

█ Editorial. *The Caribbean Dossier: Shifting the Geographies of Reason*

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## Editorial. *The Caribbean Dossier: Shifting the Geographies of Reason*

Human beings are magical. Bios and logos. Words made flesh, muscle and bone animated by hope and desire, belief materialized in deeds, deeds which crystallize our actualities.

—Sylvia Wynter, “The Pope Must Have Been Drunk” (1935, 35)

At a conference in Senegal, graciously hosted by philosophers at the Université Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar (UCAD), I rediscovered my love for philosophy in a canon that had been excluded from my ‘Western’ education—that of Caribbean philosophy. Inspired by each speaker, and especially the keynote by Lewis Gordon, I immersed myself in the brilliant scholarship of thinkers such as Suzanne Césaire (and Aimé), Frantz Fanon, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Cedric Robinson, CLR James, Charles Mills, Paget Henry, Édouard Glissant, and the work of Sylvia Wynter. The questions and communities co-created by this community of committed and engaged scholars, reminded me that there is another way of doing philosophy, which embraces being, thinking, acting, and feeling. This is what I wanted to share with other scholars and students. This lesson feels even more urgent as I write this, in 2024, when universities all over the Netherlands normalize and remain silent in their complicity with genocide.

Several years later, I taught a seminar in which I explored the rich intellectual tradition of Caribbean philosophy and thought oriented towards or revolving around issues of colonization, decolonization, resistance, emancipation, and identity. Our starting point was the transnational study of ideas forged in and through the Caribbean, which in this context includes its diaspora. We considered the meaning of the Caribbean as a geopolitical space, identities forged in the Caribbean, social and political problems that emerge because of colonialism and globalization and its relation to ethics, politics, and epistemologies.

But my students pushed me to do much more and helped me to include and focus on many other authors who were only briefly mentioned in the course—such as the importance of Suzanne Césaire’s work. It inspired them to keep learning, collectively and with care, beyond the classroom, and to organize a conference panel on Caribbean thought, a conference which led to several of the papers included in this special dossier. In their call for papers, they wrote:

How can we move beyond Western dichotomous thought? Enlightenment logic including its ideals of rationality, purity, and civilization seeks to constitute a self—be it that of the individual or the state—by defining and reducing its ‘other’ within a binary scheme of (presumably) static and mutually opposed categories. As products of the latter, the pairs subject/object, one/other, white/black, man/woman, among many others, were and continue to be politically imposed through processes of colonization. These are, on their part, circularly justified by the same epistemology. Against the naturalization of this structure, Caribbean authors such as Suzanne and Aimé Césaire, Édouard Glissant, Sylvia

Wynter, and Lewis Gordon take part in renegotiating the classifiers that inform the Western project and hence trouble the presumed absolute character of its dichotomous logic.

Grounded in intrinsically dynamic concepts like creolization and opacity, these proposals open up a space for life as an incommensurable reality beyond static binaries and offer especially fruitful tools to be applied to contemporary problems and discussions concerning identity, such as those of the category of the human, queerness, nation-building, and the limits of egalitarian discourse, to name only a few. On these grounds, the wealth of possibilities and tools for unsettling any fixed system of categories offered by Caribbean thought continues to shed light on the necessity of relationality in life.

As an editor for *Krisis*, it was an honour when they submitted some of these papers for publication. There is no greater gift for a teacher than seeing your students be inspired, thriving and teaching others. It is also a *baruch*, a blessing (the Hebrew meaning of Spinoza's name), to be able to include Lewis R. Gordon's 2022 Spinoza Lecture delivered in Amsterdam in this special dossier. This special issue and lecture are all about shifting the geography of reason, a term coined by Lewis in the late 1990s. As he writes in this essay: "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 do so as the origin of concepts and ideas was, from a Eurocentric perspective, apparently unthinkable." For Lewis Gordon, one of the reasons to shift the geography of reason is so that we may create space and embrace a radical form of love. This radical love never seeks to grasp or reduce the whole, but creates space for paradoxes, possibilities, and new relationalities. This is precisely what the four submissions selected for publication and after careful double-blind peer review do—express radical love and in so doing contribute to shifting the geographies of reason.

The first of these is by Sara Kok, who analyzes and challenges the central dichotomy of colonial modernity (evident in racism, capitalism, etc.), that between those defined as humans and those deemed non-human. Rather than as in many humanist projects, which seek to rehumanise the colonized, Kok—via the work of Suzanne Césaire—explores the political, ethical, and epistemic possibility of abolishing the category of the human. In this endeavour, she is guided by Julietta Singh's 2018 book *Unthinking Mastery*. According to her, Césaire's work, and specifically the cannibalistic narrative of the plant-human, provides an important space for unthinking mastery and coming to a dehumanist decolonialism.

