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Shifting the Geography of Reason, with Respects to Spinoza

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Abstract

This essay is based on a portion of the author's Spinoza Lecture, which was presented in Amsterdam on 24 May 2022. Although Spinoza is not the main subject of the lecture, his anxieties and fears about his Sephardic Jewishness and its links to Africa and by extension racialized blackness offer an opportunity to outline Euromodern hegemonic geography of reason as a misrepresentation from which a shift in point of view can offer a set of important challenges to the portrait of philosophy it promotes. These challenges are elaborated through the author's summary of Africana and Black philosophy and the questions that philosophy, understood in intellectual, historical, and political terms, generates. Among these are the meanings of humanity, freedom, justification, redemption, reality, political transformation, and love.

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At Spinoza's Bedside

Spinoza had a nightmare that haunted him. It was of seeing a "black and scabby Brazilian" looking at him from the corner of his bed (Feuer 1957).[1] His great grandparents' forced conversion to Catholicism, flight to the liberal Dutch Republic, then conversion back into Jews was succeeded by a *cherem* or decree of excommunication placed against their great grandson from the Talmud Congregation of Amsterdam on 27 July 1656. Spinoza had already changed his first name from Baruch to Benedictus. Although the meaning is the same—'blessed'—the language through which it is conveyed is a meaning onto the meaning. A Sephardic Jew escaping from Catholic persecution to a Protestant country, he could have maintained his Jewishness, yet, in Latinizing his name, more was at work, as the holy language for Catholics is Latin. Yet, as is well known, his engagement with Hobbes's (Protestant) thought in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (*Theological-Political Treatise*), published in 1670, enabled a form of Protestantism to emerge in relation to his Jewishness before Abraham Geiger (24 May 1810 to 23 October 1874) and his associates formulated "Reform" Judaism in Germany. But in that case, why wasn't it a Rabbi, or more shocking, his mother staring at him in those dreams? Why a "Negro"? Here we see an anxiety that has reached from Spinoza through to contemporary Jews in the United States and former colonies in which European Jews have been afforded white identities. In Europe, after all, Jews were often referred to in racial terms as "mulattoes," or in general *not* white, which makes the question of the trace of blackness/Africanness a mark.[2] Spinoza was, after all, fleeing something. But, in psychoanalytical terms, this flight was not only external but also internal, kept at bay until unleashed from the unconscious into the realm of dreams.

Imagine what Spinoza might have thought, then, about the passing of a Jamaican analytical philosopher[3] leading to a Jamaican Jewish philosopher presenting one of the Spinoza Lectures in Amsterdam in 2022. Moreover, the other Spinoza Lecturer, Philomena Essed, by way of Surinam, is also Black and Jewish. Black Jews, amusingly, in stereo. And more, she and I are of Sephardic Jewish ancestry, and I, also, of Mizrahi and Beta Israel members of the Jewish people. Together, Jewishness and blackness, at least through Essed and me, continue to haunt Spinoza. Had it been the late Charles Mills, a non-Jewish Black Jamaican, that blackness would have been there, albeit, in the spirit of Spinoza, of an assimilating aspiration with an appeal to social contract theory. But through the two lecturers in memoriam both to Mills and Spinoza, there was something at work in a country whose history stands as one of the major exemplars of liberalism, and from a Philosophy Department that, hegemonically analytical, offers an affirmation of the epistemology and metaphysics on which the past few hundred years of liberal thought is based. Essed and I exemplified a movement beyond conventional expectations, which, ironically, affirmed Amsterdam's political identity based not only on tolerance but also

plurality. To be tolerated, after all, is not the same as being engaged, communicated with, learning with. Plurality asks for the latter.

Spinoza was committed to reason, although he understood that a commitment to reality required also acknowledging the importance of affect, which he referred to as emotion.[4] This aspect of his thought ironically had an impact on two great subsequent Jewish thinkers, although they were not trying to think *as Jews*—Sigmund Freud and Ludwig Wittgenstein (see e.g. Vermorel 2009, Baltas 2012). Neither Spinoza nor they, however, questioned the presupposition of reason as an obsession of the avowed "North." Though all radically critical thinkers, they were, regarding the geography of reason, not radical enough. I say this only partially, however, since Freud famously—for critics, infamously—acknowledged the African origins of Judaism and thus the mythopoetics and ethical life of a substantial contribution to what eventually became known as "the West" (see, of course, Freud 1955). Like Spinoza, Freud also had an affection for Hobbes. Yet being properly critical, they also tread beyond him. Their Jewishness afforded great ambivalence. Though both sought an enlightened secularism, the result for them was that this mark, this ethno- and racial-oriented Jewishness pointed in one direction, and that was southward to where Africa and Asia meet.

Freud chose to face this darkness, to some extent, but he stopped short where it threatened his precious child: psychoanalysis. As Jean-Paul Rocchi and others inform us, Freud was terrified of psychoanalysis being dubbed a "Jewish science" (Rocchi 2018, 67–82; cf. Frosh 2005). To affirm its "scientificity," Rocchi demonstrates, this required posing a trope of Euromodern human science—namely, the notion of a "primitive" subject or at least its trace—to authenticate the scientificity of psychoanalysis as not Jewish. For Freud, that turned out to be the "half-breed," invariably the mulatto, which functioned as an ironic moment of transference for psychoanalysis.[5] Ironically, a metapsychoanalysis of this scientific effort reveals, through the appeal to the "half-breed" and/or the mulatto, its Jewishness. The unconscious, we should remember, always disguises itself, at times, and perhaps often, to the psychoanalyst.

It is in the spirit of this ambivalence, tension, and at the same time commitment to truthfulness and humanity, that I now turn to addressing that path of moving beyond the Northern East-to-West presuppositions—well stated in Hegel's philosophy of history—to the challenge of unlocking that submerged darkness at the corner of the bed of Euromodern thought. In pre-Euromodern times, it was there in Plato's Allegory of the Cave, but to some extent, something has gone awry, as many professional philosophers increasingly don't go farther but, instead, seek a large boulder to cover its mouth and return with the declaration: "Nothing to see there." What I call "shifting the geography of reason" is an epistemic and political act of moving that boulder.

Spinoza's life was richly psychoanalytical. He ground glass and made optical lenses and instruments, which was befitting for a philosopher of the Enlightenment. The glass dust destroyed his lungs, which took away his breath. What is light without breath—thought without life? Theoria, as we know, had an epic battle with myth in the Age of Enlightenment, but what is the point of seeing without meaning, viewing without what mythos offers, which is meaning? And, as anyone knows, where there is too much light there is, paradoxically, no longer sight. No one can see without understanding light's

relationship to darkness, and without distinctions, there is no meaning and, by extension, no sight, sound, or understanding.

