallel that the physical part of the *okra* need not necessarily be seen with the ordinary eyes but with 'medicinally enhanced perception' or, as Wiredu puts it, with a 'heightened perception' by some special people like diviners or 'medicine men'. In this way a proponent can maintain the view that the *okra* is partly physical and argue that just as electrons which are physical and yet not seen with the ordinary eyes but with an enhanced form of perception like (mega) microscope, so is the physical part of the *okra* which can also be seen only by diviners with heightened perception and not with the ordinary eyes.

But this argument is false. This is because it is held in Akan worldview that elements beyond the realms of ordinary human perception but which are only within the purview of diviners or people with 'heightened' sense of perception are not physical but rather non-physical. What counts as physical or non-physical in Akan worldview depends on what can possibly be perceived or cannot be perceived with the ordinary senses of perception and physical instruments and not what is seen or not seen by diviners. It is interesting to note in Akan worldview that diviners themselves do not consider what they see with their 'heightened' perceptions as physical. Therefore, the so-called physical part of the *okra* which is not subject to the ordinary sense of perception but is only within the scope of diviners cannot be appropriately regarded as really physical in Akan metaphysics. Besides, the analogy between the electrons and the alleged physical part of the *okra* does not hold. This is because despite the fact that diviners are in a different category from scientists who use physical instruments to see what is not privy to the ordinary eyes the kinds of elements (electrons, *okra*) that both the scientist and the diviner deal with are not the same. It would be very absurd for a scientist to claim to have seen the physical part of the *okra* using a microscope in just the same way it would be for a diviner to use his or her heightened perception to see electrons or germs.

Suppose we even accept that the *okra* is partly physical and partly non-physical and that this physical part is only seen by diviners, then by implication one is also saying that there is an aspect of the *okra*, its non-physical part, which is not and cannot be seen by diviners. But, if diviners are only privy to the physical part of the *okra* and not to its non-physical part, then there seems to be no basis upon which one can claim that there is a non-physical part to the *okra*, especially when the assertion that the *okra* is partly physical and partly non-physical is not what is held in Akan metaphysics. This is because in order for one to say that the *okra* is partly

physical and partly non-physical, then such a person must have also seen the non-physical part of the *okra* in order for him or her to assert that such a part exists. But this, in my view, is not the case because, as stated already, diviners are only able to see the alleged physical component of the *okra* and not its non-physical part and hence, there seems to be no grounds for asserting a non-physical component as part of the *okra* in Akan conception. In view of this, one (a proponent) will be forced to abandon the initial view that the *okra* is partly physical and partly non-physical for the view that the *okra* is physical, since this is the only part which is, as granted, able to be seen by those with medicinally enhanced perception.

But the incoherent nature of this new position also becomes obvious immediately we analyse it in the context of the belief that the *okra* is a part of *Onyame* (that whose nature transcends the universe and the reach of man) in a person. If God is invisible to both ordinary humans and especially to diviners, then it can be said (on the basis of the assumed definition of physical) that God is not a physical being. Also, if God is beyond the 'heightened perception' of diviners and hence, not a physical being, then the *okra* that which is a part of this non-physical being can also be said to be beyond the 'heightened perception' of diviners and thus, non-physical. It seems, therefore, that the consideration of the *okra* as a non-physical element in Akan conception cannot be under-emphasized.

Having argued that the *okra* is a non-physical element and hence, similar to the non-physical nature of the soul in Cartesian philosophy, it is important to note that the conception of the *okra* in Akan metaphysics is not the same as the conception of the soul in Cartesian philosophy. This is because Descartes considered mind as the same as the soul<sup>23</sup> and hence, as that which can exist on its own. However, it is doubtful if the *okra*, in Akan conception, can be

taken to be the same as *adwen* (mind) or whether *adwen* can be considered as that which can also exist on its own. The answer, in my view, seems to be no because *adwen*, as indicated by most of the Akan sages that I talked to, is not considered as one of the constituent elements of a person. Besides, I have argued in chapter one that *adwen* and *okra* belong to different categories and hence, cannot be used interchangeably to refer to the same thing in Akan metaphysics as it is in Cartesian philosophy. Though *adwen* in Akan is sometimes translated as mind, it does not mean that one can also talk of *adwen* as the *okra* in Akan conception<sup>24</sup>. The understanding of *adwen* in Akan as 'thought' "the noun form of the verb... think"<sup>25</sup> is, in my view, a preferable rendition of *adwen* to *adwen* as mind, due to the tendency of the latter to mislead one into thinking that it refers to something substantial in Akan metaphysics.

*Adwen* (thought), which does not refer to a substance in Akan, is an activity which is undertaken by the active component of a person, the *sunsum*. It must be noted that the consideration of *sunsum* as that which is responsible for *adwen* (thought) is, as has been stated by Gyekye<sup>26</sup>, a basic belief in Akan worldview. This seems to be the basis for the saying that "adwene no wo sunsum no mu"<sup>27</sup>, 'thought (or the activity of thinking) is in the *sunsum*', implying that 'thought' is an activity which is undertaken by the *sunsum* of a person. This, therefore, explains why one may not be correct to equate the Cartesian mind which is also the soul to *adwen* which is not the same as the *okra*, but, as indicated, is an activity of the *sunsum*. I must, however, state that I do not agree with Wiredu that the understanding of the *okra* in Akan metaphysics as the soul is "definitely wrong"<sup>28</sup>. This is because even though it is not appropriate to regard the *okra* as the same as the Cartesian soul (mind) it is not definitely wrong, in my view, to translate the *okra* as the soul in English.

#### 2.4. *SUNSUM*

Gyekye has identified two main ways in which the word *sunsum* is understood in Akan worldview; the “specific sense to refer to the essence of a particular deity or man, and the general sense, to refer to all beings and powers unperceived by man”<sup>29</sup>. The claims by Asare Opoku that, “it is not only individuals who possess *sunsum*. Families forming a community, often called a tribe, or a nation, may also have its *sunsum*. The Asante nation, for example, has a *sunsum* which is believed to be enshrined in the *sika Dwa*, or Golden Stool...”<sup>30</sup>, seem to confirm the ‘particularistic’ and the ‘genaralistic’ conceptions of *sunsum* held in Akan metaphysics. From these accounts of how *sunsum* is understood and from my correspondence with some Akan sages I can say that there are three different types of *sunsum* and thus, three ways in which the word ‘*sunsum*’ is understood in Akan worldview.

The three main categories of *sunsum* are ‘human *sunsum*’ (*nipa sunsum*), ‘non-human *sunsum*<sub>1</sub>’ and ‘non-human *sunsum*<sub>2</sub>’. Human *sunsum* is that *sunsum* which is believed to be in a person as part of his or her constitution. It is also that which is believed to be responsible for a person’s character or personality. Non-human *sunsum*<sub>1</sub> refers to beings like God, gods and ancestral spirits. Non-human *sunsum*<sub>2</sub> is believed to be naturally inherent in trees, herbs, hills, rivers and other natural objects. It is considered as the power or force that is believed to be inherent in things in the universe. It is important for us to note that a tree, that is naturally inherent with *sunsum*, can be a host of another *sunsum*, for example, a deity. But we must note that the reason why a tree or an object is regarded as having a *sunsum* in Akan metaphysics is not because such an object serves as the abode of a deity.

Objects referred to as having *sunsum*<sub>2</sub> (trees, rivers and mountains) are believed to possess *sunsum* regardless of the fact that there may be deities inhabiting them or not. There are two reasons for this. The first is that trees, rocks or mountains are believed to have their own *sunsum* and the second reason, which is related to the first, stems from the belief that 'everything in the Akan universe is *sunsum* or contains one (bibiara yɛ *sunsum*, or *sunsum* wo bibiara mu). This is the reason why it would be a mistake for anyone to regard trees, rocks, rivers as containing *sunsum* just on the mere basis that they sometimes serve as the abode of deities. This is because these deities do not reside in every single object in the Akan universe but have as their abode some specific objects and for which reason such objects are treated with all the reverence due to a deity. Therefore, if the argument were to hold that things contain *sunsum* because they serve as the abode of the gods, then the belief that all things (including herbs and stones which may not serve as the abode of a deity) contain *sunsum* will be false. But this seems not to be the case because everything in Akan universe, as the maxim indicated, is believed to contain *sunsum* though not every object is believed to be the abode of a deity. It is this *sunsum* (power, force) in these objects (which may not be the abode of any deity) that I have termed as 'non-human *sunsum*':

I have, in the fore-going, made a clear distinction between human *sunsum* and the other types of *sunsum* in Akan worldview. The aim of this distinction is to stress that my focus in this section will be on the human *sunsum*.

The nature (physical or non-physical or semi-physical) of the *sunsum* is one of the difficult issues to discuss in Akan metaphysics of a person. There is an impression that *sunsum* is a physical component of a person. I will, however, show through the analysis of some of the



arguments given in support of the physical nature of *sunsum* and also from some Akan beliefs that the understanding of *sunsum* as a physical element is a mistake. I will argue for the understanding of *sunsum* in non-physical terms and also show, as I did with the *okra*, the implausibility involved in construing *sunsum* as partly physical and partly non-physical.

Most Akan thinkers<sup>31</sup> share the view that *sunsum* as an element is related to the character or personality formation of an individual. However, they disagree on the nature of the *sunsum*. The *sunsum*, according to Busia, is “not divine but perishes with man”<sup>32</sup>. This statement indicates that Busia considers the *sunsum* to be a physical element. This is because death is considered in Akan worldview as a condition that affects the physical and not the non-physical; hence, if *sunsum* dies with a person, then one would be correct to regard it as a physical element.

Another reason why, I think, Busia mistakenly considers *sunsum* as a physical element can be deduced from his view that *sunsum* is what every father gives to his child through copulation<sup>33</sup>. In this direction, he writes “*Sunsum* is that which you take with you to go to the side of the woman and lie with her; and then *Onyankopon*, the Great One, will take his *kra* and bless your union. You give your *sunsum* to your child, not your *kra*. He comes with his own *kra*”<sup>34</sup>. What the child does not come with is his or her own *sunsum*, an element which, according to Busia, is given to the child by his or her father. Therefore, the reason why Busia rendered the *sunsum* in physical terms seems to be this: the *okra* cannot be a physical element which dies with a person because it comes from a divine source, God, who is considered as a non-physical being. The *sunsum*, on the other hand, is not divine and hence, dies with a person because it comes from a different source, man (a father) who is mortal and a physical being. This

may explain why anyone, in support of Busia's arguments, will construe *sunsum*, in contrast to the *okra*, as a physical element.

But this argument is incoherent and so, cannot be defended. There are other statements by Busia which seem to contradict the physicalistic interpretation he has given to the *sunsum*. Busia equates *sunsum* with *ntoro*<sup>35</sup>, an element he considers to be a spirit and hence, non-physical<sup>36</sup>. But, if Busia renders *sunsum* as a spirit just as the *okra*, then he cannot at the same time also consider *sunsum* as a physical element which perishes at death. The reason is that, if *sunsum* and the *okra* are both considered as spiritual (non-physical) elements in the constitution of a person, then one must either hold that both of them perish at death or neither of them perishes. It is inconsistent to regard *sunsum* as mortal and physical while the *okra*, another spirit, is considered as immortal and non-physical.

However, one can erroneously hold that *sunsum*, which is a spirit, is, nonetheless, physical because it has its source from the father, a mortal and a physical being and hence, this *spirit*, the *sunsum*, like the other physical components of a person, also perishes at death. On the other hand, one can maintain, as Busia does, that the *okra* comes from *Onyame*, a non-physical and an immortal being and hence, it is, contrary to the *sunsum*, a non-physical element which does not perish upon the death of a person. It is possible for someone to say that Busia's use of the word '*spirit*' to refer to *sunsum* was not meant to be understood in the generic or in the traditional sense as non-physical. Thus, a proponent of this view may conclude that it is not incoherent to regard *sunsum* as a *spirit* and at the same time maintain that it perishes at death, especially when it is considered that the *sunsum*, as stated by Busia, has a physical and a mortal being, the father, as its source.

But this position is also weakened by certain statements made by Busia which suggest that God, not the father, is the source of the *sunsum* in Akan metaphysics<sup>37</sup>. Busia states "The blood that is transmitted through the mother, the personality that comes indirectly from the Supreme Being through intermediaries, and that 'small bit of the creator which is in every person's body' and which he receives directly from the Supreme Being, combine to make a man what he is"<sup>38</sup>. He continues, "These gifts, too, define his place in the universe..."<sup>39</sup>. It is important for us to note that by 'personality' and 'that small bit of the creator in a person' Busia is referring to the *sunsum* and the *okra* respectively. This is because, as stated already, *sunsum* is that which is believed in Akan metaphysics to be responsible for the personality or the character of an individual and the small bit of the creator in a person is also what is believed to be the *okra*, that which makes a person to be a living being. It is also equally important for us to note that these two elements are considered by Busia as gifts. The only difference, which is obvious from Busia's assertions, is that while the *sunsum* is indirectly given to a child by God via the father, the *okra*, by contrast, is directly given to the child by God. The common feature between them is that, ultimately, both the *okra* and the *sunsum* have their source in *Onyame*, the creator. Hence, it is false to consider *sunsum* as a spirit and hold that it also perishes with the body at death.

Another ambiguous position on the *sunsum* has been advanced by Danquah. Examining his position one gets the initial impression that he considers the *sunsum* to be a physical element, but when probed further one gets another impression that he views *sunsum* as a non-physical element. These different and opposite views make it difficult to consider Danquah's position on the *sunsum* as coherent. Danquah states that "the *okra* being divine never seeks to enter into experience, into the *sunsum*..."<sup>40</sup>. He is also of the view that "...the world of the *sunsum* not the world of *okra*"<sup>41</sup>, implying that the world in which *sunsum* belongs is different from the world of

the *okra*, an indication that *sunsum* is not of the same nature as the *okra*. Danquah seems to be making a clear-cut distinction between the *okra* and the *sunsum*, the divine and the 'non-divine'. Danquah is not only making a distinction between the physical nature of the *sunsum* and the non-physical nature of the *okra*, but also considering *sunsum* as that which exists separately from the *okra*. With his assertion that the world of *sunsum* is the world of experience, Danquah is actually implying that *sunsum* is a physical element which undergoes all the experiences in this phenomenal world, which also means that it exists as a separate element from the *okra* which is divine and non-physical. In fact, Danquah confirms this observation with his assertion that *sunsum* is the "matter or the physical basis of the ultimate ideal of which *okra* is the form and the spiritual or the mental basis"<sup>42</sup>. The consideration of *sunsum* as a physical element by Danquah seems not to be in doubt, at least, on the basis of the fore-going assertions.

However, other assertions by Danquah give a contrary impression. The assertion that *sunsum* is the "counter part"<sup>43</sup> of the *okra* undermines the physical interpretation Danquah has given to the *sunsum*. This is because if Danquah regards *sunsum* as the counter part of the *okra* which is non-physical, then it is appropriate to consider *sunsum* as a non-physical element. But this is inconsistent with what his previous statements (regarding the physical nature of *sunsum*) asserted. Therefore, Danquah's understanding of the *sunsum* in Akan metaphysics is, in my view, implausible.

Meyerowitz, like Danquah, seems to be of the view that *sunsum* is a physical element, even though a careful examination of some of her statements gives the impression that *sunsum* is non-physical. Meyerowitz makes the following statements about the *sunsum*.

"...the *sunsum*, which only lasts as long as a man is able to cast a shadow"<sup>44</sup>

“The *sunsum* therefore, being not of divine origin, cannot join *Nyame*, but is changed at death into a ‘*saman*’, a ghost or a spirit that has to wander to the *samandow*”<sup>45</sup>, the land of the dead.

In critically examining these assertions the first impression that is had is the physicality and mortality of the *sunsum*. This is because the statements above portray *sunsum* as that whose existence ends with the death of a person and also as that element which does not come from God (not divine). In the case of the latter impression that the *sunsum* does not come from God and hence, not divine I believe I have already dealt with that in this section and will, therefore, not recount those arguments here.

