

ON AFRICAN FAULT LINES



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ON AFRICAN FAULT LINES

Meditations on Alterity Politics

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To the memory of innocents:
unknown millions of fellow Africans,
victims of nineteenth- and twentieth-century
ideologies and cults of difference.

*Secus decursus aquarum
Plantavit vineam Justorum
Et in lege Domini fuit
Voluntas eorum.*

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Of a culture, these meditations are inscriptions. They rely on reflectors called upon in explanations. References acknowledge debt and authority. This is the

moment to recognise the fact of possible forgotten sources internalised as to have lost their precise origin in the literature. By their expression, some ideas might not be mine. Yet, they had become also mine in their blurred relation to horizons of knowledge and their effects on my interrogations. Also, occasional detailed viewpoints are tacit responses to positions on alterity politics in my preceding books. Forgotten or erased names and trends acclimate politics of forgetting of any memory and its ambiguity within one's own economy of remembering. As a matter of principle, explicit invocation of a field or a reference to a school of thought mark possible influences and, importantly, effects of challenging critiques.

Thus, arguments are 'marked' by visible and invisible bonds. Quotations, and there are many of them, support or illustrate beliefs and viewpoints, tenets and methods. They sanction an obedience within an epistemological configuration. Annotating arguments, they underline stances in agreement or disagreement with other angles, other theories. Collages, one might say. This is a matter of opinion. At any rate, accenting points in intellectual inscriptions, citations contribute to a way of redeeming meditations from both presumptions of bringing something unique and from arrogations of framing prophetic claims. In fact, from the background of a metaphysical agnosticism, the role of citations is simply one of backing a highly limited number of lines about alterity in connection with an 'ethics of ambiguity', to refer to Simone de Beauvoir's book.

Published twenty years ago, the *Invention of Africa* was written by a Central African francophone. The chapters of *On African Fault Lines* have been lived by an anglophone black man. In the first book, acts of faith correlate codes of scientific sagas and those of power-knowledge ideological systems. With this project, an appreciation of reading and teaching other people's books reflects a sceptical patience in decoding rapports between alterity propositions and works on managing individuals and ideas.

In its method, by giving a privilege to the Greco-Roman tradition and religions of the Book, the exercise of *On African Fault Lines* states only a dispassionate manner for conceptualising disciplined examinations, and comparatively. The how of its measure on universality manifests a library. The course of its history witnesses to a how of the last centuries' Colonial Library's efficacy. To recognise such an account is a lesson in humility.

Such is, unavoidably, the burden of any intellectual activity that claims to assume disciplinary procedures in its genealogy. One may recall here Michel Foucault's *L'ordre du discours* and its articulation of constraints in intellectual practices.

In English, 'The Discourse on Language' is an appendix in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. From its lesson, one cannot but reiterate two of its main precautions concerning the commentary and the discipline. The first states an obedience to 'the discourse which is *spoken* and remains spoken, indefinitely, beyond its formulation, and which remains to be spoken'. In sum, revisited and reconditioned. And, on the other hand, for the discipline, Foucault says it well: 'What is supposed at the point of departure is not some meaning which must be rediscovered', but 'the possibility of formulating – and of doing so ad infinitum – fresh propositions'. A creativity under surveillance recommences an itinerary in perception from determining frameworks.

Earlier versions of some chapters were issued in a number of professional publications. They are gratefully acknowledged in the endnotes.

Of course, I alone am fully responsible for the ideas and the manner in which they are presented in this book.

Fault

fault plane A discrete, planar surface along which there has been appreciable relative displacement of the rock masses on either side.

fault trace (fault line, fault outcrop) A generally linear feature which marks the intersection of a fault plane with the surface of the Earth. Fault traces are sometimes marked by positive or negative topography and the emergence of springs.

fault trap Structure in which water, oil, or gas may be trapped on one side of a fault plane by an impervious horizon thrown above it by a fault. *Compare* ANTICLINAL TRAP; REEF TRAP; STATIGRAPHIC TRAP; STRUCTURAL TRAP; and UNCONFORMITY TRAP.

fault zone A region, from metres to kilometres in width, which is bounded by major faults within which subordinate faults may be arranged variably or systematically.

— *Oxford Dictionary of Earth Sciences*

If the word 'we' is not simply a *flatus vocis*, it denotes a concept subsuming an infinite variety of possible experiences. And these experiences appear *a priori* to contradict the experience of my being-as-object for the Other and the experience of the Other's being-as-object for me. In the 'we,' nobody is the object. The 'we' includes a plurality of subjectivities which recognize one another as subjectivities. Nevertheless this recognition is not the object of an explicit thesis; what is explicitly posited is a common action or the object of a common perception. 'We' resist, 'we' advance to the attack, 'we' condemn the guilty, 'we' look at this or that spectacle. Thus the recognition of subjectivities is analogous to that of the self-recognition of the non-thetic consciousness. More precisely, it must be effected *laterally* by a non-thetic consciousness whose thetic object is this or that spectacle in the world.

— Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*

Overture

Il n'est pas de solution à la démographie « incontrôlée » ni au développement déréglé, en dehors de la participation du plus grand nombre au banquet du pouvoir et des pouvoirs. Le paradigme du banquet des pouvoirs est peut-être le nouveau référentiel incontournable du début du XXI siècle; parce qu'il intègre et dépasse le paradigme du banquet des ressources prévalant depuis Malthus.

L'Afrique doit s'ébranler, pour son propre compte, pour son propre jeu, dans le match planétaire, après s'être assuré qu'il y a vraiment jeu, que les jeux ne sont pas faits d'avance. Si non, elle restera le mendiant confiné dans un recoin de la natte des autres.

(There is no solution to an 'uncontrolled' demography, nor to an unruly development, independently from the participation of a majority of nations in the banquet of power and of powers. The banquet paradigm of powers is somehow the unavoidable new referential at the beginning of the twenty-first century because it integrates and goes beyond the paradigm of the banquet of resources that has been prevalent since Malthus.

Africa must move herself, for herself, facing her own challenge, in the planetary movement and assure herself that there is really a challenge, that the challenges are effective and not pre-ordered. Otherwise, she will remain a mendicant confined in the corner of *the mat of others*.)

— Joseph Ki-Zerbo, *La natte des autres*

Marvel at this hour,
for those who have been taken for good,
and many things that are understood cannot be spoken.

— Jay Wright, 'One Must Savor the Second Law of Love',
The Guide Signs

Refaire

These meditations reflect subjective perceptions and recollections of discourses in relation to Africa. They are interventions and their associations in conversations, readings and travels have evolved from being experienced as ideas or happenings to cultural stances and occasionally a map. From objectivist explications, their style coincided with an effort to think and relate signs and accidents to representations of Africa, to the rhetorics of self-multiplying processes. From a book to a classroom, from an encounter to the simple act of listening, the consciousness comes to be the now, and a reflection about Africa, the disposition of a construction and its environment.

The visibility of fault lines organises the collection, raising questions on both the perceived and the validity of its arrangement. Stressing the harmony they aim at, the meditations are negotiations. They provide ways of decoding networks of natural and social signs and of looking for their meaning, the one that they unveil and the one that emerges in relation to what transcends them. In this sense, this book assumes the same project as *The Invention of Africa* (1988) and *The Idea of Africa* (1994).

On alterity politics or on development growth, on disciplinary practices or on fictional intellectual trails, time and again, the method submits to a strict reliance on texts and gives privilege to discourses, mainly academic, in a constant hermeneutical effort.

In my analysis, I follow three guiding precautions:

1. The ordinariness of cultural lines (economic, political, etc.) as determining localities in the practice of everyday life and from which one can interrogate what the lines suppose and impose in allegories that bring us to a dialogue or separate us in confrontation.
2. The bleak picture of Africa in the global economy, from directives of the World Bank and the IMF as channelling a history after the colonial period. It is rarely emphasised that Japan made an important declaration by publishing 'Issues Related to the World Bank's Approach to a Structural Adjustment: Proposal from a Major Partner' (OECF 1991). This document

was a counter-statement to the 1991 World Bank report about the constraints that came to structure the multipolar world in which we are living today.

The 2007 Heiligendamm Process of the G8 industrialised countries initiated by the German chancellor Angela Merkel has been identified as marking a major moment in this global economy: 'Ongoing tectonic power shifts in the global system,' wrote Dirk Messner, the director of the German Development Institute, at the beginning of his foreword to *Emerging Powers in Global Governance* (Cooper and Antkiewicz 2008). In effect, with the Heiligendamm Process, the concept of a Third World might have lost its transparency.

3. In the international world, acknowledging the relation between cultural differences and the necessity of dialogical interaction and what they may signify in 'situation ethics'. At the same time, the assumption of normative standards of truth and rationality (at least of credible approaches to what truth and rationality might represent) and how to affirm the gift of life as universal and non-negotiable.

In brief, the precautions modulate ways of bringing together complementary perspectives from a variety of disciplines. To varying degrees, they are informed by an awareness of racial dynamics and popular knowledge productions illustrated by two recent books: John L. Jackson's *Racial Paranoia* (2008) and, as an example of another way of producing social knowledge, the doubling of academic knowledge as in the case of a history of a Congolese city, *Lubumbashi 1910–2010*, edited by Bogumil Jewsiewicki, Donatien Dibwe dia Mwembu and Rosario Giordano (2010).

These precautions mark even some not-so-obvious connections apropos history and cultures. Lessons that can be deduced from Theodor Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* (1981) concerning pre-moral and moral challenges cannot be isolated from the stories of everyday life.

Thus, I return to the basics of epistemology. One way of facing this issue might be to reformulate the preoccupation that grounds it, namely, knowing if there is an epistemology that might not be conquering and subduing. The question concerns not only all systems of knowledge, but also ethics and aesthetics, and the media that handle them cannot be detached from the complex that actualises these systems. At any rate, why should we reduce such an issue to Africa, in relation to European standards?

Universality of epistemological violence?

Instead of using *epistemology* strictly in a technical sense (what concerns the origin, method and nature of knowledge), let us understand it as designating simply any *savoir* concerned with a functional knowledge system and its practicality. Such a definition corresponds to the popular usage of the word in the domain of postcolonial studies. It has another advantage, that of englobing the field of normative knowledges, as well as those of marginal and unscientific systems. In this sense, the concept applies to the *savoirs* and skills of any cultural system of yesterday and today. Exemplary by its idiosyncrasy, the colonial encounter was a modality by which a dominant system incessantly defined and redefined itself and also others in all sorts of *savoirs* (general knowledge) and *connaissances* (specific knowledges).

My first aim is to clarify the perplexing idea of an epistemological violence. In the last part of *The Order of Things* (1966a), a work describing an archaeology of knowledge systems, Michel Foucault defines a process of knowing as being always elsewhere, always at intersections of multiple lines and always within a changing cultural configuration. Anthropology, he believed, magnifies this paradox in so far as it actualises the power of one's representations of the law of desire and death; indeed, in the conjunction of having, doing and being. Now, this is also what we can deduce from Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1956), in the chapters devoted to being-for-others, on freedom and on 'doing' and 'having', which conceptually organises the space of an existential psychoanalysis. But on otherness, or moving from the interpersonal to the intercultural, Foucault said it well towards the end of *The Order of Things*: 'Ethnology is situated within the particular relation that the Western *ratio* establishes with all other cultures' (1966a: 378). By locating ethnology in a dialogue with psychoanalysis, he rightly insists that their common privilege comes from the fact that they are, fundamentally, both 'sciences of the unconscious: not because they reach down to what is below consciousness in the human, but because they are directed towards that which, outside man, makes it possible to know, with a positive knowledge, that which is given to or eludes a consciousness' (381). Without debating what is meant by 'unconscious' here and by accepting it simply as what is hidden – in sum, the repressed and forgotten but not erased – and by bringing together Freud, Foucault and Sartre, we can go back to the very idea of knowledge and to the processes by which it is produced. Once again, we come to the question of epistemology; that is, the question about the nature, source and limits of adducing knowledge. And, of course, every human being is born within a system of knowing.

The general opinion of the sciences explains knowledge simply in reference to procedures of education. Exemplary are those that construct discourses on truth and falsehood. Without entering into the philosophical intricacies of Heidegger's understanding of the idea of knowing, let us use the basic lexical grid of the German verb *verstehen*. Its meanings can be organised into a few main sets: (a) to perceive, (b) to understand, (c) to interpret and (d) to know. The word testifies to an observation first, then a discovery which is an unveiling, an apprehension of something. One faces, here, the notions of revelation, appropriation and comprehension. Similarly, in the last part of *Being and Nothingness*, in a strange prudence (in so far as what he considers to be proper to the French can be extended to most languages), Sartre notes that 'the writings of French epistemology swarms with alimentary metaphors (absorption, digestion, assimilation)' (1956: 739). About these images that translate intellectual operations, he adds that 'there is a movement of dissolution which passes from the object to the knowing subject. The known is transformed into me; it becomes my thought and thereby consents to receive its existence from me alone.' He calls this transformation the 'Jonah complex', which is about assimilating without destroying, which is also one of the modalities of knowing. The other modality Sartre explored in *Being and Nothingness* links the idea of knowing to an arrogation, a possession through perception or a 'violation' by sight known as the 'Actaeon complex'. *Verstehen* translates the whole process of knowing: perceiving, accessing an object and forcing it to disclose its secrets. Using the Actaeon allegory, Sartre writes: 'Every investigation implies the idea of a nudity which one brings out into the open by clearing away the branches so that he can have a better view of Diana [the goddess being spied on by Actaeon] at her bath' (738).

About the violence signified here, Sartre's figures should be examined from the concept of original sin. Positing oneself a knowing subject, one transcends the freedom of the Other, the transcended one. By being known, one is reified by a transcending subject and given freedom. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre provides three notes on what is a paradigmatic approach to the relationship between the self and the Other:

It does not follow, however, that an ethics of '*laissez-faire*' and tolerance would respect the Other's freedom any better. From the moment that I exist I establish a factual limit to the Other's freedom. I *am* this limit, and each of my projects traces the outline of this limit around the Other. Charity, *laissez-faire*, tolerance – even an attitude of abstention – are each one a

project of myself which engages me and which engages the Other in his acquiescence (530).

It is from this singular situation that the notion of guilt and of sin seems to be derived. It is before the Other that I am *guilty*. I am guilty first when beneath the Other's look I experience my alienation and my nakedness as a fall from grace which I must assume. This is the meaning of the famous line from Scripture: 'They knew that they were naked.' Again I am guilty when in turn I look at the Other, because by the very fact of my own self-assertion I constitute him as an object and as an instrument, and I cause him to experience that same alienation which he must now assume. Thus original sin is my upsurge in a world where there are others; and whatever may be my further relations with others, these relations will be only variations on the original theme of my guilt (531).

Thus I am guilty toward the Other in my very being because the upsurge of my being, in spite of itself, bestows on the Other a new dimension of my being; and on the other hand I am powerless either to profit from my fault or to rectify it (531).

Imperative, then, is the motion from a psychological awareness of others' presence to the concrete experience of being-with-others in situations of solidarity. The definiteness of colonial and postcolonial creativity in arts and literature provides a key to the everyday banality of the experience of existing and its dehumanisation. The geographical contextualisation of a character in a novel may suffice in bringing into the picture a racial factor. By itself a contradiction, the dialectic regulates silently perceptions from the evidence of its facticities.

It goes without saying that the production of knowledge in any culture could be checked against the Actaeon and Jonah metaphors. Apropos of the very designations of knowledge, on the other hand, Gaston Bachelard (1971) has accented the allegorical values of the French *connaissance* and *connaître* and its Romance language equivalents (the Italian *comoscenza* and *conoscere*; Spanish *conocimiento* and *conocer*; and Portuguese *conhecimento* and *conhecer*). All these terms descend from the Latin *cum plus nasci*, 'to be born with'. They would support Heidegger's and Sartre's considerations on *Mitsein*, 'being-with', which may serve as a key to an ethics of living together.

In another manner of culturally coding the idea of being-with, Joseph Ki-Zerbo has used the symbol of the *natte* (mat) and its social functions in Africa. In his argument, there are two figures. The first transfers and interprets the abstraction of a dialogic measure; we can invite each other to sit down on our respective *nattes*, exchange them if useful, and have a conversation. The second, made explicit by Ki-Zerbo himself in his edited book *La natte des autres* (1992), signals criteria and priority values for thinking one's locality, spatialising it from its endogenous cultural economy, and according it *sui juris* to the constraints of both one's local and global communities. As a matter of fact, in thinking about these contexts, it is simply practical and less costly to imagine the privilege of an approach that would fuse the perspective of the anthropologist and that of the historian. In terms of signification, Foucault suggested such a junction, which could moreover denote the ambition of psychoanalysis, reformulating its anamnesis in the double project of history and anthropology. In the process, as Foucault advocated at the end of *The Order of Things*, the two discourses would access a new maturity:

By this means, ethnology and psychoanalysis would succeed, not in superimposing themselves on one another, nor even perhaps in coming together, but in intersecting like two lines differently oriented: one proceeding from the apparent elision of the signified in a neurosis to the lacuna in the signifying system through which the neurosis found expression; the other proceeding from the analogy between the multiple things signified [in media narratives, the everyday practices of conversations, and intercultural explorations] to the unity of a structure whose formal transformations would yield up the diversity existing in the actual stories (1966a: 380).

Articulations of a method

Transdisciplinarity can express intuitions of what is given as a principle of interactions in the world, which is also the world of other people. Then what, really, is the new singularity when we compare its objectives with those of traditional disciplines, individually or in a plural disciplinary practice? For an application, consider Claude Lévi-Strauss's lesson on the complementarity between two major disciplines, anthropology and history. Let us proceed by (a) emphasising the similarities between anthropology and history, (b) indicating their differences of method and (c) concluding what the conjunction of their combined perspectives allows.

In the introduction to *Structural Anthropology* (1963), an unassuming text that inspired the last part of Foucault's *The Order of Things*, Lévi-Strauss, after distinguishing the objects of sociology, ethnography and ethnology vis-à-vis the discipline of history, suggests ways of establishing an original dialogue between perspectives that common sense tends to separate; in sum, he accents mirror-effects that unite these perspectives. Here, then, let me emphasise this possibility from the distinctions of Lévi-Strauss and integrate them in a plural voice.

There are, he demonstrates, theoretically strong similarities of method between historical and ethnographic researches. First, both are devoted to the study of different societies, societies that are different to the researcher's own. Therefore, both are concerned with the idea of distance: for the ethnographer, it is a remoteness in space; for the historian, it is a remoteness in time. Second, Lévi-Strauss continues, the two perspectives have an identical project, that of reconstruction: what happened in the past (for the historian) and what is happening in the present (for the ethnographer). This difference, however, can be relativised. Jan Vansina's foundational work in the field of African history, particularly *De la tradition orale* (1961) and Paul Thompson's *The Voice of the Past* (1978) have reformulated the view about the function of the oral and the written in historical construction. The privilege of the written over the oral did not bother Jules Michelet's belief that when he was referring to an oral tradition, he was thinking of a national tradition (1952). Third, what is expected, from both the historian and the ethnographer, is a contribution to a better knowledge of human experience, in time and space. In order to succeed in such an objective, Lévi-Strauss insists, both the historian and the ethnographer must have the same qualities: skill, precision, a sympathetic approach and objectivity (1963: 1–25).

There are, indeed, differences. Lévi-Strauss presents them and then suggests going beyond them. The first difference, and traditionally the most visible one, is the fact that the historian's study is based on socially organised materials, including documents and past traces, whereas the ethnographer collects a variety of data, including significant oral testimonies. But both the historian and the ethnographer treat these materials according to technical requirements and practices that are submitted to scientific norms. The second difference, less visible yet fundamental (it transcends the similarities existing between the two disciplines – subject, goal, method), is that 'history organizes its data in relation to conscious expressions of social life, while anthropology proceeds by examining its unconscious foundations' (1963: 18).

As synthesised, all of this seems very academic. Its pretext, a dialogic invention, is not. At least the synthesis has merit, promoting a healthy pedagogy on how, in today's global culture, to converse about systems of knowledge, the circulation of regional values and the diversity of perceptions by combining ethnographic and historical perspectives in the study of any phenomenon within and from all cultures. In bypassing the old specialisation implied by the opposition of history versus anthropology, we nullify also the absurd tension between historical and ahistorical societies. Each society deserves the best in multidisciplinary explanation, an 'evidence' for the *nouvelle histoire* position.

'La natte des autres' (The mat of others)

In *La formation de l'esprit scientifique* (1971), Bachelard speaks of 'epistemological obstacles' in the history of the thought and practice of education, coining the term 'regional ontologies'. And that is my point. Any culture is a locality on a global scale and, as such, is challenged by any other culture, even a friendly culture. Recalling Jacques Derrida situating himself within French culture, I can state that a culture is mine and, at the same time, it is not mine; any other culture is experienced as *la natte des autres* (the mat of others), the beautiful metaphor of Ki-Zerbo's, and would be expected, at least in principle, to accord itself to a cordial instrumentality.

Ki-Zerbo's metaphor means nothing more than a perception of Africa as a field of study within the social sciences and the humanities and a manner of relating it to other fields and promoting intellectual conversations and co-operation.

Indeed, one might choose a different approach to understanding intellectual practices concerning Africa and why not recall debates on the *Invention* and the *Idea* of Africa? A creative avenue might be how to read the history of discourses on alterity that deal with cultural differences represented in the diversity of continents. From this viewpoint, it seems important to consider the fact that a continent, geographically and culturally, is not what's represented in conceptual spaces produced by the sciences. To accent this distinction is important. In practice, in any history one could oppose a locality, which is the concrete reality of the practitioner, to an intellectual space, or the configuration projected by opinions and technical observations, always determined in the tension between why and how to do the correct thing. Well, correctness is not validity, and the most expedient way of expressing a reality is not necessarily the best.

Reformulated by Michel de Certeau (1984) and Paul Veyne (1984), the hermeneutical arbitrariness of writing history is a familiar topic in debates on *interpretatio christiana* of slavery, for instance. Why not invoke the justifications of Herodotus or Thucydides for writing their histories? On competing colonial histories and their merits, one may play at evaluating them from odd judgements of the little-known Caius Velleius Paterculus, the author of the ambitious *Compendium of Roman History* (1979) covering more than ten centuries. For this minor Roman historian, *alit aemulatio ingenia, et nunc invidia, nunc admiratio imitationem accendit* (1.17.6) – with genius in writing or interpreting, often envy and admiration kindles imitation. And, depending on epochs, the admiration may move elsewhere, *transit admiratio ab condicione temporum* (1.18.1). Metaphors can sometimes shape incomparable realities usefully for students of human affairs. By distinguishing a place from spatial representations, it becomes easier to face a history of transformations in intellectual activities. This might be also the opportunity for looking at the illusions of African invented ‘things’ and their effects on disciplines such as anthropology and history. As a conceptuality, Africa has been presumed a transparent concept in most politics of alterity and by almost everyone as a key to the assurance of a difference.

If one examines what seems today a solid fact concerning the genesis of *Homo sapiens* – from Africa, the possible beginning of migrations some one hundred thousand years ago – in relation to technical sequencing of genes in today’s human racial groups, the African genetic unity is at best a hypothesis. To summarise the point, let me refer to Steven Jay Gould’s book on ‘the end of a beginning in natural history’, *I Have Landed*:

All non-African diversity – whites, yellows, reds, everyone from the Hopi to the Norwegians to the Fijians – may not be much older than one hundred thousand years. By contrast, Homo sapiens have lived in Africa for a far longer time. Consequently, since genetic diversity roughly correlates with time available for evolutionary change, genetic variety among Africans alone exceeds the sum total of genetic diversity for everyone else in the rest of the world combined! How, therefore, can we lump ‘African blacks’ together as a single group, and imbue them with traits either favorable or unfavorable, when they represent more evolutionary space and more genetic variety than we find in all non-African people in all the rest of the world (2003: 354)?

Could such a background be of good use in the intellectual history of African difference, its roots in disciplinary lines of knowledge and its expression in political lines of interpretation?

From where are such questions addressed and why relate them to an interrogation about conceptual lines? One might ask whether such an approach, difficult to admit and intellectually unorthodox, in so far as it does not qualify where it belongs, can do more than allegorise its object. In fact, on what conditions could the description it produces claim to be a coherent representation of ideas on realities, a more or less faithful translation of what's out there, something to be called African? To reformulate the question in a language one hears often: If not a discipline, then, at least, what are the grids supporting this approach to Africa?

Redemptive arguments in the history of African studies can be reduced to two main types: (a) statements of a disciplinary code and its observable relation to its own history and (b) statements connected explicitly to identity politics of today's postcolonial perspectives and attentive to Africana studies ideals.

A great number of interventions about *The Invention of Africa* and *The Idea of Africa* come down to issues of both competence and dedication. By focusing on what seems to be a fundamental inauthenticity versus authenticity of this or that approach to Africa, as if the summoning of a consciousness to authenticity could avoid being one with the knowledge of a contingency, my critics have been raising questions about their own route. Let me summarise the point in three synthetic entries: first, on the responsibility of the speaking subject; second, on fieldwork as a requirement; and finally, on methodological agnosticism.

First, on the speaker's subjectivity, reflecting on my practice as one possible African practice, I am aware that I cannot identify completely with the practitioner of a disciplinary line, for instance. To some extent, I am aware of the otherness of my own consciousness. Nothing prevents me from thinking that I can, in this explosion of consciousness, say this: I identify with some beliefs about Africa before they become a public statement and, in this sense, they represent a claim for a witness, my own pre-reflective awareness. Who is this person, in his/her right mind, who does not experience such a permanent challenge; who does not experience an obligation to an ethical sincerity as a perpetual risk of one's being?

Second, even in practice in one's own native field, there is, sovereign but preposterous, both a presupposition and the idea that fieldwork should be a necessary condition for any valid proposition about Africa. As an intellectual requirement, first of all, fieldwork is predetermined by an external relation to

its object of study. In the authority of what it reveals after a performance, it witnesses to a relation of appropriation attempting to be an internal explanation and, indeed, as in the case of all realist projects, its objective always fails to access the intrinsic singularity of the known. More worrisome, do those promoting an absolute primacy of fieldwork mean what the word seems to imply? Let's at least look at two suppositions: should the whole of an invented Africa, the whole of Africans' experience, be a domain to be submitted only and strictly to this practice and is it the most adequate instrument for any translation and understanding? Consequently, would all other possible angles and disciplinary approaches be invalid? Or, in case they are not, should they play only an auxiliary role to this particular requirement of functionalist anthropology? Therefore, is the ordinary right of speaking from the creative freedom of one's home also forbidden? The extravagant character of the argument is manifest. At any rate, one would easily transfer here what, in *Wonderful Life*, Gould says of both 'the myth of field work' and 'the myth of the laboratory': they deal in 'the same misconception', the 'frontier mentality' (1989: 80).

From within or from without, all discourses are situational and defined by constraints of their own expression and the milieu of the subject. We all recognise the obvious, namely that the situation of an author stipulates a relation to an experienced locus and its exigencies; as such, it cannot be reduced to sheer objectivity or to an absolute subjectivity.

Third, on methodological agnosticism, often unfair, is the criticism underlining what seems to be an inconsistency of my work: on the one side, an affirmed critical scepticism and, on the other, what appears to some as an obsessive attention to the religious and particularly to Christianity. In personal communications to Wim van Binsbergen, an after-effect of his *Intercultural Encounters* (2003) and Kasereka Kavwahirehi's *La ré-invention de l'Afrique* (2006), I clarified the essence of an objection, that contrariness is a choice. It comes down to this. Immanuel Kant, whom we respect about this crucial fact, taught us that our knowledge relies on what we perceive. And on the other hand, it is necessary to suspend any certainty about the divine so that we can face it in the analytics of everyday life. There is nothing wrong in accepting, with civility, a dialogical attitude towards others, assuming that the configuration that bears the conditions of whatever my beliefs might be could also be the locus which recognises the reason of other beliefs, in Africa and elsewhere. On which account could not a healthy metaphysical

agnosticism welcome in a surprised respect both the Westerner elected as a sangoma (traditional Zulu healer) and the African believers in a Christian redemption?

At any rate, Christianity and Islam are today two highly visible religions and two statistical phenomena in Africa. They cannot be ignored. As of December 2010, Christianity has an approximate membership of 2.1 billion and Islam, 1.5 billion. In terms of statistical representation, in relation to other religions (Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, traditional, etc.), this signifies 33 per cent for Christianity and 21 per cent for Islam, against 6 per cent of what are called nowadays primal-indigenous religions.¹

Mirrors

Three interconnected themes – inscription in history, conflicts of language and universality of paradigms versus regional experiences – recur in a number of 2005 essays, including Ali A. Mazrui's paper, 'The Re-Invention of Africa' and a special issue of *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, edited by Kai Kresse, on how to read a postcolonial effort in the field of knowledge within the horizon circumscribed by alterity preoccupations. The authors' positions make one meditate. Mirroring one's lack and difference is a major obsession of the human sciences, which presents the idea of Africa vis-à-vis the idea of Europe, the idea of Latin America, etc. All these stand for constructs raising universal questions, including (a) the structure uniting a subject to its Other, (b) a dualistic mirroring and its limits and (c) the expressed and implicit patterns of communication. Complex, aptly marked, or unaffected by real and imaginary predicaments – to invoke a point from G.W. Leibniz's *Philosophical Essays* (1989; see essays I and IV) regarding connections between a proposition and the idea supporting its development, and in this sense its authority – by their scope, the tasks in Kresse's rich collection on rules of the game in the practice of disciplines require specifics. In this measure, centring on aspects and modalities to interpret, they could expand some of their lines of constitution and promises. A figure imposes itself. It is theological, that of 'living in the space of Granted Freedom', which allows Gerhard Sauter in *Eschatological Rationalism* (1991) to face two intertwined angles concerning what is perceived as existing out there and how it can be expressed in political and religious demands. For Sauter, who is consulting Karl Barth's notion of reality, the two approaches to God and ethics reflect the integrative generality of knowledge. Vague and enclosing, Sauter's argument would include without negative consequence disciplinary knowledges of Kresse's debate.

Such is the issue of an inscription in a history of knowledge and faith, and this indefinite article for history is a statement in its own right. It signifies a *de facto* observation in today's pluralisation of the notion of history. In this respect, it can contextualise its specifics. For the purpose of convenience, all the chapters in part one of this book are position essays that will take on the issues I have outlined here. A fellowship of discourse, within a configuration that still thematises analytical distinctions as a principle for defining beings and things and classifying them in ordered grids, is the rationalist space within which the conversation takes place. Within it, paradoxical figures illustrate the pluralisation of paths it both allows and constrains.

Sartre, 'the philosopher of the twentieth century', to borrow the title of Bernard-Henri Lévy's 2002 book, illustrates this rationalist space well. Lévy's expression exemplifies a climate that Sartre's work and life denote in full measure: under the aegis of rationalism, the goal is to bring together the Cartesian legacy and the demands of Marxist objectivism for a better understanding of history and ways of acting on it. In *The Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1976), Sartre's existentialism submits to historical materialism and defines itself as a simple commentary in the margins of Marxism, *la philosophie indépassable*, a sociologisation of the *cogito*, quipped another philosopher turned anthropologist, Lévi-Strauss. The whole enterprise of *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Lévi-Strauss observed in *The Savage Mind* (1966), could basically be seen as an ethnocentric project valorizing a conception of history and its own identification with humankind's history. At any rate, one could attend to these following markers: Descartes and Sartre, with the sign represented by Edmund Husserl's texts from the 1930s, notably *Die Krisis* (*The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*) (1970 [1936]) and *Cartesian Meditations* (1977 [1931]). One readily thinks particularly of the Vienna lecture on the crisis of philosophy and European humanity, as presented in an appendix to the 1970 English version of *Die Krisis*. Nowadays, in English, one refers to this text as 'Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity', the slight modifications in the title – *and for in, humanity for mankind* – are in themselves worth a hermeneutical study.

This perspective, a brief syntagma in the history of a fellowship, clearly outlines the horizon of the long nineteenth century of African imaginaries, moderating open intellectual predicaments on identity and difference as well as alienating conceptual networks that can be deconstructed. It sums up the history of the explanatory power of a conjunction of distinct lines: those of truth, of

knowledge and of power. These lines cohered the Hegelian lesson with Arthur de Gobineau's racial classification and the nineteenth-century scramble for Africa. Apparently autonomous, and generally granted as such in the history of ideas, they have been asserted in their reciprocal emulations. Aimé Césaire's *Les armes miraculeuses* (1970) are reflected in Sartre's reason for celebrating 'Orphée noir' (black Orpheus) (1969). These positions enlist their singularity from the ways by which, in the pursuit of truth, they have been circumscribing fields of knowledge in relation to political and economic power. In this liberty, the interconnection between process of learning and a will to power translates the same will to truth, the same intentionality transcending the locus of its own activity and, within this very process, facing what it has been outlining the past five centuries, as its alterity and unknown otherness and its 'sea of troubles', to use a magnificent image from Shakespeare.

Otherwise, a practice

Let me summarise this awareness and thus, with fragile wishful thinking, put to rest the core of arguments often levelled at my position, well formulated in a number of contributions to Kresse's volume. These arguments dwell on good usage of Africanist disciplines, including the practice of philosophy. Let me formulate it as a unique question under two entries, two variations of an enduring teleological vocation.

What is the possibility of retracing a dependable perspective on disciplines, particularly the social sciences' unstable grammars, and reading how they have been transformed since their historical genesis as practices, using languages aimed at producing and stabilising determined types of knowledge at given times?

One always works with models. Here is an approach to one example analogised from Auguste Comte's nineteenth-century classification of sciences and Franz Crahay's teachings. It could be qualified from the organic structure of the disciplines themselves and my aim is to outline a process by accenting the recent otherness of the idea of a universal paradigm. In this respect, one describes the disciplines in their historical dynamics. Their alleged impact on, say, racial outlooks may not be intended at all. For example, one sees for sure how to connect the reef of solipsism to the sovereignty of the *cogito*. But that does not make Descartes a theorist of political imperialism. In the second case, Darwin's theory of natural selection is one thing; its exploitation by national socialism ideologues is quite another. Certainly one would hardly demand the same prudence with regard to eighteenth-century

texts by distinguished natural historians, or about those concerning the politics of twentieth-century applied anthropology in Africa.

Let me focus on models. Using the notion of genetic constitution of disciplines as a criterion, it is possible to follow two interrelated processes: a decreasing generality, in terms of abstraction and, from this internal transformation, the increasing complexity of a discipline. Such a perspective would indicate stages inducing a multiplication of sub-disciplines and their diversification in new interconnecting areas. As a classical approach to the history of sciences, this perspective accounts very well for the diversification of disciplines, from the Cartesian model of philosophy as a totalising science with universal principles to a progressive constitution of apparently more restricted domains of positive and life sciences and, by the end of the European eighteenth century, the human sciences, including economics and the par excellence science of otherness, anthropology.

Indeed, there is not a necessary correlation between the thematisation of a discipline and the invention of its object. Anthropology is a good case. On the subject, we have, for instance, the now-classic 1964 study of Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. As a matter of fact, the title is misleading since the book comprises remarkable capsules on Greco-Roman anthropology. In brief, the best and the worst in African anthropology – on the notions of diffusion, the chain of being and the occult, for instance – are rarely the results of scientific research or doxic conceptions.

I use the adverb ‘apparently’ to describe restricted disciplinary fields as a precaution apropos the efficiency of a decreasing generality in relation to an increasing criterion-complexity in defining disciplines, when one links genesis and development. Useful in testing historical overviews, this conceptual tool may however lead to an oversimplified perception of a discipline, both in its history and its internal coherence. Consider the frequently quoted example of George Riemann’s non-Euclidean system, or Nikolai Lobachevsky’s hyperbolic geometry. They represent, to be sure, an increasing complexity but not at all a decreasing abstraction of the model. The same is true in the relation between contemporary mathematical theories of the fundamental interactions and the generality of topology paradigms.

About all of this, the human sciences and, fortunately, their African component represent the best terrain that challenges the efficiency of this criterion in determining the conformity of disciplines. On the one hand, the human sciences have illustrated neat transdisciplinary impulses from the beginning. Along with

the functionalist ethos and its affirmation in competition with history, African studies led by anthropology have been extolling the compelling idea of disciplinary distinctiveness and, consequently, the singularity of its being. That is, generally, the dispute that some of my opponents emphasise in disqualifying my supposedly ill-advised exploitation of their discipline. But which discipline is exploited, the humanities or the social sciences? I ask the question with a realist humility. Newcomers, African students of generalities cannot help but be suspicious of the arrogance of yesterday's philosophical systems, which seem to imply an indifference or a negation of any particular. Adorno's *Minima Moralia* (1984) has a chapter on the assumption of the singular by the universal and this movement can be reduced to the paradox that Sartre describes in *Being and Nothingness* when he quotes Jean Wahl apropos objectivity: 'We are – in relation to the other – sometimes in a state of transcendence . . . and sometimes in a state of trans-ascendence . . . But neither of these two states is sufficient in itself, and we shall never place ourselves concretely on a plane of equality' (1956: 529). A systematic deconstruction of disciplines, including African studies, asserts its justification from a critique of any abstract philosophical system in the name of concrete 'individual existence even in its most hidden recess', another excellent formula from *Minima Moralia* (15). Such a view can, indeed, invite attention to curious concordances between colonial identity politics, economic transactions and the invention of a number of 'tribes' in well-localised areas of Central Africa, for example.

To return to worlds of disciplines and their diversification, let us proceed by focusing first on the fragility of disciplinary boundaries and then on what such an inconvenience allows in terms of intellectual co-operation. Bracketing for the moment the important issue of ethics, the point to be made is crucial: from their inception, African studies have constituted themselves as a transdisciplinary space.

First, the fragility of boundaries may be the rule in almost all fields, but is particularly relevant in the social sciences and humanities. Disciplines such as aesthetics, history, philology and literature escape firm limitations and have always exceeded the constraints of the double criterion of decreasing generality and increased complexity. And, somehow, this would explain the superficiality of their academic textbooks, since their historical dimension can be formulated only from exteriority principles concerning their object. Other disciplines, such as anthropology and psychology, already from their very recent inception are not detachable from auxiliary fields whose lines intermingle with theirs to the point

of blurring demarcations. Would trivial differentiations alone separate psychology (theoretical or experimental) from life sciences? The same goes for anthropology, an unstable discipline at the crossroads of behavioural, life sciences and a number of the human sciences, including the military, its best employer these days.

One needs concrete illustrations of the type of affirmations just made. To make it brief, here are just two models. In anthropology, James George Frazer's 1922 work *The Golden Bough* (supposedly known to all professionals of the field, but in actuality read by very few) is simply incomprehensible when detached from its main reflectors, Greco-Roman philology, comparative mythology and Oriental studies. Such is also the case of the founder of anthropology of religions, the German-born and British philologist (Friedrich) Max Müller. He was an extremely attentive student of philosophy, highly respected for his English translation of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1881, which he recommends. Müller's transdisciplinarity spans nearly the whole of classic philology, Indo-European studies and comparative religion. His so-called Darwinian conception of cultures, specifically about mythologies as primal narratives translating natural phenomena, constitutes a protoscience leading to a disciplinary specification, one developed at Leipzig University a few years before the Swiss-born Ferdinand de Saussure, who also marked the disciplines. As a young man studying philology and focusing on Sanskrit at Leipzig University, Müller was exposed to theories on the newly consigned domain of Indo-European studies and hypotheses about its connection with Greco-Roman traditions and cultures.