Who else was that "black scabby Brazilian" but the rebellious Spinoza? And more, as he rebelled against his own community, whom he saw straying from the invitation of modern liberation through the affirmation of Euromodern ways, he projected his own fantasy onto those in need of liberation. This path of distancing includes moving away from the Jewish message of *Shemot* (Exodus), a message of liberation. Although Enlightenment could be interpreted as a form of liberation—seeing the light or, better, stepping out into it—the price of distance from darkness could include rationalizations of independence in which new idols are born. There are paradoxical ways of embracing one's erasure through investments in values that claim to intensify one's presence. Rejecting Jews as a *people* through embracing Jewishness as a *religion* (Judaism) carry the price of a new and psychoanalytically disguised focus. The transition from anti-Jewish racism to antisemitism in the North, for example, pushed liberation, as an anticolonial value, to the wayside (see Gordon 2023, 187–194; Boyarin 2018). Spinoza's flight as an *individual* matter was into the arms of a Northern lie in which the geography of reason welcomed him, so long as, of course, he left Jews, Jewishness, and the long line of dark southern connections behind.

Shifting Geographies of Reason

"Shifting the geography of reason" is an idea I proposed back in the late 1990s (see Gordon 2000; and, retrospectively, 2020). It was in response to the presupposition that thinking outside of Europe was nothing more than an "application" of European thought, which, as the circular logic went, was thought itself. The idea that people could not only think outside of Europe but also do so as the origin of concepts and ideas was, from a Eurocentric perspective, apparently unthinkable. Both to demonstrate and do so—that is, thinking outside of or at least beyond the Eurocentric framework—would be a seismic shift. In effect, as Europe is a "Northern" construction, this meant a shift also in geographic perspective. Such a reorientation, in which even "up" could be, as it was in ancient times, southward, transformed understanding of even the movement of the sun.[6] Instead of from right to left, the beginning could be from left to right, and even how one understands "down" could be northward bound. And, of course, other critical questions could pertain to the values we place on notions of "above" and "below."

In 2003, a majority group of Caribbean intellectuals meeting in Jamaica founded the Caribbean Philosophical Association. In 2004, its first international conference was held at the Accra Hotel in Barbados. Charles Mills was among the presenters. The theme of the conference was "Shifting the Geography of Reason." The conference opened with participants standing, barefoot, on the shore of the Atlantic side of the island. We paid respects to the ancestors lost at sea during the transatlantic slave trade. We also realized the unusual situation of standing on the beach of the Accra hotel looking eastward toward Accra, Ghana, on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. At the end of that meeting, we realized that only a small aspect of the conference's theme could be addressed at that time. So, there was "Shifting the Geography of Reason II," all the way through to "Shifting the Geography of Reason XX," with more to come. That "black and scabby" apparition

continues—perhaps through a nonlinear model of time it was we who were at Spinoza's bedside in his moment of clairvoyance—but a decisive shift is that our eyes were not looking northward. A horizontal gaze of South-South orientation defied, as well, up–down logic, as "north" at that point was to our left and "south" to our right. Perhaps more terrifying for Eurocentrism is that, embedded in our actions, was, simply, its proponents' eventual irrelevance.

In 2008, my critical historical philosophical study of African Diasporic philosophy under the title *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy* was published (Gordon 2008). In that work, I argued that the question of an African diaspora is one premised primarily on involuntary exile or, less politely stated, enslavement. This historical scattering of large numbers of African peoples was at first through Arab enslavement from the seventh century onward and then taken up by northern Christendom's enterprises in the Atlantic by the fifteenth century. The latter's intellectual impetus, however, was connected to a variety of diasporic events, among which was also the importance of 1492: the Moors were defeated in Grenada in January of that year, ending Moorish rule on the northern side of the Mediterranean, and inaugurating a new phase of inquisition during which Sephardic Jews fled in many directions.[7] Columbus's landing in the Bahamas in October of the same year, with an initial naivety of arriving in India as his journals attest— marked as well by an unusual development in which the desperate quest for extraction of wealth quickly descended into colonialism, enslavement, and genocide—emerged as key features of expanded Christendom, at least from the perspective of the Indigenous peoples of those and other islands of the Caribbean (see Columbus 1969). The course of those events transformed not only the Caribbean and the two continents on that side of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans but also the countries from which Columbus et al. sailed. Agents of Christendom staked out the Western regions of Asia into a place we now call "Europe." Along with those developments was a shift after many previous shifts. As capital, including its intellectual forms, moved more northward and westward, an eventual presupposition of its "maturation" followed as the setting sun was mapped onto Christian eschatology as the adulthood of thought.

As European history already attests, these summarized events are from centers that moved from Portugal and Spain to France, The Netherlands, and Scandinavian countries, followed by the rise of the British and an eventual face-off with France with which, along with the rise of Germany, much came to a head in global imperialism, in a variety of world wars and their subsequent and unfortunately continued proxy and at times genocidal campaigns.

Although those are historical political events, their agents offered rationalizations in which reason seemed to function more as an ally of force and warfare than an intimate partner of reality and truth. An expression such as the "triumph" of reason, fraught with militarism, misses an important insight from unfortunately too many who have witnessed triumphant displays over the ages: "winning" and being right are not identical. The suffering wrought from colonialism is, after all, articulated from the many who live its contradictions. History offers many examples of victors who turned away from reality and forced upon humanity the frustration of living lies.[8]

We come to a basic problem of the geography of reason, which is that the notion

of its endemic location in the "North" is a lie. Although one may be tempted to offer "South" as a productive opposition to this malediction, that, too, would be erroneous because of its mere flipping of a vertical axis. Whether above is called "South" and below is called "North," the hierarchical game would continue.

This game has a variety of features, among which is the presupposition of a lack of thought—and worse, an incapacity to reason—from those below. Addressing this problem, which involves, as we shall see, a decolonial practice, requires not only moving beyond the above/below dichotomy but also not eliding those conditioned by it. In other words, to ignore the historical and lived reality of those from "below" would be unjust. In *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy*, I put it this way, building on an argument I made from my earlier book *Existentia Africana* (2000): there is in intellectual histories of Africana and Black intellectual production a tendency to focus more on the biographies and experiences of Africana and Black thinkers than on their *thought* (Gordon 2000, 22–40). A good portion of this tendency emerges from the presupposition of their thought as "application" of ideas from non-Black thinkers. This is a form of epistemic racism. It is premised on presuppositions of Blacks being a cognitively challenged people. The second, however, emerges from good intentions *within* Africana and Black thinkers. The argument is that whatever anti-Africana and antiblack presuppositions against the capabilities of Africana and Black peoples may be, what Africana and Black people *experience* must be affirmed in our efforts to move forward. I argued in both *Existentia Africana* and *An Introduction to African Philosophy* that that position, although well-intentioned, is flawed. It is so from the mere fact that experience by itself requires communication and interpretation to acquire meaning. Everyone has the experience of trying to figure out their experience, and that activity involves seeking the aid or counsel of others through which to produce evidential resources by which viable interpretations come to the fore. If interpretation, meaning, and theory are left to people outside of Africana and Black peoples, then Africana and Black efforts to achieve or acquire meaning become one of dependency and something more insidious. If, for example, the people whom we call European, white, and "Western" were able to bring meaning to their experience through the communicative practices of doing so among one another, then what comes along with that effort is also the validity of their experience. Thus, if non-European peoples only seek what is wrought from the European outcomes of that practice, the result would be a form of meaning brought to non-Europeans' and nonwhites' experience that renders European experience a more valid source than their own. Ironically, it would be the erasure of non-European experience—or at least its legitimacy.