Also, if Meyerowitz states that the *sunsum* after death changes into or becomes a ghost or a spirit (which is non-physical), then there is a sense in which one can say that *sunsum* is not really a physical element. This is because *sunsum* would not be able to metamorphose into a spirit or a ghost, upon the death of a person if it were really a physical element like the body. The *sunsum* is not a physical element that changes into a non-physical element when a person dies. What happens, in the view of some sages, is that the *sunsum*, together with the *okra*, leaves the body when a person dies. Thus, for these sages, the *sunsum* is, before and after death, an incorporeal element.

I cannot agree more with the assertion by Gyekye that “if the *sunsum* is that which constitutes the basis of an individual’s personality, it cannot be a physical thing, for qualities like courage, jealousy, gentleness, forcefulness, and dignity are psychological, not sensible or physical”<sup>46</sup>. The logic of this statement is that, if *sunsum* is construed as a physical element, then it cannot be held to be responsible for personality traits like courage, gentleness and forcefulness which are all non-physical or psychological features. Such features being non-physical must

come from a non-physical source. Therefore, the fact that *sunsum* is believed in Akan worldview to be responsible for such non-physical features of a person indicates that it is not perceived as a physical thing but as a non-physical element.

But someone might hold a contrary view that all such psychological qualities like courage, gentleness and jealousy are of the brain and, thus, are physical (brain) processes or brain states. What this implies is that the assertion that *sunsum* is non-physical because it is that which is responsible for certain non-physical features of a person is baseless and hence, false. But, this view is mistaken because the brain, like the hand, leg or any other physical part of the body cannot on its own be responsible for qualities like gentleness and jealousy, unless such qualities are impressed upon it by a subject capable of such attributes. This, I think, is the reason why *sunsum* is believed to be that which is responsible for the formation of a person's personality in Akan metaphysics.

In concluding our discussions of the *sunsum*, I will examine the position that *sunsum* is a semi-physical element. It is the view of Ajei that "...*sunsum* is not exclusively immaterial"<sup>47</sup>, meaning that *sunsum* is not wholly a non-physical element and that it is sometimes physical and sometimes non-physical. Proponents of this view justify this semi-physical nature of *sunsum* on the alleged basis that *sunsum* is capable of manifesting itself to the senses in spatio-temporal conditions though they are quick to point out that *sunsum* is not directly accessible to the senses<sup>48</sup>. The consideration of *sunsum* as a non-physical element is, therefore, regarded by the proponents of this view as a wrong interpretation of *sunsum* in Akan conception of a person.

But this position is, in my view, problematic. Suppose we grant that *sunsum* can under spatio-temporal conditions manifest itself in physical terms it does not necessarily mean that *sunsum* is semi-physical and not 'exclusively immaterial'. This is because *sunsum* may be non-physical though it may also have the ability to manifest itself in physical terms. For instance, *saman* (ghosts) are believed in Akan worldview to be non-physical, and not semi-physical, even though it is also believed that they sometimes reveal themselves in the physical world. In the same vein, the alleged physical manifestations of the *sunsum* cannot be used as a basis to interpret *sunsum* as a semi-physical element.

Also, to claim that *sunsum* is not directly accessible to our senses raises certain difficulties. This is because to assert that *sunsum* is not directly accessible to our senses is to imply two things: either *sunsum* is indirectly accessible to our senses or it is not indirectly accessible to our senses. But if one should hold that *sunsum* is neither directly nor indirectly accessible to our senses, then it seems that there will be no basis for one to claim that *sunsum* is capable of showing itself in the physical, neither is it not exclusively non-physical. Hence, one is inclined to believe that proponents of this view by denying direct accessibility of the senses to *sunsum* are implying that *sunsum* is indirectly accessible to the senses.

But, it is interesting to note that the exact means or mode (microscope, telescope or a 'heightened perception') by which the *sunsum* can indirectly be accessible to our senses was not specified by the proponents of this view and this seems to undermine the claim that the *sunsum* is capable of manifesting itself in physical terms. To claim that *sunsum* is indirectly accessible to the senses via a 'heightened perception' is implausible as said in the previous section when I argued against the semi-physical view of the *okra*. On the other hand, it would not be reasonable

to claim that *sunsum* can indirectly be accessible to our senses via telescope or microscope. If it is absurd to claim that the *okra* of a person can be made visible to the senses by the use of microscope, then it is equally absurd to suppose in Akan worldview that the *sunsum* of a person can be accessible to the senses using microscope. This is because, as argued, *sunsum* and the *okra* are both held as non-physical elements. In the light of this, it is doubtful if we can rely on the use of the above instruments to make *sunsum*, that whose nature is believed to be non-physical, accessible to our senses. Rendering *sunsum* as a non-physical component of a person is, in my view, not a wrong interpretation of *sunsum* in Akan worldview.

On the basis of our discussions so far we can say that there are two non-physical elements, the *okra* and *sunsum*, and a physical component, (*honam*), constituting a person in Akan conception. In the next section I will discuss the relation existing between the two non-physical aspects of a person, the *okra* and the *sunsum*. An adequate clarification of the relation between the *okra* and *sunsum* is vital not only to a clearer appreciation of the concept of a person but also the very question of consciousness in Akan metaphysics, a topic that will be discussed in the next chapter.

## 2.5. The *Okra-Sunsum* Relation

For some<sup>49</sup> the fact that the *okra* and *sunsum* are both held in Akan worldview as non-physical elements is adequate to regard them as one and the same thing. I will, however, show by putting forth some arguments that *sunsum* is different from the *okra* and hence the two cannot be

confused as one and the same thing. In trying to show this I will be careful not to imply that *sunsum* is existentially distinct from the *okra*.

It is true that both the *sunsum* and the *okra* are considered as non-physical elements but this does not mean that they are one and the same thing or that they refer to the same thing. Let me use a simple analogy to demonstrate this. The legs and the hands are all physical components of the body but it would be a mistake for anyone to come to the conclusion that the legs and the hands are one and the same thing, just on the basis that they both share the same attribute of being physical components of the body. In the same vein, it is a mistake to consider *sunsum* as the same as the *okra* just on the basis that they are both non-physical elements of a person. The reason is that though *sunsum* and the *okra* are non-physical elements, each seems to have a particular role it plays in a person and it is the different roles that they play that distinguish one from the other. This is not to say that *sunsum* is existentially distinct from the *okra*<sup>50</sup>. In what follows, I will show why it is wrong to hold the view that *sunsum* is existentially distinct from the *okra*.

The view that *sunsum* is existentially distinct from the *okra* is, in my view, inconsistent with the conception of judgement after death in Akan metaphysics. The belief in the accountability of one's life to God after death is fundamental in Akan worldview. Meyerowitz writes, "In heaven, that is in Onyankopon-kuro, the city of God, the *kra*... has to give an account..."<sup>51</sup>. It is very important for us to note that even though it is believed that the *okra*, and not the *sunsum*, is that which will give an account of how good or bad one's destiny (message) has been realized on earth it must also be noted that it is the active part of the *okra*, *sunsum*, which, as indicated, is responsible for the realization of the destiny on earth. Hence, it is

reasonable to say that it is also only that part which will be able to remember exactly how the message was realized on earth in order for the *okra* to account for it. This means that the destiny that the *okra* will be accounting for will not be realized by it but by the *sunsum*, that which, as is believed, will remember the exact way in which the message was realized. If the *okra* will account for the destiny that only the *sunsum* remembers because it is the *sunsum* which is responsible for its realization, then the impression is that either *sunsum* is the same as the *okra* or is existentially not distinct from the *okra* (or as Gyekye puts it is part of the *okra*). But we have already argued against the view that the *sunsum* is the same as the *okra* in Akan metaphysics. Therefore, our view is that *sunsum* is existentially not distinct from the *okra*. This is because if *sunsum* is held to be existentially distinct from the *okra*, there would be the difficulty in explaining why *sunsum* is not summoned by God to account for the destiny it had rightly or wrongly realized on earth. The fact that the *okra* is that which is required to play this role- a role that *sunsum* should have been responsible for- is a good reason for one to consider *sunsum* as an element which is existentially not distinct from the *okra*.

The dual departure of the *okra* and *sunsum*, upon death, from a person's body also suggests that *sunsum* does not have a distinct existential status from the *okra* and that it is connected to it. As held in Akan worldview the continuous presence of the *sunsum* in a person is contingent upon the presence of the *okra* in a person. This means that anytime the *okra* departs from a person, the *sunsum* also goes with it and that the *sunsum* can never depart on its own from a person (not as in dreams) if the *okra* has not departed. This is not because the *okra*, that which embodies life, sustains the *sunsum* and that upon the departure of the *okra* the *sunsum* loses its sustenance and so, like the *honam*, vanishes or dies. But it is because *sunsum*, I think, is connected to the *okra* in a way that the *honam* is not connected to the *okra* of a person. This, in

my view, explains why it is believed that upon the departure of the *okra* the *honam*, unlike the *sunsum*, does not continue to exist with the *okra* in the hereafter. That is, while upon death the *honam* is separated from the *okra* to indicate that the *honam* has a distinct existential status from the *okra*, the situation is not the same with the *sunsum*. As held by some sages, *Sunsum* that which realizes a person's destiny on earth stays connected to the *okra*.

The arguments above show, I believe, the implausibility of construing *sunsum* as a distinct existential element from the *okra* in Akan metaphysics. However, this does not mean that *sunsum* is the same as the *okra* and that any reference to the *sunsum* is also a reference to the *okra*. I have argued using the different roles that *sunsum* and the *okra* play in Akan worldview to illustrate that *sunsum* and the *okra* are two different elements. The *okra* is identified with life in Akan metaphysics, but the *sunsum* is not. On the other hand, the *sunsum* is believed to be responsible for the personality or the character of a person, but the *okra* is not. It is also believed that it is the *sunsum*, and not the *okra*, which acts in a person's dream. Therefore, the different roles that the *okra* and the *sunsum* play undermine the conception that *sunsum* and the *okra* refer to one and the same thing in Akan metaphysics.

The difference between the *okra* and *sunsum* is also demonstrated by the different linguistic expressions used for the description of the *okra* and the *sunsum*. The expressions used for the *okra* are not used to describe the *sunsum* and the expressions used for the *sunsum* are also not used to describe the *okra*. It would be inappropriate, therefore, to describe the *sunsum* with expressions that are used solely for the *okra* and vice versa.

The following are some of the specific expressions used for the description of the *okra* and the *sunsum* respectively.

"His '*kra* has run away" (ne '*kra* adwane), to denote someone who is scared to death

"His '*kra* is good" (ne '*kra* ye), referring to a person who is fortunate or lucky.

"His '*kra* has withdrawn from his body"<sup>52</sup> (ne '*kra* afi ne ho), referring to a person who is dead.

These expressions are only ascribable to the *okra* and never to the *sunsum*. However, there are other statements which are only used also as expressions of the *sunsum*. The below are some of such statements.

"His *sunsum* is heavy or weighty" (ne *sunsum* yē duru), that is, he has a strong personality.

"His *sunsum* overshadows mine" (ne *sunsum* hyē me so)

"He has a good *sunsum*" (ōwō *sunsum* pa), that is, he is a generous person"<sup>53</sup>.

Therefore, the fact that these expressions cannot be used interchangeably to refer to both the *sunsum* and the *okra* in Akan worldview suggests that those who conceive of the *okra* as the same as the *sunsum* are mistaken in their view, even though, as already argued, this does not imply that *sunsum* is existentially distinct from the *okra*.

I have in this chapter discussed the various elements that constitute a person in Akan metaphysics. It has also been argued that a person is basically made up of three elements: the *honam* (physical), the *okra* (non-physical) and the *sunsum* (non-physical). It was noted that the analysis of the concept of a person is germane to the notion of consciousness. This is because consciousness is an attribute of a person and cannot be adequately understood if the nature of

that who is the subject of consciousness is not clearly understood. It was, therefore, resolved that since, a person is that who is conscious, becomes aware, thinks, understands, remembers, doubts and believes it would not be reasonable to isolate the discussion of the concept of a person from the understanding of consciousness in Akan metaphysics.

Therefore, having discussed the various components of a person, I would in the next chapter analyze the concept of consciousness and examine which of these components: the *honam* of which the *amene* is part, the *okra*, or the *sunsum* is responsible for consciousness in Akan metaphysics.

UNDERSTANDING CONSCIOUSNESS

**3.0. Introduction**

The concept of consciousness is a difficult topic to discuss in philosophy. This may explain why the concept has occupied the attention of not only ancient philosophers<sup>1</sup> but also modern thinkers alike. Due to the different meanings of consciousness in different contexts, it is reasonable to state some of the ways in which the concept of consciousness has been understood and then delimit the sense of consciousness in Akan metaphysics that we will be discussing in this chapter.

The concept of consciousness means different things in ordinary life. In medical science, for instance, when it is said that a person has lost consciousness, the word is used to refer to a person who is not responding to a physical or an external stimulus, for example, as in the case of someone who has collapsed or is under anaesthesia<sup>2</sup>. The word is also used in another sense to describe the ability that one has to see physical things like how chairs have been arranged in a particular manner or the way a mother is crying because of her sick child<sup>3</sup>. In the view of Russell, consciousness is also understood in some circles as consisting in a relation between humans and other things<sup>4</sup>. Also, the word is sometimes used to mean 'being awake' as against being asleep and in another sense as living as against not living or being dead.

I do not deny that these different senses of the term consciousness are meaningful expressions of how the concept is understood in our day to day activities. But what must be said is that consciousness as will be discussed in this chapter will not be understood in any of the senses stated above. This is because the analysis of the various Akan terms for consciousness, *anikay*, *anidahô*, *ahonim* and *adwen* as mentioned in chapter one, gives us a view of consciousness that is different from the various ordinary senses of the word outlined above. This view of consciousness will be stated shortly.

The analysis of the various Akan terms for consciousness suggests that consciousness does not exist in a person like the way the *okra* (soul) is believed, in Akan metaphysics, to exist independently in a person. Neither does it suggest that it is something concrete like how mountains or valleys exist in the universe. The word 'consciousness', as expressed by the various Akan terms, suggests that it is a state or an activity<sup>5</sup> that one finds him or herself in and knows that he or she is in that state or is undertaking such an activity. I think that the word that captures the meaning of consciousness- as- a- state is awareness. However, it must be stated that by awareness we are not referring to the sense of awareness where one is, for instance, aware of how chairs have been arranged in a particular order or how a mother is weeping because of her ailing child. But the awareness that one has when he or she is in a particular state like, doubt, disbelief, anger, or is undertaking certain activities like thinking, remembering, doubting, understanding and willing. For example, when one is doubting a story there is a sense in which it can be said that such a person is aware that he or she is engaged in the act of doubt<sup>6</sup> and hence, conscious. It would be absurd for a person to claim that he or she is doubting a story and not be aware that such an activity is being undertaken by him or her. This is why Locke is of the view that it is not possible for anyone to engage in a conscious activity like thinking without being

aware that he or she does think or is thinking<sup>7</sup>. For him, “when we...meditate, or will anything, we know (we are aware) that we do so”<sup>8</sup>.

Therefore, the difficulty in discussing the concept of consciousness, especially in Akan thought, is not about whether acts like understanding, thinking, remembering and doubting are conscious activities and neither is it about whether there is such a *thing* as consciousness. But it is whether consciousness is a feature of a corporeal or some incorporeal element of a person or whether it is a physical or a non-physical activity. While some are of the view in Akan metaphysics that consciousness is a physical activity undertaken by the *amene* (brain) as it functions, others are of the opinion that consciousness is a non-physical activity of the *okra*.

The reason why a semi-physical conception of consciousness has not been considered in Akan metaphysics and why it seems that the discussion of consciousness has been limited to a physical and a non-physical view has already been stated in chapter one. Apart from the problem of identifying and demarcating the physical and non-physical conceptions of consciousness, I also stated that the various Akan terms for consciousness, give no indication whatsoever of any possible idea that indicates, either directly or indirectly, a semi-physical conception of consciousness. The terms, as examined in chapter one, only implied either a physicalistic or a non-physicalistic view of consciousness; hence, this explains the reason why there may be an impression that the discussion of consciousness has been limited to a physicalistic and a non-physicalistic view in Akan metaphysics.