In fact, the recent idea of firm disciplinary frontiers might well be a symptom of an imaginary conception of labour division. The Colonial Library is a transdisciplinary space that for centuries transcended axes of separation between natural and social sciences. Its huge knowledge capital was put to the service of absolute aberrations such as the slave trade. The Library justified the unjustifiable in deviant ethics, shaming human intelligence. And here comes the paradox. It is, in a sort of phantasmic relation toward such an activity, in the very impotence of its will to knowledge and power that the same space processed a new imaginary in which different symptoms – displacement, reversal, condensation – made possible new constructions in relation to alterity. As functionalism and structuralism succeeded a period, so came the new arguments in *Einfühlung* and new names, those of Mary Kingsley (1965) and Edward Blyden (1967 [1888]), Melville Herskovits (1962) and Georges Balandier (1956), Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch (2005) and Wyatt MacGaffey (1981).

A will to power had doubled a scientific ambition. The primacy was reversed. One identified with the other, a will to power as will to knowledge, that is what colonisations are about. The decreased abstraction and increased complexity criterion in disciplines has served well, at least to a point in a linear representation of the history of colonial sciences as well as the perspective of most anti-colonial textbooks and, at the end of the colonial era, in the foundation of African history and sociology. They precede interrogations represented in the metaphoric value of an African philosophy and African theology, vis-à-vis *Weltanschauungen* (worldviews) and gnosis.

Let me emphasise the fact that, so far, a major issue has been suspended, that of knowing what (past and present) disciplinary practices tell us about their objects, or how reliable and valid the translations are that they allow. Methodologically, one would distinguish two main orientations. There are, on the one side, realist constructions. They are based on a hypothesis linking the power of theories to their capacity for rendering correctly a given reality. In other words, a literalistic coherence is supposed to tell us everything about the laws governing objects themselves, the truth of their internal economy. One would think of African historians, for instance. Apart from its solid ethics of human solidarity, Vansina's rigorously scientific conception might be the best illustration. It is at the heart of a fabulous project: a reconceptualisation of a discipline or, more exactly, the incorporation of oral traditions as a legitimate archive in the practice of African studies. No doubt, thanks to Vansina, history and historians have, about Africa, radically transformed the scientific and spiritual atmosphere of human sciences. Yet the change brought about its own account, as we can see by carefully reading the uplifting autobiographies of Roland Oliver (1997) and Vansina himself. In Vansina's very moving testimony *Living with Africa* (1994), along with a tremendous innovation and a fascinating interdisciplinary overture, one encounters a positivist obsession. His plea for an objectivist African history seems to ignore the deadlock of realism and the science promoted seems to have no intention of learning from Heisenberg's uncertainty principle and its effect on the positivism of microphysics, on any analogical extension. On the other side, exemplified in Africa by Luc de Heusch in anthropology, one would consider the instrumentalist approach of Lévi-Strauss's disciples. Here, scientific models are simple devices; that is, languages aimed at translating an order of things into understanding. In fact, this comes down to a commonsensical idea: within a community of language, there might not exist a necessary correlation between the truth unveiled by the model used and its

inter-subjective arrangement as truth in a 'prose of the world', to use a metaphor represented in the same title of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's book (1973) and that Foucault adopted in order to introduce *The Order of Things*.

With African studies as a case in point, on the one hand, realism stands solidly as the expression of a highly respected objectivist practice of science; on the other hand, instrumentalism, a viewpoint for understanding something creatively in a prudent expectation, where the rendered is what it should be, is a construct that depends on both the reliability of the grid and the perception of the analyst, not the exhibition of an empirically definitive truth.

While my mind fully admires objectivist initiatives in African studies, my soul would rather side with the instrumentalists.

On African Fault Lines is a collection of meditations that situates itself 'elsewhere', neither strictly objectivist nor really instrumentalist. Recognising the experience of African studies, in three parts, the book brings together ways of raising questions in everyday life:

1. The first part, 'Positions', includes position chapters dealing with Africa within today's intellectual, economic and cultural configurations. Related to precepts in agendas of political and cultural conversion, the essays safeguard methodological constraints in allegories open to lessons from Adorno's 'negative dialectics'. They support the faith of Simone de Beauvoir, who moderates with deliberate optimism: 'To exist is to *make oneself* a lack of being; it is to cast oneself into the world' (1947: 42).
2. The second part, 'Meditations', includes meditations on disciplinary practices concerned with African difference. Interrelated, the meditations are statements from three main axes – the very idea of difference, its apprehension in analogies and its expression vis-à-vis types of knowledges and standards of veracity. In sum, a critique of this difference that might not be one interrogates the construction of spaces in everyday life and in relation to processes of knowing.
3. The third part, 'The Letter' brings together meditations on alienation, creativity and friendship. As facets of the Sartrean existentialist notion of alienation, they narrate the experience of being-in-the-world as existing within a context in which there are other people. Interventions on art or on migrations, humiliation and sacrifice, depict a 'trans-ascendence' and a 'trans-descendence', to borrow a metaphoric expression from Jean Wahl, quoted above, on ways of existing that cannot be reduced to essentialist motives.

Would it be excessive to think that the explicit and the implicit in this book may encapsulate the essence of a few important issues concerning our present condition and the discourses translating, expressing and interpreting it? For centuries, African narratives have been caught between the postulations of a Western identity and its others. Thematic narratives on those problems were progressively confronted with the relativist implications issued by the very historical reason that supported their premises and, indeed, the validity of their discourse, giving cause to the West's own history and instituting it as the paradigm of human history. In other words, from our present condition, at least, and from a presence in a marginal field, one sees a modulation that seems to magnify the visibility of a 'transparent society', to use the felicitous title of a book by Gianni Vattimo (1992). This transparent society is and is not ours. Possibly, the West might have ceased to be the invisible norm. Yet the West's self-reflection in our contemporary world prompts questions on its being and its history cannot be detached from the representations of an *alter*, so well signified by African studies. In the solidity of a knowledge, there are still risks predicated in this odd formula, from 'the West and its Others' to 'the Rest of us and the West'.

At the time of this project, an organic embeddedness affirmed itself in the multiplicity of inscriptions and interferences of disciplinary fields. This means that we must accept that, although imperfect, the Enlightenment reason was an all-englobing allegory and recognise that it signified also a critique of its own activity within an unstable economy of identities. The Enlightenment history is that of our collective present. One would therefore agree with Vattimo's observation in *The Transparent Society* (1992) and with Robert J.C. Young in *White Mythologies* (1990) about the import of theorists from the global South. Yet, it should be specified that the voice of Southern theorists is not totally an external sign of an epistemological space. It does not surge from outside of the configuration that qualifies its conditions of possibility, the very space from which African studies has been narrating topographies and transformations.

14 December 2010

Note

1. See <http://www.adherents.com>

Positions

*Sur la part non partagée
Je suis nègre de préférence*

*J'ai lu Senghor et Césaire
Et Guillèn et Richard Wright
Mais Saint-John Perse et Lorca
Dylan Thomas et Cadou*

*Et debout Paul Eluard
Réinventent la mémoire
Si tu sortais du miroir
Pour unir matin et soir*

— Edouard Maunick, *Poèmes*

The flexible foundation I suggest may best be conceived as a shape able to shift but maintaining certain points of intersection. The first point of intersection takes the form of a series of open-ended questions. These questions reveal how the postcolonial condition cuts across boundaries. The three central questions deal with identity: Who am I? How did I come to be who I am? To whom am I connected? Now these questions are not unique to the postcolonial situation, so while they are the basis of concern they cannot alone set apart postcolonial writing. It is true that many a non-postcolonial text might well deal with such identity issues. However, explorations of these questions permeate postcolonial literature with a ferocity of need and complexity of depth.

— Dawn Duncan, 'A Flexible Foundation'

Chapter 1

What Is a Line?

From the ordinariness of lines as figures determining spaces in the practice of everyday life to interrogations of what they suppose and impose in allegories, lines bring us in dialogue or separate us in confrontation, by manners of social identities as well as the administration of complex systems, mental software and cultural programmes.

Chapter 2

On Converting: Lex Perfecta Praecepta Recta

The metaphor of a perfect law and correct precepts relates itself to a reflection on writing the history of an African conversion, from the background of a Christian mission that initiated it. A meditation published in *Congo in België* (Ceuppens, Van Reybrouck and Viaene 2009), a recent study by Belgian scholars reconsidering the engagement of their country in colonisation, is organised around an image used by Pierre Charles, one of the twentieth-century thinkers of Christian missiology, on how to convert the difference which is out there. In effect, suggests Charles: ‘China will not wait indefinitely, whereas its old Confucianism dissolves; India stirs too, making cracking sounds; Africa is visibly transforming itself’ (1956: 35). The matrix of an argument translates an injunction on putting thought and power into action.

Chapter 3

Constructing the Colonial: Si Essent in Analogia; On This Difference That Might Not Be One

The colonial conversion of a foreign space means the reformation of a history on the assumption of a difference that might not be the one expected. In North Africa, under French and Italian rule, urban planning played an effective role in imagining a new society and structuring ways of living that several European countries would adopt after the Second World War. The phenomenon refracts a history and programmes transcultural interventions.

Chapter 4

Within Silence: Haiti

'By these hands', an *adieu*, see you later. A word can be given this way in a negative dialectic. It recognises an erasure. In his book *The Gift of Death* (1996), Jacques Derrida describes the intelligence of Christianity in structuring transition signs between life and death. In remembering the 2010 Haitian earthquake as a case in point, the coherence of beliefs and reverential keys to interacting universes are called upon. They transcend all lines in human differences. One might entreat the authority of a modest code, the *mache chache*, this symbol of a never-ending inscription in the circles of life.

What Is a Line?

*To my Latin American students,
inscribed bodies,
who have been teaching me how to read absurd lines in compact
economies of signs.*

Nonlinearity

The term ‘linear,’ in connection with equations, theories, and physical interactions, is *not* meant to describe straight lines. Rather it means in some broad sense that things can be added.

— S.W. Hawking, K.S. Thorne, I. Novikov, T. Ferris, A. Lightman and
R. Price, *The Future of Spacetime*

Life cheats reason and reason cheats life. Scholastic-Aristotelian philosophy fabricated in the interest of life, a teleologic-evolutionist system, rational in appearance, which might serve as a support for our vital longing. This philosophy . . . was, in its essence, merely a trick on the part of life to force reason to lend it its support. But reason supported it with such pressure that it ended by pulverizing it.

— Miguel de Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life*

*Que estoy soñando y que quiero
obrar hacer bien, pues no se pierde
el hacer bien aun en sueños.*

(I am dreaming and I wish
to act rightly, for good deeds are not lost
though they be wrought in dreams.)

— Pedro Calderón, *La Vida es Sueño*

In a perception

What is a line?¹ The question is naive. That is the way it would seem to anyone: simple and credible, it would not need to be checked in a dictionary. Does not the notion of the line bring to mind images and representations transparent to the point of not needing explanation? Any speaker knows that a line, real or imaginary, signifies a path, a continuous point, a moving mark. It is from such a perception that one might see it functioning as both a designation of a reality and its figure, for instance: the line of a mountain, for contour; the line of a body, for its shape; the line of water, for a demarcation. As a metaphor, the line operates in everyday life with such efficiency that we forget that this simple word not only organises our spatial perception, but determines our conceptualisation of basic rapports between front and back, deep and shallow, in and out, near and far, on and off, up and down, past and present, and today and tomorrow. Looked at from this perspective, one may then move towards the implication of the directionality of the line, both the idea of separation and the distinction of parts it creates. Our physical geography, the whole domain of our culture, including mental configurations and our relations to nature, are topographies structured by lines. Kal Mansur's illustration pictures an artist's apprehension.²

It is not my intention to orient this reflection into debates brought, a few decades ago, to the core of structuralism about whether binary oppositions – they are not detachable from the notion of line that defines their distance – are or are not social constructs. My purpose is, from the ordinariness of lines as figures determining spaces in the practice of everyday life, to interrogate what they suppose and impose in allegories that bring us in dialogue or separate us in confrontation.

Using my own cultural wanderings and understanding allegory, after Walter Benjamin, in the sense of a cultural attitude (*Anschauung*) and as a manner of visualising something (*Anschauungsweise*), in other words a *habitus*, I would like to consider some of the paradoxes we are facing apropos identity and alterity in our contemporary global culture. Thus, not from grand theories on the order of things, but instead from the subjective experience of an African-born American teacher; in many senses committed to tasks transcending time and geographies, I marvel at their positive and negative expressions. Thus the concept, unexpectedly, may sometimes transmute itself into that of *τρῆμα* (*trêma*), the substantive for perforation. Its English equivalent (trauma) denotes a shock, initiating a lasting psychological damage that can lead to a neurosis. One would say, therefore, from the simplicity of the semantics of a line, there is not much to worry about a

rendering of such a procession. In effect, does not its signification belong to the banality of our daily existence, precisely the management of our activity and the stress it produces when correlated to healthy alignments?

There are, in principle, available to anyone, skills and techniques for mastering the demands of modern life. Fine arts, relaxation therapies and mindset stress monitoring have become popular disciplines for ‘approaching and creating harmony and wholeness in a chaotic world’. As a matter of fact, the last phrase is simply transplanted from the subtitle of *Living in Balance* (1998), a commanding self-help book by Joel Levey and Michelle Levey, two well-known specialists in ‘work-life balance’ and founders of the Seattle-based InnerWork Technologies Inc. Dignified by the moral authority of the Dalai Lama, who introduces it with a foreword, the book prescribes an agenda outlined by three main axes: (a) an inside-out approach to balance and wholeness, (b) mind-body-spirit harmonics between energy and spirit and (c) ways of expanding the circle of balance, or embracing the whole, from home to the world, through play and work. Indeed, the perspective of this ‘cutting edge research in peak human performance’, *donne à penser*; at any rate, it stimulates the linear orientation I have accented so far, slightly twisting the measure of a line as a continuous one-straight-direction point, by emphasising its sometimes circular and curved aspect, already alluded to concerning its contiguity with the idea of shape. With reference to this value, one might represent a line as a deviation from straightness, as signifying a smooth bend, an angle deflecting a plane and reorganising in this fashion the morphology of a figure.

Prescriptions in all domains, particularly about cultural lines, are always intimidating. On the other hand, in agreement or disagreement with the type of programmes inventing and promoting lines for healthy identities in our time, would it make sense to reappraise Husserl’s 1935 Vienna lecture? To reformulate Husserl’s hesitations about the lines, as they can be evaluated from the American version of *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, in which he says that ‘our surrounding world is a spiritual structure in us and in our historical life’ (1970: 272). In sum, how to apprehend differences with a profound respect for the subjective validity of their particular lines, in their conjunction with the unconditionally universal? And from such a frame of reference, how to evaluate lines of narratives that set off and connect figures of a praxis in its double dimension: a negation of a negation and an opening up to the unexpected? For me, these figures display, in their own ways, commitments lived every day in translation, through three linguistic codes, those of English, French and Spanish. In a sense,

these codes accomplish the imaginary world I inhabit, which is circumscribed by three questions, all of them dynamic, yet basically unstable in their relation to the very confusing idea of the line with which they identify: In communication, what does it mean to qualify a row of declarations, or a series of images, as my line of expression, of my visualisation? In work, what does it mean to qualify my interventions from the line of my activity? In judgement, what does it mean to qualify an orientation from the line of my belief?

All foundational arguments, positive moral paradigms and their alternatives, and cultural choices and their strategies in our constructed worlds of natural and social constraints stand in relation to a fundamental line, the one articulated by original sin. Jean-Paul Sartre expresses the idea of original sin well in *Being and Nothingness* (1956). We exist in a world in which, individually or collectively, we are superfluous. By positing ourselves as subjects, we alienate others and, in return, these Others cannot but alienate us, since they are subjects in their own right. And the French philosopher adds:

This is the meaning of the famous line from Scripture: ‘They knew that they were naked.’ . . . Thus, original sin is my upsurge in a world where there are others; and whatever may be my further relations with others, these relations will be only variations on the original theme of my guilt (531).

Such is the locus from which a social identity can be thematised. It is a self-concept, borne with a progressively increasing sense of belonging to already constructed in-groups (a race, a gender, a religion) and gradually gaining access to freedom. In its affirmation in ‘we-nesses’ and facing out-groups, a social identity outgrows its genesis, asserts itself in a project, as that which, in concrete relations with others and in reference to itself, can identify with its own capacity, along with those of others, in the travail of transcendence. This utopian vision compensates for original sin, but it does not erase or negate it. Guilty I am; at the same time, I know for sure that this form of guilt cannot be limited to any one individual. With Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida, from their dialogue on terror (Borradori 2003), I believe also that the main reason for guilt resides in a transparent evidence, namely that our identities are so interwoven, so interdependent, that in the incalculable multiplicity of their narratives, they overrun all our boundaries (gender, race and systems of beliefs). Our identities force us to live simultaneously, at once and again, in multiple territories. Moreover, nowadays each one of us is, by this very

fact, split into numerous strands of experiences to the point that we should admit that everybody is, really, a community with structurally more or less autonomous components.

These remarks are aimed at a perspective: to face some alienating effects in our global world through procedures determining social identities and, for the sake of human dignity, to emphasise the uniqueness of identity as an autonomous project in cultural topologies clearly defined from a theoretical landscape with its interconnected lines. In defining topology, an English dictionary often adds two metaphoric extensions to its first meaning, the topographic study of a given place – from a medical lexicon, the anatomical structure of a specific area, or part of the body and from mathematics, the study of the properties of geometric figures. These two metaphors allow me a delineation of interpretive charts with which I have been living the last few years, though their lines are, for sure, inscribed in the passion of a life and its singularity. In this retrodiction, rightly or wrongly, there are more lines converging toward the same challenge, the invention of identities and accommodating an anti-essentialist perspective. The basic structure of the argument unveils an anxiety concerning the inter-association of three competing reasons – the economic, the political (as fused with the cultural) and the ethical – how they function in complex systems and how these systems explicitly manipulate the technical and cultural notion of diversity and, indeed, what the concepts of identity and alterity become within configurations mapped by morally unstable lines. Perceiving and analysing an issue such as this, even when using credible sources as references, is one thing; to ascertain that one, at least partially, has not been conceptually blinded is another. About such a hesitation surges a new problem, one that addresses the identity of the seer in its interferences with semantic lines of the verb *verstehen*, an activity correlating perception (*Einsicht*, *Wahrnehmung*) and understanding (*Einsicht*, *Verständnis*).

Anton's syndrome and perceptual identity

Thanks to *An Anthropologist on Mars* (1995) by Oliver Sacks, a professor of neurology at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York, I discovered the correlation between physiological blindness and psychic blindness, known in technical parlance as 'Anton's syndrome'. To use Sacks's rendering, it consists of moderating the instability of one's own visual system and visual identity to the point that, even for the therapist, it becomes 'very difficult, at times, to know what [is] going on, to distinguish between the "physiological" and "psychological"'

(138). With Sacks's references in hand, I could further investigate the paradox by exploring three main axes: the first suggested in critical analyses of *The Oxford Companion to the Mind* (2005), edited by Richard L. Gregory, and of *A Companion to the Philosophy of Science* (2001), edited by philosophy professor William H. Newton-Smith; the second represented by two markers: *ad montem*, Denis Diderot's *Lettre sur les aveugles* (2000 [1749]) and *ad vallem*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phénoménologie de la perception* (1945); and the third, an analogical line represented by Ivan P. Pavlov's classical treatise, *Lectures on Conditioned Reflexes* (1980). According to Sacks, the paradoxical neuro-psychological disorder comes down to an attitude that can be qualified through two conceptual entries:

Perceptual-cognitive processes, while physiological, are also personal – it is not a world that one perceives or constructs but *one's* own world – and they lead to, are linked to, a perceptual self, with a will, an orientation, and a style of its own. This perceptual self may itself collapse with the collapse of perceptual systems, altering the orientation and the very identity of the individual (1995: 136).

The second entry involves the interaction between the physiological and the psychological and Anton's syndrome, or the process of moving from one site of blindness to another. This movement between the physiological and psychological would account, concretely, for a phenomenon such as the case of *L'aveugle qui refuse de voir* (2009 [1771]). As proposed by Sacks, it can also be compared to animals' self-defence mechanism of a sudden shutdown or, in Pavlov's language, a 'transmarginal inhibition consequent upon supramaximal stimulation' (1980: 139–59) which, in an analogical transfer, led him to posit human psychosis as a conditioned statement against unpleasant stimuli.

Considered as a metaphor, Anton's syndrome – reconfiguration of or withdrawal from a visual space – could be connected to allusions from an ancient maxim: 'They have eyes and they do not see'. As a matter of fact, the proverb has an extension, 'They have ears and do not listen', thus extending the meaning of a possible lesson: Modalities of two sensory functions, seeing and hearing, confer human beings with a general capability for perceiving and understanding. This, then, might explain attitudes and practices for ways of inscribing oneself in the world. The process dissociates a paradigm from its particular effects.

The process also affirms the subject as the originator. She or he might choose whether to see, whether to hear, and how. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty emphasises perception as choice, noting that in the relation between the perceiver and the perceived, it is the perceiving subject who, apprehending aspects of things, represents what is perceived as properties of totalities, which are the things (2002b). The capacity to see and to recognise things relates the seen and the subject's awareness of seeing; in this measure, the identity of the subject expresses itself as an *expérience corporelle*, a bodily experience, and a subject-object relation organises the world, founding a cultural representation. It is from such a 'primacy of perception', to refer to another title by Merleau-Ponty, that one may understand Sartre's rather unexpected statement in *The War Diaries*: 'I think with my eyes' (1999: 15). The metaphor brings to the fore the very foundation of the Cartesian science: the *ego cogito* expresses itself in the *ego percipio*. In this awareness that I see, the world surges the knowledge that I am the one seen, identical with the direct object produced in my own self-affirmation.

Diderot's *Lettre sur les sourds et muets* (2009b [1751]) listens and speaks to his *Lettre sur les aveugles* (2000 [1749]) and the latter was essentially about 'seeing' from the experience of blindness. In this exercise, from Diderot's main thesis on the miracle that a competent education can achieve, I am indeed implying that a deaf mute can hear and speak, and that a sightless person can see, on the condition that, as Wittgenstein put it in *Philosophical Investigations* (1973 [1953]), 'we accept the everyday language-game' and acknowledge that 'the concept of "seeing" (or "hearing" and "speaking") makes a tangled impression . . . There is not one genuine proper case of (what is seen, what is heard, what is spoken), the rest being just vague, something which awaits clarification' (209). It is precisely such a paradoxical challenge that Martin Jay addresses in 'The Ethics of Blindness and the Postmodern', a chapter devoted to Emmanuel Lévinas and Jean-François Lyotard in *Downcast Eyes*. As he puts it, 'Postmodernism may be understood as the culminating chapter in a story of the (enucleated) eye. Or rather, it may paradoxically be at once the hypertrophy of the visual, at least in one of its modes, and its denigration (1993: 546).

Diderot was impressed by the perceptual capacity of Nicholas Saunderson, a blind man who, early in the eighteenth century, of all disciplines one can imagine, was a professor of optics at Oxford. Sacks, who discusses Saunderson in *An Anthropologist on Mars*, also describes the intriguing case of Jonathan I., a colour-blind painter. After a car accident in 1986, Jonathan I. claimed, 'My brown dog

is dark grey. Tomato juice is black. Color TV is a hodge-podge' (1995: 3). In fact, says the neurologist, Jonathan 'did not lose just his perception of color, but imagery, and even dreaming in color. Finally, he seemed to lose even his memory of color, so that it ceased to be a part of his mental knowledge, his mind'. And 'as his former color world (became) fainter and died inside him a whole new world of seeing, of imagination, of sensibility, was born' (40).

The economy of seeing espouses that of listening, which is related to the authority of speaking. Therefore one can generalise, without hesitation, from Jacques Lacan, who reappraises a Freudian linear model on the origin of subject-formation in *Écrits*, that what matters

in psychoanalytic anamnesis, is not a question of reality, but of truth, because the effect of full speech, (that of rendering a perception, an understanding), is to reorder past contingencies by conferring on them the sense of necessities to come, such as they are constituted by the little freedom through which the subject makes them present (1982: 48).

Further, in *On Being Normal and Other Disorders*, Paul Verhaeghe relates subject-formation to the rapport between a subject and the outside world or modalities under which an identity constitutes itself as 'a chain of signifiers through which both the subject and the other gain content, along with the specific character of their relation'. Verhaeghe rightly insists, 'this has very important repercussions for the aim of the treatment. The aim of psychoanalysis is not to arrive at an accurate reconstruction of the past, nor to explain (let alone justify) the present based on the history of the subject. The aim is to create possibilities for change' (2004: 211).

In the dynamic process of a child's progressive inscription in the world or an adult's therapeutic direction, it is possible to apprehend both the centrality of seeing, listening and speaking, and the distinction of traits singularising one's self-formation. *Verstehen* means a way of mastering the perceived; the verbalised, the understood and the perceived are transmuted into a knowledge. *Ich verstehe die Situation so, daß . . .* translates to 'my understanding of the situation is that . . .'. The proposition puts the subject boldly forward, asserting clearly his or her responsibility in an explicit effort to make known a personal opinion, which will be received as an idea, a thought, a view (*Idee, Gedanke, Standpunkt*), an interpretation (*Deuten*), or as a process in knowing (*Können*).

Hence, the metaphor in ‘a sightless individual can see’ becomes understandable. To accentuate its reliability, let me go back briefly to Diderot’s text, which not only supports its soundness, but also extols the blind’s high-quality capability for abstract representations. In *Lettre sur les aveugles: À l’usage de ceux qui voient*, Diderot writes,

But if the imagination of the blind man be no more than the faculty of calling to mind and combining sensations of palpable points; and of a sighted man, the faculty of combining and calling to mind visible or coloured points, the person born blind consequently perceives things in a much more abstract manner than we; and in questions purely speculative, he is perhaps less liable to be deceived. For abstraction consists in separating in thought the perceptible qualities of a body, either from one another, or from the body itself in which they are inherent; and error arises where this separation is done in a wrong way or at a wrong time – in a wrong way in metaphysical questions, or at a wrong time in applied mathematics. There is perhaps one certain method of falling into error in metaphysics, and that is, not sufficiently to simplify the subject under investigation; and an infallible secret for obtaining incorrect results in applied mathematics is to suppose objects less compounded than they usually are (2002: 87–8).

A shift in perspective is not necessary in order to prove the reality of perceptual blindness: yesterday, the slave refusing his liberation; still today, women inscribing themselves in harems, as well as all the transcultural variations of self-destructive habits. In fact, education, because of its structural symbolic violence – as Pierre Bourdieu claimed – explains and justifies perceptual blindness. Nowadays, authoritative arguments in trendy courses celebrate what the Chilean writer Pablo Neruda deemed an ‘impure philosophy’ for the fabrication of social identities devoted to death values.

To these examples of structuring an abstract space within or without the a priori experience of a visual field, and to those of creating a positive or negative new configuration of seeing, let me add another concept deduced from Diderot, that of colour misapprehension, and thus accent some theoretical issues about perceptual identities and their relation to constructed spaces. These constructed spaces are ‘metaphors we live by’, to use the excellent title of the well-known book by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (2003). Not being colour-blind, I trust my representation of slit images and can, almost without thinking, distinguish from

the white light the distinctive qualities that everyday language qualifies as red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet and their absence, black. I doubt that I could instinctively discriminate among incandescence or thermal radiation, luminescence, or the so-called cold light suscitated by a chemical action, the bioluminescence of fireflies, or the fluorescence of some rocks. In any case, all these terms with their endings in *-el-iscence* are reducible, in my imaginary, to the 'glow-in-the-dark' concept. From such a basic frame of organising the prism spectrum, it goes without saying that the knowledge of any professional in colour and light reflection and refraction cannot but be impressive. Vis-à-vis my visual identity, it witnesses a more complex code and, as a consequence, the professional's own particular perceptual identity. For example, should I decide to get my house painted, the professional's highly developed capacity for both constructing a richer variety of colour interplays and deconstructing processes of codifying slit variations will be ringing against my partial blindness with regard to structures of light breaks or their effect interferences. My predicament could cause anxiety: In the living room, do I see and understand the distinction the painter makes between ivory cotton, white cotton and white linen? Apropos the guest room, do I understand the comparative merits of a fuchsia pink vis-à-vis salmon pink and pulsar pink? Apropos the study, did I visualise correctly and tell the painter about my poor understanding of the differences among cadmium yellow, cardstock and goldenrod in order to explain my rejection of some tones?

As a propaedeutic to a deliberation on how to transcend an empirical incapacity due to objective limitations of my perceptual identity, itself relative to degrees of my insertion in a culture, my apparently innocuous questions about a mundane decision might turn into baffling classical issues of epistemology. There are, first, questions of translation and its relation to coherence theories. A possible exit from perplexity would be, in my case, a move to the more familiar conceptual configuration of a Romance language; I could consult with, say, a French- or Spanish-speaking friend and wonder about how to measure the validity of my translation, but from which system to evaluate both the degree of coherence and justification of our two judgements? Second, there are questions of semantics and these concern the concept of *verstehen*. From the singularity of our shared experiential authority, my friend and I could decide how to connect our interpretation to general principles of explanation. Third, the partial blindness of my perceptual identity, in so far as the complex economy of wavelengths of the visible spectrum is concerned, could be called either a simple figure of speech or assumed in a multidimensional gestalt,

as understood by Lakoff and Johnson (2003) for a structuring and cohering conceptual movement of a particular existential experience. At any rate, there is little doubt that common sense always calls attention to the singularity of a social identity. It reasonably describes a perceptual behaviour and its effects in relation to the values it does or does not actualise and their rapport to a socio-cultural situatedness.

Indeed, colour perception and its relation to a cultural catalogue is probably one of the most overused illustrations of the relativist or universalist stand in the theory of knowledge. Qualifying a singular capacity with the poverty of my English lexicon, rather than invoking my relation to an idea deducible from an ontological question – What is pinkness? What is whiteness? – is equivalent to a contingent cultural stammering. In this sense, a judgement might tend to valorize an interpretation induced from a response to an epistemological intention, namely: How does he differentiate something as this sort of pink, or that type of yellow? A discussion about my colour competence could thus be reduced to an old philosophical debate on abstract forms without any consequence for my real predicament. It may also lead to a concrete evaluation of how my limited capacity impacts on both my social identity in everyday life and the measure of its constitution in social transactions. One could then begin to suspect that the banality of my case opens up very concrete issues about identity formation, negotiation and flux. It becomes possible to invoke, for instance, the practicality of Eric Berne's unified system of individual and social psychiatry: On the one hand, by exploiting *Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy* (1986), focus on my game as a notion and norm determining definite attitudes or, on the other hand, with *Games People Play* (1996), hypothesise about my personality and style of knowing from my insertion in matrix areas – (a) rituals, (b) pastimes, (c) games, (d) intimacy (e) activity – and evaluate the effects of and reactions to cultural programming of social operations, organised transactions and their patterns, as well as the possible extension of their formulas in my lifestyle.

Let me combine colour mastery, gift offering in a culture of flowers – say, in a Latin American setting such as Colombia – and the reality of a social identity, as the latter is constituted in negotiated conjunctions between social requirements and one's virtuosity in integrating socio-cultural procedures. In practical terms, to use Berne's language, one may pinpoint the following requisites for a visiting academic to Colombia: on the one hand, a stabilisation in a professional role and, on the other hand, a sense of appropriate conduct and good taste in adapting to

the local cultural mores, including how, when, and to whom one has to present flowers. Technically speaking, this is a serious game in both constructing and actualising expected lines of one's social identity.

After some twenty years of frequent research sojourns and visiting professorships in Latin America, I had the following conversation with a colleague.

'Do you know how you are called?' he asked me.

'Called? Not by my name?'

'Indeed,' he replied, 'we know your name. But for everybody, you are "the one who, when invited, always brings books or wine, never flowers".'

This description has reduced me to a voluntarily chosen behaviour, itself an effect of a double cultural lack: poverty in visually identifying colours and poverty in classifying types of flowers and matching them to the emotions with which they are culturally associated. Consider two ordinary flowers, the carnation and the poppy, and a popular gift plant, the geranium. My code would present association sequences such as these:

Carnation

Red: admiration

Pink: rare love

White: sweet and lovely

Yellow: disappointment, rejection

Poppy

Red: consolation, sorrow

White: forgetfulness

Yellow: success, wealth

Geranium

Red: melancholy

Pink: ingenuity

Scarlet: comforting

White: true friendship.

In offering-flower transactions, should one take for granted an automatic translation of the English symbolic value-code, thus risking transgressions, or review it each time according to non-English cultural contexts, thus risking also mistranslation?

Any option seems a daunting task, even apropos the English reference table itself, when one takes into account popular culture's aesthetic representations. How to assure, for certain, a universal normativity?

In social intercultural games involving colours and flowers, a legality expresses itself in inter-subjective precepts. It is *stricto sensu* to a language that one submits a performance. The qualification 'the one who never offers flowers' translates effects of my subjective negotiations concerning my identity in a Latin American environment. One of its axes concerns my sociological consciousness as it is related to different procedures of individuation in Bogota, Mexico, my hometown in the United States, or elsewhere in the world. This dimension is to be reconfigured each time by new cultural expectations for an intelligible social identity and these expectations may appear as more and more demanding, depending on geographic or simply spiritual and intellectual remoteness from my usual locality. The summons for an inculturation, should one wish to theorise, coincides with a hermeneutical task for a reformulation of one's identity in order to avoid misunderstandings and to accord oneself to different socio-cultural lines.

From this principle, another dimension would stipulate concerns about the construction of such an orientation as a way of existing in a foreign anticipation of meanings in which, among many symbolic languages, an economy of flowers and their colour expresses a system of aesthetic and moral values. To the knowledge required by a singular alien *Lebenswelt* and the science of its operative value systems, reasonably one tends to choose strategies of partial or total withdrawal from certain lines, for instance those defining rulings apropos flowers, thus acknowledging a de facto partial psychological blindness in that field, and to transfer one's obedience to the public foreign consciousness through a substitution system and its theory, making sure that the operation still translates adequately the gift-exchange socio-cultural standards and symbolic sets. To the case in point, books or wine, with more or less the equivalent symbolic value of socially expected flowers, would possibly confirm a convergence in both understanding of and compliance with a cultural horizon. Such a self-surrendering procedure exemplifies and magnifies how a social identity, any identity, is always a process, a constant invention of oneself as inscribed in a particular project.

Anton's syndrome, with its dynamics of going into and out of blindness, serves well as an image for consciously or unconsciously acting and behaving blind. In its adaptations as a metaphor, the syndrome contributes to the clarification of the idea of a perceptual identity. We can, then, choose to emphasise the fact of cultural

determinants that could account, at least partially, for the occasional poverty of a perceptual identity, the secrets of one's own perceptual identity.³ In so doing, we are defining any perceptual identity as a reflection of a social identity, a given alterity, in contextual spaces in which it apprehends itself vis-à-vis others in a variety of symmetrical lines. Moreover, any identity can be observed as intransitive through determinations qualifying its uniqueness.

Conscious or unconscious, the exercise of a partial psychic blindness is a total activity expressing a social identity and affirming an alterity in the making. It expresses itself as an overflow caused by effects of subordination to constraining lines of a global sociological context. For instance, psychic blindness can appear in the economic space as the opposition between front and back, in mixed economies of Third World regions; in the political space as the opposition between front and back structurations in sub-Saharan countries, as it is manifested in the centrally inefficient and inflexible government policies of luxury imports and the repercussions on the conditions of life in the rural areas; in the cultural space, from the opposition between the up and down of social organisation of the United States media's remarkable caring for the health of pets in its backyard and the generosity of its 'compassion fatigue' versus the ambiguity of its reflexes about catastrophic socio-economic relations of production elsewhere.

In these abstract references, I have moved from individual to collective reflexes, implying that cultures may witness Anton's syndrome. Three succinct notes will suffice in clarifying this point.

One, in the domain of ideas, Jay's study *Downcast Eyes* is a magnificent example: Between the visible and the invisible, how to see and read the traces of the Enlightenment in twentieth-century French philosophy? In interconnections of ocular permeation of language and a dynamic visual activity of understanding the priority of everydayness, what Jay observes are mainly contrivances inherited through a stubborn yet exhausted faithfulness to a Cartesian perspective and its efficiency – with the surrealists, 'the disenchantment of the eye'; with Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, 'a search for a new ontology of sight'; in the psychoanalysis of Lacan, 'a specular subject of ideology'. In sum, all these endeavours would qualify as testimonies in the dark. Bringing to light anything seems to signify concealing it and in most of his explorations, Jay delivers the same paradox, a doubt about knowing clearly how and in which sense consciousness may modify the configuration of its conditions of possibility and about knowing how to act upon the world. Despite what he describes as a vivid hostility, Jay declares that the

power of the visual – that sign of a critical reason, a light – not only survives but also ‘can still provide us mere mortals with insights and perspectives, speculations and observations, enlightenments and illuminations, that even a god might envy’ (1993: 594).

This is a major issue that goes beyond the particularity of the French cultural space. Let me compensate for Jay’s optimistic stance by quoting a passage from David Michael Levin’s *The Philosopher’s Gaze*:

Whereas the philosophers of the Enlightenment could see only simplicity, unity, clarity, and systematic totality; whereas they could assume complete control over meaning, and hence totally determinate, totally transparent meaning; whereas they could confidently ignore adumbrations of the marginal, the peripheral, and the implicit, we of today are obliged to give a more critical thought to these assumptions, cannot ignore intricacies, complexities, ambiguities, conflicts of interpretation, the breaches and caesurae in supposedly closed systems, and cannot overlook what philosophers of earlier times could comfortably overlook. We of today, heirs responsible for the present future of the Enlightenment project, are obliged to be allegorical thinkers, finding adumbrations of our destined roles among its cast of shadows (1999: 417).

Two, in the domain of political ideology, the case of National Socialism in Adolf Hitler’s Germany is conceivably the best illustration. It clearly indicates that, conscious or unconscious, psychic blindness is not value neutral and it raises issues relating ethics to individual and collective responsibility.

Three, in the domain of history, my illustration has its own ethical problems. It concerns the European discovery of the world, scientific taxonomies of connections between geography, cultural diversity and a shifting chromatic perceptual consensus from a bi-colour repartition of racial metaphors (white versus non-white in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries) to the quadri-colour model of Carolus Linnaeus’s 1735 *Systema naturae* (*Europaeus albus*, ‘white European’; *Americanus rubescens*, ‘red American’; *Asiaticus fuscus*, ‘yellow Asian’; *Africanus niger*, ‘black African’). Historians such as John Hope Franklin (*Color and Race*, 1968) and Winthrop D. Jordan (*White over Black*, 1968) have demonstrated an existing homology between the shift of chromatic metaphors and their relationship to technical tables of psychological features and both the self-assessment of the observer and his or

her cultural politics in interpreting history under modalities of both a divine and a natural election. Hence, the slave trade is not detachable from a Christian exegesis on chromatic perception of humankind and its erroneous biblical justifications. A few years ago, Alden T. Vaughan suggested in an excellent article on 'changing Anglo-American perception of the American Indian' that the American Indian's colour evolved from 'innately white' to 'innately dark', becoming red only in the eighteenth century; this transformation in perceptual behaviour 'helped assure the Indians' continued segregation and heighten their exploitation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' (1982: 919).