If Africana and Black experiences are legitimate, then the practices by which they become intelligible should be engaged with by the people experiencing them. Without doing so, the conclusion would be that the theory by which other experiences are communicated is more legitimate. In effect, then, this is a call for theorizing as a liberatory practice. It demands *everyone—humanity everywhere—*participating in the practice of bringing intelligibility to their experience. This argument even goes further, through making the intercommunicative practices of theorizing a form of experience as well, through which metatheoretical reflection on it may produce new forms of intelligibility and meaning. The result is that such practice—of shared theorizing—affects everyone

who participates. It is, in that regard, a movement from parochial theorizing to something more generalized, something that could be called "universalizing," if not universal.

Frantz Fanon, whose impact on thought for seventy years now continues to grow, had an elegant way of formulating the problem I just outlined. Reason, he observed, has a nasty habit of taking flight whenever the Black enters a room (see Fanon 1952, chapter 5). What is the Black to do? To force Reason to stay would be an act of violence. Yet a room without Reason also poses a problem. As Karl Jaspers reflected in his *Philosophy of Existence*, philosophy is a long hymn to Reason (Jaspers 1971, 60). How are Africana and Black philosophies to emerge in a Reasonless room? Ironically, what is required here is not force but, instead, reasoning with unreasonable reason—yes—*reasonably*.

Such was the task, then, not only of *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy* but also all Africana philosophy and, relatedly, Black philosophy. I posed it this way back in 2008: If Africana philosophy is philosophy, then an intellectual historical study of it must engage with its constellation of *ideas*. If the ideas are the foci, then they are, despite having emerged out of the Africana and Black experiences, accessible to *everyone*, and that means that its contributors would not exclusively be people designated Africana or Black, although, for obvious historical reasons that include the impact of racism on one hand and intellectual interests on the other, the majority tend to be so.

I therefore posed a set of intellectual questions that were generated out of the emergence of Africana and Black peoples. Before stating some of them, I should at this point address a thought that is no doubt on the reader's mind. I at this point mention "Africana" and "Black." This is because they are not identical terms. African peoples preceded the emergence of Black peoples. An African identity, although going back to antiquity in the Northeastern areas of the African continent, was not transformed into a continental one until the period of the past thousand years. This was so for many continental groups, since localized identities often at best, through analogy, extended their understanding of themselves as a group within a larger constellation of groups and, when looking to the sky, planets, and stars, their geological location in relation to the cosmos. Africans who traded with Asia and possibly South America may have also developed a broader sense of their identity—and so, too, for the people with whom they traded—but the notion of "continents" emerged from the sixteenth century, from the Latin word *continens* ("continuous land"). People from the British islands were aware of the mainland, which they imagined as continuous. Not all of them were aware that if they kept walking Eastward, they would eventually reach Korea and the large ocean it faces. Although aware of various large bodies of water on many sides of the African continent—as there were trade routes all across the continent from paleolithic times—the idea of a generic identity of its peoples depended on the historical circumstances that organized them as such. Thus, despite the diversity of peoples on the African continent, the specificity of an *African identity* came from the processes of their differentiation from the peoples with whom they were in conflict and with whom they also engaged in trade. This phenomenon was happening among other groups as well. But as Africans saw one another historically in terms of differences, it was the hostile imposition of dehumanization onto certain kinds of Africans that led to a shared African identity among or across them. Becoming racialized, however, is another story.

The process of racialization has an earlier history in Southern Europe and the part of the world known today as the Middle East. Literature on this process is vast. For now, the most relevant concern is its globalization. That came about from Euromodern colonialism. The result was the identity formation of people designated "black." I write the term in lower-case to signify its racial significance. It was not only many kinds of Africans who were being made black. This designation was also being placed on peoples of South Asia, Oceania, and the Americas, in addition to other designations, among which is "indigenous." Some have not retained those old black identities, but others, as is evident among the first peoples of Australia, have. They have also transformed the racialized black into other forms in which they assert their own positive understanding. One is the upper-case "Black." There are, for example, Black Americans, Black Europeans, Black Australians, etc. It should be evident at this point, then, that since not *all* those designated black were Africans, because peoples of the Americas, Asia, and Oceania are not historically African (except, of course, for primordial times in which the genus *homo* and its various species emerged on the African continent), we should remember that not all Africans are Blacks and not all Blacks are Africans. Since, however, most Africans are Black, the geopolitical designation "African" carries heavy connotations of blackness, and this has been evident also in references to blacks and Africans since the two terms intersected. We should also bear in mind that the intersections were not always negative. The early depictions of the Moors (Afro-Muslims) in Southern Europe were, for example, at times those of bearers of superior civilizations who brought commerce, literacy, and the arts to an impoverished Christendom.[9]

The reader may have noticed my earlier mentioning of white and European. As one could easily surmise, part of pushing a group of people down is the illusion of moving oneself "up." Embedded in the production of racialized blackness is the identity of (racialized) whiteness. I place "racialized" in quotation marks because of the presumed normativity of whiteness. That renders racialization invisible. Still, that many, if not most, whites refer to themselves as "whites" entails an awareness of a historical and social, if not biological, reality. A deep dive into this issue of whiteness and Europeanness reveals, however, many fallacies. For instance, the place that became known as Europe was not up until about 8,000 years ago inhabited by light-skinned peoples whom we have come to know as whites. That is because light morphology emerged in central Asia as a consequence of agriculture and vitamin D challenges from limited sunlight in northern areas. Those lightened peoples eventually moved westward and eastward, and eventually became the majority descendants of coastal peoples in regions once dark (see e.g. Goldhill 2015, University of Pennsylvania 2017). Darker peoples never entirely disappeared in northern coastal regions of West (Europe) and East Asia, primarily because of multiple sources of vitamin D from seafoods. Morphological diversity among peoples in those regions was thus understood by the people in unique ways internal to their various communities as compared to others, just as it was for peoples of Africa whose populations, although less melanin challenged, were also morphologically diverse. None of these ancient understandings of human appearance, from the geographical south to north, from west to east, were racial or, more accurately, racialized.

Once, however, racialized Africana peoples and Black peoples were formed, what

followed is the set of intellectual challenges generated from their emergence. For the former, because of their link to Africa, there are pre-Euromodern intellectual histories. For the latter, the emergence of Euromodernity and their challenges are one. Together, they raise important challenges to Euromodern hegemonic geographies of reason.

First, that we are reflecting at the intersection of Africana and Black is already a challenge to a geography of reason that locates unreason in the South and especially so when embodied in Africana and/or Black forms.

Second, embodiment in Africana and/or Black forms challenges reductive understandings of "geography," since the normative imposition of "south" can be carried wherever people and thought designated as "southern" are. There can, thus, be the normative "south" in the geographical north and vice versa.[10]

Third, the hermeneutical and symbolic performance of these categories, especially with respect to their historical production, entails their fluidity across human phenomena. What this means is that they are not "fixed" or permanent designations. Their sustainability and transformation depend on human constructions of meaning, which is open, and if the future is the nightmare of the same, it is a function of human commitments of making that so.

Fourth, the meeting of these categories with Reason entails bringing intellectual articulations of what sites of supposed unreason offer. I have been using the upper-case form to articulate not the superiority or supremacy of Reason but, instead, something else—namely, its paradoxical elusiveness in the midst of connectedness. This seeming contradiction is a function of its resistance to our efforts to grasp or control Reason instead of participating in reasonable activity.