A possible, but a problematic, conception of consciousness that can be held by someone as an alternative to both the physicalistic and the non-physicalistic conceptions of consciousness in Akan metaphysics can be inferred from Wiredu's notion of quasi-physical. It must, however, be said that even though Wiredu used the term quasi-physical to refer to only the *okra* it is possible for someone to use this notion to refer to the concept of consciousness in Akan metaphysics. In reference to, possibly, this quasi-physical conception of consciousness, a proponent may be of the view that consciousness is not a semi-physical activity and neither is it a physical nor a non-physical activity but is that which appears to be physical or is seemingly physical.

I do not think that this quasi-physical conception of consciousness is tenable in Akan metaphysics. This is because, and as stated at the beginning of this chapter, consciousness in itself is a state of awareness and that what makes it physical or non-physical is due to the source from which philosophers, in their view, attribute consciousness. Those who think that consciousness is a physical activity regard the *amene* (a physical component of the *honam*) as its source. In the same vein, philosophers who are convinced that consciousness is a non-physical activity also regard, in their view, a non-physical element of a person (*okra* or soul) as its source. If someone, therefore, conceives of consciousness as a quasi-physical activity, then he or she is by implication saying that there is a quasi-physical component of a person in Akan metaphysics which is the source of consciousness. But this is false, and as argued in chapter two the consideration of any of the components of a person in Akan metaphysics as quasi-physical is not tenable.

Therefore, I think that in the absence of a quasi-physical component of a person in Akan metaphysics, the rendition of consciousness in Akan worldview as a quasi-physical activity is implausible.

It must be stated that the difficulty concerning whether consciousness is either a physical activity of the *amene* (brain) or a non-physical activity of the *okra* (soul) is not peculiar to Akan metaphysics. This difficulty is also prevalent in other thought systems, especially in conceptions where the body and soul are held as alternatives to each other. However, this difficulty is complicated in Akan metaphysics in which a person is believed to be made up of not only the *honam* (body) and *okra* but also the *sunsum*. Hence, if consciousness is to be adequately understood in Akan metaphysics, then it must be examined not only in terms of the *amene*, which is a physical component of *honam*, and *okra* but also in relation to the *sunsum*. Therefore, in addition to examining consciousness as possibly a physical activity of the *amene* or as a non-physical activity of the *okra*, I will also examine consciousness as a possible function or activity of the *sunsum*.

### 3.1. *Amene* (Brain) and Consciousness

Theories of the brain as the source of consciousness have been around for centuries<sup>9</sup>. The view that consciousness is a physical activity of the brain is shared by well known philosophers like Cairns-Smith<sup>10</sup> and J.C.C. Smart<sup>11</sup>. In the view of these philosophers consciousness is not a non-physical activity as it has been maintained by Descartes<sup>12</sup> but it is an activity of the brain. The understanding of consciousness as a brain activity has been advanced in Akan metaphysics

by Wiredu. In his view<sup>13</sup> *adwene* (mind), unlike in Descartes, is not an entity in Akan worldview because it translates as 'thought' (the noun form of the verb think) in the Akan language; hence, it cannot at the same time be responsible for conscious activities like thinking. He avers that the *amene* is the basis of 'thought'<sup>14</sup> hence, consciousness and all conscious activities like thinking, remembering and doubting are a function of the *amene*<sup>15</sup>.

But this view is mistaken. The reason why it would not be plausible to construe consciousness as an *amene* activity is that the *amene*, like the hand, kidney and lungs, is a physical component of the body and hence, cannot on its own, in my view, be the source of conscious acts like thinking, remembering and understanding. For instance, the heart, being a physical organ of the body, is considered to be responsible for physical activities like the circulation of blood in the body and not with non-physical activities and features like thinking, remembering, understanding and willing. In the same vein, the *amene*, being a physical organ of the body, should also be considered as that which is responsible for some physical activity in the body and not acts like thinking, willing and remembering.

Someone can, however, maintain that the heart and the *amene* are entirely two different elements of the body, hence, the responsibility of one cannot be the same as that of the other. He or she may be of the view that organs like the kidney or liver have specific roles that they play in the body and that without them the activities carried out by them in the body would not be possible. He or she may, on this basis, assert that the *amene* is also the only element in the body which is responsible for conscious activities like thinking, understanding, remembering and doubting. In this respect, Shaffer and Smart both agree that consciousness is an activity of the brain<sup>16</sup>.

In the view of Shaffer, conscious activities or “mental phenomena are not only identical with brain processes but are in some important sense reducible to brain processes”<sup>17</sup>. For Smart, “a conscious experience is a very complex process involving vast number of neurons. It is a process, not a stuff”<sup>18</sup>. In his view, whenever that we have conscious experiences, for instance, thinking, certain processes (movement of neurons and others) also occur in the grey matter of the brain, so that such conscious experiences, though they are not seen or located in the brain, non-physical, are the same as the movements of neurons and other substances in the brain<sup>19</sup>.

But this view is problematic. As has been stated by Comman, it is possible for a person to know the kind of conscious experience that he or she is having without knowing the kind of processes and movements that may be going on in the brain<sup>20</sup>. But if conscious experiences are the same as brain processes, then the knowledge of our conscious activities must also be the same as the knowledge of the processes that the brain is undertaking. But the issue is that we do not have all the information concerning the brain in relation to our various conscious experiences that is, granted we accept the view that conscious experiences are brain processes. This fact obviously weakens the claim that consciousness is a brain activity.

The position that the brain is the source of consciousness is problematic and untenable in Akan metaphysics. There is no denying that the different elements of the body have different roles that they play but, in view of this, they also have one thing in common, the fact that their activities in the body are physical activities and not non-physical. The heart for example, is responsible for the circulation of blood, the kidney for the removal of waste products from the blood and the liver for the purification of the blood. Therefore, the *umene* being a physical organ

like the heart, kidney and the liver should also be considered as that which is responsible for some physical activity rather than as the source of conscious acts like imagination, thinking and willing. This is because to consider the *amene* as the source of consciousness in Akan metaphysics is to imply that without it, a person in Akan worldview cannot undertake conscious activities like thinking, willing, remembering, understanding and doubting. But this, as has been discussed in the context of some Akan beliefs in chapter one (section 1.3), is incorrect.

Perhaps the so-called processes of the brain are only a physical indication that a conscious activity is being undertaken and not that such processes are actually the cause of our conscious activities. It could also be that the *amene* or the brain is just a tool for conscious activities because it seems to be doubtful in my view whether the *amene* on its own can give rise to conscious activities like thinking, remembering and doubting. However, it must be noted that if we grant that the *amene* is a tool for consciousness, it must, in Akan worldview, be considered as a dispensable tool for consciousness because our discussions in chapter one (section 1.3) shown that it is believed that a person in Akan worldview is capable of undertaking conscious activities after the demise of the body. It must, therefore, be understood that as far as the Akan metaphysical framework is concerned, the *amene* is not a necessary element for consciousness.

In the light of this, I do not think that it is appropriate for the *amene* to be considered in Akan metaphysics as the source of consciousness.

Other reasons why the consideration of consciousness as an *amene* activity cannot suffice in Akan metaphysics have already been discussed in chapter one. There, I analyzed the concept of consciousness in the context of some Akan beliefs and values like the belief in the after-death accountability of one's activities to *Onyame* and the reward or the punishment thereof. The

analysis of these beliefs suggested that conscious activities like thinking, remembering,

understanding and willing would not be possible if such activities were to be a function of the *amene* in Akan metaphysics. For example, the mere fact that disembodied persons are believed in Akan worldview to have the ability to remember their past activities and account for them to *Onyame* is an indication that remembering and other conscious activities are, for the Akan, not as a result of the operations of the *amene*. Therefore, this suggests that something else, other than the *amene*, is responsible for such conscious activities in Akan metaphysics.

### 3.2. *Okra* and Consciousness

The view that consciousness is a non-physical activity of the soul is probably the most well known theory in philosophy of mind, with Descartes being its most ardent proponent in modern times. It is important to note that this position has also been advanced by Gyekye in Akan metaphysics. Gyekye<sup>21</sup> is of the view that consciousness is a function of the *okra* in Akan metaphysics. Gyekye seems to recognize an affinity between the Cartesian conception of consciousness and that of the Akan conception. Therefore, a brief exposition of the Cartesian view of consciousness will help us appreciate the position that consciousness is an activity of the *okra*.

For Descartes consciousness covers all the activities that the soul engages in<sup>22</sup>. Thinking, willing, understanding, remembering, doubting, denying, feeling and affirming are, according to him, conscious activities undertaken by the soul/mind<sup>23</sup>. This is the reason why Descartes considers the soul as that which essentially defines consciousness<sup>24</sup>. In his view, all that the soul

does, in essence, is to be conscious,<sup>25</sup> that is, to think, will, doubt, understand, deny, affirm, remember and feel. Therefore, if Gyekye maintains that "consciousness, which is equivalent to the soul or mind in Descartes, can be a translation of *okra*,"<sup>26</sup> then he is implying that whatever that can be said about the soul in relation to consciousness in Descartes can also be said about the *okra* in Akan metaphysics. A proponent can, on this basis, hold that conscious acts like thinking, willing, remembering, understanding and affirming are the activities of the *okra* and that, as in Descartes, consciousness is the essence also of the *okra* in Akan metaphysics.

But this position is problematic. This is because the *okra* (soul), in my view, is not that which is conscious in Akan metaphysics. Before I demonstrate this, I think that it is important for me to deny the affinity that has been established between the Cartesian notion of consciousness and the Akan concept of *okra*. It is important to note that the soul and mind refer to one and the same thing in Descartes and not as different elements. When one sees an affinity between the Cartesian notion of consciousness (which is essentially of the soul/mind) and consciousness in Akan metaphysics, then by implication one is also saying that *adwen* (mind) can be definitive of consciousness in Akan conception, just as mind, which is equivalent to the soul, is in Descartes.

But this is not the case because *adwen* (mind), as argued in chapter one, is not the same as the *okra* (soul) in Akan metaphysics<sup>27</sup>; hence, if it is even granted that consciousness is an activity of the *okra* (soul), it would not mean that consciousness is also the activity of the *adwen* (mind) in Akan metaphysics as it is in Descartes. This is because apart from the fact that *adwen* is not equivalent to the *okra* it is, as argued in chapter two, also in Akan worldview neither a thing that exists in a person like the way the *okra* is believed to exist in a person nor is it one of the components in the Akan conception of a person as mind is in Descartes. Therefore, while it is

appropriate to interchange the soul with mind in Descartes and thus say that mind is what is conscious, the same cannot be done in Akan metaphysics. *Adwen* that which translates as 'thought' "the noun form of the verb... think"<sup>24</sup> in Akan is, unlike in Descartes, not an entity<sup>29</sup> and hence, cannot in Akan metaphysics be the source of conscious activities like thinking, remembering, willing, understanding, doubting and affirming.

*Adwen* is not an entity because, as indicated in the above and in chapters one and two, it is not part of the elements that constitute a person in Akan conception. A person in Akan metaphysics is not made up of the *okra*, *sunsum*, *honam* and the *adwen*, but rather the *okra*, *sunsum*, and *honam*. The meaning of *adwen* as 'thought' in Akan, the noun form of the verb think, suggests that *adwen* is a function or an activity undertaken by a person. I will argue in section 3.3 of this chapter that *adwen* (thought or thinking) is an activity or a function of the *sunsum* in Akan metaphysics.

It must, therefore, be noted that mind in Descartes is not the same as mind (*adwen*) in Akan thought. In view of this, I shall refer to mind in Cartesian and Akan conceptions as  $mind_1$  and  $mind_2$  respectively. One significant difference between  $mind_1$  and  $mind_2$  is that while  $mind_1$  is held in Descartes as the entity responsible for conscious activities like thinking, willing, remembering and doubting,  $mind_2$  is, as explained in the above, in itself an activity and hence, cannot be responsible for such conscious activities. In the light of the fore-going, I do not think that it is appropriate for anyone to establish an affinity between the Cartesian conception of consciousness and that of the Akan conception.

However, it is possible for someone to claim that the consideration of the *okra* as that which is responsible for consciousness does not establish an affinity between the notion of consciousness in Akan metaphysics and the Cartesian metaphysics. He or she may say that the claim that consciousness is an activity of the soul is not peculiar to Descartes but is also shared in Akan metaphysics. The expression of such a view in Akan metaphysics is therefore, he or she may say, not intended to establish any affinity between the Akan and the Cartesian conceptions of consciousness.

But as already stated, the view that consciousness is an activity of the *okra* is, in my view, incorrect. This position seems to be shared by thinkers like Danquah<sup>30</sup> and Meyerowitz<sup>31</sup>. Danquah's view of consciousness in Akan metaphysics has to be understood in the context of his account of a person. In the view of Danquah, a person's *okra* and *sunsum* are connected to the *e-su*, which is "the primitive root of being"<sup>32</sup> or "the postulate of a prime genetic basis for the origin of the social subject, i.e., man"<sup>33</sup>. The *e-su* has life and it is also conscious<sup>34</sup> and because of this, it is able to go to *Onyame* to get its *okra* from Him to be a person<sup>35</sup>. According to Danquah, the *e-su* is also "the basis of the *sunsum* of man"<sup>36</sup>. The *e-su*, upon acquiring its *okra* from *Onyame* or becoming a person, does not vanish or lose its consciousness but "it is carried over into the individual world of experience where it is known under the term *sunsum*..."<sup>37</sup>. The *e-su* remains as "the bearer of conscious experience, the unconscious or subliminal self remaining over as the *okra* or soul..."<sup>38</sup>. In the view of Danquah, therefore, the *okra* in Akan metaphysics is not what is responsible for our conscious experiences or activities. Such conscious experiences, as indicated by him, have their source in the *e-su*.

There are difficulties with respect to Danquah's implicit denial of the *okra* as the primitive

element of a person upon which the other components of a person depend and his rendition of the *sumsum* as a physical element<sup>39</sup>. Despite these difficulties, most of which have already been dealt with in chapter two, it is interesting to note that some Akan thinkers like Meyerowitz do agree with Danquah that the *okra* is not the element responsible for our conscious activities. In the view of Meyerowitz<sup>40</sup>, the *okra* is an unconscious element, suggesting that the *okra* cannot be the source of consciousness in Akan metaphysics. She writes "the *okra* therefore appears to be that which Freud called the Id and which Jung calls the unconscious psyche..."<sup>41</sup>. We must note that for Freud, consciousness is an activity of the ego and not the id<sup>42</sup>. He writes "it is this ego that consciousness is attached..."<sup>43</sup>. The id is the unconscious part of man<sup>44</sup>. He states "we shall now look upon an individual as a psychical id, unknown and unconscious, upon whose surface rests the ego (the conscious part of man)"<sup>45</sup>. Therefore, if the *okra* is likened to the id, then the *okra*, like the id in Freud, is not that which is responsible for the activity of consciousness. Hence, in the view of Danquah and Meyerowitz consciousness is not an activity of the *okra*, implying that it is an activity of some other element of a person in Akan metaphysics. But before I demonstrate this, I will show why I think the consideration of consciousness as an activity of the *okra* is incorrect.

The *okra*, unlike the soul in Descartes, is not what is responsible for consciousness. For example, while Descartes regards consciousness as the essence of the soul and hence, as that which characterizes the soul<sup>46</sup>, I do not think that a similar statement can be made about the *okra* in Akan metaphysics. This is because, as argued in chapter two, the essence of the *okra* or what seems to identify the *okra* in Akan metaphysics is signified in the ability that it has to give life to persons<sup>47</sup>. This defining feature of the *okra* is rooted in the conception that the presence of the

*okra* in a person gives life while its departure leads to death. It appears, on the basis of this conception, that, unlike in Descartes, consciousness is not what constitutes the essence of the *okra* in Akan metaphysics. The soul in Descartes and the *okra* in Akan metaphysics are identified with two different things, consciousness and life respectively. Hence, I do not think that it is appropriate to consider consciousness as an activity or a translation of the *okra* in Akan metaphysics.

But, if we maintain that consciousness is not an activity of the *okra* and that the *amene*, a component of *honam*, is also not that which is responsible for it, then *sunsum* obviously becomes the only element of a person in terms of which consciousness may be analyzed in Akan metaphysics. In what follows, I discuss the possibility of understanding consciousness as a function or an activity of the *sunsum* in Akan metaphysics.