My own bias has been sketching out thematic lines in order to illustrate how types of specialised motives authenticate manifestations of Anton's syndrome. As they actualise themselves by contributing to individual identities, they simultaneously subvert the very idea of a fixed identity as an essence. Provisionally, I want to focus on the subject of perception, the ego of the *cogito* who, as Lacan used to say, is an eye. The ego can apprehend itself in representation as an object and as an alienated one in a world of images and stones.

What I see now, and very clearly, is this. For more than twenty years I have been pretending, with good reasons, not to see that most of my American students, at some of the best universities in the nation, were monolingual and thus restricted to a linguistic canon and what it could integrate thanks to translations. On the other hand, I could see also that most of my Latin American students were competent in at least three languages. My perception as well as my understanding have been that, indeed, this basic linguistic imbalance is the reverse of the disparity represented by the economic capital which, sooner or later, problematising it, would normalise two competing cultural capitals (determined by a single normative economic reason) destined to live in the same cosmopolitan vocation.

Complex systems and compliance

Globalisation, transnationality and paradigm shifts contribute to a new type of economic reason that dominates today's global economy. Through the lines of its technology and policies, this new structure affects the identities of millions of people absorbed in its mechanisms. The structural measure of alienation created by human needs and distributive constraints seem the most obvious phenomenon.

A number of approaches can be taken to analyse world trade in the 1990s, which is one of a single economy and marketplace, and the booms it created: growth, no energy crisis, spread of free enterprise and the 'East Asian miracle'. I

choose instead a different angle: to look at norms concerning formal structuration of systems, the action of three competing reasons – economic, cultural and ethical – and their statements on human identities. Two main references will support my argument, an ethical one that extols human dignity as a non-negotiable value. They are Amitai Etzioni's typology, *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations* (1975 [1961]), which builds on Max Weber's classic work, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (1997 [1947]), and Geert Hofstede's book – containing 25 years' worth of research – *Cultures and Organizations* (1996).

Etzioni focuses on asymmetrical relations of subordination and classes of power, using as a core variable the notion of compliance, that is 'a relation in which an actor behaves in accordance with a directive supported (command, manipulation) by another actor's power, and the orientation of the subordinate to the power applied' (1975: 3). In fact, Etzioni's typology sets up three types of power – coercive, remunerative and normative – that correspond to three modes of response behaviours: alienative, calculative and moral; together, they produce nine different forms of compliance. Among these, Etzioni focuses on the three most frequent combinations, which are all congruent: the alienative coercive type of power (a slavery structure), the calculative remunerative (capitalist corporate function) and the moral normative (political party activism). Thus, he gives us the following 'dynamic hypothesis':

Congruent types are more effective than incongruent types. Organizations are under pressure to be effective. Hence, to the degree that the environment of the organization allows, *organizations tend to shift their compliance structure from incongruent to congruent types and organizations which have congruent compliance structures tend to resist factors pushing them toward incongruent compliance structures.*

Congruence is attained by a change in either the power applied by the organization or the involvement of lower participants. Change of power takes place when, for instance, a school shifts from the use of corporal punishment to stress on the 'leadership' of the teachers. The involvement of lower participants may be changed through socialization, changes in recruitment criteria, and the like (1975: 14; emphasis in original).

Differentiating himself from the Weberian emphasis on authority and its connection to the concept of legitimate power, Etzioni qualifies the efficacy of the economic

reason from the rapport between economic goals and effective compliance, precisely the instrumental function of remuneration, rather than coercion or normative power. Thus, he argues:

Production is a rational activity, which requires systematic division of labor, power, and communication, as well as a high level of coordination. It therefore requires also a highly systematic and precise control of performance. This can be attained only when sanctions and rewards can be readily measured and allocated in close relation to performance. Remunerative sanctions and rewards are the only ones that can be so applied, because money differentials are far more precisely measurable than force, prestige, or any other power differentials (1975: 112).

The argument asserts a principle deduced from the analysis of complex systems operating in the West, or on the basis of its adaptation in transitional economies, such as in Mexico. Postulating the superior capacity of the remunerative type of power in the capitalist model, this principle does not induce its efficiency everywhere in all communities and all the time. Thus, as a case, the Chinese rural society between 1949 and 1968 demanded a different explication that could account for a conflictual cycles between coercion and normative types. In the same manner, the Zulu community was linked to lines of a theory of society that Etzioni elaborated on in *The Active Society* (1968). These two exceptions may indicate something relevant, not about their obstinate refusal to integrate the general grid of operation, but rather about production as a key measure regulating all complex systems. The effectiveness of the economic reason and the competence of complex systems is in actuality contingent on issues of human needs and ethics, which, as Etzioni himself suggests in *A Comparative Analysis*, must be addressed:

Substantively, the question is, which kinds of governance in the institutions as well as society at large will people tolerate, accept, and thrive on? What are the long-term consequences of relying on remunerative rewards and settling for calculative commitment on the part of participants (the basis of capitalist systems)? Can a system last which relies on 'higher' sanctions and loyalties implied in the notion of 'permanent revolution?' Can an organizational system survive relying on no rewards or punishments, each participant doing his or her own thing, completely voluntarily (the ideal of the *kibbutzim* and numerous communes) (1975: 469)?

These questions bring to light the major issue about modalities of integration in, or exclusion from, complex economic organisations. In today's international context, taking into account the resources and knowledge capital of the economic reason, these modalities, as Etzioni's analysis indicates, refer to a number of assumptions, including the genetic endowment of persons involved in the workforce, their regional cultural ensemble and its singularity vis-à-vis the liberal bourgeois signification of important basic material and spiritual needs. These involve, *inter alia*, rules of structural subordination and hierarchy, as well as values such as commitment, dedication and freedom.

The project of transnationality of the economic reason, over the socio-cultural system of values of its blue- or white-collar agents, manifests itself in statements combined in a unique technical grammar, both individual alterity expectations and their relation to an economic system having, these days, more and more their own diversity requirements. Diversity in this field implies two concepts expressing two very distinct realities: cultural differentiation and, most importantly, the capacity for the transnational system to adapt to a variety of milieus. This second concept designates a functional adjustment ability for optimal performance. It pertains to a flexible capability (style), knowledge capital, technology (science) and, indeed, *savoir-faire* (policy), the objective being to maximise both productivity and the quality of products, thus creating profits.

Within this economic reason, when individuals submit, their difference becomes a question mark. Alterity always affirms itself in a reciprocal relation with someone else: the subject – self-consciousness apprehending itself, to refer to Hegel – has a need for external recognition, a gaze or voice that, from the outside, can stabilise it in a perceived, re-identified and potentially usable difference. And in this effort a 'we-community' might constitute itself. The power of a complex economic system often resides in its authority for assigning value to an alterity, often as only a possible integrable body in its production processes. In such a conversion into a labour force, an incommensurable alterity is impoverished, a social identity reified and its meaning instrumentalised.

To address such a scandal, Third World intellectuals have attempted to oppose the reification by turning this absurdly created alterity into a nature. Indeed, one thing consists in negating a controversial thesis by contradicting it, and thus positing an antithesis, a procedure well exemplified in Sartre's 'Black Orpheus' (2001). Another strategy would be to stabilise such a weak moment of a dialectical process into an essence. From this view, the now-popular subaltern studies that

conceptualises an agenda in defence and promotion of stable egalitarian principles and values from the legacy of the Enlightenment seems puzzling. No serious student in today's humanities and social sciences could dismiss a transdisciplinary outlook that excels modes of either/or in our disciplines. Bridging horizons and reappraising post-Marxist trends, philosophy, globalisation critical theories and academic engagement in public political spheres, such an intellectual orientation preserves an ethical balance, certainly, in the challenging paths towards our common future. Then why on earth should it label itself 'subaltern'? The notion seems to misrepresent an exacting perspective in conveying semantics of subordination that such an adjective calls to the fore. To refer to the technical meaning of subalterneity in philosophy, the work of Gayatri Spivak, one of the founders of the movement, cannot be reduced to a subaltern proposition vis-à-vis a founding universal proposition. And only by mistake would one qualify as 'subaltern' Enrique Dussel's signification in contemporary ethics. His *Ética de la liberación en la edad de la globalización* (1998) tracks in an exemplary manner the paradoxes we are concerned with and affirms the best in descriptive and normative ethical reflections of today.

Using Dussel's work as a reference, we evaluate complex systems, knowing that human morality cannot be run by emotions. Can one say that ethics is an expression of contexts? The agent's dilemmas record a way of being in structures whose functioning in the global world largely depends on the politics of calculating orders. Let me be specific. The economic reason animates and assumes an expedient conjunction of rigorous lines that contributes to its success in three interconnected topographies and their internal processes: (a) procedures and mechanisms of a market space, as defined in interactions of resources, human intervention, work productivity and distribution of wealth, (b) procedures and mechanisms of a political space, as defined by a particular organisation of power, its inscription in a history and the justification of its legitimacy and (c) procedures and mechanisms of a social space, as defined by traditions, their rapports to the transmitted and negotiations regarding customs and the demands of necessary transformations. From how they are approached for an analysis, conceived as processes of integration into a technical taxonomy or invested for exploitation, these spaces function literally as texts and deliver organised lines determining the particularity of their syntax, against which experts articulate the most adequate grids of regulating power in order to maximise the efficacy of productive complex systems.

Two types of social constructs face each other – on the one side, the structure of the machine, modelling its aims on the basis of its morphology as a universal narrative of productivity and, on the other side, individualised forms in their regional, conventionally expected arrangements, duplicating regulatory norms. This rendering of socio-cultural relations vis-à-vis abstract models analogises Ferdinand de Saussure's view of any language system (1966). The machinery activity of a complex system functions like a conventional normative tongue, a *langue*, and the agent's performance, in its compliance, actualises the norm, expressing it in an individualised, concrete enunciation: a speech, a *parole*. The analogy could be further reinforced, since one might, in the case of an economic system as well as a linguistic model, consider the singularity of their inscription in history, say, the diachronic dimension or, their synchronic capacity, that is their expression at a particular time. In time or in space, the two constructs produce their own particular grammars that unveil a difference, witnessing a personal identity.

The banality of the analogy I am suggesting between language and economic complex systems should not distract us from its implications regarding asymmetrical relations of subordination, socially constructed psychic blindness, the notion of alterity and their impact on social identity modulations.

Let me summarise what the analogy allows, proceed with a few illustrations and then come back to comment on the concept of diversity. Like language (*langage*), an economic complex system is an abstraction transcending concrete contexts. Like language, when it manifests itself as this or that particular tongue (*langue*), as a social institution (an abstraction in its own right), the economic system comes to exist as a model, an idea corresponding to a virtual type of enterprise with expected functions and objectives. It is speech (*parole*) that, using the tongue as a data bank, actualises the language in an individualised and creative way. In the same manner, a complex economic system comes to existence as a given incorporated entity with the means and methods for meeting its aims. And now, let us note three determining characteristics that contribute to the specificity of these systems' identity: (a) an inscription in a particular history, (b) the singularity of their topography and (c) the dynamics between the virtuality of their abstract systems and the creative performance of their members. The interactions and conjunction of these three factors, important but not the only ones, bring about their style and manifest the distinction; that is, the difference of their characters.

A sign of the collaboration between a collective identity in which one is inscribed at birth and the exercise of a personal creative will to invent one's project,

an individual identity, or a flux, which intends both causing to experience and giving to be known, according to David Hume. Let us separate, for necessary and illustrative reasons – after all, we have been allegorising the economic in apprehending it as a language – the two systems we are comparing. We should focus on the fact of organisational control in these systems and its influence in the construction of social identities.

About the economic system, to Etzioni's descriptive analysis I am adding a famous prescriptive textbook, *Thriving on Chaos* (1988) by Thomas Peters, the author of *In Search of Excellence* (2004 [1988]) and, more recently, of the startling *The Tom Peters Seminar* (1994b) and *The Pursuit of Wow!* (1994a). Etzioni's presentation, in the abstract, indicates mechanical lines of systems, both their structuration and guiding principles. Peters's stance is an epic discourse on injunctions: listen to me, buy me; otherwise, you are lost. Etzioni describes processes through which complex systems stabilise their 'personality' and hence constitute a functional organism and he elaborates on their impact on the identity-formation of their agents. Peters depicts the regulating personality of a mechanical system as it is required by his evaluation of contemporary 'dire competitive situation'. The true objective, he writes in the preface to *Thriving on Chaos*, being 'to take the chaos as given and learn to thrive *on* it. The winners of tomorrow will deal *proactively* with chaos, will look at the chaos per se as the source of market advantage, *not as problem* [emphasis added] to be got around.' The italicised restriction makes all the difference between a descriptive and prescriptive presentation. Thus, for example, on the issue of the elite corps – a major factor in instituting and promoting the identity of any complex system and in activating the agents' social identities and orienting them for the better – we get two visions. In *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations*, Etzioni organises the problem around the question of 'who controls *what*, and what the relationships are among those who control' (1975: 159). This approach, emphasising a comprehensive inquiry, establishes several levels of analysis: (a) an outline of constitutive elements (individualities, power, relations), (b) a qualification of elements (types of elite, source and forms of power, structures of relations) and (c) a correlation of structural interconnections (activities, relations between elites, the nature of these relations with and in sub-collectivities). The outcome of the study portrays identity figurations whose subjective representation can be discussed. At least, they permit hypothetical interpretations on lines of self-fulfilment in coercive economic systems, on those concerning the notion and forms of integrative measure in normative organisations

and on margins of social alienation in utilitarian complex systems. Grounded on reinterpreting history as evidence, Peters's prerequisites for the internationalist achiever are instead objective conditions of exclusion. His model, in his own words, casts a 'leadership that honors the line'; as a matter of fact, the *frontline* in the military sense: 'attention to the line' and 'hard leadership' that 'promotes leaders who lead' (1988: 446–8).

Let us suspend briefly this valuation of complex systems and emphasise again language as a notion and reality that, everywhere and fundamentally, regulates and impacts on any human system. Indeed, a fortiori in preceding descriptive and prescriptive modalities of work in identity-formation, language should be posited as the original experience of one's identity in the community of being 'in-the-midst-of-the-world'. And this point is described clearly in this passage of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*:

In a universe of pure objects language could under no circumstance have been 'invented' since it presupposes an original relation to another subject. In the intersubjectivity of the for-others, it is not necessary to invent language because it is already given in the recognition of the Other. *I am* language. By the sole fact that whatever I may do, my acts freely conceived and executed, my projects launched toward my possibilities have outside of them a meaning which escapes me and which I experience. It is in this sense – and in this sense only – that Heidegger is right in declaring that *I am what I say*. Language is not an instinct of the constituted human creature, nor is it an invention of our subjectivity. But neither does it need to be referred to the pure 'being-outside-of-self' of the *Dasein*. It forms part of the *human condition*; it is originally the proof which a for-itself can make of its being-for-others, and finally it is the surpassing of this proof and the utilization of it toward possibilities which are my possibilities; that is, toward my possibilities of being this or that for the Other (1956: 485–6).

Language, in the dimension articulated here – the whole way of being, the most primitive manner of existing – expresses the conditions of possibility of one's transcendence, that is, identity, as a dynamic procession. At the same time, as Sartre puts it, this 'freedom (the transcendence) of the one who listens to me in silence'. Indeed, contextual circumstances and their conditions clothe the peculiar way one is a language aimed at one's transcendence.

What would life be like for a 'languageless man', asks Sacks in his preface to Susan Schaller's *A Man Without Words* (1995). Ildefonso, an Indian Mexican, 'who looked Mayan', has never been exposed to any language: He has lived in total, complete, incomprehensible isolation. Who can 'imagine the alienation of life without language?' ponders Schaller, a teacher of American Sign Language. 'How did the man think without language? What did he see in all the apparently senseless interactions around him? Could we ever meet?' (27). Against the orthodox certitudes of experts on the sheer impossibility of bringing into language an untaught born-deaf person, Schaller connects with Ildefonso. At the beginning, they are two strangers separated by an invisible line. Yet, in its nature, how different is their relationship really, compared to other types of identity distinctions? Schaller confesses:

Ildefonso shared none of our language categories, whether parts of speech or division of time. His inability to understand my lessons on verbs and nouns and now on time did not derive merely from ignorance but from an entirely different view of reality. It struck me that his view could be just as legitimate as mine (118).

Introduced into a common system, Sacks claims, 'Ildefonso's mental processes, his perspectives and his very identity are transformed as he acquires language and all it embodies' (1995: 15). One might say, right, but there is not a conversion of nature; there is an inscription into an unending process of inventing an identity. And a question imposes itself on our consciousness: Cannot we, through analogic steps, imagine what similar cultural integrations into the required structures of the economic reason may represent for alienated bodies submitting to the rationality of transnational mechanical languages and what they might signify in the constitution of slave social identities? What, here, would symbolise the sign represented by Schaller for Ildefonso?

On diversity?

One could consider a number of axes that, apropos work in transnational ensembles, state cultural diversity principles as governing strategic policy for advancing lines of individualised performances.

A globalist perspective would accent the capability in rules of market unification in diversity, emphasising programmatic lines of action that would include the code

of a new lexicon and methods for managing a new style in corporation culture. In Christopher Bartlett and Sumantra Ghoshal's *Managing across Borders* (1998), one finds ideal lines of an economic standard: the transnational coincides with a definitive solution and identifies with a possibly perfect body. Its portrait decodes an agenda. One, the transnational is a challenge by its capability, its model and objective beyond structural fit; two, it is a paradigm by its competitiveness, flexibility and innovation; three, it legitimises diversity, manages complexity, builds a solid socio-economic commitment and four, it is the solution. This agenda illustrates well the spirit of an 'imperial culture'. It highlights the claim 'to defy geography' analysed in John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge's exposition of management gurus, *The Witch Doctors* (1996), under a telling entry, 'what does globalization mean?' The globalist project aims to create an original matrix not submitted to territorial contingencies. The globalist statement amplifies lines for penetrating different cultures, managing technical intricacies through co-ordination instead of centralisation, allocating and integrating multiple tools, favouring flexibility and adaptability to a variety of environments. Such a model typifies, I am afraid, a divisive path extolled in a study by the Japanese theorist Kenichi Ohmae titled *The End of the Nation-State* (1995) and substantially debated in another volume Ohmae edited that same year, *The Evolving Global Economy*. The magic of diversity lines might be served well in modifying the color of Barbie's hair from blonde to dark in East Asian countries and in negotiating the quality of Coca-Cola sweetness for non-American markets, but, as Micklethwait and Wooldridge write, 'Whenever the wages in the host country get too high, the firm simply shifts production to a cheaper country' (1996: 229). This is important, ethically. We should remember at least this from Lévinas's 'Language and Proximity': an ethical practice or discourse 'does not proceed from a special moral experience, independent from the description developed until then. It comes from the very meaning of approach, which contrasts with knowledge' (1998: 124).

As a consequence of Lévinas's statement, one sees that the diversity theme belongs to the globalist argument only as a secondary support of the economic reason in its postulations about investment, effective productive performance and henceforth their relation to modalities of power (coercive, remunerative, normative) and of compliance. Another example in conflict of interests is the presence of the Japanese in sub-Saharan Africa. Let me go back in time, just briefly, to the most productive period for transnational systems, well signified by *The Roaring 1980s* (1988), an economic best seller published under the telling name 'Adam Smith', a

pseudonym of the Harvard-educated host of a PBS financial show *Money World*, George J.W. Goodman. Let me highlight a number of things. First, the central region of Africa is universally recognised for its raw materials, notably antimony ore, bauxite, aluminium, chromium, cobalt, copper, ferro chromium, fluorspar, lead, petroleum and titanium ore. Second, the 1980s globalisation phenomenon was – as the international market expert Theodore Levitt put it in 1983 in an issue of the *Harvard Business Review* – producing ‘a new commercial reality, the emergence of global markets on a previously unimagined scale of magnitude’ (quoted in Micklethwait and Wooldridge 1996: 213). Third, the phenomenon would have qualified the African continent as a superb market for capital and consumer goods.

In a comparative study of the economic competition between Japan and the United States during this period, *Emerging Japanese Economic Influence in Africa* (1985), Joanna Moss and John Ravenhill deduce a number of interesting marks for interpreting the statistics they compiled:

1. At the threshold of the 1980s: two hypotheses with an identical economic reason led to two competing policies. According to Moss and Ravenhill: In the statistical tests of this study we shall test the hypotheses that after 1975 (1) the Japanese share in African imports increased while the U.S. share declined; and (2) the United States became a more important market for African exports. The first hypothesis would require a stronger performance on the part of Japan than might appear true at first sight. Most African countries are oil importers and were faced with a rapidly increasing oil import burden after 1973. Accordingly, one would expect the share of oil-exporting states in their market to rise, leaving little room for non-oil exporters to increase their market share. If Japan is found to have been successfully maintaining its market share, it would represent a major achievement. A confirmation of hypothesis (1) would testify to a particularly impressive export performance on the part of Japan (1985: 18).
2. In the early 1980s, the authors indicate ‘alarming trends in the development of U.S. and Japanese commerce with Africa’: Whereas Japan has generally been successful in maintaining its shares of African markets, the U.S. share in most cases has declined in a statistically significant manner. This decline has been a major cause of the burgeoning U.S. trade deficit with the continent; the deficit is not

merely the result of increased imports, but also stems from the failure of the United States to maintain its share of markets in sub-Saharan Africa other than South Africa (39).

3. By the mid-1980s, Moss and Ravenill's survey of Japanese enterprises and their interviews with decision-makers led to two apparently paradoxical statements. On the one hand, they signal alarm over 'the relative success of Japanese corporations in winning a growing share of the market for capital equipment' and, on the other hand, the two analysts foresee a revision of this economic activity:

While Japan was willing in the early 1970s – a time of great concern regarding future supplies of raw materials – to undertake investments that were perceived by others as being too risky . . . the current prevailing orthodoxy in Tokyo is that the risk of African mineral ventures generally has not been worthwhile (with the exception of uranium in Niger and oil in Gabon). Having successfully diversified its sources of raw materials over the last decade, Japan is now much more discriminating in choosing new projects and places greater emphasis on the potential reliability of new suppliers (113).

The strategic revision of a successful economic programme addresses, in actuality, an external challenge to its own policy and this is accounted for by different work ethics and cultural a priori assumptions: the difficulty of the Japanese in understanding African cultures, the difficulty of the African in understanding Japanese cultures, perceived as 'one-dimensional economic being' and conflicting interpretations of diversity. For instance, Moss and Ravenhill report, 'Although willing to participate in joint ventures, Japanese investors were generally wary of demands for increased African participation in shareholding, management, and intermediate inputs' (61).

Culture and a 'software of the mind'?

It remains now to register the cultural factor, a weak reason to all appearances. At first sight, it does not have the monolithic solidity of the economic reason, nor its strength and authority. It does not compare really with the political reason. In effect, the political calls to mind fascinating arts and techniques for managing communities, both their histories and their fates. It gives rise to images of complicated procedures and choices, along with cunning expediency and shrewdness. The

cultural reason, somehow or another, brings to mind metaphors apropos a soft field welcoming attentive operations concerning the destiny of a community and its values as they relate to its fundamental conditions of existence: a genesis (to give birth, to grow, to ground); the quality of its reality and authenticity (to create, to cultivate, to nurture); and the will to last (to communicate, to transmit, to bequeath). There are sciences strictly devoted to the activity of the economic and political reasons. On the other hand, strictly speaking, there is not a science of cultures. The Husserlian *Geisteswissenschaften* or division of the academic faculty in German universities, whose semantic clarity supports the solidity of Husserl's *The Crisis*, allows the Berlin Academy to distinguish two types of knowledge on the basis of the mind-body dualism. The division, now universally accepted, specialises fields – natural versus spiritual, or moral – but it remains cumbersome. And today, an indeterminate number of disciplines such as anthropology, geography and psychoanalysis disperse the immense domain of the cultural lines. As a matter of fact, in its incommensurable signification, the cultural domain contains all the scientific practices that both the economic and political reason might motivate.

Culture is a body. Its metaphors and symbols inform a rich thesaurus in all human traditions and represent a variety of maternal womb figures. A *corpus*, it folds and embraces existence, expands and consolidates it to potentially all the limits of space and time, and animates questions and statements about destiny. It is from this perspective that one might consider distinguishing or uniting two cross-cultural types of narratives: those related to πνεῦμα, or things spiritual (inward) and those related to φύσις, or things natural (outward). The human uniqueness brings together the two types of knowledge, integrating φύσις and πνεῦμα in the mysterious cipher of a human nature. Of all the axial metonymies, the most challenging, the Arabic *rahīm* or womb, as Titus Burckhardt reminds us, shares the same root with the very name of the supreme divinity, *ar-Rahmān*, the Compassionate and with the manifested expressions in *ar-rahmānīyah*, the divine bliss animating all aspects of reality. On the other hand, on the scientific side, we still have a perennial search for something like a foundational *mathesis universalis* to which, in our time, we can link the ambitious vision of Jean Charon in *Eléments d'une théorie unitaire de l'univers* (1963) or the extraordinary project of Lévi-Strauss for ordering structural invariants of the human mind.

One could bring in the concept of 'Kantism without transcendental subject', as Paul Ricoeur called Lévi-Strauss's *Mythologiques* and Lévi-Strauss recognised

the expression in the overture of *The Raw and the Cooked* (1983). And, reflect on its similarity with more pragmatic theories, which through cultural lines, have been decoding cognitive grids that tabulate systems regarding truth and falsity in epistemologies, good and bad in ethics, and beautiful and ugly in aesthetics. In contemporary explorations for 'intercultural cooperation', one would then account for a model such as Hofstede's 'software of the mind', detailed in his work *Cultures and Organizations* (1996). The founding director of the Institute for Research on Intercultural Cooperation, executive director of the personnel research department of IBM-Europe, the Maastricht (the Netherlands) professor of organisational anthropology and international management, Hofstede has been concerned with practical issues for administering multinational businesses and negotiations. From 25 years of research in 50 countries, Hofstede suggests professional ethical guidelines for intercultural understanding and cultured positions as follows: (a) techniques for 'spreading multicultural understanding' in 'global challenges', (b) intercultural co-operation that transcends regional value-laden choices and originations, as well as problems inherent to encounters and confrontations of cultural grammars of difference and (c) how to accentuate ethically sound converging lines for living in a projected global harmony. Hofstede explains:

If the establishment of Western-style democracies depends on a country's level of economic development . . . whoever wants to make the whole world democratic should face the economic and ecological consequences of this goal. At present, the rich countries' standard of living also implies a standard of environmental pollution and depletion of resources which makes it utterly impossible to extend this standard of living to the entire world population. Therefore, achieving the goal of democracy for everybody requires an entirely new way of handling our ecosystem: sustaining the rich countries' quality of life but drastically reducing its ecological cost (1996: 244).

Against trends of cultural divergences determined by native 'mental programs', Hofstede's approach, acknowledging a constant interaction between the three reasons – economic, political and cultural – aims at engineering a 'mental software intercultural space'. Would his own intellectual education – an M.Sc. in mechanical engineering and a Ph.D. in social psychology – explain at least partially his arguments on procedures for 'rectifying' mindsets? In any case, students of debates

about the nature of the mind and its relationship to the environment might be puzzled by Hofstede's assurance. The issue is both complex and tricky. Hofstede's theory supposes that we know how to conceive properly the tension between the savage and the domesticated mind or between the pathological and the normal. Other than Georges Canguilhem's philosophical *oeuvre* in the domain of life sciences, whose work might we consult in the immense library of psychopathology that might not echo Canguilhem's uncertainty about the very nature of the deviation? At any rate, the most recent critical anthologies in *Philosophy of Science* (Balashov and Rosenberg 2002) and in *Philosophy of Mind* (Chalmers 2002) are sources for sheer bewilderment in so far as the mind and its operations are concerned.

Hofstede's model of intervention consists of a diagram defining the core of any culture by three notions – rituals, heroes and symbols. By age ten, believes Hofstede, any citizen has internalised these notions and converted them into a constraining *habitus*, a concept he borrows from Bourdieu in order to designate a way of being and behaving conditioned by one's culture. Visible to anyone, including a disagreeable observer, the way of relating to the cultural frame of reference would be, in terms of meaning, fully decodable and understandable only to insiders; that is, natives and inculturated foreigners. In effect, it expresses the cultural standards of 'the desirable' in terms of agreement and disagreement in reference to an ethics and 'the desired', in terms of individual interest, specifically in the tension between yours and mine. Hofstede's intercultural software of the mind would witness to a metagrammar. This system is built from regional grammars of norms presiding over activities between the desirable and the desired in schemata created by binary oppositions such as the following, which was used in Hofstede's information questionnaire:

Evil versus good
 Dirty versus clean
 Ugly versus beautiful
 Unnatural versus natural
 Abnormal versus normal
 Paradoxical versus logical
 Irrational versus rational

Relativist in the light of its avowed respect for all possible cultural ensembles and their internal ordering principles, Hofstede comes to reproduce the 'grand

dichotomy' model without addressing its implications. Moreover, the model transcribes, on a business management agenda, an equation between economic convergence and necessary transcendence of any alterity; by this fact, it might be bypassing the equality principle between cultural systems in order to outline the requirements of a transnational organisation. Thus, it comes without surprise that Hofstede would seem perplexed by the fact that 'there is little evidence of international convergency over time, except an increase of individualism' or that 'not only will cultural diversity among countries remain with us: it even looks as though differences within countries are increasing' (1996: 238). He might not have needed 25 years of comparative research in 50 countries to make the following observation: 'Culturally a manager is the follower of his or her followers: she or he has to meet the subordinates on these subordinates' cultural ground. There is free choice in managerial behavior but the cultural constraints are much tighter than most of the management literature admits' (235).

An intellectual challenge, Hofstede's book is exemplary compared to treatises on 'sidewalks of transnational management theory', these 'wilder areas' where, as Micklethwait and Wooldridge put it, 'theory mixes with self-help, philosophy, futurology, or downright quackery – these unmapped regions . . . where the greatest fortunes are to be made' (1996: 304). Hofstede's endeavour stands as both a paradox and a question mark apropos the collaboration between the economic and the cultural reason. Sign and symbol of norms, his model attempts to reconcile lines of competing statements, those on the validity and coherence of self-regulating cultural bodies and those of the economic reason as directive of a global historical convergence. It has the clarity of a beautiful illusion that reminds me of a gifted teenager's exquisite illumination. In his *Nature Loves to Hide*, Shimon Malin, to the purpose of 'the doctrine of the oneness of mind', remembers a story told by Kenneth Brower, Freeman Dyson's biographer, of the second generation of American quantum physicists in the 1950s:

Freeman told us that when he was fourteen he had started a religion. Unhappy with the Christian notion that the heathen are doomed for reasons out of their control, he had begun a sect of his own. 'I was convinced suddenly that all people are the same. We are all one soul in different disguises. I called it Cosmic Unity . . . I seem to remember that I even had a convert. Cosmic Unity lasted about a year, I think' (2003: 234).

‘An adolescent fancy?’ asks Malin. Yes, achieving the oneness of mind – acting like a mirror and actualising one’s own reflection – is Plotinus’s philosophy in *The Enneads*, Malin insists. He adds, ‘“We are all one soul in different disguises,” that is a precise enunciation of the idea of the oneness of mind. This gifted fourteen-year-old boy suddenly tapped into the universal mind’ (234).

Compliance

From yesterday to tomorrow, our predicament remains: how to handle a collaboration between our three competing reasons – the economic, the political and the cultural – and defend the authority of an ethics of human dignity. The complex systems englobing us are the products of our intelligence and imagination. They should not become our masters. They contribute to the invention of our social identities. We should be conscious and responsible participants in this process, affirming a critical primacy of the ethical reason over the economic, the political and the cultural.

Some years ago, Mary Modahl, vice-president of Forrester Research, who specialises in market analysis, warned us about a new global enterprise of extreme efficiency: electronic commerce, which was steadily modifying the basic structures of transnational companies. Her book *Now or Never* (1999) addresses experts on how to ‘exploit internet business models’ and ‘defy the gravity of the old ways’. However, its main exploration is on diversity in businesses and forms of alterity represented by consumers’ differences. The research dwells on the psychology of behaviours and the processes and dynamics of integrating individualities into systems of commerce. Here we face a concrete illustration of metasystems transcending, for commercial purposes, Etzioni’s analysis of complex organisations and Hofstede’s software of the mind programme.

How do we resituate the notion of compliance as a moral attitude? Indeed, by and in the credibility of explorations that raise questions attentive to ethical implications, such as the collective book on *Alternatives to Economic Globalization* (Cavanaugh and Mander 2004).

We need compliance in our public collective system of shared spiritual values in this global culture, the values it enshrines according to a code of ethics in the making, transcending its own organic structure in a transhistorical and transcultural effort. How, conceptually, could one comply with what such an abstract sign might be supposing, a symbol traced by an unstable moving point, a cipher representing a possible convergence of continuous lines on the surface of histories? In sum,

could we speak allegorically of a path that, from the uniqueness of human dignity as demarcated through time and space in a multiplicity of narratives, would state its own alignment in its transcriptions of lessons from traditions?

Reformulated in our concrete communities of existence within their laws and governance codes, compliance to human dignity exigencies should stand as our supreme value and an absolute one. It should prescribe and evaluate the activity of both the economic and political reasons. In this way, the notion of compliance would come to allegorise itself in modalities of agreement and obedience whose lines intersect in the common space of our 'we-community': acquiescence to, and accordance with, legally binding values in symmetrical relations. On the other hand, in intransitive determinations of difference, obedience to the authority of a grammar whose components, as they were well summed up in a nineteenth-century note by Charles Bernard Renouvier, can be found in André Lalande's dictionary of philosophy: ipseity, alterity, synthesis. As a matter of fact, the concepts call their coherence in the dynamic succession of identity, distinction, determination. And compliance comes to signify a perpetual search for an ethics of coexistence. Should not we adapt here John Locke's language apropos knowledge of the existence of beings and things and promote an ethics presiding over acts and dispositions that synchronises everything for the better? Accenting the project of *Totality and Infinity*, Lévinas reminds us of that which transcends all technicalities: 'The word "ethical" and the word "just" are the same word, the same question, the same language' (1988: 171).

30 January 2006

Notes

1. This chapter was first read on 2 February 2006 at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium. It was originally published as 'What Is a Line? On Paradoxes about Allegories of Identity and Alterity'. *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy* XXI (2008): 23–62. It has been reprinted here with permission.
2. See Figure 2: Untouchable.
3. See Figure 3: Secrets.

On Converting

Lex Perfecta Praecepta Recta

The year 2009 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Congo, formerly the Belgian Congo.¹ Bambi Ceuppens, David van Reybrouck and Vincent Viaene, three historians from the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, have edited a volume on the Belgian representations of Congo titled *Congo in België* (2009). Its main entries concern the Belgian colonial project, the images of the colony and the idea of a Belgo-Congolese panorama, all written by professional historians. If, as goes the challenge of the volume, Belgium ‘invented’ the Congo, what could be said of the effect of the Belgian representation of itself? The editors’ introduction dwells on this issue and analyses the colonial culture in Belgium and is accompanied by an intervention on the practice of colonial history by Jan Vansina, the theorist of oral history, as a challenge to traditional perspectives of historical sciences. The article ‘*Lex Perfecta Praecepta Recta*’,² which is published there in its original English and appears in Flemish as an afterword, asks, ‘What’s the reason to convert?’

An image: The tree is going down

‘The tree is going down.’ This figure is an arbitration or, more exactly, a metaphor. It is a remark made by Pierre Charles, one of the Belgian founders of the Museum Lessianum, at a 1929 conference on missiology in Austria. The text, as well as a similar one read the next year in Ljubljana, is included in the collection of his posthumous *Études missiologiques* (1956). A theologian, Charles argues for an adjusting dynamics of missionary activity. Presumably, according to Charles, most of the non-Western world (China, Japan, India, Africa) would have been, for centuries, spiritually immobile. Yet things are changing. If you are observing a falling tree, make sure to direct its motion before it hits the ground. According to Charles, ‘Once the giant is on the ground, it becomes cumbersome to move it’ (35).

Ut valeas (That you might be well)

The metaphor transcodes values and the urgency of an enabling strategy. In effect, suggests Charles: 'China will not wait indefinitely, whereas its old Confucianism dissolves; India stirs too, making cracking sounds; Africa is visibly transforming itself'. The matrix of an argument translates an injunction on putting thought and power into action. 'It is today that we have to act, together and with all our strength' (1956: 35).

Were Charles's arguments from the 1920s still appealing when they were published in the 1950s? China had converted, but to Communism. Independent, India was turning a principle of indifference into a political agenda for a non-alignment between capitalism and Communism, and Africa was orienting herself toward political autonomy. An image transposes a necessity. Then what does it mean to assess today Charles's reason for redynamising an effort in intellectual conversion? The tree symbol was an allegorical proposition designed to reconfigure a space in Christian responsibility and within the then-dominant imperial projects. The attempt meant more than managing competing cultural stories and transposing them into Christian places.

The geography to reconquest leaves no doubt about why it seemed imperative to act. The vision, in the religious dynamics of the period, defined a need to reassess the politics of a presence. Charles raises a more general question of meaning. The breakdown he seems to see in China may not mask the crisis. On the other hand, as it stands, it deploys a problem, a recentring of questions. There is first a problem of justification regarding his statement. There is second a problem of distinction between the mission and the culture supporting it. There may be a potential issue about the mission as being against a cultural task entailing a missionary obligation. Finally, the whole interrogation has to envision the activity that could actualise it, the missionary's effectual task, in rapport with the authority that would be regulating it as well as the expected effects of implementing the new strategy of a conversion process.

Charles's vision rests on what he calls a '*dogmatique missionnaire fondamentale*' (fundamental in missionary dogmatics). The theological field is a discipline concerned with dogmas, or elements in the doctrine deemed to be indisputable truths. The Christian mission is about the truth. To make a philosophical point, Charles conjures Plato's doctrine on the good and the truth that need to be conveyed and propagated: *Bonum est diffusivum sui* and *Verum et bonum convertuntur*.

Extremely attentive to issues of genealogy and patrimony, the intellectual's attribution and the believer's duty, Charles chooses to explain his rethinking of the Christian mission with a single, unique reason. The universality of Christianity – dogmas (original sin, redemption, incarnation) and the universality of its ethics – he argues, transcends all distinctions. The Belgian Jesuit was aware that this particular question had been essential at the genesis of Lutheran trends in the history of ideas and in theology. In other words, one would have to problematise – which doesn't mean to reject offhand – any other claim to justification, even when it relies on the Gospels' order to go and teach, such as the classical *euntes ergo docete omnes gentes* (Go ye therefore and teach all nations) from Matthew 28:19. Of the points he advances, the first may suffice here: an order is not a reason.