That said, I now move to, fifth, the importance of engaging in an intellectual discussion of an area of thought derided as devoid of reason. This is what many others and I have been doing for decades—and, for our ancestors, centuries.[11]

Africana Philosophy and Black Philosophy as Intellectual Projects

Africana philosophy as an intellectual endeavor involves engaging the problematics it raises instead of focusing exclusively on the biographies of the thinkers who raised them. Although biographies are important—after all, part of the reason for conducting such studies is in response to the claim that such intellectuals *could not exist*—the disservice of not engaging with their thought would ironically affirm their nonexistence through degrading their importance, which, as intellectual history demands, is their thought. Imagine studies of Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, or Husserl devoted exclusively to their biography. Indeed, paradoxically, the absence of their thought would be a glaring absence in any study of their life story.

I argue that Africana and Black philosophy demand addressing at least four questions: (1) What does it mean to be human? (2) What is freedom? (3) What does it mean to be justified? And (4), what does it mean to be redeemed?[12]

The Africana aspect of this consideration harkens to an insight from Akan philosophy—namely, the concept of Sankofa.[13] Already at the methodological level, there is a critique of presuppositions of how to do philosophy. The Akan people of Ghana and nearby countries of West Africa use adinkra signs—pictorial articulations of

philosophical arguments, although there are other modes through which they produce philosophy ranging from music to proverbs to written treatises. The Sankofa adinkra is of a bird moving forward while reaching to its back to retrieve an egg or nut. The argument is that one must retrieve what is essential to move forward. Notice that eggs and nuts are exemplars of life and possibility. Sankofa offers a philosophy of history connected to the future, wherein although not all of history may be necessary because it is not possible to retrieve *everything*, it is crucial to know which elements are vital. Thus, the project of an intellectual history of Africana philosophy is such a proverbial egg or nut. In that regard, it is not history in a naïve sense of simply "the past"; it is the future offered through the present's relationship with the past and commitments to the future. It is thus already a philosophy of history in which the liberatory dimension of knowledge is brought to the fore.

Thus, the first relevant point pertains to an important consequence of colonialism, enslavement, and racism—namely, dehumanization. This phenomenon involves disempowering people through restricting our capacity to participate in relationships constitutive of our humanity. To address dehumanization, we must interrogate what it means to be human. This involves a critical examination of philosophical anthropology, albeit not in the form as understood by Kant et al., since it places their unfortunately racist formulations under critique.[14] The goal here is not to articulate, as did they, who is human and who is not, or who is more human and who is less so. It is to examine fallacies at the heart of such an enterprise, since it already involves finding human beings to designate not-human or less so. Such forms of philosophical anthropology are, in other words, performative contradictions evident in activities marked by bad faith. A critical philosophical anthropology would adhere to evidence premised on challenges posed by human reality, including the researchers' participation.

The second, on freedom, emerges from the effort to discard colonization and enslavement. To be released from the shackles of such phenomena is liberating. While liberation is a necessary movement of negating dehumanization and the forms of oppression it manifests, a challenge that follows is what to do with that liberation? Put differently, what kind of existence or life for which it is worth living and striving follows? This could be understood as the project of freedom. It addresses the contradiction of agents of Euromodernity who spoke and wrote of their love of liberty and freedom while devoting so much energy to making rigorous implements of enslavement and other forms of dehumanization. The search for an understanding of freedom liberated from the yoke of false or idolatrous exemplars follows.

This combination of the first and second leads to, third, what I sometimes call the metacritique of reason, but I here advance as a philosophical problem of justification. The contradictions of making enslavement rigorous while praising humanity and freedom lead to a crisis of justification. After all, enslavement and dehumanization were rationalized as justified through rallying forth intellectual and creative resources of Euromodern thought and, in a word, spirit or conscious symbolic life. Doesn't this compromise the integrity of the arts and sciences, of knowledge, rationality, and reason? How is justification any longer justified when it woefully failed in those regards? Doesn't this call for a radical critique in which we reveal justification's need of justification? We see here a return of

Fanon's ironic critique of Reason. This also offers us an opportunity to address another aspect of the upper-case versus lower-case formulations of Reason and reason.

If the rationalizations of Euromodern superiority and the inferiority of non-Euromodern thought—indeed, even the status of, in the case of the African and the Black, such thought *as thought* at all—were true, then there would not be much to do but to invest in the radicalization of Euromodernity. The contradictions, however, pose that project as in large part a set of lies or at least misrepresentations, which makes the pursuit of truth a crucial liberatory practice. This project entails interrogating how practices of reasoning are affected by such rationalizations. The word "rationalization" is crucial here, as it is linked to what at first appears to be "rational." This effort entails expanding the reach of the form of rationality being rationalized to maximal or absolute points. There must, then, be no inconsistency in what is clearly an imperial epistemic enterprise. Thus, even reason must not escape that yoke, which is why there are Euromodern projects of making reason and rationality one, with, of course, the latter constraining the former. A problem, however, is that maximum consistency or complete, formal rationality—completeness—can easily be demonstrated as unreasonable. This is because a function of reason is not only to learn and produce rules but also to assess them and knowing when to break them. There is, in other words, a demand on reason that transcends at least instrumental rationality. This demand is the call of reality. It is this call that beckons reason into Reason. It is the same that transforms reality into Reality. Both, however, are open. In formal philosophical language, they are neither complete nor well-formed.

The metatheoretical and metaphilosophical implications of a justificatory critique of justification are manifold. The metatheoretical one addresses the conditions of theory, of generalizations that collapse into overgeneralizations, of the attempts to articulate our relationship to reality without attempting the subordination of the latter. Although I summarized some of this analysis at the outset of this essay, I here offer some elaboration. As the etymology of theory reveals through the conjunction of the Greek word for god (*Zdeus* transformed to *theos*) and the Hebrew word for light (*or*—also *owr*—into *horan*), the multidimensions of seeing come to the fore. The ancient Greek verb *theorein* means to see or to view. The theistic element suggests seeing what a god would see. Seeing without light, however, amounts to not seeing at all. Think of the analogy of *theater*, whose etymology converges with that of "theory." The absence of light on a stage (in ancient Greek, *skēnē*) is to be locked in a nether zone. A lit stage places the audience into a situation of *theorein*, but for human beings, that is also a situation of crisis, from the ancient Greek *krinein*, which means to choose or to decide. When viewing a stage, one makes decisions about that on which to focus. Every object, every movement, every sound, every word occasions a moment of decision. This situation of having to make decisions carries with it responsibility for what one views and by extension the interpretations one brings to the theatrical context and experience. Beyond the analogy, the situation of theorists is that of having to make decisions in relationship to what is seen, encountered, or experienced, but here the lit stage is transformed into practices and relations of experimentation and evidence. There is accountability, in other words, at the heart of each act of seeing.