The second article by Emma Krone brings the poetic brilliance of Suzanne (Césaire) into a relational tête-à-tête with Édouard Glissant. Krone explores their non-anthropocentric and more-than-human perspectives as critiques of 'the human' which existed prior to (Eurocentric) posthuman theorizations, opening up multiplicitous imaginaries, aesthetics, and epistemes. Inspired by Audre Lorde's essay "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," Krone shows how these logics settled and can be transformed. Krone swims the seas of Césaire's plant-human and Glissant's

beach walker, both forms of opaque poetic creolisation, showing how they disperse the human-non-human binary and contribute to a genuine decolonial imaginary.

The third essay is by M. Garea Albarrán, who offers a queer reading of Édouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* (1990). Garea Albarrán connects the notion of relations with that of queerness, both of which are transgressive, to show their potential for engaging creatively with queer theory and praxis. They explore Glissant's notion of transparency and opacity in order to better understand the tools needed for (queer) visibility and gender as a subversive tool. This opens up the possibility of exploring of an outside to the gender matrix central to colonial modernity.

In the fourth and final submission, Britt van Duijvenvoorde's essay is positioned closer to home—in the Netherlands, a place that, like much of Europe both then and now, silences and erases the stories and voices of those who are seen as nonhuman. On the slave ship, the enslaved were reduced to cargo—their resistance only to be hidden against the grain in ledgers. Britt re-reads the archives, inspired by both Caribbean scholars and themes, in order to show both the violence against black women and the violence of history. This essay demonstrates the importance and beauty of a creolization of poetics and praxis, a new kind of epistemic, a new kind of scholar and scholarship.

But more than the product of these four essays, the process, the care, the ideas exchanged, the collective way of learning and teaching, is what we all took with us from the seminar, the conference, and all the steps that led to the publication of this special dossier. We found joy in violent spaces, we found new inspiration in opacity, and we found each other to be sources of hope for academia and justice.

—Anya Topolski

*The Caribbean Dossier* was edited by our board members Anya Topolski and Guilel Treiber. In addition to the dossier, where the papers are intertwined by story and content, we have crucial contributions on a variety of topics. Related but not part of the dossier, we have an interview with Amy Allen conducted by Judith-Frederike Popp and Tobias Heinze. Allen's work has shifted from a critique of progress, sharing with Caribbean philosophy a decolonial perspective concerning the European heritage, to emphasizing, in her last book, the importance of Melanie Klein's work for the future of Critical Theory. Popp and Heinze trace the motivations behind this shift and raise crucial questions together with Allen.

Indeed, one can see the dossier on Caribbean philosophy and the issues addressed in the different contributions outside of it as addressing several lacunae of Critical Theory. This is *Krisis* self-imposed task. We assembled further replies to the "Critical Naturalism Manifesto" published in our previous issue, generating a crucial debate on the interaction between Critical Theory and the Climate Crisis. Moreover, Jan Overwijk's contribution, "Krisis Reports: *Futuring Critical Theory*," written as a report from the *Futuring Critical Theory* conference organized for the occasion of the 100 year anniversary of the Frankfurt Institut für Sozialforschung, discusses what direction future critical theories in the Frankfurt School tradition could take in the face of today's polycrisis, while also celebrating its past.

The occupation with the Climate Crisis and the relation to Critical Theory is

approached in a more suggestive fashion in Henry Pickford's essay "Thinking with Cormac McCarthy." McCarthy, who passed away last year, is considered an important writer as much as a politically elusive author. Pickford emphasizes what is the value of thinking together with McCarthy on concrete political issues, specifically the Climate Crisis. Pickford's essay interact and echoes nicely Christopher Julien's article "A Political Ecology of Modernist Resistance." Julien traces how climate crisis mitigation generate loops of disruption, the very obstacles to addressing what currently threatens the Earth and Humanity. These loops, ecomodern and ecofascist resistances, generates further loops which Julien sets to solve with the help of Isabelle Stengers and a decentralization of human agency. Stengers is at the centre of our last contribution, a review essay entitled "Something Is Brooding." In it, Halbe Kuipers, traces meticulously the advantages and limits of Stengers reading and discussion of Whitehead's processual philosophy in times of scientific conflict and contradiction.

## References

- Wynter, Sylvia. 1995. "The Pope Must Have Been Drunk, the King of Castile a Madman: Culture as Actuality and the Caribbean Rethinking of Modernity." In *Reordering of Culture: Latin America, the Caribbean and Canada in the 'Hood'*, edited by A Ruprecht & C. Taiana. Ottawa: Carleton University Press.