

On Ghana and African Rhetoric: In Search of a Theory



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Is there any such thing as Ghanaian rhetoric or African rhetoric? Or rather, it is simply that there is a vast undiscovered expanse of rhetoric in Ghana and Africa. Too often, in our quest to show the world that Africa is rich in rhetoric, scholars tend to create an impression that it is only by reifying knowledge systems and tropes afforded in Western thought that they can legitimize African rhetoric. What I hope to achieve in this lecture is trouble our contemplation of African rhetoric. The lecture is an invitation to rethink what speaking, learning, and writing about rhetoric in Africa entails, and for that matter, how it should be researched into. My overarching goal is to allow us all to build a meta-theory of African rhetoric. I have structured my argument into four basic sections. Part I explores the nexus between African philosophical thought and African rhetorical traditions, arguing that it is only through this broad intellectual engagement that one can clearly obtain a nuanced apprehension of the subject of African Rhetoric. Part II offers a thick rationale for developing a theory of African rhetoric. Here I articulate a certain “art of temerity” particularly as a contribution to scholarship in African rhetorical studies. In Part III, I present a case study of what it looks like theorizing about African rhetoric, drawing extensively on an indigenous Akan game called Ampe. Part IV concludes the discussion by attempting to lay out a theoretical framework for engaging in African rhetoric.

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