That, as well, the relationship of the ancient Greek collection of city-states (colonial

powers) to ancient Judea (an often colonized one with occasional colonial expansion of its own) already challenges asymmetrical presuppositions of the flow of meaning. Even negative human encounters flow in multiple directions, and new forms of meaning emerge. This metatheoretical consideration poses a challenge to binary interpretations of such encounters in which the dominant or hegemonic erases the dominated or the subaltern.[15] Interaction produces a dialectic in which limitations of human phenomena unfold in every revelation of avowed absolutes.[16] In revealing false universals—the performative contradiction of avowed human divinity—the human dimensions of human phenomena come to the fore. In *Disciplinary Decadence*, I characterize investments in disciplinary absoluteness as a form of decadence or dying of a discipline during the process of which its practitioners valorize their zombification. It is also when a discipline is practiced as if created by the divine. The suppression of disciplinary practice as an expression of *human* action and reality leads to familiar problems of accounting for divine error. Theodicean rationalizations follow, wherein the quest for internal consistency leads, eventually, to ignoring reality. From grasping or containing reality, the discipline's practitioners treat it as reality and inflate its scope. Where other disciplines offer contradictions, they are either ignored or discounted as illegitimate. If people don't fit into the disciplinary dictates, it must be because something is wrong with those people. At best, what practitioners would accept regarding other disciplines is that they stand as coexisting wholes or self-contained systems. This form of plurality—often characterized as "interdisciplinarity"—often has the same problem of indexical contraries: indexed within each discipline as reality, other disciplines are outside as separate, parallel worlds. Actual communication of disciplines produces dialectical transformations, in which each discipline faces possible transformation with the possibility of new disciplines being formed. I call this a "teleological suspension of disciplinarity." Instead of interdisciplinarity, which is at least a start, this approach and commitment offers *transdisciplinarity*. This is where fidelity to Reality entails being willing to learn from other disciplines, to communicate, and through that become transformed for the sake of Reality. Because the discipline suspends ontological self-presuppositions, the reality for which it reaches is never closed, which harkens for a relationship with Reality.

The theodicean model also affects methodology. When a discipline becomes decadent, its practitioners fetishize methods. A loss of critical relationship to methods results in treating them as if they were created by the divine. Instead of criticality, methodology becomes a search for "purity"—supposedly "uncontaminated methods." Instead of addressing a discipline's relationship with reality, the method distances or extracts itself from relations with all but itself as a custodian and facilitator of its discipline. Jane Anna Gordon describes this phenomenon as, in a word, "decreolization" (see J.A. Gordon 2014, 6–7, 12, 186, 193–195, 220). This quest for self-purification purges the discipline in such a way that reality becomes a contaminating danger. Ignoring what is supposedly outside, the discipline's practitioner turns inward for ontological purity. The theodicean problems outlined in the previous paragraph then follow.

The implications of rejecting theodicean practices of justification go well beyond disciplines into a critique of purity narratives with regard to human phenomena. If interaction, dialectical engagement, is "impure," then human reality, as an active

endeavor, becomes intrinsically illegitimate.[17] A form of coloniality comes to the fore here, since, as we have already seen, dehumanization is at the heart of colonial and other oppressive practices. They are, in effect, an effort to make nonrelations conditions of legitimacy. Human reality is thus imperiled unless demonstrated as nonrelational. This problem brings us to some philosophical concerns.

The metaphilosophical critique is of presuppositions of nonrelational metaphysics as the proper condition of reality. We could call this substance metaphysics. This form of metaphysics leads to mereological and spatial notions of wholes contained within wholes, or worse, a single whole that contains everything. The many problems raised by this metaphysical view—from those of accounting for negation to that of time, relations, and freedom—come to the fore in addressing all three questions of philosophical anthropology, freedom, and justification. At the core is the problem of *relations*.[18] The elimination of the human being as a relationship with reality compromises accounting for problems in the games by which intelligibility is produced. The earlier critique of changing players but not the game returns. The substance metaphysics model has the spatial model inhabited by players from within; the relational metaphysical model has relations through which new relations are produced. It is active, and it is open to unfolding possibilities, and it goes further in questioning also *kinds*. This metaphilosophical point opens the door to shifting the geography of reason, since Euromodern hegemony prioritized epistemologies and ontologies that pushed relational metaphysics in addition to understandings of human reality as relational to the wayside. This is not to say there weren't objections to that hegemonic model from within what is called the "western" tradition, but it is clear that the minority or minoritized status of those voices made them allies in the geography of reason that, in this context, is called "southern."

We come, then, to the quest for redemption. Redemptive narratives here come from multiple directions. On one hand, there is the effort to redeem the dominated, the erased, the marginalized. A question we should ask, however, is to whom should such a project be posed. If the dominated are redeemed through appealing to those who degraded them, wouldn't this be an affirmation of the hegemonic as a legitimate source of redemption? Isn't this a project of recognition that affirms the legitimacy of the core presupposition of hegemonic superiority? On the other hand, there is what could be called the hegemonic *need*. This need takes a theodicean form, which is a consequence of any binary system that constructs the notion of an intrinsically "superior," and by extension, eventually, "perfect" people, who avow having created systems that are just and right. How do they account for the degradation, dehumanization, and suffering wrought by the errors at best and maleficence at worst of their reign or rule? The response they (adherents of colonialism and concomitant systems of dehumanization) often desperately need is that all that was *worth it*. This second form of redemptive narrative slides into the psychoanalytical and philosophical terrains. The psychoanalytical is a need to force humanity into a mirror of gratitude for such suffering. The philosophical, however, is existential, historical, and metaphysical. Combined, they remind us of the contingency of human existence. Humanity manifests relations that could be otherwise, even when they are not accidental. That they are *not* accidental carries responsibility, and the critical response is that, as contingent, there could have been other ways to produce relations by

which human beings could live—relations that offer dignity and cultivate ways of living marked by freedom and respect. The concluding response to whether it was all worth it, then, is, categorically, *no*.

This *no* at times occasions narcissistic rage—a response of attempting to force others to disavow what history reveals and, instead, avow, often through the power of words, a preferred image of oneself, one's nation, or one's country. The word "image" alludes to sight, which, as we have seen, is at least a metaphorical feature of theory. But sight without meaning lacks distinction and is thus, in epistemological terms, undermined. Returning to the theater example, if the audience cannot understand what is on the stage, if they don't know what is going on, what things mean, they are, despite the stage being lit, stalled. Meaning, then, is a necessary condition of, in paradoxical language, seeing what one sees.

Meaning, however, is rooted in a much-disparaged phenomenon in the Euromodern world—namely, myth. The Greek word from which it is derived is *mythos*, which refers to narratives delivered by mouth. Today it is common to refer to that which is mythical as that which is false. This is a misunderstanding of myth and what makes it enduring. Myth, which is delivered originally by mouth, harkens to repetition, and this is an insight into meaning. Telling and retelling produces meaning. While truth is an aim of theory, it cannot emerge without meaning. In narcissistic myths, an image is insufficient without affirmation of voice (a retelling). Thus, the narratives about image bring meaning to facilitate sight. The narrative that makes theory not only visible but also *legitimate* becomes crucial. In the context of colonial and other dehumanizing narratives, meaning is distanced from what is to what, supposedly, *must be*. What, however, if meaning is released from past repetition and posed as the inauguration of new forms of meaning?