### 3.3. *Sunsum* and Consciousness

I have argued in the above that the *okra*, contrary to the soul in Descartes, is not that which is responsible for consciousness. I will, therefore, argue, in this section, that consciousness in Akan metaphysics is an activity or a function of the *sunsum*.

There seems to be no doubt in Cartesian philosophy that thinking or willing which is a conscious activity is a function of the soul. The consideration of the soul as that which is responsible for the conscious act of willing is also reflected in a popular English maxim 'the soul is willing but the body is weak'. The origin of this English maxim seems to be biblical<sup>46</sup>. The Akan version of this maxim seems to be particularly relevant to our analysis of consciousness in



Akan metaphysics. This is because it provides us with a clue as to the element of a person which is responsible for conscious acts like willing, desiring and doubting. It is important for us to state that the saying may not be original to Akan even though it makes sense to say that it has, since time immemorial, been imbibed into the Akan proverbial framework.

The saying 'the soul is willing but the body is weak' corresponds with the position that a person is composed of two elements, body and soul, and that it is the soul which undertakes conscious activities like willing or desiring. It is interesting to note that the Akan version of the saying reads as 'sunsum pē na honam yē mmerēw' (*sunsum* is willing but the body is weak) and not as the 'okra pē na honam yē mmirēw' (soul is willing but the body is weak) or as the 'amene pē na honam yē mmirēw' (the brain is willing but the body is weak). A significant observation about the Akan version of the saying is that, unlike in the English version of the maxim, the conscious act of willing seems to be an activity or a function of the *sunsum* and not the *okra* (soul) or the *amene* (amene). The recognition of *sunsum* as that which is responsible for conscious acts like willing or desiring is, therefore, one of the reasons why it is incorrect, in my view, to hold the view that consciousness is an activity of the *okra* in Akan metaphysics. This is because if conscious acts like willing and desiring were activities of the *okra* for instance, the *okra* and not the *sunsum* would be that which will be recognized in the saying as that which wills or desires. The fact that *sunsum* is recognized in the saying as that which wills or desires suggests that conscious acts like willing, desiring and remembering are the activities of the *sunsum*.

It is important for us to point out that the reason why *sunsum* is used to replace the *okra* (soul) in the Akan version of the saying is not that *sunsum* is another name for the soul in Akan.

Also it is neither because *sunsum* is a surrogate of the *okra* nor is it the case that the *okra* and *sunsum*, as indicated in chapter two, refer to “one and the same thing”<sup>49</sup> in Akan metaphysics.

The reason why *sunsum* is used to replace the *okra* in the Akan version of the saying is that the belief that willing is an activity which is, contrary to Descartes, undertaken by the *sunsum*, and not by the *okra* (soul), in Akan metaphysics. This, therefore, seems to be the only plausible reason why *sunsum*, instead of the *okra*, is recognized in the Akan version of the saying as that which is responsible for the conscious act of willing, desiring and remembering.

Some of the activities of the *sunsum* in dreams also suggest, in my view, that consciousness is an activity of the *sunsum*. There is this belief in Akan worldview that *sunsum* is that which acts in a person's dream<sup>50</sup>. The consideration of a non-physical component of a person as that which acts in his or her dream is not peculiar to the Akan worldview. According to the Yoruba, the *okan*, a spiritual element in man, sometimes leaves “the body during sleep and wander about on its own”<sup>51</sup>. The Mende also maintain that the *ngafa*, a non-physical component of a person, has the capability to “leave the body at any time and can injure another person's *ngafa* if the former happens to be a witch”<sup>52</sup>. Among the Azande, it is also held “that in sleep the soul is released from the body and can roam about at will and meet other spirits and have other adventures...”<sup>53</sup>. This view is also shared in Western thought by thinkers like Plato. For him, a certain wild beast in us leaves the body during sleep to engage in multifarious activities<sup>54</sup>. Plato observed, “When the gentler part of the soul slumbers and the control of reason is withdrawn; then the wild beast in us, full fed with meat or drink, becomes rampant and shakes off sleep to go in quest of what will gratify its own instincts. As you know, it will cast away all shame and prudence at such moments and stick at nothing”<sup>55</sup>. It appears, therefore, that the view that

sometimes a non-physical element of a person leaves him or her during sleep is shared by most conceptual frameworks.

In Akan worldview it is held that the *sunsum* in a dream sometimes engages in physical activities like fighting, eating, dancing and running. But in other cases the *sunsum* is said to exhibit psychological features like jealousy, gentleness, strength, weakness etc. Also at certain times one perceives his or her self in a dream sitting under a tree engaging in a purely reflective exercise like thinking, meditating and remembering. The analysis of the different activities that the *sunsum* sometimes engages in a dream explains, in my view, why some roles or features are ascribed to the *sunsum* in Akan worldview. Activities like fighting, dancing and eating which are undertaken by the *sunsum* in a person's dream is, I think, one of the reasons why the *sunsum*, as indicated in chapter two, is held as the active element of a person in Akan worldview. The fact that *sunsum* is held to be responsible for such activities suggests that *sunsum* must itself be active in order to undertake such activities, since such activities, in my view, would not have been held to be of the *sunsum* if it were to be a non-active element in a person. I also think that one of the reasons why *sunsum* is held in Akan worldview as that which is responsible for a person's personality is due to personality traits like jealousy, weakness, strength and gentleness that it sometimes exhibits in a person's dream. It must be noted that the use of the phenomenon of dreaming as a means to know, in this case, the activities or the functions of the *sunsum* is not peculiar to Akan metaphysics. Descartes for instance, used this phenomenon, 'the dream argument', as a means to arrive at knowledge which, in his view, could not be doubted<sup>56</sup>.

The consideration of *sunsum* as that which, in a person's dream, undertakes activities like thinking, meditating, imagining and remembering suggests, in my view, that *sunsum* is that which is responsible for such conscious activities in Akan metaphysics. This is because it is the *sunsum* and not the *okra* which is held, in a dream, as that which undertakes such conscious activities. Hence, the fact that *sunsum* acts as the agent in dreams to undertake conscious activities like thinking, imagining, meditating and remembering suggests that such activities are a function of the *sunsum* in Akan metaphysics. This is, therefore, another reason why it is incorrect, in my view, to consider consciousness as a function of some other component of a person other than the *sunsum*.

However, someone may object that activities like thinking, imagining and remembering are conscious activities of the *sunsum*. The reason why someone may hold this view is that he or she would say that acts like willing, thinking, doubting and remembering are the cognitive activities of the *sunsum* but not conscious states or activities of the *sunsum*. When Gyekye for instance, avers that *sunsum* "is that which thinks, desires, feels, etc"<sup>57</sup>, we must understand that he is not saying that such acts are conscious activities and that they are a function of the *sunsum*. Gyekye is ready to attribute the act of thinking for instance, to the *sunsum* in so far as it would be understood as 'thought' that is, in the "ratiocinative or cognitive sense"<sup>58</sup> and not as a conscious activity undertaken by the *sunsum* in the sense that Descartes understood such act as a conscious state or an activity of the soul. For him, 'thought' in this sense must be understood in its normal meaning in English as reasoning and not as the Cartesian *thought* which is consciousness and which has much more deeper meaning than what is meant in English<sup>59</sup>. In his view, therefore, it is this narrow sense of 'thought' that the *sunsum* is responsible for in Akan metaphysics. Hence,

'thought' or 'thinking', in the narrow sense, is, in his view, an activity or a function of the *sunsum* but not *thought* or consciousness.

But, I think, this objection does not take into consideration the sense of consciousness that we are concerned with. Consciousness, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, was defined as a state of awareness covering activities like thinking, understanding, willing, and remembering. An activity like thinking for instance, was understood as a conscious state and was never meant to be understood in its narrow sense in English. The act of thinking and other conscious activities were meant to be understood in the same sense that Descartes also meant them to be understood as conscious states or activities. But, unlike Descartes, I have argued, in the above, that such conscious activities are a function of the *sunsum* in Akan metaphysics.

However, I have not denied the view that thinking, in its narrow or cognitive sense, is an activity of the *sunsum*<sup>60</sup> even though this does not negate the fact that thinking, doubting as conscious states or activities are also, as argued, a function of the *sunsum*. It is possible for thinking, doubting, remembering and understanding to be the activities of the *sunsum* both in the cognitive sense and as conscious acts. The assertion that 'thinking' in the cognitive sense is the activity of the *sunsum* should not necessarily lead to the denial that thinking as a conscious act is also the activity of the *sunsum*.

'Thinking' for instance, may be a means of acquiring knowledge, that is, a cognitive act, but this does not negate the fact that the act of thinking itself is a conscious act. Descartes for instance, employed the act of doubting as a means to know that which is certain<sup>61</sup>. The act of doubting was in this instance used as a cognitive tool by Descartes to arrive at that which he considered to be certain. However, this did not preclude Descartes from considering the act of

doubting itself as conscious activity<sup>62</sup>. 'Thinking' (irrespective of the element of a person- *okra* or *sunsum* or *amene (honam)* - that is responsible for it) for instance, is by itself a conscious activity even though it can also serve as a cognitive instrument. Considering the act of thinking as a function of the *sunsum* does not make thinking less of a conscious activity than when it is considered as an activity of some other element. Therefore, while I may share the view that 'thinking' in the narrow sense, is an activity of the *sunsum* I also think that 'thinking' by itself, is a conscious activity and hence, is also undertaken by the *sunsum*.

Besides, the view that 'thought' or 'thinking' in the narrow sense, but not consciousness, is an activity or a function of the *sunsum* in Akan metaphysics is, I think, implausible. This is because 'thinking' in the narrow sense presupposes consciousness. This indicates that that which is responsible for thinking in the narrow sense must also be the source of consciousness, since without this it will be absurd to claim that that thing 'thinks' (in the narrow sense). Gyekye seems to have recognized this fact with his assertion that "thought in the narrow sense is of course a function or an act of consciousness"<sup>63</sup>. Even though Gyekye is of the view that 'thought' or 'thinking' (in the narrow sense) is an activity of the *sunsum*, he does not, however, think that consciousness is a function of the *sunsum* in Akan metaphysics. But this is incorrect. This is because if 'thinking' in the narrow sense is a function of the *sunsum*, then *sunsum* that which is responsible for 'thought' or 'thinking', in the narrow sense, must also be the source of consciousness, since without this it would be absurd to claim that 'thinking', in the narrow sense, is an activity of the *sunsum*. It is inconsistent, in my view, to maintain that 'thought' in the narrow sense is a function of consciousness and that it is undertaken by the *sunsum* and deny that *sunsum* is the source of consciousness. This is because if we deny that consciousness is a function of the *sunsum*, then we must equally deny that 'thinking' in the narrow sense is also a

function of the *sunsum*. But if we affirm that 'thinking' in the narrow sense, that which presupposes consciousness, is of the *sunsum*, then we must equally hold, and not deny, that consciousness is also of the *sunsum*. Therefore, the attribution of the act of 'thinking' to the *sunsum* suggests, in my view, that consciousness is an activity or a function of the *sunsum* in Akan metaphysics. This is also another reason why it is plausible to consider consciousness as an activity of the *sunsum* and not some other element in Akan metaphysics.

I have, in the above, argued that consciousness is a function of the *sunsum* and that it is incorrect to attribute conscious activities like thinking, doubting, willing and remembering to some other element of a person other than the *sunsum* in Akan metaphysics.

However, it is possible for someone to dispute the above position and hold that conscious acts like thinking, doubting, remembering and understanding are a function of both the *okra* and the *sunsum*. In this sense, a proponent of this view would maintain that it is inappropriate to consider consciousness either as an activity of the *okra* alone or the *sunsum* alone in Akan metaphysics.

But this position is also problematic. This is because if it is granted that conscious activities like thinking, doubting and remembering are a function of both the *okra* and *sunsum*, there would be the problem of knowing which of the conscious activities like thinking, willing, desiring, understanding and remembering are of the *okra* or the *sunsum* in Akan metaphysics. This problem would arise because of the difficulty that would be associated with the process of identifying and demarcating those conscious activities which are a function the *okra* from those which are a function of that *sunsum* in Akan conception. As a result of this difficulty I think that

it is reasonable for one to consider consciousness either as an activity of the *okra* or a function of the *sunsum*, and not both, in Akan metaphysics.

But I have already denied the view that consciousness is an activity of the *okra* in Akan metaphysics and argued that it is a function of the *sunsum*. It must be noted that even though, contrary to Gyckye, I think that consciousness is not a function of the *okra* I do, however, agree with him that consciousness is a non-physical activity in Akan metaphysics.

It is important for us to state that even though the *okra* is the embodiment of life without which the other components, *honam* and *sunsum*, of a person cannot exist, it does not mean that the activities of the *honam* (body) and the *sunsum* are also the activities of the *okra*. For instance, the body (or a part of it) is responsible for certain physical activities like walking, running, jumping and clapping. Despite the fact that these activities would be impossible without the *okra* that which embodies life and enables the body to exist to (all things being equal) undertake such activities, it is important for us to note that acts like jumping, walking and dancing are not the activities of the *okra*. This is because, even though the body cannot exist without the *okra*, it is the body (or a part of it) and not the *okra* that walks, claps or jumps.

In the same vein, the fact that the *sunsum* cannot exist without the *okra* does not mean that conscious acts like thinking, willing, desiring and remembering which are of the *sunsum*, are the activities of the *okra*. This is because it is the *sunsum* and not the *okra* which is responsible for such conscious activities in Akan metaphysics.



We are not denying that without the *okra* the *sunsum* cannot exist to undertake activities like thinking, desiring, willing and remembering. There is no doubt that the *okra*, the source of life, is vital for the existence of the *sunsum*. However, this does not mean that such conscious acts are the activities of the *okra*. The *okra* gives life to the *sunsum* to enable it to undertake conscious acts like thinking, willing, remembering and desiring.

Having examined the concept of consciousness I will devote the rest of this chapter to the examination of a difficulty which is associated with the discussion of concepts like consciousness and person. My interest in this problem is to examine whether such problem, the mind-body problem, associated with Cartesian philosophy genuinely arises in Akan metaphysics.

### 3.4. The Mind-Body Problem

The genesis of the problem in modern times is due to the position held by Descartes and other dualist metaphysicians that there is a causal interaction between two categories, mind and body (specifically the brain), which are essentially distinct from each other and have distinct characteristics. The problem arises because if one maintains the view that the body is absolutely distinct from mind, in that the body is physical while mind is non-physical, then, the difficulty arises as to how mind "influences and is influenced"<sup>64</sup> by the body. "The question as to *how there is a relation between the mental phenomena and physical states of the body, specifically the brain, is generally referred to as 'the mind-body problem'*"<sup>65</sup> (words in italics, mine). I must, however, state that not every Western philosopher regards the problem as genuine. That is, while some like Strawson<sup>66</sup> have denied the existence of the problem in Western thought others like

Ryle and Ayer blame the existence of the problem on “verbal confusions or category mistakes”<sup>67</sup>.

The examination of the mind-body problem in Akan metaphysics is a complex task to undertake. Some Akan thinkers like Wiredu<sup>68</sup> have completely denied the existence of the mind-body problem in Akan metaphysics. The complete denial of the problem in Akan metaphysics seems to give the impression that the Akan worldview is devoid of a similar metaphysical problem. But this is not the case.

I will demonstrate that the use of the label ‘the mind-body problem’ to refer to the metaphysical problem in Akan conception is inappropriate and subsequently argue that the problem that arises in Akan metaphysics is not the same as the mind-body problem in Descartes. As part of my arguments I will show that neither the concept of the mind (*adwen*) nor the concept of the *okra* in Akan metaphysics is the same as the concept of the mind or the soul in Cartesian philosophy. In this regard whether the problem that we will be examining is construed, in Descartes, as the mind-body problem or ‘the soul-body problem’, it will not be equivalent to or the same as ‘the adwen-honam problem’ (granted it existed in Akan conception) or ‘the okra-honam problem’ in Akan metaphysics.