That is the paradox. The metaphor of the tree supports a cause to be activated more successfully. Charles's argument amplifies the contours of duty and service and narrows down the justification. One could read it as somehow invalidating the usual missionary vocation and reason to convert.

Invention may be the key concept for remaking the claim of an absolute reason to expand. The image of the falling tree speaks to the senses and the mind. It expresses a subjective perception. Moreover, it transfers Charles's perceptual code into an objective universe that should be acted upon. As it is apt at maintaining its value as an expedient beat in the journey of a metaphor, could it not well end up making credible a duty? In effect, as both representation and projection, this falling tree is a dying body. It dramatises a vision. Against the lack of a reason to convert anyone, death comes in and identifies with the subject of Charles's reason and that is real. Charles's public meditation is no longer about concepts. It circles an empirical life-space that includes the Congo, India, or anywhere far from Vienna yet within the actual universality of a discourse. Of high interest to Charles, on the one hand, are the Jesuits and, on the other hand, the Belgian colony and its Brussels administration, which he knows well. The programme that the theologian has conceptualised accents a metaphor about a dying empirical reality. In its anticipation, the physical space to be reconverted and stamped coincides with the nineteenth-century 'pagan world'.

Up against a past with its multiple histories of cultural death, advancing a quality that can be thought of only in relation to another quality, Charles knew perfectly well what he was adducing with the falling tree argument. A plausible key to Charles's arcane symbolic grid is the felicitous title of a book by the American phenomenologist Alphonso Lingis, *The Community of Those Who Have*

Nothing in Common (1994), or a community of existing and dying. Charles's metaphor testifies to a tension between two symbols, two logical qualities, the universal and the particular. Once granted this original view, one might consider Charles's objective as fundamentally indetachable from the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century context. In effect, the same background reflects on a number of adjacent and interlinked phenomena. They include movement as different as the following: One, the politics of an imperial vocation between 1850 and 1920, and to which should be related Charles's reassessment of a Christian universal identity. The idea of its expansion is a direct resonance of the 1919 *Maximum Illud* encyclical of Benedict XV. Two, consider the authenticity doctrines, projected in an amalgamation with the Enlightenment idea of universality, the development of nation-states and nineteenth-century European nationalisms. Three, the historical 'scramble for Africa' claims to be equally predicated on universalist assumptions.

On the ensuing outgrowth of the imperial vocation in relation to the Berlin Conference (1884–5) and with overviews of the Congo – besides the Unesco (1971–91) and Cambridge University Press (Clark et al. 1986) histories of Africa – a number of reissued and recent works include: Barbara C. Emerson's *Leopold II of the Belgians* (1979); Thomas Pakenham's *The Scramble for Africa* (1992b); Adam Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost* (1999); Isidore Ndaywell's *Histoire du Congo* (1998) and John Reader's *A Biography of the Continent* (1999). These cultural histories can pass as interdisciplinary and intercultural studies. Descriptions of a socio-historical period of important hazards and transformations, they attest to its motifs and paradoxes, reflecting conflictual representations in 'black' and 'white' and modulating a bichromatic way of structuring the world. In his book *The Passion of the Western Mind*, Richard Tarnas suggests a moderate diagnostic: 'A relentless balance, an inextricable intertwining of positive and negative, seemed to mark the evolution of the modern age, and our task here is to attempt to understand the nature of that intricate dialectic (1993: 325).

Quis ostendet (Who shall orient)?

My intention is, from Charles's metaphor of the falling tree, to trace procedures structuring a reading as a course in inventions, in devising something new from the very experience of reading. In *The Unspeakable* (1987), Stephen A. Tyler, a professor of anthropology and linguistics at Rice University, comments on writing and insists on what is a distancing from the accepted. The written, he notes, unveils a world represented by a reflected object, the author's voice or a

spectral object and finally the writing itself. Tyler's framework states a practice as well as a presupposition that determines an approach to what would be a history of reading the world. Tyler writes that 'modern science, begun by Bacon and Descartes, accomplished the first assault on the trinity, on the object, on nature, on the signified, and now we know, because science tells us, that there really wasn't any real out there, just the discourse of science' (5). Out of context, a sustained reflection on speculative thought, this statement seems equivocal. But at the outset of a popular book on the practice of social science and on the art of ethnography as a hermeneutics, the statement could seem perplexing to those wondering about where some practitioners of the human sciences put their faith. Is there a truth?

Indeed, there must exist a truth and we can approximate its regimes: the regime that would qualify the difference in veracity between, say, Charles's falling tree metaphor and Vansina's *Living with Africa* (1994). Of the multiple pictures of King Léopold II, it should be possible to evaluate, compare and grade their degree of historical credibility. By the same token, one could measure the truth of propositions describing the king by testing these against the usual criteria of logic.

As an intellectual configuration, Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Léopold Sédar Senghor, Jack Goody and Clifford Geertz help us connect erudite positions with an everyday, commonsense certainty that truth exists and that any text is infinite.

Any approach to the truth of a sign would accept the following simple distinctions. First, there is an *empirical truth*, which is of the order of the senses; that is, an application to the human body of the factual truth, the more encompassing notion of an adequation between ideas and 'reality'. Second, there is an *allegorical truth*, or a figurative statement that stands for something else. The allegorical truth is an inclusive concept that accommodates such different and irreducible concepts as *religious truth*, *moral truth* and *fictional truth*. Finally, there is a *truth of propositions* that can be evaluated according to the truth criterion and the rules of logic.

In order to mark the point on truth and the infinite character of any text, let me suggest two tests, the first on the 'Tintin phenomenon' and the second on the usage of an oral canon.

The case of Tintin could be a first test. Nothing more than a highly learned study in cultural imagination, Tom McCarthy's argument in *Tintin and the Secret of Literature* (2007) simultaneously deconstructs Hergé's case in relation to that

of his invention and vice versa. The mirror effects result in variables that build a fascinating 'house knowledge' in Western cultural history. What is true in such a perspective? My educated interpretation is, of course, a hypothesis. It amounts to an interpretation of McCarthy's book, which is itself a hypothesis on Tintin as 'the greatest comics of the twentieth century'. It can be submitted to a hypothetico-deductive test by making explicit what is supposed and deducing statements that can be checked as to their truths. Even if the value of the hypothesis proves to be untrue, it could be reinvested in new hypotheses. Ultimately, the project may be validated or rejected. By using three keys – Hergé, his time and Tintin's behaviour – a reading of McCarthy's decoding of the Tintin phenomenon brings about at least the following prevalent lines: (a) thematics consistent with the Enlightenment postulations about humanity, along with symbols of erasure, (b) depiction of contradictions in socio-political structures and cultural paradoxes, along with negative symbols of media and (c) clear affirmations of moral standards, along with alarming settings in profanation of ideals.

The work of a historian, of an exegete, these lines will probably confirm a commonsense guessing about what, in the Tintin fiction, characterises a reality versus a fable, coheres with other evaluations and constitutes functional assertions for an approach to raised questions.

The second test of the truth, in two main expressions, empirical and allegorical, is so beautiful one would wish to have invented it. More than anyone else, Vansina is a monument for his contribution to a positive African history. Could he stand as a symbol in the practice of the method he promoted?

'What's happening?' asks the researcher of the informant and then, with an intense curiosity, adds: 'They are speaking, what are they telling each other? I want to know. You translate?' Embarrassed, the informant responds: 'Apropos your question on royal genealogy, they cannot agree on what they said to Jan Vansina some years ago. They would like to give you the same version.'³

This is the critical moment during an audience in one of the kingdoms Vansina studied. One imagines the king sitting outside his quarters, surrounded by his advisers, most of them of a certain age. Apparently impenetrable, they have been following what seems to be an ordinary ritual. The researcher asks a question in French, the informant translates, a courtier addresses it to the king and a response goes back in the same manner. In this case, a simple observation of the advisers' attitudes would indicate that most of them understand French. The king does not intervene in the exchange. All the responses have come from his translator

and were accompanied by assenting signs from other advisers. Next, an enquiry on the royal genealogy disrupts the conversation. Of two hypotheses, either the researcher's question was unexpected, and in good faith was not agreeable to the circumstance, or it had been deliberately schemed for a purpose. Whatever the case, the effect raises a doubt concerning the status of any reply. In effect, any return about the genealogy will be a ruling on itself as a new questioning within the tradition. It will be designating both its own lack – the very deficiency that justifies it – and the desires and expectations of everyone, the *nomos* or *lex* that does not need justification.

It does not really matter whether this story is a legend or a poorly constructed fable from a real event. As a matter of fact, I wish it were the latter, to justify the saying that 'truth is sometimes stranger than fiction'. An apologue, my reading accords itself with the nomothetic requirements of Vansina's *De la tradition orale* (1961). But it supplements his perspective with an emphasis on their relation to an ethnographic hermeneutics in their objective for apprehending a radical alterity. In the presence of the disciplines, what dissociates them elsewhere, in the traditional methods of history and ethnography, here brings them together. Accented are the similarities of their argumentation (their object, otherness in time and space; their technique, the mediation of grids they construct and the presupposition of a *lex* supporting their *praecepta*). Magnified in my hypothesis is a method that combines a two-way approach to its aim, which is to understand human experience, through a process of moving from the explicit of a culture to the implicit of its atmospheres and going from an immersion within the inner *Weltanschauung* to the distinctness of a *Weltansicht*, the particularity of a view.

An attentive reader would recognise here my indebtedness to Lévi-Strauss's *Mythologiques* and, with it, the not-so-innocent substitution of the unconscious by the implicit. This is to state that an ethics cannot but be assumed and thus the subject's responsibility in the convergence of the historical and the ethnographic practice and their *praecepta* vis-à-vis a *lex*. Here, a law-giving exigency of science fuses with the empathetic virtue of a discourse concerned about the meaning of what is happening. And, in this manner, the fable on Vansina appears in a different light. It designates a transcultural *carrefour* and reveals at least two truisms. First, in the name of a foundational law, between a scientific-oriented vision and a cultural-oriented one, the fable attests to a latent war about discourses on origins and to the truth in the act of its institution and, by this, a claim to a valid interpretation. What is at stake concerns the credibility of a genesis and its genealogy, who can

speak with competence about them and how. Second, in the name of this past and its authenticity, between the archives and the histories of their interpretation, another type of war must exist that opposes fellowships and interest groups. What is at stake generally concerns rights in terms of power and foundational discourses become objects of negotiations in reading the past and in signifying the present. Simply put, interactions between allegorical and empirical truths attest to the idea of truth as a project.

As an observation and a decoding, reading entails a selection from a plurality of tables and rules of interpretation. Charles's story is still a good arbitration. For example, the credibility of its metaphor would hardly compete in *Congo in België* with that concerning the convolutions of Léopoldville's genesis from Johan Lagae's analysis, Vincent Viaene's deconstruction of King Léopold's imperialism, or even the truthfulness of studies dealing with contrasted couplings in representations, as in the case of Geert Castryck's presentation of *Binnenste-buitenland* and those of M. de Ridder, Leen Engelen and Sabine Cornélis focusing on *artistieke cultuur*. My point is not to indicate the possibility of a comparison of studied sources, events or objects, but to assert the credibility of the discourse or that of metaphors describing them. That said, despite its precariousness, absolutely nothing can prevent a historian of ecclesiastical affairs from evaluating the impact of Charles's falling tree metaphor and how an efficient induction could have increased both its credibility and effectiveness. This is to say that Charles's figure could have been a real thing in the administration of ecclesiastical politics.

Accepting the coherence of the metaphor without qualifying it, admitting that, in the 1920s, its veracity might not have raised eyebrows does not mean that today it would not. But should we suppose that a confrère of Charles, a specialist in today's intercultural theology, is offended by the falling tree story; he might be proved right by contemporary cultural standards. At any rate, the reaction would reveal the reality of a conflict of interpretation. In effect, any reading is always a deciphering of coded layers, interacting and often conflictual in their symbolic and practical values.

'Proust is infinite,' says Sartre. He means it in the sense that any text is infinite, open to endless understandings, numerous types of commentaries and appropriations. As a matter of fact, any text is a body. It disorients any approach, connoting levels and denoting a plurality of associations. These levels may become subtexts tending toward tomorrow's events or otherwise reciting a tune from yesterday. Reading, one sees words and lines as if they must service patterns. This

is how they are projected. A subject intended them. Reading, one recreates a given and can advocate bifurcations, orient them, multiply them ad infinitum. The mind fuses its own accents with what they suscite, investing their silence, rhetoric or mobility.

The bending tree of Charles reports the troubles of the empire in India, the Congo or whatever fields he was minding. That is the word: to mind, to care and be concerned about, to attend and look after. In the nuances of the universal laws of conversion, the giant tree reads Chinese. An old quarrel on 'Roman rites', universal Latin liturgy against a Chinese liturgy, may be testing the voice of a twentieth-century Jesuit who remembers it. Who really lost that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century battle, the Jesuits or the West? How many centuries back to reconvene the objective drama that the adjective 'giant' resuscitates? Its theme resonates in words that could only be heretical. The universal is a quality that depends on the particular. In their concordance, these qualities spell out a cultural model of conviviality, a logical truthfulness.

Reading Charles or any other testimony about an empirical or allegorical truth informs one's record independently from any other consideration. This critique of Charles's falling tree has been signalling more than one figure-in-the-making regarding a reality; that is, relevant to something that was in his mind, within the representation of something else. It is certain that I have been reading a metaphor that for Charles was an image, a synecdoche, the term for a figurative part of something else. In his argument, and overwhelmingly in the multiplicity of references to the Greeks, mathematics and the sciences, he is designing and redesigning the same pattern, universal and particular. Beneath a curious metaphor, the lesson in logic is so transparent that it seems invisible.

Indeed a term of logic, *universality* designates the quality of elements, of all the members of a class. For each one of them, universality signifies a state, the property that qualifies each element as belonging to the same class. By extension, the word applies to any state of universal comprehensiveness and thus to the community of human beings. From the fifteenth century onwards, possibly some of the most abused concepts in cultural politics and theories of difference, the universal and the particular, have been used to bend the obvious and adjust very poor fallacies, including cultural essentialisms that are, strictly speaking, reifications. The fact of the matter is that, from textbooks of logic as well as from simple common sense, (a) universals and particulars do not exist in themselves, (b) universals exist in the function of particulars; in other words, universals proceed from particulars and

(c) universals are not entities but qualities of elements, empirical things, abstract elements, invented *realia*.

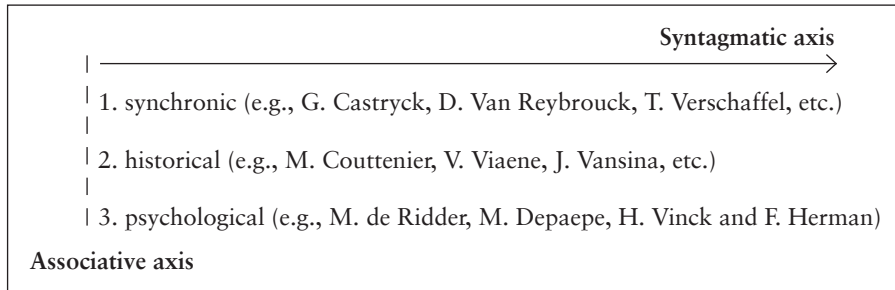
The essays in *Congo in België* form an interpretive economy that expresses ways of reading archives, which are simply constructions of multiple levels of reality. The notion of 'archive' is to be understood in the ordinary sense as a set of documents and materials of historical interest or as public declarations regarding an experience. These essays analyse and comment on a culture grappling with a number of topical angles, refracting the notion of an *empire belge* and some of its refining faces. Arguments or explanations about archives and empirical experiences, themselves reflecting other orders, these chapters unveil both the rationale of a pursuit submitted to a method and the motivation to justify a will to testify by looking, decoding and interpreting. That is a scientific practice that, in the recognition of its objectives, attests to the standpoint of a particular in the process of a quest and the claim of a construction to be true or valid for everyone.

Reading a Belgian analysis

From the general *ratio* of essays in *Congo in België*, their ordering allowed the constitution of three main groups: historical, synchronic and, interfering with the other two, an in-between that one could label 'psychological'. All of them being 'tales' about the Belgian-Congolese thematic of the collection, they really stand as anthropological discourses in a loose sense. From my reading, here are three remarks pertaining to such a *dispositio*. First, let us consider two axes. One is a horizontal axis, a syntagmatic line that can be initiated by each numbered entry. Any contribution in each class would function as an integral part of a linear story, of a narrative grounded in the initiated view – synchronic, historical or psychological.

The second is the vertical line, an associative axis, where ideas are linked together, building narratives that transcend classes. From this freewheeling exercise emerges a neatly subjective dimension that captures the *memoria* of this multivocal collection, particularly in its capacity for associative amplifications.

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe manoeuvre a similar model in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (2001). For example, focusing on the politics of British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli in nineteenth-century England (in promoting a 'one nation' motto, Disraeli marginalised the space of political confrontations), Laclau and Mouffe's model conceives the syntagmatic as expressing a 'logic of difference' in the narrative it expands whereas the paradigmatic, which in this diagram is the associative, would indicate a 'logic of equivalence'. As one would expect, the first



axis increases complexity; the second reduces possibilities of growth since, as they rightly put it, ‘elements can be substituted for one another’. The argument works on the basis of a political hypothesis, to analyse Disraeli’s politics in terms of antagonism. The same result could be obtained should we opt to read any Belgian-Congolese corpus by stressing any concrete attitude in the dialectic of having and doing, from the tension between lack and need. Approaching our diagram without an explicit conceptual key to the content of chapters, a presupposition demarcates instead only styles of narratives on antagonistic and non-antagonistic issues. The syntagmatic logic extols an interminable story, submitted only to a disciplining prediction, whereas the associative logic would let any imagination create its own nightmares, if needed.

Second, let me clarify an assumption. The classification is an organising device. It is an exacting one, yet the dynamics of any reading can often destabilise the effects of its structuration. For instance, does not the collective paper of M. Depaepe and others on *Brave Zwartjes* confirm its instability? About a number of other chapters – for instance Leen Engelen’s ‘*Een Congolees aan de Franse Riviera*’, Johan Lagae’s on Léopoldville and Brussels, Sabine Cornélis’s on art and Tervuren, Sarah van Beurden’s evaluation of ‘The 1958 Expo’ – an ordinary reading would also exemplify the thematic interactions. Paradoxically, such an apparent weakness of the hypothesis illumines the incoherence of disciplinary boundaries. Thus, I return to the initial precaution of positing an interference of classes: what exactly can the ‘psychological’ not comprise? On the other hand, in this same movement, the assumption underscores the positive of the transdisciplinary matrix impressed on the collection by the editors.

Finally, we can note that the classification creates an objective site of

reciprocal habituations for the reader. A careful syntagmatic reading would tend to result in a realist type of tale grasping events in descriptive frames. And, for sure, the associative axis, in bringing about an interpretive accent expected of any transcultural approach, would easily entertain impressionist trajectories. For example, one descends from Van Reybrouck's considerations on popular culture to Viaene's depiction of King Léopold and De Ridder's musings on *koloniale bedenkingen* with the impression of facing new socio-historical explorations in a living cultural perception.

Merleau-Ponty invoked extraordinary signs in artistic expressions to assert the multiplicity of avenues flowing from any present. Ordinary assumptions, as we can see, bring forward evidence of such a view. In this reading, the past and the present stand here in the now, real. This interdisciplinary collection stands as an exemplar. Its critical renderings of a cultural history testify to both a practice of disciplines and the intellectual configuration that justifies them. From any gap in any linear story about Tervuren, in any haphazard disappearance of associations between words concerning humans or *realia*, as well as in disputable lines of meaning that this reading may decline, the Belgian-Congolese affairs of the past century surge into stunning force in relation to current analyses. Contemporary, yet not actually identical with this future-oriented present of my reading, they prove a commonsense affirmation of David Berlinski in *The Advent of the Algorithm*: 'There are worlds and there are worlds, and physics describes one of them, but *only* one of them' (2000: 217).

Nobis (To us)

The term 'invention' should be defined. At least, it should be engaged and clearly specified with regard to its representational capacity. In what it presupposes, even in a collective research revisiting a recent history and its interpretations, the sets of criteria invoked in an analysis may still reflect ancient paradigms. A well-established reference is the Aristotelian model that we still actualise through popular entries organised from a structuration of binary oppositions. We can reconstruct fairly rigorously the impact of this model in narratives that have generalised the tension between the idea of the same and the Other, a relation instrumental in interpreting the expansion of Europe since the sixteenth century.

For our purposes, we decode the discourse of three main agents: the explorer, who, at the end of the nineteenth century, is supplanted by the colonial, who walks with the anthropologist, who is in a complex dialogue with the missionary. These

three agents, identifying with a function they believe to be a historical vocation, inscribe themselves in a fantastic initiative, that of normalising the world, in a sense. This meant the reduction of differences to a model. Africa is just one part of the topography submitted to such a will to normality, itself justified in scientific rulings. The normalising process may be understood as a task promoting a basic structure and, as such, requiring the elimination of both internal and external stressing elements. That is what 'to colonise' means. The word, we tend to forget it, comes from the Latin verb *colère*, which means to cultivate, tend or take care of a field. Through semantic extensions, in classical Latin – for instance in the language of Cicero, Ovid and Virgil – *colère* came to affirm, besides cultural values of attending and being the guardian of, the significance of devoting one's calling to commitments and objectives related to dwelling in a place and organising its structuration.

It is to this general dimension that, implicitly or explicitly, one refers in order to study the expansion of the European space overseas since the end of the fifteenth century. We tend to privilege this historical moment and understand colonisation in terms of this guardianship and cultivation. This meaning brings to mind cases like the Roman *imperium*. That said, let us accept the fact that we should not compare incomparables.

Literally one could, in the abstract, reflect on the idea of any colonial expansion in its double activity on foreign bodies and geographies. On the one hand, this activity can be apprehended as representing an intentional negation of what is out there, a foreign reality facing a normalising force; on the other hand, the process could be qualified in its own self-affirmation, an objective aimed at altering a native difference in its arrangements and cultural economies. In sum, this is a serious affair: one of transmuting beings and cultures into something else. Charles's falling tree may serve as a symbolic representation for initiating another standard. Here is a more telling figure: In positive sciences, transmutation indicates the transformation of one element into another by breaking its original structure in order to produce a new entity. Such is the procedure for producing plutonium, for example. In this case, we should note what transmutation means and then transfer the metaphor to a socio-cultural transformation.

There are studies on systems of colonisation and their variations in nature and cultures. In the early 1980s, responding to an initiative of the American anthropologist Wyatt MacGaffey, I taught a class on the history and sociology of colonisation at Haverford College. Within two years, it was doubled by a course on the 'invention of Africa'. Using the singular and not the plural of the words

‘colonisation’ and ‘invention’ was the real challenge. It meant a series of prudential constraints in ways of approaching the theme and its problems from the semantics of the Latin verb *colĕre* in politics of co-operation and confrontation within natural and cultural economies. And a clear historical cadre was a necessary precaution in order to situate the discourses on colonisation. In effect, from the sixteenth century onwards, colonisation has been a science, a theory and a practice. In coining the expression ‘Colonial Library’, I knew I was dealing with an abstraction. What it represents is a concept for an immense body of accumulated knowledge. In fact, it is a thesaurus of reasons, techniques and procedures for the transformation of localities into new places and for the cultural *aggiornamentos*.

There is a history of the ‘invention of . . .’ that should be written, though the phrase itself may be problematic. In the 1970s and 1980s, the word ‘invention’ seemed to correspond to what one would, in the Aristotelian sense, consider the presentation of a case by available ways of conviction. Rather than a simple description, *The Invention of Africa* (1988) – like Enrique Dussel’s *The Invention of the Americas* (1995) with which it shares a number of ethical preoccupations – contains militant arguments, using the authority of disciplines in order to interrogate them. Both emphasise values and standards of the disciplines. This quasi-polemical aspect becomes highly visible should one compare the style of analysis in *The Invention of Africa* to Adam Kuper’s *The Invention of Primitive Society* (1988) or Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger’s *The Invention of Tradition* (1992). These are impressively critical deconstructions of both the anthropological and political discourses. By the mid-1990s, the term ‘invention’ became a primer in social science currents. As a matter of fact, it is everywhere, rightly or wrongly, characterising the trendiness of postmodernism. It has not decelerated yet. Invention has become both a premise to method and to a belief. Significant exemplars include these three studies, which are very attentive to the management of ethical imperatives: *The Invention of Modern Science* (2000) by Isabelle Stengers; *Augustine’s Invention of the Inner Self* (2003) by Phillip Cary and *The Invention of the Model* (2006) by Susan Waller.

Of the most influential ‘inventions’, yet the only one not quoted in my previous books, is Erica Jong’s *Inventing Memory* (1997). It is a brilliant exercise in the transitivity of memory through four generations of women, with the past inventing the one remembering and, in this very act, actualising yesterday’s difference. In just one statement, Jong’s book would qualify a hermeneutical circle.

My earlier works, *The Invention of Africa* (1988) and *The Idea of Africa* (1994)

dealt with an aspect of the process of invention in its discursive manifestations. Even within such a delimited perspective, there are requirements of vigilance: for example, not to confuse regions, the particularity of their history, or the diversity of their social morphologies. The Mediterranean shore is not the Horn of Africa; the coastal Red Sea areas cannot be confused with the south of the continent or with West Africa. In the same manner, one has to pay attention to disciplinary genres and acknowledge the status of a Latin text vis-à-vis an English or French text on the same topic. What seems obvious, the fact of geographical distinctions, should be maintained as a guiding principle. Consider the notion of a unified Africa, those of African art, literature, theology and so on. Most of them are of a recent code, colonial or postcolonial, whose argument consists in advancing a possible project. In this manner, the 'invention' concept is a modality that needs qualification, particularly in technical discourse. In other words, *The Invention of Africa* and its sequel were suggesting one of many conceivable diagrams of a story that highlighted the thematics of an invented unity. What can be done with it is another story, more political. Anyway, they are now old books, published more than fifteen years ago. Their objective, a very limited one, was to indicate axes that could account for both our twentieth-century African ideologies of difference and some of their determining contexts, as well as for the conditions of possibility for new styles and demands in the practice of human sciences, with a focus on African practices of philosophy.

Concerning the idea of a cultural invention, from a theoretical view, it is possible, in principle, to distinguish external from internal dynamics (or to accent some determinants against others). Of course, such a distinction between two possibly neat types of inventions, such as those from 'without' versus those from 'within', is problematic. In effect, what is the 'without' as opposed to the 'within'? The apparent transparency of concepts might be misleading. Let me try a different approach by invoking two concrete cases that impress the intersection of what the two concepts signify in terms of quality. The first, a reflection that springs from a non-African fieldwork, Roy Wagner's *The Invention of Culture* (1981) dwells on a dialogical interaction between a locality and its perception by an anthropologist. The other, the testimony of Leila Abu-Lughod in *Veiled Sentiments* (2000) concerns gender and women's oral narratives in an Egyptian Bedouin community. They are remarkable cases that transcend the tension between the 'within' and the 'without': two American scholars and their two academic books on rather arcane topics. Impeccable scientific studies, they are also, as cultural testimonies, more than one

would expect from experts' discourses on cultural difference. How can one not share the judgement of Edward Said, who said that *Veiled Sentiments* was a truly extraordinary book? Wagner's *Invention of Culture* is a fascinating meditation on an anthropological practice. It is possibly, with Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques* (1992), one of the rare anthropological works I have read several times. These are convincing signs of cross-cultural understanding at its best.

I chose these two books in order to suggest two things: the first is that cultural inventions are dialogical in space and in time. What we perceive, how it is handled and the expressions of its courses are not unmarked. In space, they are brought about within interpersonal and transgeographical exchanges; in time, in transgenerational and trans-seasonal transmissions. In both dimensions, inventions spring forth as that which is always lived and sometimes willed, directly or indirectly. Everywhere and at any time, in an academic or popular setting, cultural inventions and their representations are negotiated, peacefully and violently, among individuals, communities and competing groups. They circulate, are modified, can vanish and be rediscovered, reformulated and occasionally reintegrated, as a stamp of faithfulness and authenticity, in a society.

One remembers the original meaning of 'invention', its etymological signs and values. To synthesise two axes, one can find in William Freund's nineteenth-century *Latin-German Lexicon*, the verb *invenio*, from *invenire*, which means to come, to light upon a thing, find or meet with. A second, more complex axis includes a series of values: (a) to find out, invent, effect, (b) to discover, ascertain, learn, (c) to devise or contrive how to do a thing and (d) to acquire, get, earn. Occasionally, in a special construction, *invenire* may signify to be at home. This rare meaning closes in on the idea supporting an expression such as the 'invention of Africa', whose semantic play involves both the notion of processing an idea and that of a negative or positive fabrication from one's motivations. Intervening this way, there is a sociological aspect with implications on symbolic and real power. Bourdieu's *In Other Words* (1990) is an ample commentary on both cognitive dissonance and agreements between scientific practices and sociological inducements. Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard and Pierre Mayol convincingly demonstrate similar patterns in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1998). Even the ordinary gesture sequences about doing and having speak of how causes and interests process interpretation.

The act of inventing is almost always a paradoxical statement. It posits the visibility of the invented against the invisibility of the usual. In fact, the invented ends up assuming the latter and its particularity, often in line with its antithetic

features. The rationale of a private discourse on race versus its public version may be a good illustration. This is to say that the projection of a cultural construction can seem unconstrained compared to that of figurations that qualify the expected, which one may consider invisible or normative. For instance, the conflicting representations of Shaka have unravelled incredibly rich sets of historical and symbolic meanings. An Africanist of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Daphna Golan, published some years ago a study on the case, *Inventing Shaka* (1994). The contrasted figure of Patrice Lumumba, the Congolese nationalist, can serve also as another example.

Bona (These goods)

Indeed, regarding procedures of social inventions, John Fiske's *Media Matters* (1996) looks at race and gender in politics in the United States. Fiske interrogates the media and their inventions, particularly the contradictions concerning a utopian social harmony vis-à-vis the recognition of individual and collective lack and need. Though creative, the process seems interminable in its excessive shrewdness, to the point that it is today trivial to wonder about the grid to use to distinguish the real from its mediated representations. The practice would qualify a permanent game of competing tasks in Bourdieu's field of cultural productions.

The media culture is organically part of a global happening, itself part of a complex history. On media accountability and ethics in terms of values, one cannot but remember the testimony of Jerold M. Starr in *Air Wars* (2000). In the universe of media mergers and corporate giants, to use his description, how should we alert ethical implications? On social interactions, the habitual academic analyses of media philosophy focus on mechanics and socio-cultural impact and additionally on semantics of progress and modernisation. Liberal views tend to test the media's correlations to power structures. Eric Alterman of the World Policy Institute at New School University coined the term 'punditocracy' to describe a form of directive bias (2000). From existing structures of inequality, one sometimes has the impression that media culture vacillates between constraints from interest groups and its informational tasks. Indeed, the news media are not in a one-party system. And that is good for all of us. From some quarters, however, exegetical reports seem to substantiate the old discourse on human hierarchies, its present variations and differing resorts.

Let me take another angle. The media have been good masters in teaching us how to look at a vast world and its perplexing problems, how to speak about these issues with respect to our collective and individual condition, and how to see that

this condition is determined by history, or our often conflicting histories. From this point of view, scientific and technological achievements, the management of states, of human rights, and of the environment are, or should be, equally as important issues as anything else about living together on this planet we are shamelessly destroying. But this is a different problem, deserving more than factional politics. Decent standards in imaginative inventions include such a commitment, without a secondary alternation. In the same initiative, consider the immense domain of *la misère du monde*, to use the title of a book edited by Bourdieu (1993). Interest is a coded word for the media. The media reflect an imaginary and contribute to its construction productively.

Would it be excessive to think that, apropos Africa, there seems to exist a rich thesaurus of the strange and the odd? The problem is our collective responsibility. The record of our time has been settled. In this collection of a colonial history, the measure of alienated representations of yesterday mirrors itself against the critical capacity of today's social sciences and the quality of a public conversation. Ethically intelligible, the latter articulates a statement on the moral purpose of adequate representations.

Without hesitation, there are far-reaching signs in need of mitigating testimonies. The power of the media is real, their interventions often controversial. The technology supporting the institution is impressive. In actuality, it does not seem excessive to compare the media force to that of war machines. In itself, there is nothing wrong with such a metaphor. It explains the symbols of a technological empire in global trends. Its procedures can be acknowledged from the acclaimed *Information Rules* by Carl Shapiro and Hal R. Varian, two Berkeley professors (1998). In this book, some of the most instructive lessons are easily deduced from its chapter on waging a 'standard war' in the name of an economic reason.

About contemporary media interventions in today's global village, one could look at a variety of initiatives and their metaphors. They are there haunting our perception. Let me suggest three models as a way of synthesising an immense problem. First, the geographic space of the world appears to submit to the rising messianic conquest of imperial institutions. A New York-based institution, Vault has published reports since 1993 and has suggested the plausibility of a special, unified community, isomorphic with transnational structures of world economic power. A second model, an ethical vision, might be seen in the intellectual activity of some media specialists, including an academic voice that interrogates the global media culture in the name of an ethics for a more human interest and

responsibility. One thinks of interventions that are standing as vibrant swords in Dante's hell; they amuse and enlighten, wrote Paul Berman of *The New Republic* apropos Alterman's idealism in *Sound and Fury* (2000) and *What Liberal Media?* (2003). The metaphor fits remarkably with Susan D. Moeller's challenging book, *Compassion Fatigue* (1999). The last model is a hypothesis, a strong vision of the invariance thesis that Samuel P. Huntington popularised with *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1998). In essence, it is about cultural tempos that the West would have induced in non-Western cultures. First, colonisation incites a Westernisation process; second, Westernisation suscitates modernisation; third, modernisation brings about the need for a de-Westernisation, which combines an effective inscription in an international economic sphere and actualises the rediscovery and promotion of indigenous cultures. The popular book *The Second World* (2009) by Parag Khana claims that the world has three entries. First, there is the East of the West, seen from Brussels; second, the Latin America introduced from the metaphor of an ending Monroe doctrine and finally, the Asia for Asians that concludes the book. This part seems hardly related to what precedes it geographically and is approached 'in search of the "Middle East"'. Look at Africa in accordance with these entries, or at Islamist issues. Yet from the introduction that situates globalisation in a setting dominated by an opposition between Francis Fukuyama and Huntington, one learns that 'globalization is now part of every society's strategy for survival and progress' (xxi). In fact, geopolitics defines interactions according to ranks of yesterday's classification. But between the First World and the Third, the Second one – mainly oil-producing states (Venezuela, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan) – is given as a 'zone of great potential', with a requirement: 'to master the geography'.

The invariance hypothesis can be tested against the convergence theory of global economy theorists. As a matter of fact, the conflicting representations they actualise seem to give new life to logical figures of our imaginary universe. Beneath new lexicons, the present revives speculations on relationships between cultures and inner qualities. With this, Charles's metaphor of the falling tree and the universality paradigm are again relevant. More mundanely, one might well evaluate the import of the invariance and convergence theories by revisiting one week of columns concerning Africa, say of London's dailies in July 2005, the month of the G8 Summit in Edinburgh, Scotland. Madeleine Bunting, in *The Guardian* of 4 July 2005, summed up very well two possible responses to the G8 Summit: on the one hand, a wish for, finally, a possible identification with Africa; on the other

hand, an observation about what she considered to be a ludicrous naivety. The generosity of the mind and heart may be real and that is not being questioned. On the other hand, any position translates an evidence of a global political economy. Its demands and expectations reflect and deflect the function of a science and a *doxa* of the media, which is information. Here is a different opinion, equally made in the name of a science but with a different sense of justice, from the report of the International Forum on Globalization, first published in 2002:

IMF action to impose financial liberalization is a violation of Article VI of its own articles of agreement, which specifically sanctions the right of a nation to adopt capital controls. This is integral to a nation's right to economic self-determination, and it is inappropriate for outside parties to pressure a national government to abandon them. The crucial question of *when* or *how* a state wishes to liberalize its capital account – or *whether* it wishes to embark on such liberalization at all – is properly left to its sole determination, without outside pressure (Cavanaugh and Mander 2004: 215).

And here I am, meditating on Bunting's predicament, which signifies a responsibility in the management of truth and moral obligations. It also justifies the statement that this book represents and its testimony: there must be a *lex perfecta*; there must be *praecepta recta*.

15 August 2008

Notes

1. A translation of this chapter has been published as an afterword titled '*Lex perfecta praecepta recta: Mediteren over bemiddelen*' in *Congo in België* (Ceuppens, Van Reybrouck and Viaene 2009: 315–33). It has been reprinted here with permission.
2. '*Lex Perfecta Praecepta Recta*': Perfect Law, Right Precepts.
3. This rendering of mine reports what happened to a researcher who told me this story.

Constructing the Colonial

Si Essent in Analogia; On This Difference
That Might Not Be One

*For Ursula Coleman
In memory of James S. Coleman*

Eo iam magis analogias {esse negandum, quod non modo ab similibus} dissimilia finguntur, sed etiam ab isdem voabulis dissimilia neque a dissimilibus similia, sed etiam eadem.

(So much the more now must it be denied that regularities [in language] exist, because not only are unlikes made from likes, but also from identical words unlikes are made, and not merely likes, but identicals are made from unlikes.)

— Varro, *De Lingua Latina*

To think the history of anything, to meditate on the meaning of this 2008 exhibition at the Berlin Haus der Kulturen der Welt as an event inscribed in a history, the history of its own conditions, how not to face both an anxiety and a doubt of our time about expectations from any historical interpretation that doesn't privilege analogies?¹ The challenge here concerns the manner of perceiving what is qualified by the curators as 'the desert of modernity', the organising metaphor of *Colonial Modern: Aesthetics of the Past, Rebellions of the Future* (Karakayali and Von Osten 2008: 1). In themselves, these words, which assume both the exhibition and the series of interventions, seem innocuous. On the other hand, the manner of signifying them within current trends that define them as modernist or postmodernist cannot but problematise the conjunction of 'desert' and 'modernity'. Let me express what these words intended and clarify my aims. The master argument offers explicit guidelines that have an unmistakably functional objective in summarising the singularity of a perspective. They include three propositions on the European modernisation in relation to external factors.

There is first the description North Africa as a ‘laboratory for European projects and projections’ (2), with its emphasis on Casablanca. We are told that this city ‘was not only the locus of Europe’s first underground car park and the largest American-scale swimming pool, but also became the testing ground for several modernization strategies during and after the Second World War’. Within this context, from three different types of reality – a geographical cadre (North Africa), a political practice (colonialism), a discipline and an art (architecture) – one could delimit and define a model and its impact in the modernisation process. The exhibition would thus testify to and regulate some of the major tempos of such an assignment. The second proposition concerns North Africa under French and Italian rule: ‘Housing and urban planning projects acquired a symbolic role in the constructions for a new society and modern way of living that several European countries initiated after the Second World War’. This is a socio-political diagnosis explaining a choice that is figured by the argument of an initiative. Precisely, to

reflect a paradigm shift in post-war modernism: from the acknowledgement of the pre-modern through translation into modern forms, to the recognition of everyday practices as basis for planning methodologies. This shift from a morphological perspective of Modernism to the gaze on local actors and everyday practices in the discourse of architecture took place in the space and time of social struggles, and the emerging moment of liberation (Karakayali and Von Osten 2008: 2).