The production of new forms of meaning need not ignore past repetitions. They can pose in relation to them new forms of repetition that may be at home in times to come. This was an insight in Plato's *Republic* (Greek original, *Politeia*, approximately 375 BCE). Recall Socrates' reflection (at 327a) of going with Glaucon to watch a festival that was being held for the first time. In that brilliant, seemingly mundane remark, Plato announces the thesis of the text, for if a tradition has a beginning, it is contingent, and other traditions can be created. Later, in the Allegory of the Cave (514a–517), the one who breaks from the shackles of enslavement in a false reality of looking at shadows exits the cave into reality onto which the sun shines, but returns in an effort, marked by a form of love, to liberate others from their shackled condition. Alain Badiou rightfully describes this effort, of going back and forth and attempting to persuade the others to go outside, as politics (*politeia*).[19] We can add to this, however, the crucial element of repetition that follows the initial encounter with outside as the philosopher moves back and forth. In addition to the brilliance of *demonstrating* instead of *stating* the thesis of the text in Book I, Plato also articulated meta-allegory in the liberated and eventual love of wisdom's exiting the cave, for "allegory" (from *allos* [different, beyond, another] and *agoreuein* [to speak openly, out in the open], which is connected to *agora* [assembly place]) in effect brings things out into the open. The Allegory of the Cave is thus not only an allegory of politics, political responsibility, and philosophy's obligation to learn, know, and understand Reality but also an allegory about allegories, for all allegories are indirect

ways—the use of something else—to bring forth openness or to disclose something hidden. Bear in mind the Greek word that is often translated as "truth" is *aletheia* (personified as a goddess), which means to disclose. Although the most famous allegory in philosophy, its Sankofic element is evident, and its connection to earlier African myths of breaking free from cyclical claims of completeness—think of the myth of Isis and Osiris/Horus—is evident. Think as well of earlier East African philosophical reflections of persuasive movements of speech through which better conditions are achieved as in the case of the *Sekhti-nefer-medu (The Eloquent Peasant*, 1850 BCE).[20] That famous philosophical tale has *MAat* at its center. *MAat*, which has multiple meanings from truth to life to breath to balance to justice is also personified as a goddess. The Greek and Kmt connection leads, as well, to an unusual metaphilosophical conclusion, which is that philosophizing is, ultimately, allegorical. Much of that comes to the fore in Antef, a thinker from Kmt, who reflected on philosophy about 1500 years before Plato's *Republic*:

> [The lover of wisdom is the one] whose heart is informed about these things which would be otherwise ignored, the one who is clear-sighted when he [or she] is deep into a problem, the one who is moderate in his [or her] actions, who penetrates ancient writings, whose advice is [sought] to unravel complications, who is really wise, who instructed his [or her] own heart, who stays awake at night as he [or she] looks for the right paths, who surpasses what he [or she] accomplished yesterday, who is wiser than a sage, who brought him [or her] self to wisdom, who asks for advice and sees to it that he [or she] is asked advice. ("Inscription of Antef," 12th Dynasty, Kmt, 1991–1782 BCE).[21]

The richness of Antef's reflection and the obligations it poses for the lover of wisdom or the philosopher are familiar across possibly all traditions. For our purposes, two striking elements are his reference to "ancient writings," which offers a sense of how ancient a great deal of written philosophy was before Euromodern hegemonic misrepresentations of its ancient history. That most philosophizing is done orally affords a sense of an even more primordial philosophical past. But germane to the point about allegory, the message offers a portrait of a lot of repeated work along with efforts to enlist the wider community into the project of, allegorically, stepping outside.

This consideration of repetition and disclosure as breaking free from old repetitions through the production of new ones poses a critical relationship between at least two forms of responses to crises. The first, the narcissistic rage model, is an attempt to block the future as breaking repetitions of the past. It proffers a "return" to the past, which would be an affirmation of permanence as a condition of order. The crisis posed by the philosopher is elided in favor not only of returning to the cave but also, as I mentioned early on in this essay, placing a boulder in front of its opening. The goal is to forget through returning to repetition of the familiar. This model, which is a feature of conservatism, is a desire to be freed from decisions. Its response to crisis is to retreat into the elimination of all crises. It's a response marked by an investment in order, the elimination of difference, and an appeal to permanence, often through an appeal to a protector who is always right. That fascism is what awaits those who take that route is well known. Curiously enough,

despite his insight on the importance of change, Plato was unfortunately wedded to a conception of Reality premised on permanence. He thus, despite this bold creative move, was normatively attached to a model of reality—ontology—with a conservative promise. In fact, the notion of "return," marked by an epistemology of recollection, is a feature of this approach, of which Platonism is not the only exemplar, as it reaches, as well, into Roman thought and, eventually, forms of Christianity, in which the return of Christ is a hallmark. Against that model is the realization that there was never a perfect past. All pasts were marked by decisions, which make present crises simply a different generation's turn to make decisions. Those who interpret the task as eliminating the need for decision slide into conservatism. They mistakenly think decision is what humanity needs to be liberated from by virtue of making an ultimate and finalizing decision. Then there are different kinds of deciders. There are those who regard decision as a feature of human existence, which is not complete or contained but is, instead, an unfolding reality. From that perspective, making decisions is a relationship with reality that doesn't end because Reality is always exemplified beyond quantity, space, time, and kinds. In this regard, Reality is also beyond ontology, which makes the copula "is" an inappropriate and misguided attempt at containment. Karl Jaspers and Keiji Nishitani both in effect argued that ontology, in this regard, is an attempt to cover reality under the guise of Being (see Jaspers 1971, 63–94; Nishitani 1982, 77–118).

Redemption, then, is an effort to claim, to grab, to grasp, that which it would be best to discard. Instead of a self or identity or story onto which to cling, the task in this regard is what to do. This letting go is a decolonial practice in the sense of liberation from walls that block our relationships with reality, whose ongoing call is Reality.

Shifting the geography of reason unmasks a form of narcissistic disorder that maintains Euromodern hegemony. Proponents of that hegemonic geography of reason treat the end of European reason as the end of the world. Their position loses ground, however, when it is shown to be a worry about the end of the world for *whom*. As humanity could live beyond empire, we can live beyond the reduction of reason to a single group. And more, if humanity can move beyond reality to thinking about Reality, a form of humility—a word curiously linked to humanity—follows in which reason need not promise our outliving Reality to warrant its legitimacy.