The question as to the relation between the body (*honam*) and the mind (*adwen*) seems to be, unlike in Descartes, inappropriate in Akan metaphysics. This is because of the different conceptions of the ‘mind’ in both the Akan and Cartesian metaphysics. For Descartes<sup>69</sup>, mind is an entity and the most essential component of a person. He believes that the mind can independently exist on its own<sup>70</sup>. However, the situation is different in Akan metaphysics. Mind in Akan translates as *adwen*. *Adwen* in English also translates as ‘thought’, the noun form of the

verb 'to think'. For the sake of clarity let us use  $mind_1$  to refer to the Cartesian mind and  $mind_2$  to refer to mind (*adwen*) in Akan conception.

The differences between  $mind_1$  and  $mind_2$  on the basis of the above seem to be this: in Akan conception  $mind_2$ , unlike  $mind_1$  in Descartes, is neither an entity which forms part of the constituents of a person nor does it have an independent existence.  $Mind_2$  which translates as 'thought' in English is an activity or a function of the *sunsum*.

It is important for us to note that the consideration of mind as an activity or a function is not peculiar to Akan metaphysics. This view is also shared by some Western thinkers. Cairns-Smith for instance, is of the view that "minds are what brains do"<sup>71</sup>. Mind, in his view, is nothing but the activities or the functions of the brain; hence, it is not an entity. We must note that the denial of mind as an entity in Akan metaphysics does not amount to the denial of the *okra* (soul) as an entity in Akan conception as is the view of some Western thinkers like Ayer<sup>72</sup> concerning the Cartesian mind. This is because, as would be argued,  $mind_2$  in Akan conception is not identical to the *okra*.

The concept of  $mind_1$  in Descartes is not the same as the concept of  $mind_2$  in Akan metaphysics.  $Mind_1$  in Descartes is an entity and the essential component of a person but  $mind_2$  in Akan conception is not. Hence, it seems, in my view, to be inappropriate to use the label 'mind-body problem' to refer to or describe the metaphysical problem that exists in Akan metaphysics. This is because, as conceived in Akan,  $mind_2$ , which translates as *adwen* in Akan or 'thought' in English, is not an entity but an activity and hence, it is doubtful whether there can possibly be a question of how it interacts with the body in Akan metaphysics. This is probably the reason why some Akan thinkers like Sarfo Kwame are of the view that "the mind-body

problem does not arise in the philosophy of mind that is inspired by an African tradition such as that of the Akans<sup>71</sup>. However, as indicated already, this does not mean that a similar metaphysical problem does not arise in Akan conception. I must mention that the label 'mind-body problem' does not refer to or describe any metaphysical problem in Akan conception. Since the problem in Akan metaphysics is about the relation between the *okra* and *honam*, it is, in my view, appropriate to describe the problem as the 'okra-honam problem' instead of the mind-body problem.

However, it is possible for someone to hold that 'the okra-honam problem' is actually the same as the mind-body problem or what may be referred as 'the soul-body problem' in Descartes. The reason why someone may come to such a conclusion is this: first, he or she can argue that the *okra*, like the soul in Descartes, is a non-physical component of a person. Secondly, one can also maintain that since mind in Descartes is the same as the soul<sup>74</sup> 'the mind-body problem' can also be rendered as 'the soul-body problem' in Descartes. On the basis of this he or she can conclude that 'the okra-honam problem' is the same as the mind-body problem (or 'the soul-body problem'); hence, it is inconsistent to affirm the former problem (the okra-honam problem) and deny the existence of the latter problem (mind-body problem) in Akan metaphysics.

But this objection is mistaken. This is because the 'okra-honam problem' is not the same as the mind-body problem or what may be referred as 'the soul-body problem' in Descartes. Hence, even if the mind-body problem is rendered as 'the soul-body problem' in Descartes, it does not mean that it is the same as 'the okra-honam problem'. The reason is that the concept of the *okra* in Akan metaphysics is not the same as the concept of the soul in Cartesian philosophy.

For Descartes, the soul is the same as the mind<sub>1</sub>; hence, what is true about the soul is also true about the mind<sub>1</sub> and vice versa. The soul and the mind<sub>1</sub> in Descartes represent one and the same concept and therefore, are interchangeable.

However, the *okra* in Akan metaphysics is not the same as the mind<sub>2</sub> (*adwen*). The *okra* is one of the constituent elements of a person but the mind<sub>2</sub> is not. Certain expressions about the *okra* would be unintelligible when they are made about the mind<sub>2</sub> in Akan conception and vice versa. For instance, it is appropriate to make the following statements about the *okra* in Akan worldview.

The *okra* is an aspect or a part of *Onyame* in a person.

The *okra* is the embodiment of life.

The *okra* has withdrawn from his or her body, meaning he or she is dead.

All such statements refer to the *okra* (and are held to be true about it) but not to the mind<sub>2</sub> or the *adwen*. Thus, it will be unintelligible to assert in Akan worldview that mind<sub>2</sub> or *adwen* is the embodiment of life or that a person's mind<sub>2</sub> has withdrawn from his or her body to signify death. Similarly, certain expressions about the mind<sub>2</sub> will be unintelligible when attributed to the *okra*. An example of such an expression is 'kyerē wo adwen'. Even though, literally, this expression translates as 'show your mind<sub>2</sub>', it means 'let us hear your thought' and not 'let us hear your *okra*'. Also the expression 'wo adwen ne sēŋ' which literally translates as 'what is your mind<sub>2</sub>' means 'what do you think?' and not 'what do you *okra*'. It has nothing to do with the *okra*. The expressions 'kyerē wo adwen' and 'wo adwen ne sēŋ' indicate that mind<sub>2</sub> in Akan conception means 'thought' or to 'think'. It does not refer to an element like the *okra*.

It is clear from the above analysis that the *okra* and  $\text{mind}_2$  represent two different conceptions in Akan metaphysics. They are not interchangeable. That is, while in Descartes, the soul is the same as  $\text{mind}_1$ , the *okra*, in Akan conception, is not the same as  $\text{mind}_2$ . This, I think, constitutes one of the basic differences between the Cartesian soul and the Akan concept of the *okra*.

Another difference between the Cartesian soul and the *okra* has to do with the differences in their basic or primary activities or roles. In the view of Descartes, consciousness is the primary activity of the soul<sup>75</sup>. All that the soul does in essence is to think, doubt, understand, believe and remember. This is, however, not the case in Akan metaphysics. As has been discussed in chapter two, the *okra* is, in essence, that which embodies life. It is that which enables the other components of a person to exist. It is not that which thinks, believes, understands and remembers. Such conscious activities are, as argued in the previous section, a function of the *sunsum*.

Therefore, while the soul in Descartes is primarily responsible for conscious acts like thinking, willing and remembering, the *okra*, as conceived in Akan worldview, is not. This constitutes another reason why, I think, the Cartesian soul is not the same as the *okra* in Akan metaphysics. For instance, given *a* and *b*, if whatever is attributed to *a* can be attributed to *b*, then *a* can be said to be the same as *b*. But if there is at least a feature that *a* has but *b* does not have, then we can say that *a* and *b* are not the same. On the basis of this and in the light of the differences between the Cartesian concept of the soul and the Akan concept of the *okra*, I think it is correct to say that the soul in Descartes is not the same as the *okra* in Akan conception. Therefore, even if the mind-body problem is rendered as 'the soul-body problem' in Descartes, it

does not mean that it is, in the strict sense, the same as 'the okra-honam problem' in Akan metaphysics. The 'okra-honam problem' is, I think, very similar to the mind-body problem in Descartes but it is by no means the same as the mind-body problem.

Having argued that the problem that arises in Akan metaphysics is the 'okra-honam problem', I will like us to consider how this problem is generated in Akan conception.

The 'okra-honam problem' in Akan metaphysics is the problem as to how the okra, an incorporeal element, interacts with the honam, a physical component of a person. The basis of this interaction is the belief that the presence of the *okra* in a person gives him or her life while its departure leads to death. It is held that it is the *okra* that enables one's body to function and hence, without it all the physical activities of the body would be impossible. This is the reason why death in Akan conception is defined as the departure of the *okra* and not the cessation of the functions of the body (or any part of it). It is, therefore, held that it is the relation that the *okra* has with the *honam* which sustains the *honam*.

Another basis for the claim in the interaction between the *okra* and the *honam* in Akan metaphysics stems from the conception that certain physical (bodily) illnesses can be cured by 'purifying' or 'cleansing' one's *okra*. Though it is known that diseases have physical causes, it is also held in Akan conception that certain diseases have non-physical causes and hence, the treatment of such diseases must have recourse to the non-physical. Busia noted, in Akan worldview, that "recovery from serious illness was marked by a rite of purification- to wash away any uncleanness that may have caused the illness"<sup>6</sup>. For instance, it is held that certain strange rashes or sores on the body or the skin may be due to certain 'stains' or 'dirt' on one's *okra*. It is usually said in such instances that 'his or her *okra* is dirty' (*ne kra ho ayɛ fi*). The

treatment of such illness, in Akan worldview, primarily includes the removal of the 'dirt' or the 'stains' on one's *okra* by 'cleansing' or 'washing' in what is sometimes known as 'okra guare' ('soul bathing'). Busia stated that in Akan worldview, "... spiritual uncleanness was an element of ill-health and that the cleansing of the soul was necessary for health. When, for example, a patient was made to stand on a broom while being treated, it was so to symbolize this cleansing. The broom sweeps filth away from the home and keeps it healthy; so the soul must be swept of filth to keep the body healthy"<sup>77</sup>. The conception that the 'cleansing' of the *okra* is the primary cure for such physical ailments is, therefore, another basis for the relation that is claimed to exist between the *okra* and *honam* in Akan worldview.

Similarly, it is held that the state of one's body also affects the *okra*. It is believed that the *okra* stays longer in a healthy body than in an unhealthy one. That is, a body with debilitating illness without an effective treatment is very likely to cause a person's *okra* to withdraw from it than a body without such an illness. Therefore, the continuous presence of the *okra* in the body depends, in some cases, on the good or the bad state of the body. This is also another basis for the interaction which is believed to exist between the *okra* and the *honam* in Akan conception.

But, if it is held that the *okra* and *honam* are distinct elements with distinct characteristics, then the difficulty arises as to how the *okra*, a non-physical element, interacts with *honam* which is physical<sup>78</sup>. This is a problem because there seems to be no explanation for the interaction that is believed to exist between the *okra* and *honam*. Thus, even though it is held in Akan worldview that the *okra* resides in the head of a person<sup>79</sup>, the exact manner in which the *okra* interacts with the *honam* is yet to be explained.

However, it is important to note that not everybody would agree that there is 'the *okra-honam* problem' in Akan metaphysics. It is possible for someone to deny 'the *okra-honam* problem' by denying the existence of the *okra* in Akan conception. This would mean that there would be no *okra* for there to be an interaction between it and the *honam* to generate the problem in Akan metaphysics.

But this view is difficult to defend. This is because it is tenaciously held in Akan worldview that the *okra* exists and that it is its presence in a person that enables the *honam* to also exist. The *honam*, as conceived, cannot exist without the *okra*. This suggests that it is doubtful to deny the existence of the *okra* without, by implication, denying the existence of the *honam* in Akan metaphysics. But the view that a person in Akan conception is composed of only the *honam* is problematic. Therefore, the denial of 'the *okra-honam* problem' on the basis that the *okra* does not exist in Akan conception is false.

The belief that there is an interaction between the *okra* and *honam* in Akan metaphysics seems to be undeniable. What seems to be problematic in Akan conception is exactly how this interaction is possible between the *okra* and *honam*. It is a problem because of the apparent lack of explanation for the *okra* and *honam* interaction.

But it must be noted that the fact that one may not be able to explain how the interaction between the *okra* and *honam* takes place does not necessarily mean that there is no such an interaction. This is because there could be an interaction without our having the means now to explain how such an interaction is possible. It is, therefore, possible that in the near future we may be able to explain exactly how the interaction between the *okra* and *honam* takes place in Akan metaphysics.

Besides, the lack of explanation with respect to how any interaction is possible between a non-physical element and a physical element is not peculiar to 'the okra-honam relation'. There are theories which lack similar explanations. For instance, force of gravity is believed to pull two objects in space to each other and also thrown objects back to the earth. But as to how force of gravity is able to pull one physical object to another object in space and also thrown objects back to the earth seems not to have been adequately explained. In physics, what is mathematically arrived at is the amount of force of gravity that acts on a particular object and not the interaction between force of gravity and an object or how force of gravity pulls physical objects to each other. But the seemingly inexplicable nature of how force of gravity pulls physical objects has not undermined the claim that an interaction exists between force of gravity and objects in space and also between force of gravity and a thrown object. In the same vein, the apparent inability to explain how okra interacts with the honam in Akan metaphysics should not, in my view, constitute the basis for the rejection of the conception that an interaction exists between the okra and honam.

I have discussed two issues in this chapter: the concept of consciousness and a supposed problem, the mind-body problem, associated with concepts like consciousness and person. I argued that the label 'the mind-body problem' is not the appropriate description of the metaphysical problem, 'the okra-honam problem', which arises in Akan metaphysics. The mind-body problem ('the adwen-honam problem') does not refer to any metaphysical problem in Akan conception. It was, therefore, stated that even though 'the okra-honam problem' is similar to the mind-body problem in Descartes, it is, in the strict sense, not the same as the mind-body problem. This is because unlike in Descartes, *adwen* (mind<sub>2</sub>) in Akan conception is not the same as the *okra* and the concept of the *okra* is not the same as the Cartesian concept of the soul. But

before this, we noted that consciousness is a state of awareness; a state where one knows when he or she is engaged in acts like thinking, remembering, willing and doubting. I argued that conscious acts like thinking, remembering and willing are the activities or a function of the *sunsum*. We also noted on the basis of the roles of the *sunsum* that consciousness is a necessary feature of a person. What has not been discussed in this chapter is how this necessary feature bears on one's personal identity in the context of the belief in personal survival in Akan conception. I discuss this in the next chapter.

**PERSONAL IDENTITY AND PERSONAL SURVIVAL**

**4.0. Introduction**

In this chapter, I will discuss personal identity in the context of the belief in personal survival in Akan metaphysics. The problem of determining that which constitutes the identity of a person makes the discussion of personal identity a difficult task to undertake. In the view of some philosophers, like Locke<sup>1</sup>, consciousness is not only a characteristic feature of humans but it is that which determines a person's unique identity. It is my aim in this chapter to examine the relationship between consciousness (as understood in Akan metaphysics) and personal identity in the context of the belief in personal survival in Akan metaphysics. Having discussed consciousness in the previous chapter, I will proceed to discuss personal identity in relation to the belief in personal survival. I will also analyze some philosophical positions regarding the criteria of personal identity, and how plausible or implausible such positions are within the context of Akan metaphysics.

**4.1. Personal Identity**

"If you ask for the definition of an identity I confess I can give none: it is too simple a notion to admit of logical definition"<sup>2</sup>. This statement by Reid may sum up the difficulty in

determining that which constitutes the basis of personal identity, that is, what makes one to be who he or she is and different from others. The search for that which constitutes the basis of personal identity has been the focus of many philosophical arguments with no agreed view on what it is that really defines a person's identity and makes him or her different from others.

The difficulty in determining that which constitutes a person's identity may have contributed to the reason why Hume had the impression that what constitutes personal identity cannot be known<sup>3</sup>. In the view of Hume, that which defines a person's identity cannot be attributed to any particular thing, for it consists of "a bundle or a collection of different perceptions which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity and are in a perpetual flux and movement"<sup>4</sup>. In the view of Hume, that what defines a person's identity cannot be determined and, hence, is illusive. But, if it is true that what defines a person's identity is constantly changing at an unimaginable rate such that it is impossible to determine personal identity, then on what basis do we identify ourselves from others, or for instance, distinguish Akwetey from Kwarteng? Therefore, it seems that the fact that we distinguish between two or more persons suggests that there is something unique about a person which can serve as the basis upon which his or her identity can be determined.

Besides, the Akan proverb *Nipa nyinaa nsẽ*, "All human beings are not alike"<sup>5</sup>, is an implicit acknowledgement of the existence of a feature which serves as the basis for determining the identity of a person. The proverb suggests that there is something about a person which makes him to be what he is and different from other persons. In the light of this, the Humean assertion that a person's identity cannot be known is problematic and, hence, untenable in Akan metaphysics.