On the other side, what the exhibit offered represented in concrete arrangements the history of an experiment. The curators used examples chosen with a purpose. What was discarded might not be less valid than what is exposed. Yet, argue the organisers, what was exhibited subsumed the conflicting evidence of missing documents. According to the curators:

The different ways in which the various spheres of modernity – socio-economic, artistic, and political, etc. – are interrelated have been and still are regulated by a regime that changes through negotiations, conflicts and struggles. The project and, in particular, the closing conference, will thus investigate – among other things – the question as to which modi, at which locations, through which actors and forms these negotiations on modernity have taken place and are still taking place, and which conclusions we

can draw for current – cultural, scientific and political – problems and perspectives (Karakayali and Von Osten 2008: 16).

My anxiety is real in facing the lines of an exhibition from conceptual categories that address ambivalent questions and, specifically, in the fear that Richard J. Evans, the Cambridge distinguished Germanist, summarised eloquently in his *In Defense of History* (2000). This book invites precautions regarding postmodernist biases. The economy of the exhibit stands for a language and its historicity and intimates a socio-historical reality. Should we not dare to compare it to one of Evans's legitimate points? Evans, referring to French historian Roger Chartier's remark on our time as one of an uncertainty and of epistemological crisis, writes:

In the mid-1990s, American historians Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob echoed this view: 'History has been shaken right down to its scientific and cultural foundations.' The postmodernist view that language could not relate to anything except itself must, as another alarmed historian observed, 'entail the dissolution of history' and 'necessarily jeopardizes historical study as normally understood.' The postmodernist challenge, warned distinguished Princeton historian Lawrence Stone, had plunged the historical profession 'into a crisis of self-confidence about what it is doing and how it is doing it.' The sense of crisis is widespread. 'Historians,' declared another writer on the subject, 'have suffered a major theoretical challenge to the validity of their subject' (3–4).

Regrettably, moving away from some historians' concerns about methodic demands in the positivist tradition seems a productive strategy for conceptualising basic premises of new approaches. On disciplines and cognition, epistemology and analytics of 'Othering', crossroads and diversity, the *Review of Research in Education* (2000–2001: 25) edited by Walter G. Secada of the University of Wisconsin-Madison (2002) may engage useful positions about knowledge-construction and explanatory models. A new approach does not need to imply a refusal of working from expected attitudes from within classical models. Indeed, we are suspicious of cut-offs in our cognitive strategies apropos the limits of objectivist models. In the same manner, the awareness of what social psychologists call a representativeness heuristic; that is, cognitive shortcuts in our critique of, for instance, an ethnocentric reason in the practice of history, as well as in understanding

its unsettling conflicts of interpretation, should make us attentive to dangers of ongoing base-rate fallacies and their import on some postmodernist trends. The third proposition makes clear the imperative of a *vigilance épistémologique*, to borrow the guiding hypothesis from Gaston Bachelard's *Le rationalisme appliqué* (1947).

Thus, the next precaution concerns how to exploit advisedly an internal index of what is said and symbolised by names of architects, aerial views or political demonstrations. From volume two of Plato's *The Republic*, we remember a well-known injunction:

Picture men in an underground cave-dwelling, with a long entrance reaching up towards the light along the whole width of the cave; in this they lie from their childhood . . . Then picture also men carrying along this wall all kinds of articles which overtop it, statues of men and other creatures in stone and wood and other materials; naturally some of the carriers are speaking, others are silent. 'A strange image and strange prisoners' (7.1.514).

This is an old dispute; today as yesterday, it pertains to an 'art of conversion', which is the expression used in *The Republic* to describe the necessity of turning in the right direction regarding the world we are interrogating. We are reminded of something simple in the language of our epoch: Is the perceived brute reality or constructed schema? Indeed, we live such a question by our experience in this place, which is a socio-cultural environment, physical universe and socio-historical context. Let me invoke John R. Searle's intimation at the end of *The Construction of Social Reality* and adapt what he says of culture in general to the locality we are individually and together metamorphosing into our space, affirming in the act a 'territorial behavior':

What is special about [this exhibit] is the manifestation of [its] collective intentionality and, in particular, [a] collective assignment of functions to [chosen] phenomena where the function cannot be performed solely in virtue of the sheer physical features of the phenomena. From dollar bills to cathedrals, and from football games to nation-states, we are constantly encountering new social facts where the facts exceed the physical features of the underlying physical reality (1995: 228).

Searle is, for me, brilliantly crowding a bit the forum within which one can meditate on evidence, namely, that we are looking at processes of inventing a social reality. The idea, not being obvious to everyone, means this second precaution that I am considering to be a simple functional hypothesis proper to an intellectual perspective. And from it I can then suggest that we accept a third precaution, what another philosopher, Stephen Toulmin, in his *Cosmopolis*, calls our recovery of a practical philosophy exemplified in four main returns: the oral, the particular, the local and the timely. These are reversals of the eighteenth-century legacy and its focus on the written, the universal, the general and the timeless. In other words, with this hypothesis, we have moved from stability and system canons to function and adaptability norms. Writes Toulmin:

This shift of attention . . . has its counterpart in the social and political realms. For 300 years, Europe and its dependencies learned the lessons of 'nationhood' all too well, and must now in some respects unlearn them. The task is not to build new, larger, and yet more powerful powers, let alone a 'world state' having absolute, worldwide sovereignty. Rather, it is to fight the inequalities that were entrenched during the ascendancy of the nation-state, and to limit the absolute sovereignty of even the best-run nation-states (1990: 192–3).

Walking

From the entrance to the exit of this exhibit, how should we visualise in a rigorous frame its thematic notions: on the one hand, the fluidity of 'sources', its semantic extension in 'sound' and 'movement' and, on the other hand, through discontinuities, to guess what might actualise realities of 'improvisation', 'action' and 'time', in 'spatial' relationships with what endures 'beyond boundaries'? In sum, I am proposing a meditation on such a subjective effort, a wish to ponder over my relation to pictures and their imaginary in a process different from the analytical grid of the catalogue. As someone who does not have a good apprehension of this style of pretext and who is just coming from a fascinating philosophical meeting on 'space' in Mexico City, let me elaborate on my way of looking at this project, emphasising what I get by walking within it and bringing together two notions – those of 'motion' and 'coherence' – that animate the general framework. In actuality, I am using metaphors from the sciences (particularly from physics and psychology) in order to arrest three trains of thought that could cohere: the

conceptual, the visual and a meditative 'walking' in these two preceding fields. From titles, captions and registers of *oeuvres*, I am accessing three immediate paths, three ways of discovering the exhibit and creating new spaces. Within the organising order, with a few unclear concepts from the American Psychological Association *Dictionary* (Vandenbos 2006), I am an observer walking in this House of Culture in which an exhibit is exposed, according to an aesthetic argument and its planning.

To begin, here is what is fostered by my metaphors on motion and coherence. In their systematic application are at least three entries to three interrelated narratives: the law of colonialism subservient to presumptions on otherness, the experimentation of innovative models in managing human spaces and their effects on each other and their developments. First, the images of a coherent radiation – architectural site and human presence – understood from the language of electromagnetic processes, in terms of photos, drawings and sketches, are sets. They associate as waves in motion, but attesting constants in their relationships with occasional peaks, signs of explosion (violence) or implosion (destruction) within the created 'narrative' order: the catalogue is an obvious checklist, a constructed norm. One adopts its order and at the same time questions how to visualise the succession of these things, situated in the fluidity of similarities, from one position to the following, from one step to another.

Thus, the second image I present, that of a coherent scattering, is a strictly well-arranged succession of interconnecting waves between phases, from the beginnings, and any first craft as an initiating wave, and I proceed until the moment where the waves come to a stop. Such an arrest establishes a new structure. The exit stands then as a going elsewhere, with something in mind, images and representations created by walking through the exhibit.

Is it possible to conceive such a scattering from another notion, that of coherent units? I have been wondering about the keys used by the organisers to correlate the exceptional distance existing between orders of concepts and those of cultural politics.

Thus, my third concept, that of the invention of a social reality, as I have suggested in invoking Searle's notion of a socially functional structure, allows one to visualise the exhibit as a unique system of units, unlined yet interlinked by accents, *in absentia*, *in praesentia* and succession, multiplying their effects from an ingoing wave, dividing the multiplied in a variety of sections without numerical factors. I have in mind a nineteenth-century approach to linguistic diffusion,

Johannes Schmidt's *Wellentheorie* or 'waves theory'. One imagines a contained quantity of water where the surface is still. Drop a small piece, a quarter or a dime, a *bidonville* and from the fall points surges a dynamic expansion of concentric circles, the procession of a possible contamination. Such a spatial result of an initiated motion creates its own regulated order.²

From the lines that suscite these three metaphors, one contemplates the cohesion and the inherent tension of this exhibit's economy, coherent in the intricacy of motions that its own internal units create.

Recording the thematic of fluidity, as I understand it, from station to station and to the exit, the reality of 'movement' accords an avant-garde picture of new cities to colonial imperatives and the system of knowledge founding their interference in history.

Here is a second angle, also from three other possible entries.

With the first entry, I examine an ordinary understanding of the motion-economy: marching. I scrutinise one piece, peruse a text or detail, a political event. My walking has followed an almost curved line, that of the space attributed to the project. There is always the possibility of imagining a parallel arrangement of works that permits an easy, almost natural access to what each representation means, in a sort of continuous rhythm. In effect, each one states a difference as if it were a going-beyond and as a completing of the preceding. The order of the motion can spell a paradox in dispositions of views, human habitats, social events, daily life, an interference with an addition and a subtraction, depending on one's attitude and in a variety of combined thematic ensembles and without long reaches.

Second, this type of movement can be translated into a 'motion parallax' (a metaphor from the lexicon of psychology); that is, an organised interrelation between the movements of what is to be seen, the interrelated sequences, the dependence of their internal elements on larger contexts, such as the background of French academia, the regime of a colonial occupation, or the style of nationalist insurrections. And this dynamic may be in connection to a perceived (in fact, imagined) movement of an observed piece, representing a human, for example, as if in motion. Depth cues are, moreover, created easily by the arrangement of elected objects, videos as to have unexpected elements, or their structuration changing when the observer moves relative to them. They accompany and inspire walking.

Third, to the usual expectation of art specialists and the museum's experts who emphasise an after-effect motion (a strongly prolonged fixation suscitated by a high stimulation) as a possible long-term 'investment', what appears as an

after-effect motion in this exhibition seems integrated to the message of a motion-economy as a reflection of a socio-political and educational compound. Does it not make sense to stabilise, at least in this project, the little-known or the unrecognised in their own right?

What better medium for the unexpected than the after-effect motion! The observer's perception of what is stated moves naturally after a fixation; in fact, it creates an illusion of permanence in the mind of the visitor and thus creates the surprise of discovering in the unusual, something new, the testimony represented by the exhibit and its relation to the history of northern Africa.

... And mapping ...

One of the maps that the talented young priest Martin Waldseemüller made, and that is acknowledged by its dependence on his world map of 1507, the *Carta Marina* commits a tradition to the ethos of discoveries.³ Specialists insist on its geographic education. The popular *Mapping the World* (2002) edited by Nathaniel Harris insists on the particularity of this 'Sea Chart of Portuguese Navigation', the quality of its information in fusing the ritualism of *mappa mundi* and the effectiveness of a new type of knowledge. Thus, for instance, as Harris notes, 'If Iberian exploration supplied the outline of the Americas and new African place names, the information given about Asia continued to rely on the writings of Marco Polo' (73). An editor of Ptolemy's *Geography*, Waldseemüller cannot afford to ignore an ancient veneration and he reproduces some of its limitations, including an established mathematical error concerning degrees of the Euro-Asian landmass. It has been standing for centuries, determining the geographic representations of Africa versus the Euro-Asia huge bloc, in systems of knowledge as well as in cultural imaginaries. From the four capsules that, in Harris's album, position the character of the *Carta Marina* – a crowded Europe, the Portuguese mastery of the sea, the myths of a Great Khan and the 'Prester John' – it is possible to deduce three lines of narratives. From the first capsule, the overpopulation of Europe carries a self-evident meaning, that of the underpopulation of the rest of the world. From the second, the tribute to King Manuel I, whose authority is of a divine seal, is sanctioned in both an economy justified by natural law and a Christian teleological argument in which the European expansion states its necessary inscription in the order of things. From the last capsule, both the hypothetical Great Khan and the mystery of the Prester, one reads a conquering vocation. It transcends all traditional frontiers; the mastery of the sea goes beyond the Mediterranean basin and the Atlantic becomes a centre of gravitation, a route.

Students of cartographers, after post-sixteenth-century explorers and colonists, are children of Abraham Ortelius and Gerhard Kremer, the Latinised Gerardus Mercator, father to Rumold, who defined the universally referred to *oeuvre* of 1595. This atlas incarnates a paradigm of mythical proportions. All historians agree and the University of Chicago Press's *History of Cartography* (Harley and Woodward 1987) demonstrates it. It will be effectively appropriated, copied and re-erected for centuries. In large measure, the atlas is a perception in multiple registers. One thinks of navigations it will permit, the sagas it will warrant and the sciences it inspired. Thomas Wright's 1599 mathematical explanation, which made Mercator's projection comprehensible, induced a radical power in topologising the earth, an absolute that is given to masters of the seas.

Mercator's art redirects ancient routes in new ways, giving abilities to concepts and guidance in an extending topography whose centre is moving from the Mediterranean basin to the Atlantic. Somehow, Mount Atlas is tied to the spreading of the European space. For its ridges claim the authority of Greco-Roman divinities, their desires and adventures in these extreme regions of the Greek map. From them, the Romans reinvested under their laws fabulous names of Africa, Mauretania and Libya, blanketing the southern part of their *mare nostrum*. Reactivating Atlas, the Mercators, fully enough, co-ordinated the idea of defying divine reason and linking it to the authority of a conquering knowledge. The conquest this map allowed was a task presumed in the incredible identification of a violent Titan with a sheet of paper. The original name of the man, Kremer, means shopkeeper. He chose to be known to the world as Mercator; that is, merchant.

Did Herman Moll's 1710 map of Africa make a difference?⁴ Between those of Joos de Hordt (1610) and Edward Hertslet (1909), Moll's is certainly one of the good keys to a periodisation of both map drawings before and after 'the age of explorations' and 'the politics of cartography', to refer to *100 Maps* (Clark 2005: 91, 1). His Africa depicts a supposedly immense *terra nullius*. Its economy was to reflect itself in John Bartholomew's map (1885) as well as in the 1885 Berlin Conference. For sure, Moll's map still demonstrates signs of the traditional imagination and includes determining factors that entertain a fanciful topography. Harris is more cautious. From the capsules he chose, indeed one can work toward such a reading. But let us accent a few features. In the dedication space, to begin with, Africa is signified by rare animals (such as crocodiles and snakes) and half-vested natives. On the other hand, the map installs, in a vivid manner, the effects of the knowledge that European travellers and merchants have been propagating. For

example, on the exact sites, the Limpopo and the Zambezi rivers are recognised and the southern Cape carefully depicted, but on the erroneous sites, the description of Central Africa reproduces faithfully Ptolemy's inscription.

Few keys could be emphasised from Harris's commentary of the map. They channel and specify features of a representation. First, there is the detailed geography of 'Barbaria' that constitutes a whole region and its structures (Algiers and Tunis, for instance). Barbaria has haunted the European mind for ages. Ultimately, identifying with the Islamic culture, the area has been expressing a feared body. Paradoxically, in this capacity, Barbaria testifies to what the word and its cognates came to symbolise in the authority of learned lexicons that confused two conceptual fields, inexactly linking Barbaria and barbary. The first word, Barbaria, is from Berber while the second descends from the Greek, βάρβαρος. In its strict value, Berber designates a linguistic group in the Afro-Asiatic family. In classical Greek, βάρβαρος stands for the non-Greek, the foreign; thus, βάρβαρίζω translates as 'to speak broken Greek' and, by extension, 'to speak nonsense, to behave strangely'. Unanimously, ancient sources and modern lexicographic data indicate that the notion of rudeness, attached to βάρβαρος, appears in texts of the post-Persian War, the period dated 493–79 BC. The frequently quoted references are Aristophanes's *Nubes* (492) and *Aves* (1573); Menander's *Epitrepontes* (477) and Xenophon's *Anabasis* (5.4.34). The Liddell–Scott–Jones *Greek-English Lexicon* (1996) has a significant but imprecise reference to Demosthenes (21.150).

In brief, initially a discriminating term for those who do not belong to the normative culture, βάρβαρος became a negative qualifier for a behaviour in military engagements and then, by extension, for anything uncivil. Within the Greek-Roman *oikoumene*, βάρβαρος (Latin *barbarus*) is the term par excellence that defines a lack in manners. Under the entry of *barbarus*, in his *Latin-German Lexicon* (1853), William Freund writes: '*Barbarus*, a foreigner, stranger, barbarian; in opposition to Greek or Roman . . . That the Romans ever called themselves *abs. barbari*, as is sometimes asserted, is entirely false.'

There is a remarkable reversal of the ethnocentric value of the term in a rare attestation. The Liddell–Scott–Jones text mentions 2 *Maccabees* (2.21) in the *Septuagint*, where Jews apply the word to Greeks. One should also note that the word is not frequent in the Scriptures. It appears in Psalms (114:1) and reappears in the New Testament without negative connotations. Here is an exemplary illustration. In Paul's Letter to the Romans, one finds a passage (1:14) with the basic ancient value of the word 'barbarians' designating non-Greeks of language

and culture: ‘*Graecis, ac Barbaris, sapientibus, et insipientibus debitor sum: ita (quod in me) promptum est et vobis, qui Romae estis, evangelizare*’ (I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to evangelise to you that are at Rome also).

Other keys to Moll’s map surge from the cartouches. They witness a current view of how a particular world appears to knowledge in its will and desires. Let us remember that we are looking at a map of the eighteenth century. Colonisation is a total project. Besides the intensification of slavery, the century of the Enlightenment properly assumes colonial expeditions and settlements around the world. Accompanying Moll’s map, one faces European interventions in the disintegration of the Asian Mughal empire in 1707, the Franco-British confrontation in Newfoundland in 1708, a massive immigration of Germans to the New York area in 1709, the charge of Charles XII of Sweden in the 1710 Turkish war against Peter the Great and so on. European nations have taken upon themselves the mission of reflecting the world in their own image and will to power, actualising a *libido scientiae* along a *scientia dominandi*. Moll’s map designs a domain in progress. It is possible to identify one of its emblematic signs a few years after its composition in the 1718 grandiose symbol of the Mexico Cathedral conceived by Jeronimo Balbas. Possibly the grandest of churches outside of the Christian European space, it marks a mission.

Going back to Moll’s map of Africa, let me outline some of its messages. In the dedicatory vignette, the name of Charles Earl of Peterborough is circled by an index to the difference of the continent. At the bottom of the map, other vignettes reveal transformations that Europeans are bringing about, including the Cape Coast Castle, the Fort of Good Hope and the Prospect of the same Cape. Harris notes how the last vignette refers to pictures of ‘the layout of a strategically vital Dutch settlement controlling the sea routes to India’ (2002: 201). The age of discoveries is past. That of a systematic colonisation, contemporary with mercantilist ideologies, is stabilising. Its tasks will be worked out in nineteenth-century European nationalisms and their national imperial vocations. Their tempos reflect each other from the first part of the nineteenth century to their radical questioning in the mid-twentieth century. Popular academic evaluations – including M.S. Anderson’s *The Ascendancy of Europe* (1972), Martin Gilbert’s *The European Powers 1900–1945* (2002 [1965]) and J.M. Roberts’s *Europe 1880–1945* (2000 [1967]) – are ambivalent evaluations of the colonial enterprise and its contrasting strategies in normalising the African continent. With *The Scramble for Africa* (1992b), Thomas

Pakenham writes what a critique on the front cover deems ‘an account of one of the most gigantic and astonishing episodes in human history’. It is consistent with his coverage of *The Boer War* (1992a), a confrontation of ‘White camps’ and their networks, describing their respective rights on the South African land in the name of a *terra nullius* principle. In any case, the effects of the scramble for Africa erase from maps the reason that justified it. The *terra incognita* that marks Central Africa on Moll’s map defined itself in a reason: ‘This country is wholly unknown to Europeans’. The Berlin Conference sanctions the scramble and accounts for novel patterns in terminology. And for millions of victims, dead and mutilated. As John O.E. Clark puts it in *100 Maps*, ‘Africa’s sad history of political instability, debt, and famine can be traced to decisions taken round a table in Berlin in 1885’ (2005: 207).

Let me take a different angle and focus on the impressive map of Joan Blaeu and annotate some of its features vis-à-vis Mercator’s, which preceded it, and Moll’s, which followed almost fifty years later.⁵ Apropos Blaeu’s world, the *orbis tabula* of a sliced globe, in his *Mapping the World*, Harris pinpoints entries to a manner of reading five cartouches (2002). First, he emphasises the centrality of Mercury, symbolised by the mythological god wearing a winged helmet. Second, Tycho Brahe’s presence affirms a double filiation (Blaeu’s blood filiation since the Danish astronomer had been the teacher of his father) and the intellectual inscription of Blaeu’s own knowledge in the scientific exploration represented by Brahe on one globe, and on another, by Galileo. Third, from the preceding lines, one can decode the interactive allegory signified by the transformation taking place, thanks to explorers in the remote Hollandia Nova, or Australia, and by the celebrating fall, ‘the tipsy-looking youth with a cup and grapes (and the Leopard’s skin and goats associated with the god Bacchus) is clearly celebrating the wine harvest’ (Harris 2002: 153). In sum, a magnificent synthesis recites the necessary expansion of Europe. The lesson from Waldseemüller’s *Carta Marina* and the Mercator’s *Atlas* commands here a repetition and a correction, assumed by Moll. In brief, Blaeu’s *Atlas Maior* (2005) is a paradigm from which metaphoric conjectures became historical and political procedures.

Let me focus on this 1665 *Africa nova descriptio*. The frontispiece by Nicholaes Berchem for Blaeu’s Africa is a text. It brings about markers that translate a code. Africa is pictured as a woman caught between nature and culture, chanced in the ownership of cultivation that an obelisk symbolises and situated from the presumption of a primeval existence within an innocent economy. Incarnating

this polysemic structure, a body enacts a privilege. A half-naked woman raises a horn of plenty and faces a horizon that an observer cannot see. Above her, three joyous cherubim look down, condescendingly protective. Below her, on earth, are their three opposites, black and unassuming. The painting establishes itself as an explication of the map of the continent. In effect, introducing the map, Berchem's text structures an order of representations. It illustrates also an expectation organised by an ancient ethnographic knowledge. Africa attests what has been intended for her. She stands against a presupposition, a statement, a tradition. Here, she presides over three main avenues that accent her visibility. The frontispiece exhibits simultaneously an order of nature (crocodiles, elephants, lions) and an order of culture (Alexandria, Algiers, Cairo, Tangiers, Tunis), reflections of an elsewhere. Their distinction is determined by the uncertain space that identifies a formative passage from an order of nature to that of culture. The representation comprises human figures with exotic insignia. Both nature and culture recommend an imaginary in-between condition, a transforming process (Cape of Good Hope, Elmina, Mozambique) that travellers initiate. Africa, a code, is a statement within the narrative of the frontispiece. In colour, the design is functionally bichromatic and should be appreciated from a normative allusive cast. The body of the woman named Africa actualises the narratives she is supposed to instruct. Within the frontispiece, she bridges the up and the down, angelic figures in white and black, the luminous and the shady of the whole frame. She is a myth. At the same time, she is a uniting and a dividing claim. A symbol, and by the appearance of her body and its centrality, Africa assesses an invocation, a *what* in the larger pictorial sign that should include the map. This is to say that from Berchem's frontispiece, one accesses the map under the sign of this woman who crosses the standard boundaries of a bichromatic model *in absentia*. Her blackness encodes a mystery invented by a tradition. Thus, *quis*, who, what kind, who is this woman? What is Africa? In transference, the pronoun *quis* leads to a *how* and a *why* and, indeed, to the always possible questions in any interrogation of this sort, *quid si*? In the *how*, if a doctrine may indicate what the map assumes, a *quia*, a *because* that Blaeu's greetings of 1 January 1665, to a candid reader cannot satisfy. Yet in it one may read a declaration apropos what a black woman can signify or symbolise and the real question becomes a *cur*, why, and *quapropter*, on which account?

Benevolent Reader, take pleasure in our labors and whenever something is lacking in either map or description, bear in mind that a mistake is easily

made when describing a place one has never seen and that forgiveness is nowhere more appropriate than here. It would be wonderful indeed if every man knew everything about humanity. Farewell (Clark 2005: 7).

For sure, it is possible to appeal to other reasons in order to understand the rationality presumed in the black woman code for an invented Africa, vis-à-vis invoked symbols such as Algiers or Tangiers that transcend her being as well as the emulation of that to which cartouches of Canaria or Mozambique testify.

Let me advise another angle, that of the sciences to which the maps have made a remarkable contribution. For example, one might choose a distinct approach from within intellectual practices concerning Africa. One of the ways, a creative avenue, might be a question: How do we read the history of an epistemological patience, the project of discourses on alterity, with which the last five centuries have dealt with cultural differences represented in the diversity of continents? Maps reflect these discourses. From this viewpoint, it seems important to consider the fact that a continent, a geography or an environment is not what is represented in conceptual spaces that the history of sciences has been producing. I would tend to accent this distinction. By distinguishing a place from its spatial representations, it becomes easier, at least regarding human cultures and their representations, to face a history of transformations in intellectual activities as well as in cultural presuppositions.

This might be a good opportunity to look at what one might call the illusion of a geographic representation. Our recent intercultural politics in intellectual dialogues have somehow purged the past of maps. The idea of geographic diversity doubles that of individual singularities in today's global political economy. In attending to alterity thematics, the African difference can be grounded in a critique of the insubstantial likelihood and the denotation of the image of a black woman. This very notion of difference renews ways of having and doing. This conceptuality has been presumed an efficient notion in most African politics of alterity. Often, it is a key to the reality of an ancestry negated by the politics of maps and those of colonial regimes. But northern Africa consigned an undisputed exception, depending on its situation of being or not being part of the continent. Let me refer to evidence already quoted in the introduction, about how we tend to forget or, I would suspect, to ignore the fact that it doesn't make much sense to 'lump' Africans as a group. As Steven Jay Gould put it in *I Have Landed: Africans* 'represent more evolutionary space and more genetic variety than we find in all non-African people in all the rest of the world' (2003: 354).

Now in a scientific practice and in good faith, can we use such a background and re-evaluate the intellectual history of an African difference, its roots in lines of knowledge, its presentation on maps and its expression in political lines of interpretation?

This exception . . .

Anthropology, in the diversity of its theories since the eighteenth century, has been formulating this complex activity, articulating the clash between a science of distinctions and a science of cultures and between two competing methods: a *reductio ad mathematicam* that still characterises physical anthropology and a *reductio ad ethicam*, the project of cultural anthropology. The assumptions of the exhibition belong to the latter. It states a challenge. The idea that intellectual progress, including the belief that its explorations and even the most representative of present-day transcultural projects are morally more advanced in terms of quality, is probably only a contrivance of the disciplines. This belief may be related to what justifies it. In the history of its fellowship of discourse, geographic maps are testimonies; they are assorted to an explicit or implicit valuation of an exacting application of realist or instrumentalist paradigms, or their combination, according to expectations at a particular moment. The extolled perspective, through time, may represent a change in the manner of describing something and in this way exemplifies a method and validates certain types of intellectual and political rapports.

In *Creation of Rights of Sovereignty through Symbolic Acts* (1967 [1938]), A.S. Keller, O. Lissitzyn and J.F. Mann have analysed the highly ritualised procedures through which European nations came to expand their economic and political rule. The implementation invoked foundational allegories about a difference of essences in nature and the necessity for the stronger to intervene in the process of transforming the weaker and its milieu. The model is exemplified in narratives by scholars, missionaries and travellers from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries; as a matter of fact, since the beginning of the saga, it has utilised the metaphor of a diseased body.

The pathologisation of difference can be succinctly summarised in a critique of thematics from a medical model, as suggested in *Modern Clinical Psychology* (1976) by S.J. Korchin. Such an exercise might seem dubious and, moreover, controversial, since Korchin's examination concerns mental problems. I believe, however, that the usage can be justified. On the one hand, the literature on

non-Western cultures terms them in metaphors of health and disease and the structures of social formations are generally allegorised as marked bodies. On the other hand, the process of the native's inscription in a new programme, socio-economic or religious, almost always stands analogised in mental and spiritual healing procedures and language. This is to say that narratives on conversion, and one could extend the hypothesis to the whole of the Colonial Library, tend to evidence a defect-based paradigm. In effect, (a) the narratives emphasise biological references describing societal and individual traits in terms of negative symptoms, their scripts exposing an etiology requiring interventions on a diseased organism, (b) the mediating context pictures an unequal relationship between a healer and a patient, a knowledgeable authoritarian figure and a recipient whose expected role is to submit to a prognosis and (c) basic assumptions supporting the model relate concepts from grids for classifying deficiency types and grids for their transformation.

Look at the photograph of the Sidi Othman settlement in Casablanca.⁶ It is an example of the 'Colonial Modern' and the know-how that made it possible. The structures address an elemental question on how 'colonial' and 'modern' they are, and the meaning of the conjunction of the two words. On what they have in common, in a cautious approximation, I may accent three light characteristics. One, from a perceptual grasp of their general lines, they are aspects of a human environment. They reflect a process that transformed areas into structured spaces. Two, from an intellectual approach to the process, the planning testifies visibly to a determined '*perspective of expectation*'. This notion, an adaptation of Hans Robert Jauss's *Erwartungshorizont*, coalesces the idea of cultural assumption and that of an original social engineering system of applied knowledge. It accounts for a discernible style. Three, from an explanatory standpoint, the coherence of the space depends on its structuring. It qualifies a style. To use an easy metaphor, an absorbent model proved productively apt for generating a manageable type of habitat. Productivity and saving money are two factors that contributed to the capacity of a style. It came to correspond to both the expectation of the colonial policy and the demand for an economic form transcending geographies.

. . . That might not be one

Do not the lines of these constructions from an absorbent model translate an anthropological practice? They serve well as an introduction to the creative capacity of applied social sciences. They can double as an assessment of the exhibit grids

with regard to the history of an experimental administration of human habitat in North Africa. These are representations; they are statements. They convey a history and equally express the more and the less of the whole of 'In the Desert of Modernity', this exhibit as a symbol and the conditions of its actualisation. Should not we accept to apply, at least to the signs of the experimental, the basic line of what we have inherited from Georges Canguilhem's *The Normal and the Pathological* (1991)? Anything, in effect, can be approached in its being a system with its own norms and rules that are relative to what a culture defines as functional and meaningful. Consider again the picture mentioned above – the Sidi Othman settlement. It passes for exceptional. Yet has not it been called upon to stand for a general rule? It interrogates our perception in what it contends: why does it hold our interest? I respond with a *because* of the banality of its exceptionality, which justifies my way of adapting one of Canguilhem's positions about the value of valorization:

It is not just the exception which proves the rule as rule, it is the infraction which provides it with the occasion to be rule by making rules. In this sense the infraction is not the origin of the rule but the origin of regulation. It is in the nature of the normative that its beginning lies in its infraction. To use a Kantian expression, we would propose that the condition of the possibility of rules is but one with the condition of the possibility of the experience of rules. In a situation of irregularity, the experience of rules puts the regulatory function of rules to the test (1991: 242).

The exhibition, in a different manner, raises the same issue about the idea of epistemological violence. How could we move, apropos knowledge and about the practice of everyday life, towards an ideal way of understanding cultural difference in its own right and without reifying it? Again, let me refer to Claude Lévi-Strauss's lesson on the complementarity between two major disciplines, anthropology and history, its anti-ethnocentric credibility and, importantly, its transcultural applicability.

Of conversations initiated at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in 2008, which led to the publication of *Colonial Modern* (2010), edited by Tom Avermaete, Serhat Karakayali and Marion von Osten, strong beliefs about appropriation and re-appropriation connect many things of long history in a postcolonial language. The editors provide outlines for a dialogue, evaluate marks in histories of competing

memories and invest positive anticipation in public transcultural exchanges. They provide the blessing of commonsense viewpoints, which may not be the best to trust and worse, the respectability of the so-called semantic memory, that of words and concepts, events and their contexts, one's capability and general knowledge of the world, certainly all references that should be mistrusted, and rightly so, should one follow Ian Glynn's intimidating hypotheses in *An Anatomy of Thought* (2000). However, unparadoxically, such a will for clarification, disconcerting itself in its own patience, could liberate the positive aspects of anger from unrestrained creative stances of rebellions. Yet how many causes challenge the indefinite past rhythms of a semantic memory?

First, as an illustration, I want to address postcolonial views. In comparative literature, one either admires or dislikes the re-creation of an eighteenth-century colonial atmosphere exposed by Srinivas Aravamudan's *Tropicopolitans* (1999). The reconstructed colonial processes it assumes in letting it testify in the idiom it controls is the often subjugating capacity of a literary classic. On North Africa's echoes, Aravamudan remarks:

It may be useful, to analyze race in the early-eighteenth-century context of [Addison's] *Cato* as a metonymic rather than metaphorical principle, itself dependent on a newly acquired conception of national culture. When it comes to the elaboration of Whig national allegory in theater, *Cato* and [Thomson's] *Sophonisha* are only two instances. In this respect, Moors have no weeping privileges when it comes to Whiggish tears; sentimental objects and models of liberty from almost anywhere do just as well if not as famously as the Roman senator from Utica (1999: 114).

Second, consider the case of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu:

[She] insists in a letter to Princess Caroline that her journey 'has not been undertaken by any Christian since the Time of the Greek Emperours' (310).

Writing to Pope, she scales down the same claim as a journey not made by a Christian for a century (330).

She reserves high praise for the effendi's moderation and intellect and attempts to assimilate Islam to 'plain Deism' even as she dismisses the

controversies about Islamic theology's recognition of women's souls (318, 376).

Attempts at contemporaneous syncretism of this sort – that Islam is not all that unfamiliar theologically – are matched by nudging the reader toward her idea of a stable antiquarian 'Levant.' Montagu's return to England is by way of various archaeological sites containing ruins of classical civilizations, including a misidentified Troy and an actual Carthage. Pastoral poetry and Greek myth help contextualize these yet-to-be tourist attractions for her audience (187).

Influential in their context, these sources illustrate representations of race and North Africa, not necessarily propositions in ethics. Yet they lend themselves to expressions in a surprisingly telling imaginary. For a number of readers, would not an exception be significant?

Third, I want to quote the exemplary testimony of the special issue of *Dédale* (1997) edited by Abdelwahab Meddeb on *Postcolonialisme*. On the cover, there are three ordinary concepts – first, decentring, shifting; second, an impressive list of contributors that constitutes a truly amazing intellectual canvas and third, between the two, the following statement that condenses a striking agenda in postcolonial ambitions:

Entre les langues, les cultures, les continents, dans l'intervalle, l'aporie de l'universel, vue d'Europe, vue d'ailleurs, l'occultation du passé et la dérive de l'identité, colonialisme et intégrisme, les arts en procès, esthétique de l'interférence, la politique de la prose, poétique de l'entre-deux, les nouvelles et les jours, la traversée, le poème.

(Between languages, cultures, continents, within gaps, the aporia of the universal, seen from Europe, seen from elsewhere, the occultation of a past and the drift of identity, colonialism and fundamentalism, the arts on trial, poetics of intermediate space, of news and days, the crossing, the poem.)

No doubt, this exceptional volume synthesises basic lines of the appropriation and reappropriation in a postcolonial imagination. The volume engages in a double critical transformation, a challenge to the Western canon and a deconstruction of values in non-Western cultures. Then comes a question on reappropriation

procedures, how to formulate them and from which angle? From where to give force to a new understanding, if this statement does not work? In the introduction to *The Idea of Europe*, historian and editor Anthony Pagden recalls the Greeks and their neighbours:

For most Greeks the difference between what they called Europe – by which they frequently if not consistently meant Hellas, the lands around the Aegean Sea – and Asia or Africa would remain, as it had been for Aeschylus, one not only of climate and disposition, but also of race (*ethnos*). Herodotus, however, had understood that ‘Europe’ had no natural frontiers and that, as most subsequent cosmopolitans came to realize through experience, cultures are never so incommensurable as their members often like to suppose. If ‘Europe’ had come to acquire an identity, it was always one that had to accommodate the uneasy realization that not only were the origins of Europe non-European, but that no one could establish with any precision where Europe stopped and Asia and Africa began (2002: 36).

Concluding Pagden’s volume with a chapter on ‘The Kantian Idea of Europe’, James Tully observes his ‘Socratic task of showing that Kant’s idea of Europe and the world does not possess the cosmopolitan status it intends to possess’ (358).

29 September 2008

Notes

1. This chapter was originally published as ‘Si Essent in Analogia . . . A Meditation on This Difference That Might Not Be One’ in Avermaete, Karakayali and Von Osten, eds, *Colonial Modern: Aesthetics of the Past, Rebellions of the Future* (2010: 288–303). It has been reprinted here with permission. *Si essent analogia* translates as: If it were about resemblance.
2. A *bidonville* is a shanty town.
3. See Figure 4: Carta Marina.
4. See Figure 5: Map of Africa.
5. See Figure 6: Nova et Accuratissima Totius Terrarum Orbis Tabula.
6. See Figure 7: The Sidi Othman Settlement in Casablanca.

Within Silence

Haiti

For Winter Schneider and her friends

Let us do as the prophet says: 'I have said: I will keep my ways so that I will not offend with my tongue. I have guarded my speech. I have held my peace and humbled myself and was silent, even from speaking good things' (Ps. 39:1–2).

— *Rule of Saint Benedict*

Speaking?

There are two motivations in such a prescription, silence as a preventive stillness and as a disposition.¹ What a paradox to begin an intervention on 'within silence' by a didactic instruction on why to go silent and, immediately after quoting it, proceed with a speech! Certainly, by accident, a spoken meditation could still lay claim to a variety of ways for meditating and, silence being the issue, one would even more easily confess about the unsaid of one's recent obsession on Haiti, more from within one's silent wanderings than from within a noisy cadre. Even if silence does not and cannot erase its self-deceiving traces, the confessing act should be, at least, a justifying one. In addition, detaching itself from a particular type of silence, the *raison d'être* of the confession reflects also a bowing to a firm invitation of Dean Tabetha Ewing, an obedience to Winter Schneider's instruction, and in relation to signposts and a declaration. On the side of signposts, as in Morris Louis's *Floral V*,² there are wood objects, masks or flowers of yesterday and tomorrow. There is also, on the one hand, the Greco-Roman sign of the *Silentes*. The tradition names this way the disciples of Pythagoras. Masks, during the five years of their education, could not speak. Symbols of silence and the dead, the *Silentes* would stand for metaphors that death and silence could ratify. There is, on the other hand, the communion between interacting universes illustrated, for instance, in the *Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou* (1995), edited by Donald J. Consentino. An elliptic

code might bring all these signposts together, human or spiritual: ‘The mask hides as much as it reveals, “denies as much as it affirms,” ’ asserts Claude Lévi-Strauss (1982: 144).