Some Concluding Remarks

These reflections are but a fragment of what Africana and Black philosophy could offer projects of critical reflection on philosophical thought. They are posed, in a way, with irony, for they delve into particulars that reveal false universals and, in that process, offer advancement of universalizing projects. Among Africana and Black thinkers who noticed this unusual outcome was W.E.B. Du Bois. He realized that Africana and Black thought is always simultaneously aware of how Euromodern, white-centered thought presumed its superiority and universality to the point of hiding from itself its particularity. This arrogance often took the form of being able to talk about white subjects and Europe as if doing so alone would be sufficient to address "humanity." How the rest of humanity saw European and white subjects is often presumed by whites and Europeans to be how they see themselves. And how whites and Europeans see non-whites and non-Europeans is

presumably how those people "are." Such is the nature of hegemonic standpoints. Du Bois, however, noticed that Africana and Black peoples are bombarded with white standpoints, and they are well aware of how white and European peoples tend to see themselves *and* Africana peoples and Blacks. He noticed there was a form of double consciousness at work, in which Africana and Black peoples would be aware of how whites and Europeans imagine themselves and that many of the ways they imagine Africana and Black peoples to be are not identical with what we are. This twofold consciousness—of seeing how others see one and how one sees oneself—enabled Du Bois to address a peculiar aspect of dehumanization. The negative ways of seeing Africana and Black peoples force upon such peoples the identity of being problems instead of *being human beings who face problems* (Du Bois 1903).[22] It is an epistemic assertion that slides into an ontological judgement with a dehumanizing consequence. Understood as human beings who face problems, the important question to ask is from where such problems come. A lot of Africana and Black thought—not only from Du Bois but also thinkers from Ottobah Cugoano and Anton Wilhelm Amo, who preceded Du Bois, to Du Bois's contemporaries Anna Julia Cooper, Frederick Douglass, and Anténor Firmin, through to Cheikh Anta Diop and Frantz Fanon—exposed an uncomfortable realization that a lot of white and European thought was weighted down by whites and Europeans lying to themselves.[23] Any group of people who construct images of themselves as perfect commit the hubris of attempting to be gods. Such projects are attempted sterilization of their humanity. To make such lies stand as metonymic of humanity is a grave injustice to the human condition. Beginning with humility, with an understanding of human imperfections in addition to our strengths, would offer a more universal picture of human reality. In Du Bois's work, and so many others in Africana and Black thought, the twist is that the avowed white universal was a particular lying to itself about its universality, and the supposed black particular, through admission of its particularity, was open to admitting what it shares not only with flattering images of humankind but also troubling ones. This is a theme in Africana and Black thought, as attested to, for example, in Léopold Senghor's critique of European "man" as an imagined complete rationality. What is humanity without affect, including those we call emotions? (Senghor 1964, esp. 24)

This aspect of double consciousness—identifying the universalizing elements of particularity and the particularity of avowed universality—opens the door to an additional form of double consciousness. Jane Anna Gordon describes this kind as "potentiated double consciousness" (2007, 143–161). It emerges as follows. In realizing the false ontological claims of forms of double consciousness that fix Africana and black peoples into "things," the door is open to address the structural conditions by which societal injustices limit the options by which people can live meaningful lives. This enables those who realize this to become what Frantz Fanon called "actional" (Fanon 1952, 180). It opens the door to different ways of living that transforms black identity into Black identity along with the realization that there may be more kinds of identities or ways of living to come. This is, then, a form of epistemological liberation.

In *Fear of Black Consciousness*, I argue this transformative movement into potentiality is an attunement to Reality. This attunement and the actions to which it leads—or at least for which it calls—are ultimately political (Gordon 2002, 147–165).

To understand this requires thinking through two phenomena, with which I will close these reflections. The first, because political, is power. I define this phenomenon as the ability to make things happen with access to the conditions of doing so. This definition isn't new. It is, in fact, ancient. In Kmt (ancient Egypt before Persian, Greek, and Roman colonization), the word was *pHty*. It is sometimes translated as the godlike strength, often associated with pharaohs (notice the *pH*), but what is crucial about *pHty* is that it is ineffective (impotent) without *HqAw* or *HkAw*—that which activates *kA*. *HkAw* is at times translated as "magic" (think of its connection to "hex," which in most etymologies is associated with German but archaeolinguistics may prove otherwise). It is what activates the *kA*, a concept with meanings ranging from spirit to soul to force to (with a "t" as *kAt*) vagina. The combination amounts to this: *HkAw* is a condition of possibility for *pHty*. Despite the abilities one may have, nothing will happen if the condition or conditions of that ability being made manifest—of *doing something*—are not met. The idea of a powerful person being incapable of acting or affecting anything is a contradiction of terms. Readers may also notice the peculiar similarity of *pHty* to the later Latin word *potent*, which has the same meaning. As with the earlier discussion of "theory"—and elsewhere others and I have discussed similar adaptations in the northern side of the Mediterranean of terms such as *rx* (wisdom, mostly from women) and *sbAyt* (wise teachings) from the southern regions of Upper Kmt/ancient Egypt—we could see how a geography of reason that does not see how communities affect one another, including the importance of flows from the geographical south to the geographical north, misrepresents how ancient humanity produced concepts and ideas. This archaeolinguistic consideration offers an understanding of power in which a lack of it would render humanity stillborn. Power is manifested in many ways, and humanity's production of culture, language, and social institutions enables us to make things happen to the point, also, of the worlds in and through which we live. Actionality, then, is key to human existence, and where conditions of making things happen are blocked, that is disempowerment. Where it is accessed, there is empowerment. Dehumanization is, in this regard, the practice of blocking people's capacity to live their humanity. This is done through denying or eliminating the conditions by which their abilities can be made manifest.

Another way of stating the conclusion of the preceding paragraph is that human reality is the manifestation of the living power of creating worlds in which human beings can live human lives, but some human beings privatize the conditions, which limits the options available to others. These conditions range not only from material things such as food and shelter but also human-specific phenomena such as social access, speech, and, by extension, political power. Potentiated double consciousness is access to phenomenological and epistemic conditions of unleashing human potential. In this regard, it is also an exemplar, through access and transformation of epistemic conditions—an important element in shifting the geography of reason.

The second phenomenon pertains to the insight about affect. A philosophical anthropology that ignores affect may work well for rational beings, but it falls woefully short for human beings. This is because human reality reaches and is lived beyond narrow dictates of rationality. Living in and through human reality affords a form of affective existence in which meaning and meaningfulness thrive. This, to some extent,

makes humanity narcissistic, because one must learn human reality to live it, and this involves paying so much attention to human phenomena that even what we call the "natural world" is mediated by human meaning. These mediations aren't intrinsically bad, since they have afforded our survival, and they did so for many other hominins who preceded us with longer runs than the approximately 300,000 years we've achieved thus far. This good narcissism, if we will, can, however, be corrupted by a form of narcissistic disorder that militates against living with others. The desire is no longer for humanity to be the proverbial mirror but instead for the self, or one's specific group, to function as a mirror imposed *onto humanity*. The initial reaching out to learn from the symbolic and interactive world here characterized as human reality can also be called a form of love. That love reaches outward with an understanding that it can never fully grasp the "whole," for there is not only always more by virtue of possibility but also paradoxical possibilities beyond possibilities similar to the earlier movements from reality to Reality. This latter form is radical love.

Colonial love is locked in an old-style metaphysics. It reproduces the self, which makes others into analogues. It thus, in avowed acts of loving, seeks the eradication of what differentiates others from the self. Its logical course is narcissistic solipsism.

Radical love, however, is relational and cultivates continued growth of new relations. It is a *growing* love without expectations of epistemic closure. Epistemic openness, as its hallmark, makes it an ongoing activity of learning by which and through which the self is also transformed. This love permeates productive human relations, including the social institutions they build. In political terms, it takes seriously that power can empower those other than the self, and that empowerment, because it extends beyond the self, reaches out to those unknown. This defies a colonial logic of love, wherein one could only love through similarity, which leads, ultimately, to loving only oneself (selfishness). The defiance accepts the human capacity to love beyond the self in a reaching out whose conclusion is selflessness since the beloved's eventual anonymity is not identical with the already disclosed self. How can one love the anonymous? Yet, in each act of radical love, we do.