I must state that the difficulty associated with the concept of personal identity is not about whether there is such a thing as personal identity or not; neither is it about whether there exists a feature or an element of a person that makes him to be who he is and different from others. The difficulty is rather about determining the feature that makes one to be who he is and different from others. It is in response to this difficulty that several philosophical positions have been advanced, each with the aim of providing us with that which serves as the basis of personal identity. One of such philosophical positions held in Akan worldview is the *honam* (bodily) view of personal identity. It is this view that I immediately examine.

#### 4.2. The *Honam* (Bodily) Criterion of Personal Identity

The consideration of the body as that which determines a person's identity is, in the view of McGinn<sup>6</sup>, the most "favourable" of all the views on personal identity. For Apenteng Sackey, an Akan sage that I interviewed, the *honam* or a person's body is that which constitutes his or her identity<sup>7</sup>. Even though he believes that, apart from the *honam*, a person in Akan conceptions is made up of the *okra* and *sunsum*, he is, however, of the view that it is a person's body that we see and touch, identify and re-identify in different places and times, and that it is on the basis of the body that we distinguish one person from others, hence, the body is that which constitutes a person's identity<sup>8</sup>. He is convinced that a person's body has a lot of features, height, size and colour; that can distinguish him from other people and aid in the determination of his identity<sup>9</sup>. He, therefore, seems to be saying that the reason why we are able to identify a person as Kofi and distinguish him from Ama without any confusion or difficulty is the uniqueness of Kofi's body which is distinct from that of Ama. The body, he would maintain, is unique to a person and,

hence, it is that which constitutes the sameness of a person over time and his re-identification in different places and times. But this view, as would be argued in the context of the belief in personal survival, is not tenable in Akan metaphysics

It is important to note that the view that personal identity is bodily identity is not peculiar to Akan metaphysics. Philosophers like Ayer<sup>10</sup> also share this view. Ayer makes the following assertion "I am, however, inclined to think that personal identity depends upon the identity of the body..."<sup>11</sup>. Ayer states, "The position is that a person can be identified by his body: this body can be identified by its physical properties and spatio-temporal location"<sup>12</sup>. There is no doubt, therefore, that in Ayer's view, like Apenteng Sackey, the body is that which makes a person to be what he or she is and different from others.

There is another reason why it is, in Akan metaphysics, inadequate to consider the *honam* as the basis of personal identity in Akan metaphysics. The maxim, 'ɛbere dani', 'time changes' suggests that everything in time, including a person's body, changes and, hence, does not remain the same. The maxim, ɛbere dani, therefore, does not only portray the general conception of time, as expressed in the statement 'there is no time' but it is more indicative of the conception that everything within time in the phenomenal world undergoes changes and transformations and, hence, does not remain the same. As indicated by Gyekye, time in Akan conception is "considered as a concrete reality, associated with change and growth"<sup>13</sup>. "To experience time, then," he avers "is to experience concrete change, growth, generation, and passing away of specific things"<sup>14</sup>.

On the basis of the above analysis of 'èbere' (time) in Akan conception, it seems that there would be a problem of establishing the identity or the sameness of the *honam* if the position that personal identity is bodily identity is left unrefined. This is because, as implied by the maxim, a person's body grows, matures, and changes and hence, does not remain the same over time, implying that the *honam* is inadequate as the basis of personal identity in Akan metaphysics. Commenting on the inadequacy of the bodily view of personal identity, Butler noted that an infantile mango tree planted twenty years ago at a particular spot is not the same mango tree twenty years later<sup>15</sup>. The reason is that in the "strict and philosophical sense"<sup>16</sup> the small and the big mango trees are not the same or do not have the same 'bodily identity' due to the differences in their physical properties. For example, it is characteristic of a three month old mango tree not to have large branches, large roots, plenty leaves and fruits. While these properties may not be the characteristic features of the infantile mango tree, there is a sense in which such properties can be said to be the characteristic features of the twenty year old mango tree. In the strict sense, therefore, it would be false to maintain that the small mango tree is the same as the twenty year old mango tree.

In the same vein, considering bodily identity (in the context of the maxim, 'èbere dani') as the criterion of personal identity faces similar difficulties, especially in instances where one's childhood body is compared to one's adulthood body. Admittedly, we can say that one's body at age twenty is not the same as one's body at age two. This is because one's body at age twenty has some features that the body at age two did not have. These may include the full set of one's teeth or pubic hairs. These differences in bodily features give the impression, on the basis of the above criterion, that a person at age two is not the same person at age twenty and that it is justifiable for us to deny the sameness of a person because of the differences in bodily features.

But I have reason to believe that the view of bodily identity held in Akan conception is more complex than what has been discussed. The analysis of the Akan expression '*onyini ěnsesa nipa*', 'growth does not change a person', seems to suggest that the conception of personal identity as bodily identity in Akan metaphysics accommodates certain changes and transformations that may occur in a person's body. It is important to note that the expression, '*onyini ěnsesa nipa*', does not refer to or concern the behavior or the character of a person in Akan conception. This is because a person is, as is generally held, believed to change and adopt new forms of behavior or character as he or she grows. In this sense, it is believed that growth can bring a change in a person with respect to his or her behavior. But this, in my view, is not what the expression '*onyini ěnsesa nipa*' is suggesting in Akan conception. The expression seems to indicate that a person does not lose that which identifies him or her as the same person that he or she was and different from others with time, that is, through growth, transformation, and certain changes in the body. Thus, even though the expression seems to acknowledge the changes, growth and the different stages and transformations that may naturally occur in the body as it grows through time, it indicates that there is something about a person which captures his identity and makes him to be the same person that he was.

A proponent, like Apenteng Sackey, may, therefore, say that the bodily view of personal identity in Akan metaphysics does not deny for instance, that the body that Kofi had at age three is not the same body that he has at age thirty. But he may say that it is also not denying that (*onyini ěnsesa nipa*) Kofi at age three is the same person at age thirty. He may use the following scenario to illustrate this point. Let us suppose that Kofi and Atta were very close high school friends but have not seen each other for the past thirty years. They, however, meet at a village festival after these long years and immediately they recognize each other. A proponent may ask

his or her interlocutor whether Atta would say to Kofi that he (Kofi) is not the same person he (Atta) knew some thirty years ago just because Kofi is now old with grey hair and, hence, looks different from how he (Atta) knew him as a teenager without grey hair. It would be maintained by the proponent that the fact that Atta recognizes Kofi, despite the 'changes' in Kofi's body, indicates that Kofi is the same person that Atta knew some thirty years ago. The proponent can, therefore, opine that Kofi's body has not 'changed' but has only 'continued' that is, developed, grown and matured into something that still defines his identity as Kofi. This, in my view, is what is expressed by Bernard Williams as bodily continuity<sup>17</sup>. This refined version of the bodily criterion, as expressed in Akan metaphysics, seems to avoid the problem that the old version encountered in that it provides a justification for the claim that a person remains the same person he or she was some years ago regardless of the disparities in the features of one's adulthood and childhood body.

This position, bodily continuity, is faced with some difficulties because it is known that there are some identical twins who do not only look very identical but also maintain and continue to grow in their identities or sameness of bodily features. This, however, does not mean that one of the twins is the same as the other despite the resemblance in bodily features<sup>18</sup>. Bodily criterion of identity does not seem to offer a very distinct basis upon which a person's identity can be determined. To use the body as the basis of determining a person's identity may for example, result in the wrong attribution of identities to two identical people, especially when such people have very similar bodily appearances and features. This, therefore, suggests that that which serves as the criterion of personal identity is something which is very basic and unique to a person and not just his or her body or bodily continuity; hence, bodily continuity is not a sufficient basis for the determination of personal identity<sup>19</sup>.

The consideration of the body as the criterion of personal identity also means, though problematic, that anytime the body ceases to exist a person also ceases to have an identity. This is because, if we take the body as that which constitutes personal identity, then it would not make sense to talk of one's personal identity in any other terms after the demise of the body. But this view is not the case because there is a sense in which someone can talk of a person's identity in some other form or work of his. A proponent can say that a particular feature of a person, like one's specific intellectual work, could continue to identify him or her long after his or her death. For instance, a proponent may cite Plato's *Republic* and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* as good examples in this regard. However, I do not think that that which constitutes the basis of personal identity is the specific intellectual work of a person. This is because it is not every person who will have an intellectual work to his or her credit.

I must also indicate that the bodily criterion of personal identity is untenable in Akan metaphysics, especially when it is analyzed in the context of the belief in personal survival, life after death. The belief in personal survival is one of the most cardinal tenets in Akan worldview. It is the basis of several concepts, values, ideals and practices in Akan metaphysics. An Akan sage, Rev. Pious Agyemang, averred "we believe in life after death because if we do not believe in it, we will never organize elaborate sending-off ceremonies, burials, for the dead"<sup>20</sup>. The organization of elaborate burials for the dead, with cloth, money, sponge, towel, slippers, utensils and other things in the coffin, indicates that death is not conceived in Akan worldview as the end of man but a beginning of a journey into another level of existence, hence must be furnished with basic things that would make his or her journey comfortable. Therefore, the inclusion of such items as gold, money, expensive cloth and others in the coffin does not indicate that the custodians of this act do not value or have use for such items or that such items were in

abundance, but is because of the conception that a person upon death only sheds off the physical component of his being, *the honam*, but continues to exist in a world that is different from this phenomenal world. This conception is, I think, what has been expressed in the maxim, 'onipa wɔ bɛbi' ko, 'a person has somewhere to go'. This somewhere, for the Akan, is not a place within this physical world but is metaphysical.

Therefore, the view that a person in Akan conception is *honam*<sup>21</sup> which also suggests that upon the demise of the *honam*, a person ceases to exist is inconsistent with Akan beliefs and practices. This is because several maxims and proverbs express the belief in personal survival and also show that the *honam* is not the only element and the most important element that constitutes a person in Akan conceptions. The maxim, "Onyame nwu na mawu", or "Onyame bewu na mawu", Onyame (God) does not die, I will therefore not die, or if Onyame dies, I shall die, but since Onyame does not die, I shall therefore not die"<sup>22</sup> clearly demonstrates the belief in personal survival and the falsity of the claim that a person in Akan conceptions is made up of only the *honam*. The analysis of the maxim indicates that there is an aspect of a person that, like God, will ever exist and not perish. This aspect of a person is, of course, not the *honam*, since the *honam* (body), as we know dies and decays. The conception that there is an aspect of a person that, like God, will never die even after the demise of the *honam* is one of the bases for the belief in personal survival in Akan metaphysics.

It is important to note that the belief in personal survival is not peculiar to Akan worldview. Among the Yoruba, it is believed that the *emi*, a non-physical component of a person, upon the demise of the body "returns to *Elemi*, Owner of the Spirit, God, and continues

to live"<sup>23</sup>. The Mende also believe in the existence of a non-physical component of a person after death<sup>24</sup>. The belief in personal survival, therefore, seems to be wide-spread.

Hence, the analysis or the logic of the maxim 'Onipa wua na onwui', meaning 'when a person is dead, he or she is not really dead', in the context of the belief in personal survival, is the reason why it would not be tenable to maintain in Akan worldview that the demise of the body leads to the non-existence of that which constitutes, or preserves one's, personal identity. This is because death is not considered in Akan worldview as the end of a person but, rather as a means of ushering him or her into another life. It is clear from the meaning of the above maxim that a person is held in Akan thought as essentially not a body<sup>25</sup> and that he or she continues to survive, after the destruction of the body, in a world which is different from this physical world. Therefore, if it is considered that that which makes a person to be the same and different from others is the *honam*, then for the Akan, it would be impossible to identify that which determines the identity of a person after the demise of the *honam*.

It must be noted that I am not denying, in Akan worldview, that a person can be identified by his body or some feature other feature of his; height, name, profession, car, mother's name, house, spouse or number of children. However, considering the difficulties associated with the *honam* as the criterion of personal identity in the context of the belief in personal survival, one is inclined to believe that what constitutes the basis for determining the identity of a person must be unique and essentially inherent in a person, so that it will be impossible for that thing to cease to exist, change or be separated from who a person is<sup>26</sup>. This feature, which will be examined later, is *memory*. For to base a person's identity on a non-essential feature like one's car or house or one's name, profession, height or skin colour would

easily show itself to be inadequate criteria for determining a person's identity. This is because a person does not lose that which makes him to be who he is and different from others with the loss of such features like one's car, house and a change of name<sup>27</sup>. If we can say that a person is the same person after he or she has changed the name or does not remember his or her past or has undergone a plastic surgery to change some parts of the body, especially the face, then one can aver that that which conserves a person's identity has a "continued uninterrupted existence"<sup>28</sup> and, therefore, it transcends the possession of a name, which can easily be changed, memory<sup>29</sup> (as espoused in Locke), which can be lost or interrupted by forgetfulness, and a *honam*, which can also be destroyed by death.

The view that that which conserves a person's identity has a continued uninterrupted existence (a feature that does not cease to exist or interrupted or changed) is the reason why it is not plausible to consider the *honam* or one's name as that which constitutes a person's identity in Akan metaphysics. This is because the *honam*, though important, is, unlike the *okra*, not what a person is. This is because of the Akan conception that a person continues to live after the destruction of the *honam*. As explained, this belief is the basis of the Akan proverb 'onipa wua na onwui', meaning 'when a person is dead (when the *honam*, body, is no more), he or she is not really dead'. Due to the belief that a person continues to live after the demise of the body, it would not be reasonable to regard the body or anything associated with it or believed to be of it as that which determines a person's identity in Akan metaphysics. This seems to be the reason why it is plausible to consider an intrinsic feature of a person as that which constitutes one's identity in Akan metaphysics.

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easily show itself to be inadequate criteria for determining a person's identity. This is because a person does not lose that which makes him to be who he is and different from others with the loss of such features like one's car, house and a change of name<sup>27</sup>. If we can say that a person is the same person after he or she has changed the name or does not remember his or her past or has undergone a plastic surgery to change some parts of the body, especially the face, then one can aver that that which conserves a person's identity has a "continued uninterrupted existence"<sup>28</sup> and, therefore, it transcends the possession of a name, which can easily be changed, memory<sup>29</sup> (as espoused in Locke), which can be lost or interrupted by forgetfulness, and a *honam*, which can also be destroyed by death.

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It is possible for someone to hold that, since, in Akan worldview, the *okra* is the essence of a person without which a person cannot exist, the *okra* should be regarded as that which constitutes a person's identity in Akan metaphysics.

But the consideration of the *okra* as that which determines a person's identity in Akan metaphysics has its own difficulties. There is the difficulty of determining that which makes an *okra* (for instance, Kofi's *okra*) to be what it is and distinct from other *akra* (like Kwame's and Ama's). It is not clear whether that which distinguishes a person's *okra* from another lies with the appearance or the form of that particular *okra* or with a person's *sunsum* or with consciousness, which, in my view and as discussed in the previous chapter, is a function of the *sunsum*. In what follows, I examine the relationship between the *okra*, consciousness and personal identity in Akan metaphysics.

#### 4.3. The *Okra*, Consciousness and Personal identity

The consideration of the *okra* (soul) as that which constitutes a person's identity is a view which is shared by most philosophers. The Cartesian assertion that "the mind, which alone I at present identify with myself..."<sup>30</sup> gives the impression that in Cartesian philosophy a person's identity is definable in terms of the soul.

It is important to note that the view that the soul or *okra* is what constitutes a person's identity in Akan worldview is also shared by some thinkers like Osei<sup>31</sup> and Asare Opoku<sup>32</sup>. Opoku believes that "a person has an *okra*, which gives him his personal identity"<sup>33</sup>. This view of personal identity may be informed by the belief in the survival of a person after the

destruction of the *honam*. This is because of the conception in Akan worldview that, "death is a departure and not... annihilation of a person,"<sup>34</sup> meaning that at death a person only loses his body but does not lose that which makes him to be the same person that he was. Let us suppose that Kofi and his three friends had an accident and died three days later. According to this conception, Kofi will only lose his body but not (*memory*, a feature I will examine shortly) that which makes him to be the same person that he was and which distinguished him from others, including his three friends. For Asare Opoku, however, this feature of a person which constitutes his personal identity and makes him to be distinct from others is the *okra*.