On the side of a declaration, the message of René Depestre marks a duty in a silent humility. It coincides with a prudent necessity, described by the activist Edna Bonhomme in her testimony about what might emerge from ‘(Mis-)representation of Haitian History: Subaltern,’ anything from the best or the worst in reading a particular line with reference to expectations. In ‘Open Letter to the Haïtiens of 2004’, published in Martin Munro and Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw’s edited volume *Reinterpreting the Haitian Revolution and its Cultural Aftershocks*, Depestre states:

Haiti is afflicted by a state of existential stasis, one that exists in a context of cruel inhumanity . . . For all that, I have no lesson to offer Haiti . . . I do not seek to dictate from so far away the conduct of destitute women and men in the Caribbean. Humility, respect and the understanding of others inspire me as I look towards Haiti’s suffering (2006: 1).

The letter begins with Depestre’s concern for the future of Haiti – ‘a cry for help’ – marking two antithetical references: on the one hand, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and, on the other hand, the bicentenary of the independence of Santo Domingo’s slaves.

Coming from a foreigner and a cultural nomad, this meditation limits its motive to what seems like an illusion, the deafening silence of something in words called upon by interventions, discourses and programmes. Yesterday, about the Balkans; today, about Chile or Haiti. An aphorism from Theodor Adorno’s *Minima Moralia* – ‘Anything that is not reified, cannot be counted and measured, ceases to exist’ (1984: 47) – can be reversed: to exist signifies to be inscribed within a constraining order.

Certainly, silence is not only a designation of a lack of noise or the absence of sound, of a presence. Here is a lazy illustration. A Google search of ‘Haiti’, ‘Chile’ and ‘silence’, on 8 March 2010, brought about 530 000 results in 0.41 seconds. Most of them could be grouped into two approximate classes, positive (the meditative or contemplative moments of a minute’s silence, the required silence of order) and negative (of absentees, or the unexplained absence of leaders). Indeed, simplistic, such a distribution. It does not accommodate silences as acts of resistance against unimaginable traumas. In psychoanalysis, the resistance has been a concern since

Sigmund Freud's 'The Dynamics of Transference' (1976 [1912]). (The New Delhi psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar repositioned a few years ago, and brilliantly, the issue of words and the unsaid from an intercultural perspective attentive to religion, in 'The Guru as Healer', a chapter of his book *The Analyst and the Mystic* [1991]).

The silence to rescue in attention consigns the unpreserved irreducibility of what is lost in definitions or comparisons, references and classifications in the tension between a subject and an object, signification and system. For the sake of clarity, classifying procedures cannot but be discriminating processes. The particularity of something is so often subsumed through its proprieties, defined in relation to both antecedents and their common class. Yet, even if it were a replica, this something is neither a sheer accident nor a simple thing that comes to pass. A happening in the world, it stands as an event, an individuality, a question in its own right. Confronting its distinction in relation to any external otherness silences a uniqueness. Concretely, with her presentation on 'hearing our mothers', Myriam J.A. Chancy, of the department of English at the University of Cincinnati, suggests a possible start, a manner of listening. Its lesson imports an intellectual legality. It concerns a genealogy of memories and their reactivation in successive generations. Two positions come to mind immediately: Paul Ricoeur's reading guidelines, particularly those on history and time in *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004) and Susan Moller Okin's 'Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?' from the edited volume of the same name (Cohen, Howard and Nussbaum 1999). Addressing interconnections between gender and culture, Chancy points out a duty of actualising virtues of remembering and their times. From this invitation, Ricoeur's rethinking of Reinhart Koselleck's history of concepts and relating the guidelines to the notion of 'history itself' (*Die Geschichte selber*) and to 'our' modernity opens up, should such a figure make sense. On listening to mothers and their mothers and going as far back as possible, Chancy is right: each of their *paroles* trains a commitment to memory, to the account of its history.

From Adorno's negative dialectic, Michel Foucault's critique of histories of ideas, and the lessons of our generation in revisiting a Hegelian modernity, the issue of a historical difference requires a search for a method on how to requalify the being of the non-identical. It requires us to reappraise the memory of Kosovo, as suggested by Andràs J. Riedlmayer, a bibliographer in Islamic art and architecture, to recast that of Haiti and to reclaim them in their own visibility.

The *plaidoyer* for any suffering individuality is made in the name of an impoverished condition. What is to be remembered is the sign of an experience

articulating itself in its own *parole*. It does not necessarily exclude itself from the dialectic of a reason it may be questioning. Ricoeur writes in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, about any testimony:

In crossing the threshold of what is written, [a reader] stays on guard, casts a critical eye, and demands if not a true discourse comparable to that of a physics text, at least a plausible one, one that is admissible, and in any case honest and truthful. Having been taught to look out for falsehoods, [the reader] does not want to have to deal with a liar (2004: 261).

Aimed at giving its own coherence to any event from its conditions of possibility, Foucault's methodological principles for an 'archaeology of knowledge' – reversal, discontinuity, specificity and exteriority – applied themselves best in *Discipline and Punish* (1995 [1979]), a genealogical project. Foucault's project would compare to the conference's first panel of presentations, historically attentive to Haiti's temporal splits. They oblige Ricoeur's note:

We can say this: the historian's representation is indeed a present image of an absent thing; but the absent thing itself gets split into disappearance . . . and existence in the past. Past things are abolished, but no one can make it be that they should not have been. It is this twofold status of the past that many languages express by a subtle play of verb tenses and adverbs of time. In French we say that something no longer is (*n'est plus*), but has been (*a été*). It is not unacceptable to suggest that '*avoir été*' (having been) constitutes the ultimate referent intended across the '*n'être plus*' (being no longer). Absence thus would be split between absence as intended by the present image and the absence of past things as past in relation to their 'having been' (2004: 280).

At the intersection of historical and ethnographic practices, we have an *histoire immédiate*. To give just one brief illustration on the complex efficacy of diachronic definitions and their synchronic attestations, Robert Farris Thompson's grids of deities in *Flash of the Spirit* (1983) are exemplary in handling a creative tension between equivalence and incultured translations. The representation of a deity could well attend to what has been, *a été*, and still subsume its presence in what it is not anymore, this or that Dahomean or Yoruba figure. The concordance

between names of deities or spirits, for instance, ‘*Bondieu*’ and ‘Almighty God’, ‘*Chango*’ and ‘Thunder God’, ‘*Erzulie*’ and ‘River Goddess’, etc., might seem to defy the criterion of definability that any interested person might expect in the study of Vodou cosmology. But, transferring them into a different linguistic system is thinkable without confusing semantic loads, as proves Thompson. It demands contextualised conceptual equivalents vis-à-vis an origination. Certainly such a relation, without renouncing a past, does not and cannot exhaust the signification of the singularity it is to attest. And that does not prevent socio-historical parallels or contrasts with proximate systems. One may think, for instance, of the syncretic Umbanda cosmology analysed in Diana DeGroat Brown’s *Umbanda Religion and Politics in Urban Brazil* (1994). Immediately visible, one might refer to traces and well-kept African signs studied in chapters of the book edited by Linda M. Heywood, *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora* (2002). Yet, how to access, at intersections of similarities, the expression unveiled in such an operation and the measure of its specificity? This is a question of epistemology, a question of language. Addressing such a problem from the angle of language and realism, Christopher Norris orients its generality towards a viewpoint about how the sense of something is conveyed. He writes in *On Truth and Meaning*:

Meaning or structure can register as such only on condition that they show up against this wider background of shared logical or syntactic resources. Whence our ability to spot them in the first place, perceive how they disrupt the process of communicative uptake, and then cast around for the best explanation of just why they have occurred, whether through some deep-laid disparity of worldviews, or more likely, some localized case of semantic and lexical mismatch (2006: 80).

In this age of classifying virtues of putative identities, consider the public debate on universals affirmative and negative in the language dialecticising human reason and its instrumentality according to paradigms of a global progress. And how in the name of the sovereignty of abstract lines can theoretical imperatives impoverish the particular, its expressions, within today’s political economy?

How then to bring the police of knowledge and its politics into a more critical perspective that would reformulate the irreducibility of the particular in its relation to the universal it should justify? Where can we access a frontal view of what has been – *a été* and *fut* – strained within this adjective ‘particular’, on what account

to recognise it for what it is in the world, an *ipse*, unique and distinctive, eminent and prominent to any predicate? As praised in the language of Emmanuel Lévinas, the values of this *ipse* should not obscure the inherent intricacy of its Latin origin, the concept it is to transcend. Alfred Ernout and Antoine Meillet's *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine* (1951 [1932]) notes that, in Latin everyday language, this intensive pronoun/adjective *ipse* was the designation of the *pater*, the *mater familias* and also that of the teacher of Pythagorean *Silentes*. A telling formula, '*ipse dixit*, αὐτὸς ἔφη', consigned Cicero in *De Natura Deorum* (1.5).³ In its Christian sublimation, the *ipse* applies to the Lord, the only Κύριος, *Dominus*, having sovereign authority and supreme power.

In the name of negative dialectic

Here the prophet demonstrates that if we are not to speak of good things, for the sake of silence, it is even more vital that we not speak of evil lest we sin, for we shall be punished for that as a sin.

— *Rule of Saint Benedict*

Upon any particular statement, one supposes a reference, a relation to something else. In everyday language, a direct or an indirect complement is a particular function determined by its relation to the subject of a sentence. In terms of history, happenings are situated in general trends; as in the dialectic of reason, the particular stands for the antonym of a universal. One agrees that there is no such thing as a universal before what signifies it in constitutive particulars. One also admits that idealism has tended to give it precedence and thus a paradigmatic power. Adorno bestowed an inspiring name on what elicits experientially *la douleur du monde*, or the suffering of the world. The human experience of reification is exemplified by the tension between the subject and the object of an abstract dialectic. For instance, remembering Auschwitz or apartheid, in recent world history, is to recall a reason that, under the guise of a sovereign thesis, explains them, as it would explain the alienation of the dispossessed of its technological progress today.

Semantic values would interrelate aspects of the case by means of association. Illustrative, they have the capacity of structuring autonomous yet intimately interdependent signs, linking and dissociating the inauspicious and the unfortunate issued forth from non-human and human responsibility. First, the notion of *douleur*, itself pain and grief, opens up a vast panorama in its own courses and its conceptual economy, physical and spiritual, ethical and religious. There is the

enunciation of *la douleur du monde*, that of the alienated, the sign of a truth interrogating a conceptual tradition and addressing its violence. Finally, even in the abstract authority of the dialectic, any political reading could recondition the *douleur* in questions about ethics in the fate of the world.

Pre-morally or morally induced, any suffering of what has been the contradiction of a paradigm is always remembered. Part of the living world, the suffering is a question on what it is, as this given measure of the human.

In this manner, the otherness of a Mask, these avenues reflect what is fundamentally a subjective perception of the privileges of knowledge, or one of their fundamental principles, that of an *adequatio rei et intellectus* (adequation of thought to thing) contemplated as an *in-adequatio*, from the contradiction signified by the non-identical. In this manner, otherness, in the reflections of *la douleur du monde*, is an incommensurable viewpoint. Giving itself to itself, it situates itself from the multiplicity of its own testimonies. In this capacity, it precedes the notion of truth-value.

It is almost impossible to circumscribe, even schematically, fields of its immense disclosure. Concerning Haiti, one hears about Creole poetry, the *oeuvre* of an invisible minority, states Saint-John Kauss. One wishes to accord it to a few familiar voices, Marie Célie Agnan or Marlène Apollon, along with some other known names such as Raymond Beaulieu, Louis Philippe Dalember, Dany Laferrière and a few more. Still, they quote only a few reflexes in freedoms, a small number of expressions in a variety of achievements, of feeling in English or in French. Unavoidably, cited names translate the limits of one's knowledge, an objective cultural poverty. Look, the Franco-Belgian writer Marc Rombaut would insist, a Marc Rombaut, there is Davertige, there is Franketienne, and the virtues of their visions. Individual or collective, could the enigma Rombaut was invoking be correlated to Jacques-Stephen Alexis's '*réalisme merveilleux*' learned from Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi's *L'œuvre romanesque de Jacques-Stephen Alexis* (1975)?

If it seems hard to connect the concept of *réalisme merveilleux* to shifts and turns of sociological constraints, its magic sounds like an appropriate alley into the language of Haitian popular art, as a first step. Under the guidance of Alexis, for example, one discovers work, along with the militant vibrancy of those of Jacques Roumain, or René Depestre and others, without addressing Adorno's incredulity about Marxist filiation. Does it really matter? Within the perspective that separates my present admiration from what it has been signifying in reading

them, and in a way that does not disallow their infinite distinctness, does not this creative expression mirror all other possible connections to any Haitian work of art? The genealogy of a critical imagination, from Roumain's *Gouverneurs de la rosée* (2000 [1939]) to Alexis's or Dany Laferrière's acclaimed novels, manifests a boundless alterity in otherness. Approached from within or from without a dialectic – infinite, a diversity – the literary creative imagination testifies to a manner of being in this world. It is an imagination that reflects and depicts artistic arguments. Sometimes, it invests the written with the hope of the voiceless, aiming at transforming a silence into the joy of historical subjects.

A dominating rationality brings together the mid-nineteenth-century description of Emile Nau's *Histoire des Caciques d'Haiti* (2003) with the startling and sweeping view of Haiti outlined by Alex Dupuy of Wesleyan University. All other things being equal, Dupuy's periodisation of Haiti's underdevelopment surely reactivated memories grounding themselves in everyday stories. Between literature and activism, one remembers Jacques Roumain protesting the massacres of thousands of Haitian peasants in Santo Domingo, saluting them in the Parisian journal *Regards* of 18 November 1937, as historical subjects. Exemplary, they were: '*Ces paysans noirs, travailleurs acharnés, dont il suffirait de citer le titre magnifique qu'ils se décernent à eux-mêmes: gouverneurs de la rosée, pour définir leur dénuement et l'orgueil qu'ils éprouvent de leur destin*' (These black peasants, determined workers, about whom it would suffice to cite the magnificent title they give to themselves: masters of the dew, in order to qualify their own destitution and pride they have about their destiny) (1937: 257).

On class, gender and race, debates have taken place about conflicting ethical approaches and moral obligations vis-à-vis acts or policies deemed negative and unjustified. In recent years, major ethical challenges have resulted from pre-moral disasters, their impact on human dignity and competing hypotheses on the best instructions of various cultural grammars. In interpreting the effects of unexpected situations with efficiency as a necessary argument, they address concerns to new fields such as environmental economics and philosophy. Assuredly, their merits would justify the distress of anyone revisiting *A World Safe from Natural Disaster*, published by the World Health Organization/Pan-American Health Organization in 1994.

'After the earthquake, do victims have culture?' asked Andràs Riedlmayer. The fact of the matter, as he demonstrated at the conference, is that aftermath interventions to alleviate human-made hardships in the Balkans of the 1990s, or

to contain nature-made disasters in Haiti or in Chile, should be revisited from the complexity of demands they entail.

There are more distressing reasons, such as facing what has become an ordinary horror. Dead, a human being was put to rest. When disinterred by his family a few days later for a proper burial, the corpse testified to an absolute torment, the desperate struggle of a living person given for dead. One imagines a 'right' to blasphemy. Leonard W. Levy's *Blasphemy* (1993) exposes daringly the worst that any human being could face. A learned exposé on reasonableness and excesses, it details the good and bad reasons for revolt. The case of the man buried alive would stand at the top of the list of tests that go beyond any clinical qualification. The negation of a gift of life is here vivid, in a suffering without assistance, human or divine, an absolute solitude.

'By these hands', an *adieu*, see you later. A word is given this way. It recognises an erasure, death as gift and a gift to life. In *The Gift of Death* (1996), Jacques Derrida describes the intelligence of Christianity in structuring transition signs and rituals between life and death. In remembering, the Haitian sanctions the coherence of beliefs and reverential keys to interacting universes. One might entreat a sign, the authority of a modest code, the *mache chache*, this symbol of a never-ending inscription in the circle of life. And all the bones of the body rejoice.

The irreplaceability of dying, to use Derrida's concept apropos Heidegger's 'being-towards-death' is not detachable from what it institutes, an obligation in an ultimate solidarity: 'A death is not given in the first instance as annihilation. It institutes responsibility as a *putting-oneself-to-death* or *offering-one's-death*, that is, *one's life*, in the ethical dimension of sacrifice' (1996: 48; emphasis in original).

The abyss, a gulf imposes itself on the mind as a concrete figure. Always of something else, a relation apropos a designated reality and what it might infer conceptually. In this particular language, today's context, an effect, and lived vis-à-vis other representations of *realia*. Right now, we hear an unending flow of statistical tables on the magnitude of earthquakes and related stories, the strength of the Chile earthquake compared to the Haiti earthquake in the history of natural disasters, in the classification of 'acts of God'. In the aftermath of the earthquake in Chile, the geophysicist Victor Sardiñas declared: 'The energy released by this massive quake should ensure that it will be quite some time before anything on a comparable scale happens again. However, there will undoubtedly be several after-shocks before the geological situation in the region returns to normal.'⁴ Human deaths parallel the number of damaged buildings and espouse indexes to technicalities on political management and social responsibility.

Chasm and abyss! These words are used with their ordinary dictionary meanings – an unfathomable something, for the first, and a breach in structure for the second. Coincidentally, three months after 12 January 2010, an article by Simon Romero in *The New York Times* on 28 March is titled ‘Quake Accentuated a Chasm That Has Long Defined Haiti’. Chasm and abyss are metaphors. Here, and initially, they express the stupefaction created by an apocalyptic accident. As metaphors, they articulate correlations between earthquake damage and social surroundings. They can serve in raising questions on the proximity between the notions of natural capital and environmental economics and possibly in understanding manifestations of what Susan D. Moeller described in her sociological landmark work *Compassion Fatigue* (1999). According to Romero, ‘“There’s nothing logical about what’s going on right now,” said Tatiana Wah, a Haitian planning expert at Columbia University who is living in Pétionville and working as an adviser to Haiti’s government.’ She adds a point that echoes the fear in a number of panel presentations: ‘“The nongovernmental organizations are flooding the local economy with their spending,” she said, “but it’s not clear if much of it is trickling down.”’⁵

Importantly, with reference to the panel on ownership of a disciplinary practice, an intellectual capital, how can we forget the charge of measuring the humanitarian force in our communities! With this crisis, more than ever, the onus cannot divorce itself from a commitment or the fatigue of benefactors. Our anxieties, as well as our faith, are to assume both a deontological and a moral responsibility, in the manner of facing the deadly silence of any corpse, in reference to the intervention of the Brooklyn educator Marie Lily Cerat.

In the semantic interactions of chasm and abyss, one is alerted to other values they may bring about. Faithful to their origin in ancient Greek, the words signify the deep void, original chaos and bottomless pit, on one side, and the domain of the dead, with its ambivalent settings of joy and sadness, on the other. Most compendia and dictionaries of symbols admit several of these quasi-universal meanings and the belief they involve. In the *Dictionary of Symbols*, Jean Chevallier and Alain Gheerbrant claim the following:

The depths of the abyss form an analogy with the kingdom of the dead and hence the worship of the Great Goddess, Mother Earth. Undoubtedly when C.G. Jung connects the symbolism of the abyss to his maternal archetype, the MOTHER who inspires both love and fear, it was upon the basis of the

age-old cultural substratum. In dreams pleasant or nightmarish, the abyss conjures up the vast and powerful subconscious and is seen as an invitation to plumb the depths of the soul, to break its bonds and exorcise its ghosts (1996: 3).

And in Maya Deren's *Divine Horsemen*, a vision transcends negative thematics in collapsing antinomic perceptions of extreme oppositions between the below and the above:

If the earth is a sphere, then the abyss below the earth is also its heavens; and the difference between them is no more than time, the time of the earth's turning. If the earth is a vast horizontal surface reflecting, invisibly, even for each man his own proper soul, then again, the abyss below the earth is also its heavens, and the difference between them is time, the time of an eye lifting and dropping. The sun-door and the tree-root are the same thing in the same place, seen now from below and now from above and named, by the seer, for the moment of seeing (1983: 260).

From this background, Jacques-Stephen Alexis's book titles, such as *L'espace d'un cillement* (1983 [1959]) or *Le romancero aux étoiles* (1988 [1960]), become captions for enigmatic works of art. Here and elsewhere, against squabbles on opposites, titles of narratives aestheticise belief systems and recite the memory of a cultural coherence. Mothers know it, insists Chancy, by focusing on processes for 'safeguarding Haitian women's self-representation'. Diana Lachatanere concurs, emphasising the fact of well-kept archives. One imagines the incredible dialogue between the evidence of such a library and the promise of a negative dialectic, which would rethink junctions between subject and object within a framework that does not oppose history to nature. Writes the African philosopher Bourahima Ouattara in *Adorno et Heidegger*:

La dialectique non accomplie, c'est-à-dire la dialectique négative [soutient que] la réconciliation serait la remémoration d'un multiple désormais exempt d'hostilité, celui-là même que la raison subjective frappe d'anathème. La dialectique sert la réconciliation. Elle démontre le caractère compulsif du processus logique auquel elle obéit; c'est pourquoi elle est accusée de panlogisme. En tant qu'idéaliste, elle était cramponnée à l'hégémonie du sujet absolu

comme à la force qui négativement produit chaque mouvement particulier du concept et la marche dans son ensemble.

(The not-yet accomplished dialectic, that is, the negative dialectic, claims that reconciliation would be the recollection of a multiple that would exist now without hostility, that very recollection that subjective reason anathemises. The dialectic is in the service of reconciliation. It demonstrates the compulsive logical characteristic to which it submits; that's why it is considered to be a panlogism. Idealist, the dialectic was depending on the hegemony of an absolute subject as it was the strength which, in the negative, produces the particular movement of the concept and its complete orientation) (1999: 62–3).

This is to say that, from such a promise, the semantic interference of chasm and abyss imposes also on the mind conflicting values to negotiate critically. They are a legacy of an origin, of languages. In a first approximation, the Greek χάσμα and the Latin *chasma* mean opening, yawning gulf; ἄβυσσος or *abyssus* means chaos and deep void, a bottomless pit, the underworld domain of the dead. In fact, lexicographic sources indicate also what texts attest. In both Greek and Latin, the two words often function as quasi-synonyms. Precisely, for instance, Hesiod or Herodotus's χάσμα γῆς designates the entrance to the abyss and the exact reality of Seneca's *chasma* and *abyssus* in *Naturales Quaestiones*.

The invocation of these philological subtleties is not gratuitous. It confesses a fear of what the pathological polysemy of these words might still convey surreptitiously in conversations on earthquakes. Equally, one admits that against common sense, in both the positive and the negative, unfortunate extrapolations from metaphoric propositions could connect an earthquake to a literalistic reading of the crucifixion of Jesus or connect an earthquake-related tsunami to patristic parables and myths concerning a gloomy abyss.

The tree symbol

A final recourse to the *Rule of Saint Benedict*: 'No matter how perfect the disciple, nor how good and pious his speech he rarely should be given permission to speak for: "In much speaking, you shall not escape sin" (Prov. 10:19)'.

Apologetically, one could proceed by actuating briefly symbolics of trees that, as models, subsume human finiteness and overshadow the limits of disciples. Trees are venerated across cultures. How not to dream of transcultural trading values and

their connections to trading teleologies involving trees? An exemplary inspiration would be the dialogical book of Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner, *Trading Places* (1996). From the intersections of a number of disciplinary thematics (politics, values, teleology, history), Chilton and Neusner connect central keys (encounter with God, the canon, the Sage) of two religious trees, Judaism and Christianity. They demonstrate how Judaism and Christianity took intersecting paths, one ending in the situation from which the other began.

From such a model, it should be worthwhile to contemplate the inspiring effectuality of the tree symbol in a few transcultural variations, an awesome prolegomenon to a possible something else. Interstitial, trees endorse allegories of human finitude. That is the meaning of Alexis's *Les arbres musiciens* (1997 [1957]), a fiction in and about Haitian life. There is also the case of Arthur Tsouari, a professional accountant who, at 70, decided to publish a thesaurus of 800 proverbs on 'self', subject and object, concept and living reality, in the Beembé culture of Mouyondzi, Congo. He called it *L'arbre des sagesse: The Tree of Wisdom Mboongi* (2001). A privilege to itself, the work might be qualified by one of the proverbs that Bernard Lacombe quotes in his introduction to the book: '*Fundu bwoso di beele dia vimfula mutima ko, "qu'elle s'élève en abondance, jamais la poussière ne peut salir le coeur"*' (Even when it goes up powerfully, dust cannot sully the heart).

The tree mediates limits by the transcendence it manifests in joining the below to the above of the earth.

The first variation on trees comes from Asia. In the 1948 edition of the *Bhagavadgita*, chant XV extols 'the Tree of Life: the Cosmic Tree', in terms of value and teleology. Its basic articulation – the Sanskrit *vriksha* (tree) and *samsâra* (life) – inspired Patrick Mandala's popular *L'arbre de vie* (2002). A treatise on Ayurvedic plants, the book begins with a pronouncement of the Buddha:

*Je peux vous montrer la Voie,
Mais pour la suivre et parvenir à son terme,
Vos efforts, votre diligence et votre dévotion sont nécessaires.
Je ne peux pas vous transporter au but;
Je peux seulement vous enseigner le chemin qui y mène.
(I can show you the Way,
But in order to take it, and to reach its term,
Your efforts, your diligence and your devotion are necessary.*

I cannot transport you to the end;
I can only show you the way that leads to it) (2002: 9).

The second variation comes from Africa. Here is a major trading on values and teleology. In *An African Tree of Life*, Thomas G. Christensen, who served as director of the École de Théologie at Meiganga, Cameroon, warns: 'If you attend Catholic or Lutheran services in Cameroon, you may hear the preacher speak of Jesus as *soré-ga-mo-k'ee*, "Jesus our *soré-cool-thing*." A new naming of Jesus! But what does Jesus have to do with *soré* (tree) and what does *soré* have to do with Jesus?' (1990: 3).

Nothing and everything: nothing in terms of space and time and everything in terms of figurative homologies that they both generate. As spiritual matrices, nothing and everything would emblematisé some of each other's distinctive features. Accepted as aesthetic and spiritual codes, should one invoke Umberto Eco's *A Theory of Semiotics* (1979), they pass for ciphers. Though communicated acts, they are equally nurturing motives, it is believed, and they inform the whole of cultural networks. Here or there, and always, the *soré-ga-mo-k'ee* abducts the divisive between communities, to say nothing of individual predicaments. Exactly, as the '*mboongi*' of Arthur Tsouari, the *soré* is a palaver place, a locus of reconciliation. Also, the *soré* adduces solutions for building a better life from human lack, redeeming from mistakes and ensuring peace.

A tree of good life, the *soré* is an opportunity for representing beings and objects in wood.⁶ Contributing to the symbolics of life and fertility, it takes on the worst and obliges the best in human existence, according to the Cameroonian Gbaya's cosmology. Christensen's hermeneutical perception inflects a major assertion in its approach and moves from a mediating soteriological similitude to Christology; from the *soré* symbolism to Jesus Christ. In effect, he writes: 'The Gbaya naming of Jesus entails a double newness: first, the newness of the metaphor itself, its linguistic components; and second, the way in which Jesus lives in the language to make *soré* a symbol of God's word addressed to human lives in a given situation' (1990: 159).

From the preceding variations, one can, without consequences, consider the tree as an aesthetic code and dwell on its expressions. It brings to the fore what, in *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno says, 'of the truth of artworks [which] depends on whether they succeed at absorbing into their immanent necessity what is not identical with the concept, what is according to that concept accidental' (1997:

101). There are extraordinary values induced by symbolics of the tree, or reflecting the tree-referent. Contemplating some of them, one would readily appeal to Adorno's notions such as 'enigmaticalness' about a sign unfolding 'as a question and demands reflection' and expression (121), from the ordinary value used so far, to 'that distance [which] is won from the trapped immediacy of suffering' (117).

The expression of the tree, as an incarnated creative act and aesthetic code, could be tested very naively from a meditative glance at the austerity of G.L. Hagberg's magnificent pages on 'The Silence of Aesthetic Solipsism' in *Art as Language* (1995: 118–25). Attentive to the collision of the signifier and the signified, a reality or a creation, one may exalt hyperbolic connections.

About the notion of expression, Hagberg notes: (1) 'Emotions are private, phenomenologically internal objects that are logically beyond the reach of others'; thus, they are personal, 'in a sense, secrets inviolably kept by ontology'. Then, suppose that in a community of faith, or in a fellowship of taste, expression functions as a basic structure in belief, how could the measure of the secret be signified? (2) Hagberg rightly states: 'Artworks are physical objects . . . objects located in the public, observable, external world'. It follows that 'their existence does not depend . . . on the mind that perceives them'. Then what presumptions do we make when a living figure – a human being or a tree, or their symbolic conjunction – passes for an artwork? From the presuppositions on the tree of life, should the figure be related to some of its expressions, one trembles in pursuing the following challenge from Hagberg's apprehension of the problem of expression: 'Artistic expression is nothing short of the apparently impossible process of merging (1) and (2). Expressive artworks cannot – as ontological impossibilities, exist – and yet they most assuredly, as the empirical fact of the case, do exist' (1995: 120).

Finally, here is a third variation: the tree as a metaphor for a living artwork. A tree is depicted by Jean Price-Mars in an explicit exposition of a Haitian history, *La République d'Haïti et la République Dominicaine* (1953). The book is dedicated to a nameless individual, '*Au Nègre inconnu. Obscur rejeton de l'Ancêtre venu d'Afrique – qui libéra Saint-Domingue et fonda l'Indépendance d'Haïti – Indestructible*' (To the unknown person. Obscure descendent of the ancestor who came from Africa – who liberated Santo Domingo and founded the Independence of Haiti – indestructible). It materialises and exalts a historical persona of mythical proportions in terms of values. Arrested on 7 June 1802, reports Price-Mars, Toussaint Louverture declares, '*En me renversant, on n'a abattu à Saint-Domingue*

que le tronc de l'arbre de la liberté des Noirs; il poussera par les racines parce qu'elles sont profondes et vivaces' (By removing me from the office, what was thrown down in Santo Domingo was the trunk of the liberty tree of black people; the roots will revive, because they are profound and deep) (29).

Identified with such a tree, Louverture incarnates more than a simple historical argument. On 7 April 1803, he died in Jura, France. Proving right a prophecy, Aimé Césaire has immortalised another tree, the successor, in *La tragédie du roi Christophe* (2000 [1963]). The creative rendering takes on a strategic topography and emerges in a vocation. 'The biggest secret of Vodou,' writes Ross Heaven in *Vodou Shaman*, is that 'ordinary people, not deities, control the cosmos' (2003: 264). A more prudent pronouncement comes from André Pierre, quoted by Consentino: 'We are made by magic. All of us in general are magicians' (1995: 25). In general, indeed.

A map tells of poles in the cultural history of this island from the beginning. Names qualify eponymic traces: Christophe, at Cap; Dessalines, at Saint Marc; Laplume, in Cayes; and Ogé, in Port-au-Prince. Doubling the order of symbols, the toponymy elicits a fabulous genesis. Correlations accommodate human dwellings to values. History did test some tasks by transforming some names into tropological fireworks, as in Maurepas and Port-de-Paix, Paul Louverture and Saint Domingue.

Of a different nature certainly is Henri Christophe, the ambivalent King Christophe, by the manner of situating himself during the decisive years, demonstrates Michel-Rolph Trouillot in *Silencing the Past* (1995).

Césaire erected a monument. The year 2004 revisited a promise. Among stimulating interdisciplinary contributions by friends of Haiti, three tributes stand out. In France, *La révolution haïtienne au-delà de ses frontières* (2006), edited by Giulia Bonacci, Dimitri Béchaq, Pascale Berloquin-Chassany and Nicolas Rey; in the West Indies, the already quoted *Reinterpreting the Haitian Revolution and its Cultural Aftershocks* (2006), edited by Munro and Walcott-Hackshaw; and finally, an extension of the preceding title and under the same editorship, *Echoes of Haitian Revolution 1804–2004* (2008). Part of a contemporary public discourse on Haiti, these works largely found a heartening complement in contributions of the Bard College conference on 'Beyond Silence: Meaning and Memory in the Noise of Haiti's Present' in March 2010. Its three panels on 'Haiti and History, the Atlantic, the Archives'; 'Self-Representation and Ownership of Practice' and 'Representation and Humanitarian Response: After the Earthquake', accorded themselves to a spirit.

Their statements have a number of things in common, at least at three levels. On the idea of Haitian culture, they moderated hagiographic memories in a carefully restricted reading of events. On the politics of a practice, they assumed the vigour of foundational sagas in an attentive approach to the singularity of a history. On the symbolics of the Haitian recent disaster, they deconstructed polarising preconceptions in balanced positions and in an unconditional solidarity with Haiti's future. The sea is a horizon of our collective destiny.

In conclusion, from within the silence of a meditation, how not to recognise the inspiring presence of Césaire's ghost of King Christophe?

Here he is, and listen:

Alors au fond de la fosse! C'est bien ainsi que je l'entends. Au plus bas de la fosse. C'est là que nous crions; de là que nous aspirons à l'air, à la lumière, au soleil (2000: 59).

Merci, Martial Besse . . . Merci . . . je retiens votre idée: un patrimoine. A ceci près que je dirai plutôt un patrimoine d'énergie et d'orgueil. D'orgueil, pourquoi pas? Regardez cette poitrine gonflée de la terre, la terre qui se concentre et s'étire, se déprenant de son sommeil, le premier pas hors-chaos, la première marche du ciel (62)!

From the bottom of the pit we cry out, from the bottom of the pit we cry out for air, light, the sun (1969: 42).

Thank you, Martial Besse . . . Thank you . . . Your idea is good: a patrimony. Except that I should speak of a patrimony of energy and pride. Yes, pride, why not? Look at the swelling chest of the earth, the earth stretching and tensing its loins as it shakes off sleep, the first step out of chaos, the first step to heaven (44).

10 March 1010

Notes

1. This chapter was first read as the keynote address at the conference, organised by Winter Schneider, on 'Beyond Silence: Meaning and Memory in the Noise of Haiti's Present'. As chair, Binyavanga Wainaina. Revised 29 March 2010. Special thanks to the following of the Bard College Community: to the Achebe Center, Bard Urban Studies in New Orleans, to the

dean of Bard College, the dean of International Studies, the dean of Students' Office, to the program in French Studies, the program in Historical Studies, the Human Rights Project, and to the Institute for International Liberal Education, the program in Languages and Literature, and the Office of the President. And in recognition of the three panels of the conference: (a) Haiti and History, the Atlantic, the Archives (chair, Christian Crouch). Presenters: Alex Dupuy, Edna Bonhomme; (b) Self-Representation and Ownership of Practice (chair, Tabettha Ewing). Presenters: Diana Lachatanere, Marie Lily Cerat and (c) Representation and Humanitarian Response: After the Earthquake (chair, Gregory Moynahan). Presenters: Andràs Riedlmayer, Myriam Chancy. A Spanish version of this chapter, titled 'En el silencio: una meditación,' was published in the journal *Universitas Humanística* 69 (2010): 13–34.

2. See Figure 8: Floral V.
3. 'He said it. It is an order.' In fact, this is not a translation, but a rendering of the formula, which indicates the authority of the father or the mother in a house.
4. See <http://www.rnw.nl/english/article/why-chile-not-a-second-haiti>
5. See <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/28/world/americas/28haitipoor.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>
6. See Figure 9: Mother with Child (*Lupingu Lua Luimpe*).

Mediations

Interconnectivity within a rhizomatic network is not merely the joining of individual boxes by lines in a kind of line or staff hierarchical vision. Rather, substitute a finite box with many small boxes, and groups of boxes with multiple lines crossing and criss-crossing one another, coalescing at various points, dispersing at others. Interconnectivity is not a constant, but rather a fluid notion of cohesion involving movement, varying momentums, and moments of stability. It also allows elements and connection between elements to shift in terms of allegiances and connections creating a sense of temporary equilibrium.

This model of social interaction and cultural development permeates and interconnects every aspect of society reflecting a much more rich and diverse assemblage version of reality.

— Candis Callison, *Some Structures to Think with:
Interconnectivity and Network Possibilities*¹

1. <http://www.gingergroup.org/resources/Callison.pdf>

Chapter 5

Maya Angelou's Sign: Et Nunc . . . Per Hoc Signum; On Genitives in Everyday Life Stories

'Tell me the truth,' asks the disciple. In the introduction to *Classic Folk-Tales from Around the World*, Robert Nye gives value to this track in human heritage. Universally, the wish to know tells of a thesaurus of lessons that contains an amazingly limited number of codes. As a matter of fact, this corpus would have a quasi-closed list of archetypes constituting a collective unconscious, according to Carl Jung. 'Imperative' is the word for prescriptions that can be deduced from this collection of folk tales. A reading of Maya Angelou may be a sound transcultural grid from which to face other meditations of wills to cultural alterities.

Chapter 6

Quam Metuendus Est Locus Iste (How Awe-Inspiring This Place Is)

Is transculturality homelessness? Here is a method initiated by a few Greek eccentrics, as Edmund Husserl called them in his Vienna lecture of 10 May 1935: 'The universal critical attitude toward anything and everything pregiven in [any] tradition . . . not inhibited in its spread by any national boundaries' (1970: 288). This attitude allows anyone a critical interrogation of any cultural space from within the borderlands of a language in friendship.

Chapter 7

About a Will to Truth: On Terror

Related to the preceding chapter, could a hypothesis on a theory of justice in the global world contribute to thinking seriously on what 'terror' and 'terrorism' could signify in 'situation ethics' and in which sense Africa might be concerned? At the same time, in supposing normative standards of truth and rationality, how can we affirm the gift of life as universal and non-negotiable?

Chapter 8

On Education and Anxiety

Interculturality and diversity are avenues that have marked styles of knowing. From seminars on expressions of alterity, how are we to face the notion of diversity as it functions in clashing imaginaries of a 'global village'? Which keys should we introduce in views that take into account Simonides's ruling as mediation? The city is still a teacher.

Maya Angelou's Sign

Et Nunc . . . Per Hoc Signum; On Genitives in Everyday Life Stories

It is easy to forget that everyday stories witness an intellectual configuration, as do, in their own way, the apparently more complex discursive systems.¹ In 'The Discourse on Language', at the end of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* – a programmatic statement from 2 December 1970 – Michel Foucault sums up some of the alterations on G.W.F. Hegel's conception, initiated by Jean Hyppolite's exegesis of Hegel. He notes that one of the risks, and possibly the most visible, concerns the ambiguous intersection between philosophy and non-philosophy and the questions of origin and identity of the philosophical discourse. In this, one has to take into account, on the one hand, from the discontinuity represented in Hyppolite's reading, the line of philosophy in a reappropriated perspective as an 'endless task, against the background of an infinite horizon', qualifying itself in the very process of a perpetual recommencement. On the other hand, on the 'repeated contact with non-philosophy', one has to face philosophy interrogating itself about its genesis vis-à-vis the empirical dimensions of existence (Foucault 1972b: 236). That is the heart of the questions raised by this passage on Hegel.