There is much more I can say on this matter, the many aspects of which I have written about in my books and articles, some of which are assembled in *Black Existentialism and Decolonizing Knowledge*. What I would at this concluding point like to say is that I bother to pose this question of love because it brings us full circle to Spinoza. El-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz—still most popularly known as Malcolm X—reflected in his autobiography on his admiration for Spinoza, whom he referred to as a "black Spanish Jew" (X 1966, 180). This would have horrified Spinoza, who, as we saw, was determined not to be a Black man and rejected his Jewishness, which, in Medieval and Modern Europe, carried the trace of his blackness. Spinoza had no reason to imagine receiving love from el-Shabazz or, for that matter, me. We did not exist back then. Yet, he did write from a form of love that reached to those to come, those whom we could call the subjunctive and future anonymous. That love was, ironically, in his articulation of the idea of love, which he defines in his *Ethics*, Proposition XIII, as "… nothing but joy accompanied with the idea of an external cause…" Radical love could be regarded as the apotheosis of Spinoza's conception of G-d, in which ethical responsibility also takes

political form. How extraordinary a paradox it is to be connected to a cause that, by virtue of its futurity and anonymity, is also external?

Recoiling, however, from the idea of joy at the disclosure of Philomena Essed and me would, however, be a form of hate. In effect, being wedded to a philosophy invested in purity led, ultimately, to a form of decreolization of the self and separation of thought from reality. Spinoza, however, did not reject the idea of *externality*. This externality, at least as Spinoza discusses it when it comes to love, is uncomfortable, insofar as it is left as an "it." I end, then, with a consideration from another Jewish philosopher, one who left the Northern regions in 1938 for Jerusalem, where mixed people abound and where African cities and towns stand next door, a worry that, as we saw, haunted Spinoza's dreamlife, and, as psychoanalysis would have it, his life of living the dream. For that philosopher, Martin Buber, internal/external distinctions are properly a condition of *I–It*, in which the self relates to the world and others as things. Love for Buber transcends that relation into *I–Thou* (Buber 1971). To find joy into looking into the unknown as *Thou*—indeed, to all of Reality, which includes that "scabby Brazilian"—is the potential of radical love.

It is with that consideration in mind that I, the author this essay, this Black Jewish philosopher, along with Philomena Essed in celebration of Spinoza's name, join Buber in amending your insight, dear Spinoza, and reach forth, with an open heart, in radical love for those to come.

Notes

1 Feuer argues the "Negro" in the dream was Henrique Diaz. The "New World Spartacus" of the Pernambuco uprising described his fighters as "gladiators" and the "Creoles" among them as "malevolent" and claimed that they "feared no duty."

2 The classic racist work of this brand of anti-Jewish hatred is Arthur de Gobineau's *Essai sur L'Inégalité des Races Humaines* (1853–5), available in English as *The Inequality of Human Races* (1999).

3 I'm speaking of Charles W. Mills. See Risen (2021).

4 Especially Part III of the *Ethics*, "On the Origin and Nature of the Emotions," and Part IV, "Of Human Bondage; of the Strength of the Emotions."

5 The obsession with black-white miscegenation in Euromodern human science would warrant a talk of its own. For an excellent analysis in the thick of its nineteenth-century formation, see Anténor Firmin's critique of Paul Broca in his *De l'égalité des races humaines* (1885); available in English as *Equality of Human Races: A Nineteenth Century Haitian Scholar's Response to European Racialism* (2000). Firmin was also responding to a host of racist anthropological literature from Kant to Gobineau.

6 That is among the reason why so many ancient maps would appear today as "upside down." See, e.g. Burzacott (2015), Sowden (2022). To see for yourself, consult the "Map of the Cosmos" (664–332 BCE) in the Yale Map Collection, Accession #61: https://echoesofegypt.peabody.yale.edu/overview/map-cosmos. Notice the Pharoah and others facing the rising sun on the left.

7 Although these events are well known among historians of Andalusia and its demise, the reader may wish to know that among critical eyewitnesses from those times was Niccolò Machiavelli. See *The Prince* (2005, 76).

8 Examples are many. Mourad Wahba offers a succinct summary of these historical derailments in *Fundamentalism and Secularization* (2023, 3–41).

9 I should stress how extraordinary depictions of the Moors are in paintings adorning the walls of museums a city such as Toulouse, France. For scholarly discussion, see Gabriele and Perry (2021); Mignolo (2003); and Van Sertima (1992).

10 For elaboration, see, e.g., de Sousa Santos (2018, particularly 1-2). This is the theme of much southern theory, as observed by, e.g., Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff (2012).

11 I discuss the thought of many of these ancestors and contemporaries in *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy*. It is, however, not exclusively through philosophy that we should acknowledge their importance and thought. For critiques from anthropology to sociology, from history to politics, see, e.g., Connoll (2007); Trouillot (1995); and Robinson (1983). These are, of course, not exhaustive.

12 For readers interested in specifically my thought on these questions, as well as others ranging from other areas of philosophy to history, politics, and religion, see Maart and Day (2023).

13 This is a well-known concept in Africana thought. For discussion, see Gyekye (1996).

14 For an anthology of this literature, see Bernasconi and

Lott (eds., 2000).

15 This complex flow was especially so in the formation of religions. For the case of the "Abrahamic" religions, see, e.g.,. Cohen (1999); Topolski (2017); and Gabriele and Perry (2021).

16 This is an observation made by many researchers on intercultural encounters, but see, e.g., Wiredu (1996); Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff (1997); Trouillot (2003); and Wahba (2023).

17 Recent developments in creolization theory illuminate this problem. See, e.g., Jane Anna Gordon (2014) and Monahan (2023).

18 Africana philosophical criticisms of this ontology and its metaphysics are numerous, many of which I discuss in *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy*. It should be borne in mind that these criticisms also emerge in what is also called "Western" philosophy. A prime exemplar is the writings of Ernst Cassirer. See, e.g., Cassirer's *"Substance and Function" and "Einstein's Theory of Relativity"* (1923), originals *Substanzbegriff und funktionsbegriff* (1910) and *Zur Einstein'schen Relativitätstheorie* (1921), and, of course, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (1955–1957), with a 4th posthumous volume published by the same press in 1996. They converge with ideas on relational metaphysics in East Asian philosophy, as attested to by Xiang (2021). See also Xiang (2023), Valmisa, (2021), Wang (2012), and Nishitani (1982). Many of these ideas are also connected to, in contemporary parlance, philosophical structuralism; see, for instance, Caws (2000).

19 See Badiou's offering this interpretation of the famous allegory in Gorav Kalyan and Rohan Kalyan, *Badiou* (Documentary Film, 2018): https://www.badioufilm.net/

20 See Alan H. Gardiner's commentary and scholarly translation of this piece of classic literature from Kmt (1923).

21 The brackets refer to some changes I made to Hellmut Brunner's translation of Antef's inscription. I did so because philosophers of ancient Kmt weren't exclusively male or identified with the masculine in English known as men. For the original, see Brugsch (1883–1891).

22 For elaboration, see also Gordon (2000), chapter 4.

23 See *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy* (2008) for discussions of these thinkers.

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