But the view that the *okra* is what determines the identity of a person in Akan worldview bristles with certain difficulties. Before I examine these difficulties, I must state that some traditional thinkers like Nana Boafo Ansah<sup>35</sup> would deny the *okra* as that which constitutes a person's identity on the basis that it does not exist as an element of a person. But this is not correct. This is because, as demonstrated in chapter two, there are several maxims and proverbs which attest to the existence of the *okra* as an element of a person in Akan metaphysics. Therefore, the rejection of the *okra* by Nana Boafo Ansah as that which determines a person's identity in Akan metaphysics must be grounded on some reason(s) other than the denial of the *okra* as an element of a person in Akan worldview. This is what I intend to do.

If the *okra* is considered as that which determines a person's identity, it would be very difficult to determine that which makes a particular *okra* to be that *okra* and different from other *okra* (souls). There would be the problem of how we can identify for instance, Kofi's *okra* from the *okra* of Kwame, Ama and Yaw in a company of other *okra*. But, since it is believed that everyone has his own *okra* and also makes sense in Akan worldview to make these expressions

'me *kra*' (my soul), 'wo *kra*' (your soul) and 'ne *kra*' (his or her soul), one is inclined to believe that there is a belief in Akan worldview that every *okra* has an identity, that which distinguishes it from other *akra*. Therefore, the question is, what is it about an *okra*, for example, Kofi's *okra*, that makes it uniquely Kofi's own and different from the *akra* (souls) of Kwame, Ama, Yaw and others?

There is an impression, on the basis of some statements by Asare Opoku, that *kradin* (soul name) is that which distinguishes a person's *okra* from other *akra* in Akan metaphysics. He writes, "Every *okra* has a *kradin*, a name which is given to a child according to the day of the week on which it is born. These names have been mistakenly called day-names in English, but they actually denote the names of the *akra* (plural) born on specific days"<sup>36</sup>. Someone can, therefore, suggest on the basis of the above view that *kradin* is that which identifies an *okra* from other *akra* in Akan metaphysics. For example, a person born on Thursday would have its *kradin* as Yaw or Yaa, and, hence, is different from the one born on Sunday with Kwesi or Esi as its *kradin*. In this sense, someone could say that the individual *kradin* given to a particular *okra* could serve as the basis for determining the identity of a person's *okra* in Akan metaphysics.

But this view is not plausible. This is because there are only seven male and female *kradin*<sup>37</sup> for all *akra* in Akan worldview. The number of *kradin*, in relation to the number of *akra* (if the latter can be numbered), is, therefore, inadequate. What this means is that every *kradin* like Yaw or Kwesi would be shared by an innumerable number of *akra* in Akan metaphysics. Hence, the *kradin* Yaw or Kwesi would not, for instance, identify any particular *okra*, and, thus, it cannot be the basis upon which the identity of a person's *okra* can be determined. Therefore,

the *kradin* by virtue of the fact that it does not identify and differentiate one *okra* from another makes it inadequate as the basis of personal identity.

A possible but another implausible answer to the question of that which identifies and distinguishes between different *okra* in Akan metaphysics is to grant that the physical form or appearance of a person is a copy of the form of his *okra* and that the way the body of a person appears is the same as the way his *okra* also appears. A proponent of this view may maintain that a person has both a physical form and a non-physical form. The physical form is the form that a person's body takes. The non-physical form of a person is the form of his *okra* and this is what is reflected outwardly by the way a person looks physically. In this way, a proponent could hold that since it makes sense to say that there is, at least, a difference in bodily structure and appearance between persons, the forms of their *okra* would also be distinct and different from the form of each other's *okra*; hence, the distinct form of an *okra*, that which is reflected outwardly by the body, is that which identifies a particular *okra* and distinguishes it from other *okra* in Akan metaphysics.

But this position is implausible because the problem of identifying and distinguishing between two or more *okra* would persist. For instance, if Kofi and Kwame were, before their death, twins who were identical so that it was impossible for their identities to be based on their physical forms (their bodies), then the same difficulty will also arise in relation to the identification of their *okra*. This is because, if it is maintained that a person's physical form is a copy of the form of his or her *okra*, then it would also mean that in instances where one cannot distinguish between two persons for instance, Kofi and Kwame, on the basis of their physical forms, it would also be impossible to distinguish between the forms of their *okra* and hence, their

distinct identities. In the light of this difficulty, I do not think that it is plausible to consider the *okra* as that which constitutes a person's identity.

To turn to the *sunsum* itself as that which determines a person's identity in Akan metaphysics faces similar difficulties. However, I must state that there is a particular feature of the *sunsum* which distinguishes it from other *sunsum* and which also serves as the basis for conserving or determining the identity of a person and how distinct he or she is from other persons. This feature is *memory*.

The consideration of *memory* as that which preserves or conserves one's personal identity in Akan metaphysics is inherent in the Akan belief in judgement after death. Before, I examine the relation between *memory* and the above belief it is important for us to state that the belief in judgement after death is an indigenous belief in Akan metaphysics and not a borrowed belief from the Christian faith or the Western thought. As demonstrated by Asare Opoku, a person in Akan worldview is believed to go back to *Onyame* after the demise of the body to account for its earthly existence<sup>38</sup>. This whole idea, in Akan worldview, of a person coming to the earth with a destiny to fulfill and then going back to *Onyame* to render an account of his or her destiny on earth is the basis of the belief in accountability and judgement after death in Akan metaphysics.

It is important for us to now show how that (*memory*) which conserves or preserves a person's identity in Akan metaphysics is related to the above belief. The belief in judgement after death which entails accounting for one's past activities to *Onyame* for either punishment or reward, presupposes, that one would also have *memories* of what he or she did on earth. This is because if one does not have *memories* of the manner in which his destiny was realized on earth, he will not be able to give an account of it, implying that *Onyame* would not also have the basis

to either punish or reward him for the manner in which his destiny has been realized. But, it is believed in Akan worldview that a person will give an account of how good or bad his destiny has been realized for either punishment or reward, implying that a person would also have *memories* of the manner in which his destiny was realized. *Memory*, as analyzed within the context of the belief in personal survival, is the only means or vehicle by which a person can say that I am the same person who said or did this or that when I was living on earth.

*Memory* that which makes it possible for a person to account for how his destiny has been realized to *Onyame* is that which conserves the identity of a person in Akan metaphysics. This is because a person's *memory* of his past life is distinct from others and is uniquely his in the sense that he is the only person that can remember what he did in his past life in a manner that no one else can. Even if it is possible for someone else to have *memories* of another person's life, the manner in which a person would remember how his own destiny was realized would always be peculiar and distinct from the way someone else would remember it. Hence, if a person is believed to give an account of how his destiny was realized to *Onyame* for either punishment or reward, then it is logical to say that such a person was the same person who undertook all those activities in his past life and is the same person who is now rendering an account of his past activities to *Onyame*. Besides, it is absurd and against the nature of *Onyame* to either punish or reward a person for the destiny that he has not realized. The fact that it is believed that *Onyame* punishes or rewards a person for his past deeds indicates that such a person is the same person who undertook those activities. This sameness of a person is conserved by one's *memory* that is, a person's *memories* of himself as the one (same person) who undertook those acts that he is now accounting for to *Onyame*. This is because *memory*, which is a conscious state, is basic and indispensable to giving an account of one's past activities and the punishment or the reward.

There is the need at this point to distinguish between *memory*, that which in my view conserves the identity of a person in Akan metaphysics, and Locke's view of memory. Before we proceed, it is important for us note that Locke uses memory interchangeably with the word 'consciousness' <sup>39</sup>. It seems to me that for Locke, it does not matter whether that which, in his view, determines the identity of a person, memory, is associated with a physical or a non-physical substance <sup>40</sup>. All that matters for him is the continuity of memory, that which for him determines identity of a person and not necessarily the element of which memory is a feature or associated. Whether memory is a function or a feature of a physical element or not does not seem to be an issue for him. For he is of the view that "...personal identity would equally be determined by the consciousness (memory), whether that consciousness were annexed to some individual immaterial substance or no" <sup>41</sup>. For Locke, therefore, the association of memory with either a non-physical element or a physical element is irrelevant in determining the identity (sameness) of a person. But this is not the case in Akan metaphysics. This is because the element (immaterial or material) of which *memory*, that which conserves the identity of a person, is a feature of in Akan metaphysics matters. The analysis of the belief in personal survival in relation to the belief in accountability and judgement after death suggests that *memory* is not a feature of a physical element in Akan metaphysics. For if this were to be the case, it would mean that without the physical element (*honam*), it will be impossible for a person to have *memories* of his past activities. But this seems not to be the case. Hence, unlike in Locke, the nature of the element (physical or non-physical) of which *memory* is a feature of is essential in determining the identity of a person in Akan metaphysics.

Also in the view of Locke, a person's identity depends on how far back he can remember his past, meaning that a person is the same person that he was ten years ago if he can remember his activities of the past ten years but is not the same person if he cannot. This indicates that the Lockean conception of memory is susceptible to interruptions and forgetfulness<sup>42</sup>. But this conception of memory seems not to be the case in Akan metaphysics. This is because if it is possible for a person to forget or lose his past i.e. how he realized his destiny, then it would also be impossible for *Onyame* to punish or reward a person for how good or bad he has realized his destiny. But the fact is that it is believed that *Onyame* will either punish or reward everyone for the manner in which he has realized his destiny; hence, this presupposes that everyone would remember and not lose or forget his past activities in order to account for them to *Onyame*. Therefore, *memory*, which conserves the identity of a person in Akan metaphysics, is, as explained in the above, not analogous to the Lockean conception of memory.

It is important to note that in chapter three we said that memory is a state of consciousness. A person has to be conscious before he can claim to remember his past; hence, without consciousness it would be absurd to imply that a person can have *memories* of the activities that he has undertaken in his past to even account for them. This means that consciousness is indispensable to having a *memory*. Therefore, it would be incorrect to deny any relationship between consciousness and the determination of a person's identity in Akan metaphysics.

In this chapter, I sought to identify that which determines a person's identity in Akan metaphysics. We noted that, as a result of the belief in the survival of a person after death in Akan worldview, it would be untenable to consider that which does not have an uninterrupted

continued existence as that which constitutes the basis of personal identity in Akan metaphysics.

In this regard, the *honam* (body) and others were rejected as the ultimate basis for determining one's identity in Akan metaphysics. An analysis of the Akan belief in judgement after death and accounting for one's past activities to *Onyame* for either punishment or reward revealed that *memory*, which is a state of consciousness, is what conserves or preserves the identity of a person in Akan metaphysics.



CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have tried to understand the concept of consciousness in Akan metaphysics. In the course of our discussions, I identified some of the similarities and differences between the conception of consciousness in Akan metaphysics and other concepts of consciousness, especially the Cartesian.

We began our discussion with an examination of the various Akan terms for consciousness and their metaphysical significance. It was noted that consciousness is an attribute of a person that is, since it is a person who becomes aware, thinks, remembers, understands and doubts, it was necessary for us to examine and understand the nature of a person, that which is the subject of consciousness in Akan metaphysics. The aim of this examination was not only to provide us with a clear understanding of who a person is in Akan conceptions, but also to aid us in our understanding of consciousness as possibly an *amene* activity or a function of the *okra* or a state of the *sunsum*. The thesis, therefore, sought to provide an unambiguous understanding of the concept of consciousness and how consciousness may bear on the determination of a person's identity in Akan metaphysics.

In terms of the above aims, I believe the thesis has shown that consciousness is a state or a function of the *sunsum*. This view of consciousness differs from other conceptions of consciousness, such as the materialist and the Cartesian conceptions. It differs from the materialist view of consciousness because of the belief in the existence of a non-physical

component of a person as that which is responsible for consciousness in Akan metaphysics and a person's ability to remember, think, understand and undertake other conscious activities after the demise of the *honam* (that which the *amene* is part of). Thinkers like Nana Boafo Ansa and Wiredu, who seem to have a materialist outlook in Akan metaphysics, disagree with the above claim. But the prospects for personal survival and consciousness of a person in Akan metaphysics seem to undermine the view held by these thinkers that the *amene* is the source of consciousness in Akan metaphysics.

The conception of consciousness in Akan metaphysics also differs also from the Cartesian view. The difference is not only due to the fact that, unlike in Cartesian philosophy, three elements, *honam*, *okra* and *sunsum*, are held as the constituents of a person in Akan metaphysics but also because the nature of the role(s) of the *sunsum* in Akan metaphysics and certain beliefs and proverbs concerning the Akan worldview suggest that *sunsum* and not the *okra* is that which is responsible for consciousness. Conscious acts like thinking, doubting, understanding, willing, and remembering are active phenomena and, since, *sunsum* is the active component of a person, it would be correct to hold that such conscious acts are a function of the *sunsum*. Besides, the *okra* in Akan metaphysics is the embodiment of life and not the phenomenon of consciousness. This feature of the *okra* is different from the soul in Cartesian philosophy in which the soul is considered to be the essence of consciousness that is, as that which thinks, doubts remembers, and understands. 'Thinking' for instance is, as argued in this thesis, an activity of the *sunsum*. This is the basis of the maxim '*adwen no wɔ sunsum no mu*' ('thought' or 'thinking' is of the *sunsum*). Thus, even though it is possible for someone to understand 'thought' or 'thinking' in the cognitive sense or in its normal English meaning it is important for us to note that 'thinking' or 'thought' in the cognitive sense is an act of

consciousness, implying that thinking would not be possible without consciousness. Therefore, if thinking is, as expressed by the maxim, of the *sunsum*, then it is also plausible to consider *sunsum* as the source of consciousness in Akan metaphysics.

It must be said that it is not clear what Gyekye means by the assertion that consciousness can be a translation of the *okra* in Akan metaphysics. If Gyekye is implying that another term for consciousness in Akan is the *okra* then he is mistaken. This is because the term consciousness translates in Akan as either *anidahô* or *ahonim* or *anikaŋ* or *adwen*. The *okra*, as my analysis revealed, is neither a term for consciousness nor does it translate as consciousness in Akan metaphysics. The *okra*, in Akan metaphysics, is believed to be an aspect of *Onyame* in a person. Alternatively, if by saying that consciousness is a translation of the *okra*, Gyekye meant that consciousness is a function of the *okra*, which in my view is what his assertion means, then it is not tenable. For arguments in chapter three suggest that consciousness is a function of the *sunsum* in Akan metaphysics. It must be noted that my arguments for considering *sunsum* as the source of consciousness are totally different from the arguments of Danquah. Also, unlike Danquah, I do not think that it is plausible to render *sunsum* in physical terms as some of his statements indicate.

Therefore, the consideration of *sunsum* as the source of consciousness in Akan metaphysics and the analysis of the differences between this view and other conceptions of consciousness are important results of this inquiry into some theories of consciousness.

Another important conclusion of this thesis is the discussion of personal identity in Akan metaphysics. I consider the discussion of personal identity as an important contribution of this study because even though the concept seems to be known within the Akan worldview, there has not been (to my knowledge) any extensive philosophical analysis or discussion of the concept in Akan metaphysics. For instance, that which determines the identity of a person in Akan metaphysics was only stated briefly in Asare Opoku's *West African Traditional Religion*. However, in our examination of the concept of personal identity, not only did we carry out an in-depth analysis of that which in my view determines the identity of a person in Akan metaphysics, but other philosophical positions that I came across through my correspondence with some Akan sages were also explored. The chapter on personal identity, therefore, brings under one umbrella a comprehensive discussion or examination of some of the salient positions on personal identity in Akan conceptions. This, I think, is significant.

Discussing the criteria of personal identity in any philosophical framework is a difficult task. This is partly because of the difficulty of defining the concept of personal identity and the problem of identifying what determines a person's identity. The belief in personal survival in Akan metaphysics makes the body to be an inadequate basis for determining a person's identity. This is because if a person is believed to survive and retain his distinct identity after the demise of the body, then the body cannot constitute the basis for determining his or her identity. But the belief in personal survival makes the discussion of personal identity in Akan metaphysics to be very complex. For, if the body is rejected as that which determines a person's identity, then on what basis can someone say for example, that person 'A', with a body, is the same as person 'A<sub>1</sub>' after death (without a body). The basis, as discussed, is *memory*. The analysis of personal

identity in the context of the belief in personal survival, therefore, seems to suggest that the body is not that which constitutes a person's identity in Akan metaphysics.