First, Foucault justifies his hypothesis by rephrasing its premise on 'attempting to flee Hegel' and accents the difficulty of what it would mean 'truly to escape Hegel' (235). Thirty-five years later, in *Hegel et la philosophie africaine*, a study issued forth by a meditation on an African crisis, Mèdewalé-Kodjo-Jacob Agossou accents a view similar to Foucault's and emphasises the singularity of Hegel: '*Sa patrie est le monde tout court en son universalité concrète*' (His nation is simply the world in its concrete universality) (2005: 27). More strongly than Foucault, he maintains the same effective duty in a paradoxical credit: on the one hand, a good philosopher does not necessarily need to 'Hegelianise' ('*pour être . . . un bon philosophe, personne n'est obligé d'hégéliéniser*'); on the other hand, no serious student of philosophy can afford to ignore, or pretend to bypass Hegel: '*quiconque aborde le projet philosophique avec un brin de sérieux ne peut éviter ni contourner Hegel*' (27).

The second question raised by Foucault's argument concerns the vagueness of the non-philosophical vis-à-vis the distinctness of a philosophical practice and its object. In such a representation, one would oppose philosophy, a discursive practice that is explicit, systematic, critical and autocritical, to non-philosophy. The non-philosophical may seem to coincide with, at best, an ancillary role. But the philosophical and non-philosophical are intimately interrelated. Foucault's challenge and Agossou's effort are about assuming their interconnections. In rethinking the Hegelian legacy, as Foucault puts it in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, one explores 'the path along which we may escape Hegel, keep our distance and along which we shall find ourselves brought back to him, only from a different angle, and then finally be forced to leave him behind once more' (1972a: 235).

Playing it safe, I am looking at everyday beliefs on multifarious matters. They are explicit, critical and often autocritical statements on concrete issues related to the multicultural condition. I am reading them with an eye on a grammatical function, the genitive, following its effects on the stories as objective and subjective points. In their attestations, genitives simply mark a determinative function. One can even doubt that an author would consider them as having another usage. Nevertheless, within a socio-cultural context, in descriptions or in requisitions of rights about identity and obligations, genitives tend to contribute to a joining of belief and truth and to amalgamate imperatives and duties in statements justified by the context.

Children's truth

'Tell me the truth,' asks the disciple. In the introduction to *Classic Folk-Tales from Around the World*, Robert Nye gives focus to this track in human heritage (1996: iv-xx). Universally, the wish to know tells of a thesaurus that contains an amazingly limited number of paradigms. As a credible hypothesis, this corpus would have a quasi-closed list of archetypes constituting a collective unconscious, according to Carl Jung. 'Imperative' is the word for prescriptions that can be deduced from this collection of folk tales. The everyday stories tell of virtue and friendship, malevolence and death in nature and culture. They allegorise the true and the false, the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly, begging to measure their own lack. Nye introduces the singularity of the corpus. Let me emphasise three ideas from his testimony. First of all, there is the incredible structural universality of these hundreds of tales: 'Tell me a story,' cries the child. As Nye remarks:

How powerful and pervasive this desire has been is proved by the widely various provenance of the tales in this book, gathered from all parts of the world. Yet it does not surprise me that there are stories here from China and Africa and South America which I heard first from my grandmother who told me versions which she thought were English (1996: xiv).

Second, one would agree with Nye that, reabsorbed in their ordinary environments, folk tales are about means and ends in the particularity of imperatives. In this capacity, they transmit ethical constructions, explanations of necessary questions in the history of a more general 'must'. Succinctly, they offer a *telos*, adorning and embellishing it according to stylistic requirements that define them:

Here are tales that express in simple form the essential imaginings of us all, all of them told with an insistence on virtue which seldom cloys because it is so clean and honest. Folk-tales are not to be confused with popular romantic fantasies of wish-fulfillment. The best of them bring news of heaven and hell, as well as earth. Here the good and the true achieve happiness not by craft or luck or magic, but by love. Living happily ever after, it will be noticed, is not a fate promised or awarded indiscriminately to all (1996: xv).

Finally, individually or in groups, these everyday life stories speak about movements in cultures and their relation to histories of a humanity, ours and its variations. In their diversity, these dynamics state their own process as identical to the time they bring in their own present. On this point, the main lesson from these narratives comes down to an observation by Claude Lévi-Strauss that makes any myth an ethical narrative, any history a mythological narrative (1963: 206–31).

The stories present themselves as arguments in the most ordinary sense of the concept, that is, in its polysemic value. 'Polysemic' can indistinctly designate a course in demonstration, an address intended to convince, the expression of a controversy or a dispute. As arguments, their reasonableness depends on the content. Strictly speaking, should one accept some logicians' ingenuity, can the stories, along with novels and all epic and mythic narratives, pass for *informal fallacies*? This qualification does not negate the possible practical value of their reason. It refers to the how and the situation in which it is actualised. As a matter of fact, in everyday stories, one observes beliefs and their connection to valuing

attitudes and actions they inspired, as well as the manner in which these beliefs are aimed at goals. Often, they confirm common sense in the process, the progressive constitution of appropriateness and a good probability of the truth in what is being valued, designated or remembered. On valuing, Robert Nozick writes:

To value something is to stand in a particular close, positive psychological and attitudinal relation to it, a relation itself marked by high organic unity. *Valuing* something is doing that particular relational activity. You might then say that every thing or trait to which we do that specific activity therefore has 'value,' but that is to project the unity of the psychological evaluative activity onto whatever differing objects that activity was directed toward. The view of value as degree of organic unity, on the other hand, keeps value as just one kind of phenomenon, the activity of valuing being an instance (1989: 166).

I am reading everyday stories, interpolating them, pursuing meanings. In actuality, spacing their time, timing the spaces they reveal and following their instruction, I try to decode imperatives and how they are signified. In *The Imperative* (1998), Alphonso Lingis seems to overemphasise ways in which 'musts' express themselves but underestimate the almost invisible grammatical constraints that often orient value and obligation. He demonstrates how imperatives are assumed in contextual statements, often operating in transcriptions and by what exceeds them. The thesis, says Lingis, the good old Kantian measure to be extracted from its account, 'shows sensibility, sensuality, and perception to be not reactions . . . but responses to directives . . . it holds that the directives we find in the night, the elements, . . . the faces of fellow humans . . . have to be described separately' (3).

A girl's love stories

The problem with friendship seems to be more about what it represents than what it might be when lived. In socio-cultural terms, analyses of the tension between *agape* and *eros* seem to be the best of possibly the worst systematisations. The thematic field of charity is a good illustration. Its overused concepts (generosity, giving, help, judgement, kindness, love, mercy, service and unselfishness) seem more and more slippery. Their interpenetration with psychotherapeutic exercises has somehow accented the religious uncertainty of most of them.

Sentiments, before being concepts, are lived in concrete experiences. These are often identified with feelings. Theorising responsibly on *agape*, for instance, would mean to face one's sentiments about a sentiment. By insisting on using sentiment rather than feeling, one can maintain Edmund Husserl's position as interpreted by Ulrich Melle: 'An object must affect us emotionally; otherwise, there is no inducement whatever, no motive for us to be interested in it, to strive for it, or to avoid it' (1991: 118). In actuality, what is being said concerns the very basis of one's ethical measure, what stabilises the fundamental sense of the right and the wrong, an imperative. This makes of *agape* a foundational sentiment, an act in its own right. In friendship, *agape* addresses the whole of one's commitments to an affected reality. Existing becomes submitted to such an engagement lived in a perpetually recommenced act of creativity. To refer to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, this is the heuristic requisite in the formation of an ethics, a constant encounter of the self and the other in a continuous fascination with the world (2002b: viii–xx).

Reading Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1970) and *The Heart of a Woman* (1981) is to face a bird's story on the lightness of the unterrestrial, an education, that which defies everything, including death, said Socrates. Yet the truth of its image represses its own reflection. The singularity prior to all singular pregnancies would give birth to what is inscribed on it: the rule of her own eyes. Angelou writes:

The world had ended, and I was the only person who knew it. People walked along the streets as if the pavements hadn't all crumbled beneath their feet. They pretended to breathe in and out while all the time I knew the air had been sucked away in a monstrous inhalation from God Himself. I alone was suffocating in the nightmare (1970: 276).

In a name, Bertha Flowers, lies the whole difference between a vocation and the banality of an obsession with pineapples: 'I dreamt of the days when I would be grown and be able to buy a whole carton for myself alone' (15). The deviation states something, the silent pact of a curved something. On the one side, what founds the beauty of a girl's expectation; on the other, against it, the beyond. The idea of a proper name preceded by a 'Mrs', a dream. Angelou's story begins with the end. A way of looking at preferences in one's past articulates intersections in which a sentiment for the beautiful transforms its object in the now that arrests a space. Angelou's autobiography provides an understanding of what a name

projects. Indeed, it also understates: 'Mrs. Bertha Flowers was the aristocrat of Black Stamps' (90). To observe the alternative reason was a cue that could saturate the resources of many safety zones – the acts of an American black woman or the fate of three mirrors. All of them are concave: *American*, adjective; *black*, another adjective; *woman*, substantive. In this neighbourhood along the Brazos River, there is a Wm. Johnson General Merchandise Store in the heart of the 'Negro area', a mother about whom Marguerite says, 'We soon stopped calling her Grandmother' (7). The two poles are pillars. So everything hangs warm and expected by the familiarity of 'a Fun House of Things where the attendant has gone home for life' (26).

This accords itself to the values of Gerda Lerner's *Black Women in White America* (1972). Reciting years later her capacity for modelling assignments, Angelou decelerates what kept her moving in remembering the phases of a miracle, a law: '“Thou shall not be dirty,” and “Thou shall not be impudent” were the two commandments of Grandmother Henderson upon which hung our total salvation'. Inexplicably, this grandmother was, in business, capable of 'being in two places at the same time' (1970: 26): in East Stamps, she sells lunches to saw men; in West Stamps, to seed men. But it is her store that identifies the Momma with an immense grandmother. Her sign stands like a straight candle. Thought to be supernatural in origin, and two women in one, they resembled weathered rocks, a mountain. The grandmother determines the atmosphere of a memory: 'I sensed that it was tired. I alone could hear the slow pulse of its job half done' (16). A gift: arms around excerpts of past fragments in the morning and afternoon, any cause could become an excuse for celebration: upside-down cake, scent of pineapples, shelves of dried fish and tobacco. Slavery, they say, is outlawed. There are many things, they say. Human achievement, not the devil's, justifies huge books of scholarship. A distance. In God's love, you are told, life was apt to be milk and honey, *lac et mel ex eius oris suscepit*. This refers to a Latin antiphon in honour of a young rich woman. Martyred, of necessity. Another country, another century, for Agnes the Roman! But you?

The revelation bursts a few years later, at a graduation. Her first one. It coincides with the experience of being inhabited by a circuit of negative feelings: anger and resentment in an ellipsis structuring death wishes. The commencement speaker was late. The school principal at his task, docile, was calling for friendship: 'Our speaker tonight, who is also our friend, came from Texarkana'. In the name of this friendship, he came. 'But due to the irregularity of the train schedule, he's going to, as they say, “speak and run”' (1970: 173).

Marguerite, you reconstructed the whole event. The bad faith in an invoked friendship anchored your reflected awareness of being cheated. And mortifying, the principal's voice as a consenting victim. Everything around seemed insupportable. At eight, a violation led to the hospital. Here, the rhetoric of evidence was supposed to straighten you up. That is the term you used. The principal would have said anything to save the appearance of generosity. 'He was talking about Booker T. Washington, our "late great leader," who said we can be as close as the fingers on the hand, etc. . . . Then he said a few vague things about friendship and the friendship of kindly people to those less fortunate than themselves' (1970: 173). The traffic in friendship would antagonise no one. There is no equity court for what was happening to your mind. Later, you remembered the road you took. An education had padded your curiosity and Mrs Flowers guided the intelligence. With her, no evasion, no illusion. Highly surprising, therefore, that you could name the temptation and the way out, an agenda from Patrick Henry's words:

'I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death.'

And now I heard, really for the first time: 'We have come over a way that with tears has been watered,

We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered'
(1970: 179).

The ritual, its racial subtext and tricked values, ruined a beautiful secret: a love affair with Shakespeare. This was music to you, a conversation with a style, human riddles, rich things. The influence of Mrs Flowers? With your brother, you had learned by heart *The Merchant of Venice*. Art and decency: the perfect match. Sure, you could trust Shakespeare's conduct apropos disgrace with fortune and in people's eyes. And, then, against this happiness, a very prosaic predicament. A major one, and it infected your attention: 'But we realized that Momma would question us about the author and that we'd have to tell her that Shakespeare was white, and it wouldn't matter to her whether he was dead or not' (1970: 14-15). This graduation ceremony, with its well-mitigating interests in a practical genre of friendship, had poisoned the beauty of a relationship.

By the age of ten, a young black woman has been working on questions not given to words. Not for her experience. How to emerge from acts of God? Clean and innocent, she steps back. She has no reason to lament. Not really. 'Our

appreciative customers used to admire: “Sister Henderson sure got some smart grandchildren”’ (1970: 15). Yet with time, she apprehends herself ‘like an old biscuit, dirty and inedible’ (90). Still caught in the trails of her neighbourhood, she will never forget the limits of a topography: the house, the Store (with a capital ‘S’), the school and the church. The big truth, a stick. They say it is dogma: ‘To be of no church is dangerous’ (Johnson 1818: 110). With no real childhood, she wakes up a woman, fuses with the only life she has known. They dress her up to fit within norms for appropriating an alienation. She is good. After all, the lesson about such a course came later, with the famous graduation. Again and again, the community was the start and the end of a life. Fast, you learn. It is in the dictionary: an imperative is a course that is expected of one by position, by law. To expect another way was unreasonable.

A good girl walks simply, alongside the reminders of her future. Friendship had a name: the memory of a pattern. That is the other name of the present. Some kids may some day emulate the Galileos or Madame Curies, persons you refer to. But in Stamps? For your generation, all the unanswered questions posed are useless, apart from the preacher’s recitation of Deuteronomy and the law of the grandmother. On that side, the Lord has taken good care of everything. There is joy in memorising abominations, doing one’s best to avoid them and curbing all the chances of risking eternal damnation. As to education, you trusted your common sense: ‘And our boys (the girls weren’t even in on it) would try to be Jesse Owenses and Joe Louises’ (1970: 174).

One day, the swing.

... And genitives’ imperatives

The case of love stories builds an argument, that of a girl pictured in the woman’s heart.

It formulates itself within repetitions of voices. Angelou’s books confess and what the relation brings about in all these narratives is that the case articulates itself in genitives and these prescribe ways of reading the case. In Grandmother Henderson’s clients’ devotion, Mrs Flowers’s affection for her protégée, the graduation ceremony and its effects, one might, when reading, accent or antagonise the functional values, objective versus subjective, that the genitive actualises. Grandmother Henderson’s devotion can be indistinctly read as the devotion she has for her people, or that they have for her. In the same vein, an expression like ‘God’s love’ is inherently ambiguous in any context, when part of an ensemble,

with a subject attesting an attitude or a sentiment, or recognising its consequence. Thus, it is useful to distinguish an objective genitive in the 'love of God', its direct object; from the subjective genitive, the love of the subject for God.

In reading Angelou, one tests the complexity of an imperative. We can dissociate objective genitives from subjective ones. The general principle reads this way: In words that designate attitudes, physical or psychological, one finds generally a verbal ideation, easily detectable from the context. The substantive that is the object of the ideation is an objective genitive and that which is the subject of the ideation is the subjective genitive. For instance, in qualifying the regime of Grandmother Henderson's dedication to the well-being of her neighbourhood as reflecting one of the keys to *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, one sorts out two genitives. There is an objective one, the neighbourhood, which is the object of the verbal ideation present in dedication, and a subjective one, Grandmother Henderson, who is the subject of the verbal ideation present in the regime. In this construction, a very brief phrase, the genitives would unveil two different statements. They may imply, and be imprudently seen as, the induction of an objective or a subjective judgement. To fear the genitive? Rather, to be cautious in not deducing ethical adjudication from the semantic ambiguity that proceeds from the genitives. The objective and subjective adjectives do not bestow a moral value on a genitive. Instead, they simply qualify a function that the genitive can actualise. Besides the objective and subjective, a third function, a predicative one, may be recognised in any substantive that in the genitive denotes a socially and widely accepted attribute. Fundamentally descriptive, this type of genitive tends to be evaluative and, as such, judicative. From Mrs Flowers and Marguerite to Maya in *The Heart of a Woman*, the tropes on keeping a stiff upper lip have matured. Predicative genitives magnify a perception of the 1980s world they lack.

The case, Stamps. The case, the characters. The case, Mrs Flowers, the aristocrat of the neighbourhood. And then, also, the case of a girl who is learning how to name her perception according to a law in the singular. That of God and that of grandmother: two genitives. The function, a social one, structures a language and creates a meaning from ordinary cracks in everyday life. Doing and having are normalised in a grammatical culture.

The genitive, a *casus*, in Latin; *ptôsis*, in ancient Greek. What is designated here, as a key to reading the practice of an ordinary, everyday perception, is a simple modulation of words in these languages. From Cicero, in *De Oratore*, a definition that most nineteenth- and twentieth-century dictionaries of Latin reproduce:

'*ea (verba) sic et casibus et temporibus et genere et numero conservemus*' (this [word] thus, and respective of cases, tenses, gender, and number now) (3.11.40). This is a first approach focusing on inflection (substantives, adjectives, pronouns) or declension, as indicating qualities according to gender (feminine, masculine, neuter), number (singular, dual, plural) and also through word endings, as in the stipulating of a case (*ptôsis, casus*) by its function (nominative, vocative, genitive, accusative, dative) and as determining both its morphological and syntactical roles.

Looking at Angelou's texts on our present-day condition, from such an apparently arcane structure, is an effort in both detachment and critical indifference. First, her texts deliver their visibility in the contrasts spelled out by a grammar in which qualities and functions depend on word orders and the intervention of prepositions. An inwardness documents its features, substantiates fragile items in comparison with a Greek or Latin declension and word-ending systems. In Angelou's narratives, details signal, for example, the supernatural traits of an absent mother, the virtues of a mythic figure in two women, gendered labours and only interpretive but systematic comparisons with different linguistic tables and memorial substantives. Second, from a linguistic background – genetically identical with English and some twenty centuries distant – an old framework transforms reading into a perpetual exercise in comparative interpretations. The main functions of the genitive might serve the task of a first vignette.

The meaning of the concept itself demands a better appropriation of what it actualises in the education of Marguerite. From any lexicographic entry of *ptôsis* or of *casus*, as substantives, to that of *gen-* in *genitivus* (*-a, -um*), an adjective, one faces a solid idea of origin and generation, present in the field of *ptôsis-casus*, as well as in that of *gen-genitivus*.

First, *ptôsis* concerns the idea of fall, an accidental happening, physical or moral. From this value, a semantic expansion appears as a major opposition, frequent in the language of Aristotle, as in the failure of the soul, of a mind, contra *ἐπαρσις* (the rising and elevation) and towards that of quality in proposition, a technical specialisation in Aristotelian logic. Second, we have an explicit metaphorically oriented axis, with values applying to what is impermanent, an occurrence and, in extension, an adverse situation or a calamity.

Of the *genitivus*, the case expressing a determinative function, there are also two main semantic axes; in fact, there are two intertwined lines, one realist, the other allegorical. The first attests the idea of filiation, that of an inscription in

a generation. It is well signified in the definition bestowed on the *casus* by the Latin grammarian Varro: *patricius casus*. The basic value indicates a patrilineal descent, the law of a generator – that is, the source attested in the root *gen-* (Greek γένος, Latin *genus*) that *genitivus* contains. The best and classical example is about the mythological reference to Rome. In Quintus Ennius's *Annals*, one has an exemplary passage that affirms Romulus's origin of divine nature. In this case, the *lex* in a masculine origin attests the idea of generation: 'O Romule, Romule die! O pater, O genitor' (1.181). In brief, *genitivus*, a determinative adjective, as a functional *casus*, conveys this basic articulation, an idea of belonging and one of a patrilineal lineage.

The imaginaries of Marguerite's education and of Maya in *The Heart of a Woman* duplicate the structuring of Stamps, a climate of strong women and the preoccupation of an origin without a father figure. On the one hand, for Marguerite, there is a mother who is away, almost erased in exemplary substitutes (Grandmother Henderson and Mrs Flowers). Her force does not refute a law in biological generation. On the other hand, in *The Heart of a Woman*, Maya, reflecting on Marguerite, faces a boy who resembles her brother in Stamps. She remembers her experience as a girl and the context brings about a question on origin. In effect, can the genitive stand only as an adjective in the 'heart of a woman'? Celebrating her engagement to Africa, in the presence of two men in her life, her son, Guy, and her partner, the matriarch thinks, 'Now you'll have two strong men to take care of. We three will be the only invaders Mother Africa will willingly take to her breast' (1981: 132).

Can she really have found a new law?

How to educate Marguerite was the question. In schools, the then classical grid, a value-acquisition process, was initiated by *Values and Teaching* (Raths, Harmin and Simon 1966). The guiding principle was to clarify the process itself and the teacher expected to assist pupils in examining the criteria determining values and their whys. The questionnaire can be reduced to three main avenues, enabling an ethical expression. The first aims at an evaluation of what happened (its value quality, how it is prized compared to alternatives, how it inscribes itself in a tradition). The second avenue consists of a re-enactment of what happened, a way of bringing to light motivations (is the choice a free one? Corresponding to what kind of idea? Can its assumptions be spelled out, shared?). Finally, the student was led to the affirmation of a moral position (why should it be valued as right, and on the basis of which criteria?).

The process reveals pedagogy with two intersecting objectives: on the one hand, an 'equaliser' ethos of educating and schooling that reflects a mainstream system of cultural values and, on the other hand, the recognition of a 'multicultural education and cultural pluralism' (Raths, Harmin and Simon 1966: 18). Two popular textbooks of the 1980s could be referenced as exemplars: with an emphasis on integration, *Those Who Can, Teach* (Ryan and Cooper 1988) and, with an insistence on diversity, *Intercultural Studies* (Pizzillo 1983). Symptomatic of a period, these two textbooks convey a pedagogical vision in their understanding of education and schooling and their sociological channels of circulation.

Don Anselmo's trees

In the presence of Juan A.A. Sedillo's Don Anselmo, from the short story 'Gentleman of Rio en Medio' (1939), one rewrites a universe. To write again gives birth, gives meaning to the act – this particular verb and not another. To decline a verb, to inflect a word. The discourse translates a possible, which is there: *vocabula et verba*. Submitted to both perception and understanding, one might believe. In order to claim that one has it, the memory of a genesis. To possess and feel an obligation, to become *verbosus*, one has to do it, to incarnate an imperative and name what is necessary since the word preceded it. A biblical imperative: I have named you; you belong to me. In the recollection lies an imperative. 'Open to it, to reconciliation and repetitions,' say the wise. Criteria for its integration in an order of consequences, crucial to how we relate to each other, speak about our limits to the list of 'musts'. They mind a world of objective data, strained spaces, detached feelings, clear walk-arounds. This is the verbosity of the world. And 'to mind' means 'to do justice'. One thinks rationally by discriminating qualities. A story on friendship should make a case. Be clear, have an intentional direction, aim at an arrangement. It should be aimed at. There is, first of all, its structure. Feel an obligation, whatever it is. Then within its analytics, present a succession of events or facts and their relations. Finally, propose a conclusion by which to stand. It will proclaim the order of obligations.

The sign of Don Anselmo might be a parable. Verbs to express it: allow, acquire, experience. Inflections to face. The old sage had consented to a transaction. It took him months to reflect, to wait, to accept the principle of a contract. Twelve hundred in cash for eight acres of land. The story is reported by a lawyer, someone who can speak both English and Spanish. He comments on the affair's background. Don Anselmo and his people have been living in Rio en Medio for hundreds of

years. He compares the old man's attitude to Charlie Chaplin's, insists on gestures of obsequiousness in a movie. Yesterday's situations profile today's occurrences, as if Don Anselmo's life were just a fiction, a silent representation of how things may not be.

The signing of papers is an experience. *Per hoc signum*, by and in this sign there are obligations. On one side, we have the old Don Anselmo: 'The old man bowed to all of us in the room. Then he removed his hat and gloves slowly and carefully . . . He handed his things to the boy, who stood obediently behind the old man's chair' (1939: 181). Embedded phrases, cohesiveness of associated sets, their mutual interdependence with Aristotle's concepts. These phrases testify to anyone who can recollect the value of symbols. Foucault has reanimated some of them: similitude and analogy, resemblance and sympathy. To communicate, one retains their lack. Hat, gloves and the text transform their meanings into figures. Two screens: the old Prince Alberts, for the coat of Don Anselmo vis-à-vis the ghost of Thomas Benton Catron, senator of New Mexico at the beginning of the twentieth century. They are prime signals and their capacity for persuasion constitutes its own law. Imperatives handle customs and all manners of respectability.

The argument articulates a reason for the meeting: 'These Americans are *buena gente*'. This word both unites and separates: *gente*, from *gens*. It means the group of people claiming the same origin through a patrilineage. Their *gente*, a world. *Mi gente, la gente*. This man says, 'They are willing to pay you for the additional land as well, at the same rate per acre.' Facing up *la buena gente* and the commentator who speaks Spanish is the silent Don Anselmo. The old gentleman of Rio en Medio carries the skeleton of an umbrella, I am told. Is there a question, the why of such a style? It is in the language of the Spanish-speaking person that an accident happens. An excellent intercultural go-between, he suggests a price to Don Anselmo: 'Instead of twelve hundred dollars you will get almost twice as much, and the money is here for you' (1939: 181). In its expression, an aspiration excavated real limits. They were obvious. Then comes the response of Don Anselmo. On the fringes of both a reading and interpretations, it exposes a real question: ' "Friend," he said, "I do not like to have you speak to me in that manner" ' (182).

The author of this story, Juan A.A. Sedillo, makes this story credible by its ordinariness. The description of a transaction projects a number of scenarios. Fostering an economic practice, it illustrates determinations: inequality of exchanges, anonymity of the buyer, the power of the market and indifference to everything else. Don Anselmo's land was not for sale. The genitive. And this simple

linguistic case, Don Anselmo's land, heightens his belonging and being here. It outlines a relation to birth and to life, to a genitrix, the genitive delivering the name of the origin. Don Anselmo does not need the recitation of a mystery he incarnates. *Et nunc*, and now. As in the past and in the future, the old wisdom is still a certainty. This man's way of relating to his land is a form of wisdom, as we know from Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*: 'Quare "magna deum mater," "materque ferarum" et "nostri genetrix" haec dicta est "corporis" una' (Great mother of the gods, mother of the wild, genitrix of mankind) (2.599). This is recognition of our origination: Earth, mother of divinities, mother of animals and genitrix of our body. To put the land to a good commercial use lights another bend. An activation of what a common idiom might prompt between the commentator and Don Anselmo is expected in order to manage a necessary intimation. A transaction does not call a war; it is an affair. In style Anglos compromise; that is a rule. The Spanish have none of it. In the *lengua*, a compromise is a meeting. Such a cultural bond, causing what it implies, cannot but cohere principles. Here and now, economic impulses in a community of natural liberty identify with a system of perfect liberty. This is a rule from textbooks. Only here, obvious from conflictual genitives, the outcome of semantic opposites translates a fundamental argument and its variations on Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1937 [1776]) in a global culture. The efficacy of words does not motivate much, apart from their own value, and mainly within boundaries of their own system of coherence. They are obviously cultural.

In the expression 'Don Anselmo's land', the genitive states an inscription. Beyond the act of having and selling, a silent yet fundamental argument brings about symbolic paths in biogeography and physical resources, specifically the basic relationship between nature and humanity. In the banality of wording – Don Anselmo's land – the genitive authenticates a community's life. According to all models, there must be a genitrix. The genitive, in its materiality and function, acknowledges a well-born descentence. In any case, an etymology recollects the origination of *gens*, *gentis*. It affirms simultaneously the fundamental axis of *gen-*, the meaning and values of the gift of life issued forth. Lucretius's quotation can be reformulated from the dynamics of the Greek γίνομαι (*ginomai*) or γίγνομαι (*gignomai*: to come into being, to come into a certain style that is produced, a product or offspring), which testify to the etymon *gen-*. The conceptual field between *ginomai* and *gignomai* articulates two remarkable semantic lines. One line is indicative of processes of coming into being, of happenings to be thought of in relation to what signifies and represents another verb, εἶναι (*einai*: to be).

Inseparable from a causation (addition, multiplication, implosion), the values of *gignomai*, generally understood, are similar to those of *ginomai*, when the latter means 'to become' or 'to come into existence', representing a transformation or what can occur after something else. The Christian symbolic configuration exemplifies the usage with its antithetic structuration opposing death and life, falsehood and truth, and so on. And transcending the dichotomy is the remarkable singularity of a virgin mother, a genitrix who transcends the tension between life and death. In Christian representation, Mary, the mother of Jesus, is the only human being who did not die; thus, we have the 'assumption' in the Western tradition and the 'dormition' in the Eastern Orthodox. From the beginning, Mary has been associated with, and yet detached from, the ancient representations of foundational figures. Θεοτόκος (*theotokos*), God-bearer, she is born 'immaculate' and virgin, the genitrix of a new humanity. The Christian library on Mary as genitrix is simply overwhelming.

It does not really matter whether what *gen-* projects in the genitive or prompts in *la gente* frames itself according to lexicographic grids that this reading exploits. In the final analysis, what counts is what emancipates the genitive, linking its function to a land and its metaphors. Don Anselmo's anger reinstalls a number of principles about mediations and imperatives apropos of having and doing.

The tension that led to a confrontation in the story reveals two competing reasons that reflect different laws in contemporary social physics. The culture of the commentator could well be the most uncomfortable. It can convincingly assert its logic, yet its standards can expose it to a comprehensible measure of dislike. In the address of Don Anselmo, the description 'my friend' works out at least two types of principles. There is the idea of a normative conception of friendship, or one that stands silent yet is an efficient reference, opposite to what is supposed by the abstract *buena gente*, which obeys its own demands. Second, the by-product of the transaction polarises two horizons in a game. It merits an attention to how the meaning of economic goods sometimes conflicts with the meaning of cultural goods.

Once concluded, the transaction between Don Anselmo and *la buena gente* engenders a crisis. Of course, how could it be detached from two views of economics and culture? To the buyers of Don Anselmo's piece of land, the village children become a nuisance. They disregard all boundaries. And the good friend, in virtue of his position between two cultures, is to negotiate a new agreement. The words that Sedillo uses in pursuit of co-operation maximise the enmity: 'Don

Anselmo, about the ranch you sold to these people'. The evidence, indeed. He continues: 'They are good people and want to be your friends and neighbors always . . . Now, it seems that every day the children of the village overrun the orchard.' As an elder, Don Anselmo would be expected to bring order to the small community. The children must learn the meaning of property rights and privacy. Don Anselmo's response equates the issue of rights to something else and the price of morality to his convictions in cultural authenticity. 'We have all learned to love these Americans,' he says, 'because they are good people and good neighbors. I sold them my property because I knew they were good people, but I did not sell them the trees in my orchard' (1939: 183).

. . . And the ethics of a nunc (now)

Don Anselmo's attitude argues that selling property could displace a manner of 'having' and not the need of relating to the profusion of its life in the world.

To think of ethics is to think of its relation to 'needs'; it is to think about how it is a need 'in the world'. Imprudent expression as it is, it may be the best way of facing John Leslie's 'The Theory That the World Exists Because it Should' (1970). The 1960s and 1970s were the years of the first wave of multicultural statements. One could measure the steps of the effort through a number of questions it adduces, a classical approach but useful for recontextualisation. Namely, 'If the world is as good as can be, what room is left for moral effort?' Then, are we not forced to be ethical, in the manner of being ethically designated 'for existence'? As a matter of fact, the question presupposes an a priori that Leslie labels 'axiarchism' or any theory picturing the world as ruled by value (1970: 286). On such a path, from one ethical conditional in need of a world to the following, it assumes conditionals in search of foundations. An interminable regress must end in commonsense evidence. The ultimate effect 'would presumably produce any number of similar worlds' (285). And, indeed, one may accept Leslie's vision as too good to be true or disagree that 'ethical needs by themselves bring about anything' (288).

Leslie's argument is impeccable if one subscribes to an analogy between 'ethical requirement' and 'causally effective requirement' (1970: 288). The figure by itself would, then, require a distinction between 'ethical necessity' and any analogy supporting it, as a way to meet 'needs transcending needs for action' (289).

Could one not relate this exercise to what precedes it in the same issue of *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Sydney Shoemaker's essay, 'Persons and Their

Pasts'? Shoemaker's thesis may easily be fused in many multicultural stances and their politics of identity:

A person's past history is the most important source of his knowledge of the world, but it is also an important source of his knowledge and his conception of himself; a person's self-image, or his conception of his own character, values, and potentialities, is determined in a considerable degree by the way in which he views his own past actions. And a person's future history is the primary focus of his desires, hopes, and fears (1970: 284).

This is to say that one's 'past history', one's self-image, is as past does, is that living construction one does not escape. In a sense, the past is one person's knowledge and power, and its instruction is what an identity tends to create and reformulate; as Shoemaker claims, 'A knowledge of our own pasts and our identities provided us by memory, is essentially "non-criterial"' (1970: 283). In other words, it makes no sense for me to inquire whether that action or experience was my own. We can, thus, reformulate the claims that qualify the demonstration. First, says Shoemaker, there is a 'previous awareness condition' for remembering and it is 'a necessary condition of its being true'. Second, such a 'first person memory claim' is, somehow, 'in a certain respect immune to what I shall call "error through misidentification"' (269). Commenting on contemporary hypotheses on reconstructive and reintegrative memory, Shoemaker annotates passages of John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1879 [1690]), specifically Locke's definition of the 'person': 'a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, *and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places*' (2.9.222).

Contemporary with the debate on multiculturalism of the 1960s and the 1980s, in a philosophical critical restraint, Leslie and Shoemaker write on the cultural memory of a cultural space about which one may remember the demarcation between 'education' and 'schooling'. A bibliographical distinction of Lyn Miller-Lachmann's *Our Family, Our Friends, Our World* (1992) would permit the qualifications of two waves: the first being 1960 to 1970, symbolised by Nancy Larrick's 1965 intervention, 'The All-White World of Children's Comic Books'; the second being the 1980s, which 'witnessed a retrenchment in publishing books by and about minorities in the United States' (Miller-Lachmann 1992: 85).

. . . And Maya's education

One summer afternoon, sweet-milk fresh in my memory, she stopped at the Store to buy provisions . . .

Momma said, 'Sister Flowers, I'll send Bailey up to your house with these things.' She smiled that slow dragging smile, 'Thank you, Mrs. Henderson. I'd prefer Marguerite, though.' My name was beautiful when she said it. 'I've been meaning to talk to her, anyway.' They gave each other age group looks. Momma said, 'Well, that's all right then. Sister, go and change your dress. You going to Sister Flowers's' (Angelou 1970: 93).

A new ritual begins without justifications. As they are, things are not good. They are not bad. To justify? Only to assess the obvious: the elected is good enough and Bertha Flowers stimulates the imagination and senses of her unusual talent. One can use an old saying – 'Many are called, few are elected': *Multi sunt vocati, pauci electi*. Bertha says, 'I hear you're doing very good school work, Marguerite, but that it's all written. The teachers report that they have trouble getting you to talk in class.' Maya is edified in reading first, then speaking: 'Your grandmother says you read a lot. Every chance you get. That's good, but not good enough. Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with the shades of deeper meaning.' Speech, she insists, is language. It describes, prescribes, saves, or damns. Imperatives, all of them. But for her? Is it a lesson or a simple observation? Moreover, she asserts, 'Language is man's way of communicating with his fellow man and it is language alone which separates him from the lower animals' (95). Stepping into what should have been a mundane space, Maya ascends into an unreal vision. From her everyday life, what is real is Grandmother Henderson's store. To her eyes, Bertha Flowers's house surmises the supernatural. The kitchen she walks through, the rooms with their fresh walls. Everything as expected in that rule, which, indeed, is not, cannot, be mine. Nice curtains, furniture, old photographs solemnising the arcane of a new order of sentiments. Empirical reality, home. Allegories are everywhere. And now, this. How can Maya access its daunting secrets, which are quite possibly illusions in perception? The girl wishes to decode the beauty of a vision. She states, 'I wanted to gobble up the room entire and take it to Bailey, who would help me analyze and enjoy it' (96). How to incorporate the fog of things?

The event has accented an awe in its determinations. As they are, the imperatives on inscriptions are not bad, but they are not good either. To face them is one thing. Is ignoring them an option? Grandmother Henderson is of this world. Mrs Flowers knows ways of accessing some of its transactions and their aberrations differently. The issue is about how to actualise one's quality. Genitives often translate 'musts'. Borders to each other, the two women stimulate the same past stories supported by the magnitude of the unsaid. Alienation stands up against the ordinary. No birds, no flowers, no real-life boats. The stillness of a protocol. In anger, from their generation to that of Maya's, to pass a debt. Don Anselmo did recall such a standard. Almost. Is it really the same? There can hardly be ruthless exceptions. Even this atmosphere with identical ghosts can allow a variety of expressions. And then, there must be a defining note. Language, she said. Each original, its own universe. In Mrs Bertha Flowers, Maya pictures a goddess who has 'the grace of control', looks 'warm in the coldest weather' and would seem to have 'a private breeze' during Arkansas summers. As a symbol of these qualities, 'she was our side's answer to the richest white woman in town' (90). Don Anselmo, on the other hand, is a monument in another intensity.

Grandmother Henderson and Mrs Flowers call each other 'sister'. Claiming a terminological proximity, they affirm the veracity of synonyms framed by a history. A quality in closeness and a foundational one. It sustains all comparisons, one would think. What parts of appearances could be negotiated in the eyes of the girl? Marguerite was to echo the unsettling features of two noticeable sets of differences. To entertain the idea of bestowing on her a predictable outlook was one thing, the marketplace logic was quite another. The Spanish-speaking man who offended Don Anselmo, a nameless man, probably would also make a good case, but in a negative manner. Moreover, there were other distinctions on which Marguerite could already elaborate: 'Mrs. Flowers didn't belong to our church, nor was she Momma's familiar. Why on earth did she insist on calling her Sister Flowers? . . . Mrs. Flowers deserved better than to be called Sister' (91).