It was noted, within the context of the belief in the accountability and judgement after death, in Akan conception that *memory* is that which conserves the identity of a person in Akan metaphysics. It is the means by which someone for instance, person 'A<sub>1</sub>' can assert that he is the same person as person 'A' and give certain specific details of person A's life to demonstrate that he, person 'A<sub>1</sub>', is indeed the same person as person 'A'. It is important for us to note that the concept of *memory*, as discussed in Akan metaphysics, differs from the memory criterion of Locke. The central concern of Locke in his theory of personal identity is the continuation of memory, the criterion of personal identity, but not the nature of the element (physical or non-physical) of which memory is a feature. But in our discussion of personal identity in Akan metaphysics, not only did we stress that *memory*, and the continuation of it, is what determines a person's identity but, most importantly, we argued that *memory* is a feature of the *sunsum*, a non-physical component of a person. The consideration of *memory* as a state of consciousness and, hence, a function of the *sunsum* indicates that *memory* is not a state of a physical element in Akan metaphysics. In my view, therefore, the element that *memory* is associated with is essential to the determination of personal identity in Akan metaphysics. This is how different the *memory* criterion of personal identity in Akan metaphysics is from Locke's memory criterion. For, if we discuss personal identity in Akan metaphysics in the context of the belief in personal survival, then *memory* (and the continuation of it) must, on my analysis, be associated with a part or a component of a person that can continue to exist even after the demise of the body. This part of a person is the *sunsum* and not the *amene*. Thus, the conception of *memory* as that which conserves a person's identity in Akan metaphysics is, therefore, worth highlighting.

However, it is important for us to note that other positions on personal identity exist in Akan conceptions. Even though these positions have not been given an in-depth philosophical elucidation but have briefly been stated in some few lines they, nonetheless, serve as alternatives to the *memory* criterion of personal identity discussed in Akan metaphysics. I have in the above discussed the *honam* (bodily) view of personal identity in Akan conceptions. I think the position that best challenges the *memory* criterion of personal identity in Akan conceptions is the *okra* criterion. This position suggests that a person's identity is determined by his *okra*. One may, on the surface, be inclined to give some plausibility to this view of personal identity. This may be because of the conception that the *okra* is the essence of a person without which a person cannot exist and the belief in the survival of the *okra* after the demise of the body. That is, if the belief in personal survival entails the survival of the *okra*, then we can probably understand why Asare Opoku would consider the *okra*, the essence of a person, as that which constitutes the identity of a person in Akan metaphysics

But a critical analysis of the *okra* criterion reveals its implausibility. This is because there seems to be nothing about a person's *okra*, for instance Kofi's *okra* that makes it uniquely his and different from the *akra* (souls) of Yaw, Ama and Kwesi. This difficulty makes the *okra* to be an inadequate basis for determining a person's identity. The conception of *memory* as that which determines a person's identity in Akan metaphysics is not only tenable but compatible with certain basic Akan beliefs like personal survival and accountability and judgement after death.

An equally difficult but pertinent subject that this thesis deals with is the concept of mind (*adwen*) in Akan metaphysics. In the course of my field research, I came across some conflicting views on what *adwen* is. While some Akan sages were of the view that *adwen* is 'thought',

others were of the view that *adwen* is the *okra*. But the absurdity of construing *adwen* as the *okra* becomes clear when we ascribe to the *adwen* the roles believed to be those of the *okra*. Besides, to construe *adwen* as the *okra* is to render *adwen* as an entity. But this is false. Mind (*adwen*) in Akan philosophy is not conceived as an entity. For this reason, the relational problem between mind (as an entity) and the body in Cartesian philosophy does not arise. That is, there is no such problem in Akan metaphysics. The problem is, rather, how the *okra* interacts with *honam*.

The postulation of 'the *okra-honam* problem' in Akan metaphysics and how different this problem is from the Cartesian 'mind-body problem' is another contribution of this thesis to Akan philosophy.

The thesis also discussed the concept of the 'I' or the 'self' in Akan metaphysics.

Discussing the 'self' in Akan metaphysics is a difficult thing to do. This is mainly because an examination of some of the expressions of the Akan language gives the impression that 'self' refers to both a body and a non-body. But this is confusing and illogical. This is because a thing cannot be 'A' and 'not A' at the same time. It is inconsistent, therefore, to render the 'self' as a body and a non-body at the same time. As a contribution to Akan philosophy, the study has been able to reduce the confusion surrounding the status of the 'I' or 'self' and demonstrated, through the analysis of some Akan beliefs, proverbs, and concept of a person, that the 'I' or the 'self' in Akan metaphysics refers to the most essential element of a person, the *okra*.

The categorization of various Akan terms for consciousness as non-physicalistic and physicalistic terms, as far as I know, has not been done before by Akan philosophers. I must also point out that although I agree with Christaller that *ahonim* is a term for consciousness, I do not share his view on the interpretation of the term. Contrary to Christaller's view, I think *ahonim*

means self-knowledge and not self-consciousness. This is because it is circular to render *ahonim* (a term for consciousness) as self-consciousness. The elaborate examination of the Akan terms for consciousness for their metaphysical significance which has been undertaken in this thesis is quite original and is, perhaps, the most important contribution of this thesis to Akan philosophy.

To a very large extent, it can be maintained that the thesis has been able to achieve the aims it set out for itself. In spite of the difficulty of discussing the concept of consciousness in Akan metaphysics, it has been possible to argue that consciousness in Akan thought is a function of the *sunsum*, an incorporeal element of a person.

### Introduction

1. The Akans occupy the vast majority of the forest regions stretching to the West of the River Volta in present day Ghana. As the largest ethnic group in Ghana, the smaller groups constituting it are the Asante, Fante, Akyem, Akuapim and the Akwamu. See Osea and Nwabara. 1968.p.1.
2. Ree, J., 1974. p.75
3. Cairns-Smith, 1996. p. i
4. Ryle, G., 1949. p.158
5. McGinn, C., 1996. p.42
6. Gyekye, K., 1987. p. 87
7. Dennett, D.C. 1969. p. 99
8. Wiredu, K., "The Akan Concept of Mind" in *Ibadan Humanistic Studies, Oct. No.3,* (1983). P.119
9. Smart, J.C.C., "Materialism" in *New Readings in Philosophical Analysis*, ed., Herbert Feigl and Others. 1972. p.378
- 10 Gyekye, K., 1987. p.167.
- 11 Dzobo, N.K., in *Person and Community*, ed., Wiredu and Gyekye. 1992, p.95.
- 12 Vansina, Jan., 1985.p. 29.
- 13 Gyekye, K., 1987. p. 13-17



Chapter One

1. Taylor, C., 1989. p. 146
2. Russell, B., 1927. p. 218
3. Ryle, G., 1949. p. 158
4. Meginn, C., 1996. p.83
5. Christaller, J.G., 1933. p. 340.
6. Ibid.
7. See Wiredu's analysis of "Amo's Critique of Descartes' Philosophy of Mind" in *A Companion to African Philosophy*, ed. Kwasi Wiredu, 2004. p. 204. (words in parentheses mine)
8. Gyekye, K., 1987.p.167
9. Churchland, P.M., 1984, p. 63
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Gyekye, K., 1987.p.166
13. Rosenthal, D.M., "Mind in the Cosmos; Descartes' Mechanistic View of the Mind and the Body" in *History and Philosophy of Science for African Undergraduates*, ed. Helen Lauer, 2003. p.427
14. Opoku, A., 1978. p.95
15. Christaller, J.G., 1933. p.186
16. Ibid.
17. Kwasi, W., "The Akan Concept of Mind" in *Ibadan Humanistic Studies, Oct. No.3*, (1983). P. 119

18. This is the view of Rev. Pious Agyemang, an Akan sage and a priest, interviewed on (3/9/2008)
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
- 23 Kwasi, W., "The Akan Concept of Mind" in *Ibadan Humanistic Studies, Oct. No.3*, (1983). P.118-119
- 24 Ibid. p. 116
- 25 Ibid. p. 118-119
- 26 This is the view of Agya Osei, Akan historian and publisher (interviewed on 11/9/2008).
- 27 See Rosenthal, M., "Mind in the Cosmos: Descartes' Mechanistic View of the Mind and the Body" in *History and Philosophy of Science for African Undergraduates*, ed., Helen Lauer, 2003. p 427
- 28 This is the view of Agya Osei (interviewed on 11/9/2008).
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Opoku, A., 1978, p. 152
- 31 Gyekye, K., 1987. p.139
- 32 Ibid.1996. p. 3, 57
- 33 Opoku, A., 1978, p. 96
- 34 Ibid. p. 155
- 35 Gyekye, K., 1987. p.165

36 Ibid. p. 166

37 Ibid. (I introduced the parentheses )

38 See how this has been demonstrated by Gyekye with his analysis on the concept of 'Causation' in Akan metaphysics in his book; *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought*, 1987. p.76-84

39 Wiredu, K., in *Identity Meets Nationality: Voices from the Humanities* ed., Lauer, H., Amfo, A. A., Anderson, J.A., 2011, p. 22-23

40 Ibid.

41 Gyekye, K., 1987. p. 87

42 Ibid.

43. 'Sunsun' is an element believed to be part of what a person is and that which is also responsible for a person's personality in Akan worldview.

## Chapter Two

1. Gyekye, K., 1987. p. 94
2. Ibid. p. 48
3. This is Nana Boafo Ansah's position. See Gyekye, K., *An Essay On African Philosophical Thought*, 1987. p. 48
4. Opoku, A., 1997. p. 2
5. Mbiti, J.S., 1969. p.74
6. Rosenthal, D.M., "Mind in the Cosmos: Descartes' Mechanistic view of the mind and the body" in *History and Philosophy of Science for Undergraduates*, ed. Helen Lauer, 2003. p. 423
7. This is the view of Rev. Pious Agyemang. (Interviewed on 3/9/2008).
8. Haldane, E.S., and Ross, G.R.T., 1967. p. 190
9. Keeling, S.V., 1968. p. 157
10. Ryle, G., 1949. p. 22
11. Meyerowitz, E., 1951. p. 84
12. Gyekye, K., 1987. p. 85
13. Busia, K. A., "The Ashanti" in *African Worlds*, ed. Daryll Forde, 1954. p. 197
14. R  e, J., 1974. p. 73
15. Aboagye, J. G. and others, 2002. p. 292
16. Busia, K. A., "The Ashanti" in *African Worlds*, ed. Daryll Forde, 1954. p. 197
17. Wiredu, K., "The Akan Concept of Mind" in *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*, No. 3, Oct. (1983), p. 127
- 18 Ibid, p. 119

- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Gyekye, K., 1987. p. 86
- 22 Opoku, A., 1978. p. 95
- 23 Dicker, G., 1993. p. 67
- 24 Wiredu, K., "The Akan Concept of Mind" in *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*, No. 3, Oct. (1983), p. 120
- 25 Ibid, p. 116
- 26 Gyekye, K., 1987. p. 62
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Wiredu, K., "The Akan Concept of Mind" in *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*, No. 3, Oct. (1983), p. 119 (italics, mine).
- 29 Gyekye, K., 1987. p. 73
- 30 Opoku, A., 1978. p. 97-8
- 31 See Busia, K., "The Ashanti", in *African Worlds*, ed. Daryll Forde, 1954. p. 197, Gyekye, K., 1987. p. 90, Wiredu, K., "The Akan Concept of Mind" in *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies* No.3, Oct. 1983. p. 120. Also see Rattray, R.S., 1923. p. 46 and Meyerowitz, E., 1951. p. 76
- 32 Busia, K. A., "The Ashanti" in *African Worlds*, ed. Daryll Forde, 1954. p. 197
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid, p. 196

- 37 Ibid, p. 200
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 See Danquah, J. B., 1968. p. 87
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid, p. 115
- 43 Ibid, p. 112, 115
- 44 Meyerowitz, E., 1951. p. 86
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Gyekye, K., 1987. p. 90
- 47 Ajei, O.M., 2000. p. 42
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 This is the view of Apenteng Sackey, Linguistics Department, university of Ghana, Legon, (interviewed on 14/08/2008)
- 50 Gyekye, K., 1987. p. 98
- 51 Meyerowitz, E., 1951. p. 86
- 52 Gyekye, K., 1987. p. 95 (The words in italics are mine)
- 53 Ibid.

Chapter Three

1. Taylor, C., 1989. p. 146
2. Ryle, G., 1949. p. 157
3. Ibid, p. 156
4. Russell, B., 1927. p. 218
5. By consciousness as a state or an activity, I mean the same as the Cartesian understanding of consciousness, but unlike Descartes I do not intend to say that consciousness is a state or an activity of the soul or mind. See Haldane, E and Ross, G.R.T., *The Philosophical Works of Descartes* Vol.1, Cambridge university press, (1967), p. 196
6. Haldane, E and Ross, G.R.T., 1967. p. 37
7. Locke, J., 1961. p. 280
8. Ibid. (the words in the parenthesis are mine)
9. Popper, K. and Eccles, J., 1977. p. 117.
10. Cairns-Smith, A.G., 1996. p. 154
11. See Smart, J.C.C., "Materialism" in *New Readings in Philosophical Analysis*, ed., Feigl, H., Sellars, W., and Lehrer, K., 1972. p. 382.
12. Rosenthal, D.M., 2005. p. 16.
13. Wiredu, K., "The Akan Concept of Mind" in *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies* No. 3, Oct., 1983, p. 116.
14. Ibid, p. 119.
15. Ibid, 117
16. Cornman, J.W., "The Identity of Mind and Body" in *New Readings in Philosophical Analysis*, ed., Feigl. H., Sellars, W., and Lehrer, K., 1972. p. 387

17. Ibid.
18. Smart, J.C.C., "Materialism" in *New Readings in Philosophical Analysis*, ed., Feigl. H., Sellars, W., and Lehrer, K., 1972. p. 382.
19. Ibid. p. 379
20. Cornman, J.W., "The Identity of Mind and Body" in *New Readings in Philosophical Analysis*, ed., Feigl. H., Sellars, W., and Lehrer, K., 1972. p. 387
21. Gyekye, K. . 1987. p. 87.
22. Dicker, G., 1993. p. 67.
23. Haldane, E and Ross, G.R.T., 1967. p. 196.
24. Collins, A., "The Scientific Background in Descartes' Dualism" in *History and Philosophy of Science for African Undergraduates*, ed. Helen Lauer, 2003. p. 441-2.
25. Haldane, E and Ross, G.R.T., 1967. p. 157, 190.
26. Gyekye, K., 1987. p. 87.
27. Wiredu, K., "The Akan Concept of Mind" in *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies* No. 3, Oct., (1983), p. 120.
28. Ibid. p.116
29. Ibid, p. 120
30. Danquah, J. B., 1968. p. 112
31. Meyerowitz, E., 1951. p. 84
32. Danquah, J. B., 1958. p. 111
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid. p.112

36. Ibid. p.113
37. Ibid. p.112
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid. p.115
40. Meyerowitz, E., 1951. p. 84
41. Ibid.
42. Strachey, J., and Freud, A., 1961 Vol. XIX. p. 17
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid. p. 23
45. Ibid. p.24
46. Collins, A., "The Scientific Background in Descartes' Dualism" in *History and Philosophy of Science for African Undergraduates*, ed. Helen Lauer, 2003. p. 441-2.
47. That which is believed to be identified with the *okra* (soul) in Akan metaphysics is life and not consciousness. See Rattray, R.S., 1923. p. 46. See also Meyerowitz, E., 1951. p. 84.
48. In the Book of Matthew 26: 41, (Holy Bible, King James Version) Jesus told his disciples that "... the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak". In English, the flesh and the spirit seem to have been interpreted as the body and soul.
49. Gyekye, K., 1987. p. 97
50. Ibid. p. 91
51. Opoku, A., 1978. p. 93
52. Ibid. p. 94
53. Gyekye, K., 1987. p. 91

54. Cornford, M., 1961. p. 290
55. Ibid.
56. Rée, J., 1974. p. 71
57. Gyekye, K., 1987. p. 98
58. Ibid, p. 87
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