Sisterhood, in terms of status or terms of condition? How to name the traits for a distinction that an adult remembers to be a child's perception? Writing her memoir, did Angelou know of another Sister Flowers who, in the mid-1940s, was living in North Carolina? She made her case, well publicised by the *Federation of Tax Administrators* news bulletin of 15 January 1947. Sister Estelle Flowers, a single mother of four children, needed a pay raise. She was working for a tobacco company, making \$21 per week. A condition difficult to appraise: 'We eat beans,

collards, cornbread. I can't afford milk for the children . . . It takes \$2 a week for coal and that doesn't keep the home warm' (Lerner 1972: 267). It makes sense that she wants more money. What does she intend it for? Clothes for the children, more food, more for the church? A programme? Should obligations in the name of race be corrected by a differentiating value from elsewhere? Another subtle nuance that bothers the mind of the child is that for her, Mrs Flowers was one of the few 'gentlewomen' she had ever known (Angelou 1970: 91). 'Gentlewoman'. Two worlds collide in the word. Two universes of sentiments also emerge.

A mature Angelou looks back. She remembers a woman 'who has remained throughout my life the measure of what a human being can be' (91). Between Grandmother Henderson and Mrs Flowers, the erect body of a young woman called to stand in their hold. As a figure of interest, she consented to an instruction: how to master a variety of lineages, their rhythms, past and present. One supposes: like the young nameless man, but distinctly. That difference stresses divergent paths, but how different? An education becomes initiation. In psychological jargon, for the two, an ethnic supplement to an idea of alterity and, one would think, that signifies a process in one's self-actualisation. One needs a guide, a friend in imperatives.

In Angelou's memoir, it is possible to recognise that which is unsaid. The inkling testifies to the stepwise phenomenon of gestalt theory, 'the sense that a sequence of steps along a continuum is an organized, smooth progression' (according to the *Penguin Dictionary of Psychology*). It corresponds here to effects of what seems to be Bertha Flowers's unfolding self-imposed task in constructing an economy of duties. The girl's education is an initiation in perception and taste. Did only an ethnicised culture determine other people's imperatives to another faithfulness?

Conformation of intelligence, refinement of senses, temperance of sentiments – *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* memorialises a taste for life. Here, Maya accepts cookies: '“Have a seat, Marguerite. Over there by the table.” She carried a platter covered with a tea towel.' She remembers: 'The odors in the house surprised me. Somehow I had never connected Mrs. Flowers with food or eating or any other common experience of common people' (96).

The goddess is a human being. She has chosen Maya for this initiating journey. A here and now, *hic et nunc*, accommodates positions. It seems the only reasonable way, in good manners, to transmit one's quality. Well, to educate is to enable and disable, in the words of the philosopher Albert Borgmann (1987). The person, an object interface, interrelates, teaches two functional units – ways of learning and ways of feeling – and two manners of designating the same thing, a will to

knowledge and to what it allows. For instance, eating and reflecting, Maya explains: 'As I ate she began the first of what we later called "my lesson in living" ' (97). An exceptional education allowed a language of memory to condition equally a liking for poetry. Can a disciple's chance obsession emulate her mentor's enthusiasm?

I had read *A Tale of Two Cities* and found it up to my standards as a romantic novel. She opened the first page and I heard poetry for the first time in my life. 'It was the best of times and the worst of times . . .'. Her voice slid in and curved down through and over the words. She was nearly singing. I wanted to look at the pages. Were they the same that I had read? Or were there notes, music, lined on the pages, as in a hymn book? Her sounds began cascading gently (97).

Maya reconstructs Marguerite's recollection. In her untouched joy, she remembers comparing the end of Bertha Flowers's recitation to the decreasing tempo of a preacher's voice nearing a sermon's end, a sacralisation of poetry and binding words.

She was nearing the end of her reading, and I hadn't really heard, heard to understand, a single word. 'How do you like that?' It occurred to me that she expected a response. The sweet vanilla flavor was still on my tongue and her reading was a wonder in my ears. I had to speak. I said, 'Yes, ma'am.' It was the least I could do, but it was the most also (97-8).

Bertha Flowers knew what she was doing. Her wager in electing Marguerite was expected by Grandmother Henderson, her relatives and possibly most of the neighbours to enhance a particular way of existing in the common language of a social morality and, at the same time, accent a measure of dissatisfaction against its incoherences. In consigning this aspect to her autobiography, Angelou stresses the distinctive privilege of an old institution: intergenerational bonds, walking together in a cultural capital, in the spirit of friendship. The same perilous idea of a distinctive privilege founds Don Anselmo's right to an attitude about a way of being and having and the moral validity of his vision. Imperatives state their lack every time. A constant reminder of conditionals. If you must or you can, if you desire or detest.

Abraham H. Maslow describes this rule as the 'full use and exploitation of talents, capacities, potentialities' (1970: 47). In sum, for Maya, the initiation

meant all the projections of a child and a necessary inscription into what she could not suspect. Sometimes, good things, unexpected accidents or coincidences happen that way, in genitives. Simply. Maya's gifts and virtues were requested to coincide with an immeasurable investment. The induction, a cultural hypothesis, confirmed an anticipation. With an adult's attention, the young Marguerite entered a vocation. It remains linked to an intersection that constructed its own contingent categorical variations in the universality it projected.

In Angelou's own comments, the truth of an encounter like hers does not need a validation by convincing reasons or sound premises. Love stories do not, in principle.

I was liked, and what a difference it made. I was respected not as Mrs. Henderson's grandchild or Bailey's sister but for just being Marguerite Johnson. Childhood's logic never asks to be proved (all conclusions are absolute). I didn't question why Mrs. Flowers had singled me out for attention, nor did it occur to me that Momma might have asked her to give me a little talking to. All I cared about was that she had made tea cookies for me and read to me from her favorite book. It was enough to prove that she liked me (98).

A *now* guarantees a destiny. *Et nunc*, and now, supposes a dislocation: a *before* distinct from this *present*, pregnant with a tomorrow. In any question involving a temporal reference, the present is presumed to be a totality, a clear and neat unit. Is it, and how? An experience fuses with what I intend by a *nunc*. It may recall a Christian formula meant to transcend the time of human history: *Sicut erat in principio et nunc* (As it was in the beginning is now and forever). Aimed at exceeding time divisions, it fumbles types of categories in the task of naming what cannot be contained. The source is designated by the Greek ἀρχή (*arche*: beginning, origin, source), or Latin *principium* (principle). The present is rendered in an adverb, the *nunc*, followed by another adverb, for at all times, the forever, *et semper*, and the future undertaken in a self-reflexive genitive of centuries, *in saecula saeculorum*. The difficulty in expressing these categories of time reflects the arduousness of signifying what is beyond our concepts, even in the apprehension of the evidence of our finitude.

The *nunc* of this mediation coincides with the ordinariness of a perception at this precise, and not another, moment – in this act of facing grammatical functions. Approached in the explosion of its signified, it assumes its values from all the

temporal dimensions, as they correlate in the mind apropos what the genitive can suggest from its functions and in relation to modalities of having and doing.

Martínez's Cartesian lesson

Are there differences along the journey from Marguerite to Maya and does it have a particular quality? The words, their materiality and their scope, could they fit into Don Anselmo's temper? Don Anselmo cannot be compared to anyone. That is a good argument for any uniqueness – Maya's, Don Anselmo's or others'. Indeed, Zora Neale Hurston made a wonderful declaration about herself: 'I am the only Negro in the United States whose grandfather on the mother's side was not an Indian chief' (1993: 152). Inevitable doubts surface here about such a distinction. First, can the statement be authenticated? If so, where does it come from? Second, how can we evaluate such a stance as mockery, drollery or allegory? At any rate, is not the subtext apropos the mother's side curious? Neale the Nail, some people used to call her. A nail is meant to hit, to fix things. In accordance, it is some sort of definitive act. In a speculative way, nailing is to harmonise things. One stabilises whatever should be set, giving it a permanent quality or, in the negative, destroying it. Should the quotation be inauthentic, or even if it were only a trifling remark, what would be a more tolerable way of appropriating it and, in dialogues, calling forth another style of love stories?

For a change, this story is not an abstraction but a case in concrete ways of being, the full beauty of a chameleonic authenticity. 'Technicolor' is the contribution of Rubén Martínez to Claudine O'Hearn's 1998 volume on biraciality, *Half and Half*. From one's past and the multiplicity of its legends, how can we mobilise believable duties and turn them into a cultural faith? Opposite to the probably composite picture of Don Anselmo, why not face the testimony of a real person? Like Angelou and Hurston, Martínez's identity can be verified. A journalist, an academic who specialises in Chicano studies, he is the author of *The Other Side* (1993).

Martínez fits; he has the appropriate everything: birthplace, education and culture. The name? It has the perfect value in California, even against assumptions. What he says, faultless plausibility with its sense of humour. No reason to doubt. Hollywood is his city, that of his father, grandparents. Impeccable. Correct. Hollywood in LA, near the Shakespeare Bridge, was rebaptised against his very Anglo taste in Franklin Hills. If he could, he would have brought the name back. From home, think of it, this TV and VCR kid can walk to the ABC studios. An

accent? Why such a question? In effect, Martínez has stories concerning friends at school. He catalogues their seasons. Blue- and green-eyed boys and girls living in poor neighbourhoods, with Mexicans, imagine! Does he not speak 'pocho'? Not yet in the dictionary? A sign that says it all. The only problem is the father. A bit of an embarrassment and it seemed a big one to the young Martínez. Indian-Spanish blood, he loved to play cowboys and Indians, to imitate his teachers (John Wayne, Audie Murphy, Gary Cooper). But the son is the real thing. Candidly, he admits that 'there was something Faustian about my love affair with Hollywood's whiteness' (1993: 47). An addendum follows. Has it preceded the confession? It is of no importance: 'My heroes were white, just as my father's heroes had been' (49).

And, one day, the inevitable. It cannot be. Martínez was still one of those of whom it is written that they have eyes and do not see, have ears and cannot hear. Is *El vendido* a metaphor? Being a natural bridge amounts to an almost inconceivable equation, with envy and jealousy on all sides. They rejoice in insults. Manual Labor, the president of Mexico? He gets it, anyway. Who could miss such a name? Martínez is above these sorts of bad jokes. Is not who is dating whom on campus a different issue? When the arithmetic of basics surges, it rings false against the logic of a raceless cowboy. 'Utopian', Martínez recognises the word. But could it not stand for an attribute of James Dean or Pedro Armendáriz? Movies have bred their own notions of utopia. The concept exists, however, in all dictionaries, contrasting or assuming tensions between politics of propriety and normality in life. Kantian or Hegelian, in today's descriptive definitions: 'utopian', an adjective meaning 'someone who believes in the immediate perfectibility of human society by the applications of some idealistic scheme', according to the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*. 'Utopian': 'ideal but impractical'. Martínez's Hollywood, in Los Angeles, is the same California that Chicano playwright and activist Luis M. Valdez situated his 1967 *'Los Vendidos'* (1990). How could Martínez have missed its imperatives? At least now, the orders to remember what El Teatro Campesino meant may produce questions about Valdez's temper. In *'Los Vendidos'*, a no-problem attitude dramatises an annoying disgrace, with Honest Sancho telling the secretary: 'You know the firm labor camps . . . built out by Parlier or Raisin City? They were designed with our model in mind. Five, six, seven, even ten in one of those shacks will give you no trouble at all' (1990: 43). True or false, the phrase exposes a fable in one of its strict definitions in the *Random House Dictionary*: 'A fanciful, epigrammatic story, usually illustrating a moral precept or ethical observation'.

And then, another day Martínez, you can see what you have known all along. At 25, you cease to be a myth, discover that your mother was born in El Salvador. Stimulating, how you (re-)learn Spanish, reject the cowboy and become the Indian – almost, but not quite. A metaphor, it mediates all the styles of acting out *mestizo*. Let us try three of the models. One, American? The response you write should include Jewishness, blackness, Asianness, Scandinavianness. Two, Latino? Any, you say, counted with Indianness, Iberianness, Creoleness, Africanness. Three, more? Smart answer, your immigrantness. This one would have sufficed with, in mind, the theme of your unpublished poem: 'I am much more than two'. Walt Whitman's intervention supports your view. The last paragraphs of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* may make your day even more festive. Collecting memories that could account for this moment, your testimony has been commenting on imperatives about doing and having. After the rapid exegesis on Marguerite's inscriptions, Don Anselmo's standing, Hurston's extraordinary statement, with its implications on ways of having, the recognition of your imperatives demands an interrogation of their status.

And now, an objection apropos this reading. On the one hand, there is the objective, the real, a deprivation. Isn't there a mistake in aligning narratives about existence too exclusively with anxieties brought about by the decoding of a grammatical function? On the other hand, in which measure can this retrodiction (*retro*, back; *dicēre*, to speak) speak about real life when it converts its testimonies into what seem like preconceptions?

Angelou writes with the rule of her own eyes. In a determinative function surges an imperative and that is real. Categorical principles wear well their name. In the her-own-eyes rule, there is proclaimed a number of things. A subject, a perceiving subject, a thinking and a ruling subject is to be recognised and from there, the situation of her responsibility in the act of reading. A determinative function expresses a law that is duty-bound in a *nunc*. The phrase conveys a task, a subjective line in the genitive. It states a fundamental assumption that a subject apprehends and expresses in a now: such is my situation, this is my responsibility. An infinite interrogation stands there, supported by a genitive. The absolute of this reading reactivates presuppositions on the inherent capacity of a genitive; that is, a determination, and what is set in motion: obligation and morality. Here I am, thus facing expectations in the act, virtuous self-deceptions, the memory of a black woman, of Don Anselmo and of Martínez. In the structuration of an English genitive, an imperative testifies.

In the celebratory mood of our multicultural present, Rubén Martínez, are there duties about these matters – Maya’s education, Don Anselmo’s stance, the manner in which you handle your identities – that would really oblige you unconditionally? In fact, is there a sense of these obligations that you may pass on to the children in Don Anselmo’s village? Moreover, journalist and teacher, if you do not mislead us about your view on your own identity, about what your statement signifies, do you not think, to say the least, that everyone, and your rediscovered *gente*, could mistrust you, including members of your own family? There is no reason to doubt the honesty of your testimony, along with that of Angelou, the symbol represented by Don Anselmo. If you tell the truth, a hypothesis and your right, you should be happy, satisfied. But why should we?

On a good usage of Cartesian conditionals, apropos erring in judgement, the clarity of your negotiations with ‘musts’ and ‘ifs’ amplifies a predicament. In the Fourth Meditation, Descartes assures this: ‘*si quidem a iudicio ferendo abstinence sit non satis clare et distincte percipio*’ (if I abstain from making a judgement, when I do not perceive clearly and distinctly), it is apparent that I act correctly (*me recte*) and I do not err (*et non falli*) (4.12). Descartes’s statement is common sense. But the argument continues. If I affirm or deny, then I do not use my freedom of choice correctly (*non recte utor*). Elegant, this manner of indicting truth by chance. The interminable debates on *clare et distincte* might miss the ordinariness of the predicament about imperatives in the practice of everyday life.

5 September 2008

Notes

1. This chapter was originally published as ‘Et Nunc . . . Per Hoc Signum: A Meditation on Genitives in Everyday Life Stories’. *South Atlantic Quarterly* 108, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 419–47. It has been reprinted here with permission.

Quam Metuendus Est Locus Iste (How Awe-Inspiring This Place Is)

I am not a 'living creature' nor even a 'man,' nor again even 'a consciousness' endowed with all the characteristics which zoology, social anatomy or inductive psychology recognize in these various products of the natural or historical process – I am the absolute source, my existence does not stem from my antecedents, from my physical and social environment; instead it moves out towards them and sustains them, for I alone bring into being for myself (and therefore into being in the only sense that the word can have for me) the tradition which I elect to carry on, or the horizon whose distance from me would be abolished – since that distance is not one of its properties – if I were not there to scan it with my gaze. Scientific points of view, according to which my existence is a moment of the world's, are always both naïve and at the same time dishonest, because they take for granted, without explicitly mentioning it, the other point of view, namely that of consciousness, through which from the outset a world forms itself round me and begins to exist for me. To return to things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always *speaks*, and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign-language, as is geography in relation to the countryside in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is (Merleau-Ponty 2002b: ix–x).

Benito Juárez International Airport. 'Good for you to have come . . . Welcome back home,' says Ana-Maria in English. 'How was the flight?'

'You were reading something new,' Mario observes in Spanish. It was in actuality a question. Another one was to subsume it, erasing a silence: 'A coffee, a good cup of ours, from here. And you tell us what you have been doing. Something interesting, I hope.'

In the meeting is a community of language, an allegiance to a universe. Here we are once more, a body. This is our world. We live it; we reflect it. Our conversation

transforms a space into a place, signing a difference. In our interest we are this world, refining the space from which our reunion comes to be, in which our being-together-now creates and guarantees the time of the world. It is a language we inhabit. There and then, we can assert a space, our space. This space is the configuration of our inscription in the diversity of our plural traditions. It stands for the locus from which we can simultaneously go back to *the veracity of our individual roots* and reflect in *authenticity* the demands of *our present-we*, this community of thinking and existing in its existential functions. No one else can assume for us the responsibility of our conceptual and practical duties. We inhabit a space. Its fields speak in us, the particular subjects we are.¹

A space? For clarity's sake, let us distinguish first a commonsense perception that is synthesised in dictionaries. Everyday usage of what a space means is organised according to three main axes:

1. A space designates an unlimited, indefinite, bi- or multidimensional expanse in which material objects are located and in which events take place. *This room*, or *the area around this building*, are spaces.
2. By an extension of the first signification, we call a space any area or extent, or its portion in, say, two dimensions. In this sense, physical space is an objective constituent of the real world. In this sense, *the seat over there*, or *this table* are spaces.
3. Extended again, the value can apply to an illusion of depth on a two-dimensional surface, as well as to more restrained designations. One may thus think of the meaning of space in arts and in disciplines. For instance, in music, the interval between two adjacent lines; in communication, any rupture during the transmission of a message; and in mathematics, a system of objects with relations between the objects defined. This comes down to equating space with any structured set.

Second, the conceptual coherence of the everyday usage depends on the basic notion of the extent to which it is used to designate a temporal pause. The expression 'a while' is a magnificent illustration. It fuses space and time. Another case, and an excellent one, is the title of a novel by the Haitian writer Jacques-Stephen Alexis, *L'espace d'un cillement* (1983 [1959]), which can be translated as the 'space' or the 'instant' of blinking. For someone who knows the content – a love story in a poor neighbourhood, and at a difficult time – 'interval' would seem the most convenient word, since it assumes both the spatial (a distance between two points) and the temporal (an intervening period of time).

Intersection and junction of time and space, mutuality and correlation, and interchange and transposition are the concepts that this word brings forth. One can accord to its field what, in 1908, the German mathematician Hermann Minkowski said to a perplexed audience during a lecture on space and time: ‘Nobody has ever noticed a place except at a time, and a time except at a place’ (1923: 76). All things and happenings are to be thought in four dimensions, on a space-time continuum that includes past and present. (Today’s string theory admits more than a ten-dimensional physical space.) Indeed, against any ontological inquiry on what it is, the perceived physical dimensions around us remain the commonsense ‘real’ space in a first approximation. In a second approximation, one might also conceptualise the time inside us by spatialising it, situating it between dates or between points. Yet everyday life, with radio waves and X-rays, has charged us with the difficult task of imagining the notion of an empty space. To introduce it in a classroom, to teach it, we have recourse to James Clark Maxwell’s electromagnetic theory as a way of explaining the 300 000 kilometres per second of waves of light throughout an ‘empty space’. What is an empty space vis-à-vis an evidently empirical space that comprehends our bodies?

Thus, in my constructed space – an allegory of the mathematical concepts of a structured set – at the airport, or in the first minutes of a conversation, our space is a language and its representations. In the banality of our first exchanges, of questions and responses on our individual time between there and here, yesterday and today, we oblige a space with its rules and discriminations, including presuppositions of an external realism hypothesis, and our subjective certainties. Is such an intervention, in itself, a question on what is around us and, by our very exchanges, ‘really’ unconnected to both our representation and expectations?

Let me suggest lines of meditation from an ancient verse, still in use during the day of dedication of a religious space. In transforming a space, house or building into a temple, the Christian imagination ritualises a recognition and its memory about the converted space as something ‘to be feared’: *O quam metuendus est locus iste: vere non est hic aliud, nisi domus Dei et porta caeli* (Oh, how awe-inspiring this place is: in truth, it is nothing else, apart from being God’s temple and the door of Heaven). A similar notion can be found in Varro’s *De Lingua Latina* (7.5–7) with a subtle distinction: a consecrated space (*locus sacer*) is always holy (*sanctus*), but a *locus sanctus* is not necessarily *sacer*. In effect, *sacer* designates a state or condition and *sanctus*, an effect of a ritual, of veneration. Thus, for instance, laws are *saint*. The *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine* of Alfred Ernout and

Antoine Meillet (1951) has a magnificent definition: ‘Properly we say of things that they are *saint* (*proprie dicimus santa*) those which are neither *sacred* nor *profane* (*quae neque sacra neque profana*), but have been confirmed through a sanction (*sed sanctione quadam confirmata*)’.

Indeed, the *locus sanctus* and the *locus sacer* embody the symbolic universe in which the divine meets the human. Bodies in the world, they substantiate the incarnation of a mystery. In this respect, the prologue of the Gospel according to John is a testimony: the central figure is the Logos at the beginning (ἐν ἀρχῇ) who is with God and who is God (καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος) and the Logos became flesh (σὰρξ ἐγένετο) and tabernacled among us (καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν). Exegesis relates the concept of dwelling (to tabernacle) to Exodus (40:34) and John’s Logos incarnate to Moses’s prayer (33:18). Everything to be feared is there. The Christian liturgy for the consecration of a church accumulates symbolic transfers related to a divine incarnation. The workings of figures assert analogies among the function of a language of incantation, the temple and the idea of body. One can apply to them what Jean-Luc Nancy says of the spirit of Christianity in *The Birth to Presence*:

Body is the total signifier, for everything has a body, or everything is a body . . . and *body* is the last signifier . . . mixing everywhere, and everywhere manifesting the other absence of name, named ‘God.’ It stands for a ‘sign of itself’ and ‘being-itself of the sign’ (1993: 195).

Nancy continues, ‘The signifier body denotes nothing other than a circular resorption’ (194). This Christian acceptance of *corpus* that Nancy finds articulated in Aquinas does not detach itself completely from the generic Latin value of ‘*omne quod potest uideri corpus dictum*’ that applies to anything. Interestingly, the sacramental dimension seems close to the Aristotelian conception one finds in *De Anima* (412b6) and shared today by many non-Western cultures. Affirming a profound cohesion of the body and the soul, Aristotle rejects as ‘unnecessary the question whether the body and the soul are one; since it is as nonsensical as to inquire whether the wax and the shape given it by the stamp are one’.

However, my usage of notions that bring forth symbolic values from the Christian horizon is simply allegorical. In effect, from the idea of a space that can be transformed into a place, it was productive to posit any socio-cultural system in the manner of a *langue* that can be actualised in concrete *paroles*. The symbol of kiva, the spruce tree, guided me as an inspiring cipher representing the principle of

another order that would compare to the abstraction of *la chose du texte*.² In the multicultural representation of my airport group of friends, the kiva stands validly as a model of both a *locus sacer* and a *locus sanctus*, from which one can attempt to illumine the concept of the ‘homeless mind’.

Homeless mind?

But the meditating Ego, the ‘impartial spectators’ do not rediscover an already given rationality, they ‘establish themselves,’ and establish it, by an act of initiative which has no guarantee in being, its justification resting entirely on the effective power which it confers on us of taking our own history upon ourselves (Merleau-Ponty 2002b: xx).

In the early 1970s, with *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness*, Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner were among the first to address what I am symbolising by the language that my two friends and I inhabit at the airport, the plausibility of the kiva, or a horizon and a friendship that transcends boundaries of identity theories. The approach of *The Homeless Mind* supposes a quasi-soteriological *ens realissimum*, as ‘the healing reality of our “natural” being’. It could account for, on the one hand, a ‘demonizing animus’ and its excesses and, on the other, the opposite represented in social sciences by symbolic figures such as B.F. Skinner and Che Guevara. As the authors see it, one side comprises a ‘poor utopian imagination that makes the blood curdle’ and the second problematises itself in its own ‘heady rhetoric of revolution’. The challenge to face would be a *repandre* of defining correlations between modernisation and homelessness. The first concept is to be understood from the context of economic growth. They explain: ‘We . . . discuss *modernization as the institutional concomitants of technologically induced economic growth*. This means that *there is no such thing as a “modern society” plain and simple; there are only societies more or less advanced in a continuum of modernization*’ (1973: 9; italics and emphasis in original).

Some of the implications of this approach include a way of administering culturally routinised concepts such as ‘“third world” vis-à-vis “advanced industrial societies”’. The expression ‘third world’, an invention of two French social scientists (Georges Balandier and Alfred Sauvy), has been featured in patterns of the 1950s political stances and at the Bandung conferences. In both cases, the name has been popularised as a common substantive connoting racial divisions. In this measure, as the authors note, ‘Racial minorities within the United States

have also been defined as belonging to “third world peoples” (10). From the ambiguity of these terms, the analysis seems to assume three conjectures. First, one could decode a homology between ‘racial’ groups and socio-cultural systems in terms of characteristics. Second, on the basis of their own research postulations between ‘objective givens’ of a social reality and subjective meanings, the authors correlate objective modernising institutional processes and ‘the consciousness of everyday life’. Finally, in the name of a sociology of knowledge, one can distinguish the notion of an organisation of knowledge in the sense of the cultural *what-it-is* from its ‘cognitive style of a particular consciousness’. A mirror effect can be seen between the authors’ notion of socio-cultural fields of consciousness and individual actualisations of a society’s *symbolic universe*.

My reading of *The Homeless Mind* is biased, but not prejudiced. Too much has been made of racial categories, and of the ‘third world’ as a concept, to make them suited for a convincing study on the homeless mind. Consider this. ‘Third world’ in today’s common language, denotes South-North, illegal immigration, the minority situation in the West and a lack of ethical standards. The media accents such an image, which is a fable, according to reliable sources. The volume *Immigration: Opportunity or Threat? Recommendations of the Gulbenkian Immigration Forum* (2007), edited by António Vitorino for the fiftieth anniversary of the Gulbenkian Foundation, is a rare exemplar of intellectual integrity. At any rate, a classical example in applied social sciences is the FBI’s operational classification of crimes. From the simple distinction between ‘offenses known to the police’ and ‘offenses cleared by arrest’, the grids of statistics allow competing readings of correlations between race and crime, since, a priori, a non-minority may be less answerable for a minor offence than a minority. Operational studies in social research using racial variables cannot be evidential assessments for inferring how values are effectively actualised in a given society.

I am suspicious of both the notions of race and causality in the constitution of plausibility structures of a culture. Readily, I would accept the main hypothesis of *The Homeless Mind*, and even agree that, in principle, internalised values of ethical fields, for instance, ‘would qualify a homeless mind’. And returning to my airport group, I would possibly acknowledge that because of the barriers it transcends (ethnicity, gender, nationalities) it may close in on its singularity. Such an approach can determine proprieties people may have in common. Specifying the quality of what I have called a language on the basis of a variety of knowledges (traditions, experiences, sciences) it may demarcate this system from other types,

similar or dissimilar. It goes without saying that this circumscription does not and cannot exhaust what a language and its *identity* represent. Thus, by positing it as a system in its own right, I am de facto admitting a number of things, including the possibility of new original approaches to its complexity, depending on the angles, levels or methods one invokes. For instance, internally, an always more comprehensive knowledge of any cultural system can be entertained by changing the theory supporting the research (structuralism versus functionalism, for instance) or simply modifying a few of its concepts. Alternations of hypotheses, modification of variables, or a comparison of one case with others generally bring about conflicting interpretations on any socio-cultural topic.

Let me clarify the issue by dwelling briefly on the expression ‘homelessness’ to qualify my airport group.

1. In English or in Spanish, the word is polysemic, for sure. Strictly speaking, this term is not applicable to the group. In effect, homeless means without a home, or affording no home. It is through a semantic extension of the signified that the authors of *The Homeless Mind* apply it to a cultural phenomenon that presumes a crisis of plausibility in the West, its most visible manifestation being in the domain of religion. Within its particular context, the adjective designates an intrinsic poverty of a structure in the symbolic universe. On the other hand, by equating the word with a symbolic language that transcends contingent differences (origin, ethnicity, gender) one is engaging a different phenomenon and, this time, presuming an effective plausibility structure.
2. The polysemy of the word explicates conceptual interferences and, in this way, homelessness can validly be applied to a street culture, as well as to a high culture quest in the erudite and the exotic. For example, *Down on Their Luck: A Study of Homeless Street People* (1993) by Leon Anderson and David A. Snow views homelessness as a sad predicament – namely, that to be homeless in America is to have fallen to the bottom of the status system. On the other hand, Bruce Chatwin’s *Anatomy of Restlessness: Selected Writings 1969–1989* (1996), with its ‘compelling arguments for the nomadic “alternative”’, is praised as a ‘fascinating book’ and the man is, according to *Kirkus Review*, ‘in a word, awesome’. A simple ascription of the same concept to two incomparable situations brings about difficult issues in sociological psychology. There are readers who, from the analysis of Anderson and Snow, may assign the homeless question

to psychopathology. Whatever emotions Chatwin's texts could suscite, and morality has been lighted sometimes, they would hardly eclipse the esteem of literary critics for a flamboyant *oeuvre*. Liberties that poetic licence would not shade could always be accounted for otherwise. No one doubts that artists are often 'touched with fire', to use the incisive title of Dr Kay Redfield Jamison's book on 'the relationship between moods and imagination', that 'fine madness' (1993).

3. If the antecedent remark on the polysemy of the word holds forth foundational issues, including a major ethical thematic, the preceding on semantic interferences makes visible the fact that this apparently innocuous word conveys more than one would expect. Homelessness is here a nexus prescribing an obligation – how to control the dissemination of its values – necessary for the recentring of a conceptual polysemy.

In this ἀνάγκη – a norm unto itself, says Diogenes Laertius ('Pittakos' 4) – the welcome from my airport group was a reflection of my own consciousness in *the homelessness code*, the *frontera* of my being-for-my-friends; that is, an actualisation of being and the actualising of a borderland. In fact, as if defining our airport group, Gloria Anzaldúa writes, apropos the Southwest United States-Mexican space: 'In fact the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy' (1987: 9).

From the preceding capsules: three lessons, three obligations: (a) Apprehending myself as a being-for-others in a welcoming space, the sociologisation of my consciousness posits me as this particular quality in the singularity of a common space of life. Perceiving and perceived, I mirror the dynamics of the space that mirrors my self-apprehension, the language that explains my refractions along those of *mi gente*. (b) Reflecting on assumptions accounting for my behavioural and cognitive attitudes in order to accord myself to the spirit of this we-community, divided I stand, subject and object, knowing and known. Exploring this concrete space that statutes my limits, faithfully I must translate the journey into another language. (c) Isolating myself in the effort to sustain the distinction of my individuality, and that of language, I must incessantly construct and reconstruct the set that I am in this *locus*, itself being a system in a context and its histories. Constructing and constructed, this very process qualifies my homelessness as the quest to name the truth of the language that comprises it.

Eccentric attitude, indeed. A method I freely chose, initiated by a few Greek eccentrics, as Edmund Husserl called them in his Vienna lecture of 10 May 1935: 'The universal critical attitude toward anything and everything pregiven in [any] tradition [. . .] not inhibited in its spread by any national boundaries' (1970: 288) it allows me a critical interrogation of the space I inhabit, and that from within the borderlands of a language in friendship.

Demarcations

My personal existence must be the resumption of a prepersonal tradition. There is, therefore, another subject beneath me, for whom a world exists before I am here, and who marks out my place in it. This captive or natural spirit is my body, not that momentary body which is the instrument of my personal choices and which fastens upon this or that world, but the system of anonymous 'functions' which draw every particular focus into a general project. Nor does this blind adherence to the world, this prejudice in favor of being, occur only at the beginning of my life. It endows every subsequent perception of space with its meaning, and it is resumed at every instant. Space and perception generally represent, at the core of the subject, the fact of his birth, the perpetual contribution of his bodily being, a communication with the world more ancient than thought. That is why they saturate consciousness and are impenetrable to reflection (Merleau-Ponty 2002b: 254).

How does one witness to *philia* apart from recapitulating the truth of its variations and explosions, thus linking its concept to borders delimiting our individual and collective ways of existing and thinking it? Today and yesterday, in ancient Greek and in Latin; in sum, in any language informing and conforming our relation to the idea of friendship, space and perception meet, and they are framed. Invoking the singularity of any first-person pronoun, my own, I am underscoring the signified of the Latin *finis*, boundary and terminus. A central heading in his *Aporias* (1993), Jacques Derrida registers its effects in two problematics: one, from Diderot's critical reading of Seneca's *De Brevitate Vitae*, the paradox of a rhetoric of borders, its relation to the truth and the case of one's death; and two, Martin Heidegger's definition of death in *Being and Time*: 'the possibility of the pure and simple impossibility for *Dasein*' (1962 [1927]: 23). In effect, insists Derrida,

Dasein stands before death [*s'attend à*] as its most proper possibility: 'This is a possibility in which,' Heidegger abruptly adds, 'the issue is nothing less than *Dasein*'s being-in-the-world [*in-der-Welt-Sein*]. Its death is the possibility of being-able-no-longer-to-be-there [*die Möglichkeit des Nicht-mehr-dasein-könnens*]' . . . Heidegger does not say 'the possibility of no longer being able to be *Dasein*' but 'the possibility of being able to no longer be able to be there' or 'of no longer being able to be there.' This is indeed the possibility of a being-able-not-to or of a no-longer-being-able-to, but by no means the impossibility of a being-able-to. The nuance is thin, but its very fragility is what seems to me both decisive and significant, and it probably is most essential to Heidegger's view. Death, the most proper possibility of *Dasein*, is the possibility of a being-able-no-longer-to-be-there or of a no-longer-being-able-to-be-there as *Dasein*. And of that *Dasein* is absolutely certain; it can testify to it as to a unique truth that is not comparable to any other (68).

Facing the possibility of such an impossibility, Derrida reduces thinkable exits to two: an improper one, 'the *Dasein* can escape from this truth inauthentically' and a proper one, 'to approach [death] authentically, awaiting it in anxiety and freedom'. But awaiting death, where exactly? In effect, the route to the impasse begins with three types of border-limits and their privileges. They include, first, the domain of countries and nations with their own languages and cultures; second, the domain of discourses with their specified knowledges and disciplines; and third, that of lines of discrimination and opposition between determinations and forms of borders.

Separations, for sure, yet a thin nuance about the fragility with which the impasse identifies with its possible statements. A nuance is a locus that can be inhabited. An auxiliary code to the service of scientific discourse in the Aristotelian tradition, logic deals with the truth of discourses. My death is, in principle, reducible to observable and interpretative features. Like my birth, a simple facticity, it can be apprehended as an event or as a function on a motion line that has an empirical genesis and an ending, and signified in a discourse. In *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (1991), Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari convincingly work out a useful distinction between an event and a function. In the first case, the death event can be defined by variations qualifying life; in the second, the death function states its condition through variables determining the situation of a lived body, actual or symbolic. One gets here two autonomous yet interfering lines, which in

their fluctuations aim at an inter-reflection. They prove valid Christian exegeses on the inseparability of death and life. They also make sound the inspiring authority of intercultural tables of belief systems in the style of the compendium edited by Andrew Wilson, *World Scripture: A Comparative Anthology of Sacred Texts* (1991), which establishes the same structure. One does not need to be a believer in order to face its vivid insights on intersecting grids of life and death. The kiva testifies to their interrelation.

Any end, including the purportedly symbolic one actualised in any close reading of Aristotle's ethics of friendship, denotes death, but is not death in the limited sense of an empirical line ending. Derrida rightly insists that the word expressing death is and 'remains absolutely unassignable or unassigning with respect to its concept and to its thingness' (1993: 22). To speak of its peculiarity, he chooses the Latin *finis*. For its decoding, he analyses its meaning by critically integrating schemes from two main references: the Teubner edition of Cicero's *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, as well as entries of *finis* in dependable lexicographic sources. Besides the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (1894) that I am using, the best references include William Freund's nineteenth-century *Latin-German Lexicon*, its English version, plus the Gaffiot (2001). The way Derrida orients the semantic study of *finis* by accenting conflictual interpretations leads him to an 'anachronism', he says. It might not be one but, instead, the expected effect of an unguarded elucidation of the history of a word. Or it could be that there is no anachronism at all for one who can bracket the issue of the semantics of *finis*, thus Heidegger's intervention.

Why should the abyss be an absolute lack? Derrida situates *finis* in a series of conceptual equivalents or quasi-synonyms (border, demarcation, limit). The word is then identified with death, which, in view of its history in the West, can be subsumed in the 'universal delimitation' of Heidegger's analysis in *Being and Time*. Conversely, Derrida suggests more persuasively, one would consider Heidegger's book as a sign among others 'within the huge archive where the memory of death in Christian Europe is being accumulated' (1993: 80–1).

Finis is the Latin corresponding term of the Greek *oros*, recurrent in Aristotle's language with the meaning of ratio, rule or standard. As previously noted, *finis* is the central term of a book by Cicero on passing. Derrida's analysis is more concerned with the conceptual value of the term than with Cicero's approach to its Roman cultural context.

In this first attempt to circumscribe spatial constraining values of *finis*, one could suggest, first, to present quickly the main cognates of *finis*. Then, in relation

to the idea of space (*locus, spatium*), I want to articulate the main semantic axes of *finis* (boundary), *finio* (I limit, I enclose) and *finit-io/-or* (for the termination act). Each will be concluded by a brief survey, in which I shall comment on how these concepts can effectively illustrate constraining or restraining limits over three symbolic spaces: reading the idea of space in one of Varro's texts, interpreting the effects of a secret memo from the World Bank and understanding the abandonment of a scientific theory. The presentation aims at depicting how death may be seen as just an ultimate expression of what are effects of boundaries on the body of any space.

Here is a short table of the most frequent cognates of *finis*: *fin-io* (-iui, -itum), verb; *finite*, adverb. V. *finio*; *finitimus*, (-a, -um), adjective; *finitio* (-onis), substantive; *finitivus* (-a, -um), adjective; *finitor*, substantive. The adverb (*finite*) and the adjectives (*finitimus*, *finitivus*, *finitus*) draw their value from the deriving word, noun or verb.

1. *Finis*

a. Reading an entry, *finis* in relation to space (*locus*)

i. boundary, frontier, limit, horizon

1. *physical border in general, term of geographical and technical language;*
2. *figurative: what is ethically or legally binding, the permissible versus its contrary.*

ii. What is enclosed within limits?

1. *a physical country, a territory. Frequent in military texts (Caesar, for instance) and geographers;*
2. *figurative: what is acceptable, that which is being respected, within measure, as far as, in view;*
3. *starting point in a race, the space of divinities and worship.*

iii. An end or termination

1. *as concrete designation of completion, extremity, termination, amount, the highest point of something;*
2. *definition, aim, purpose, design, explanation, measure, the end of life;*
3. *(telos), intention, summit, greatest degree, till when and how, an everlasting anything.*

On restraining a conceptual space: A philological aspect

In a close reading, one could choose to synthesise the line of *finis* and what the word defines, delimits or ends, vis-à-vis the Greek σπάδιον, Latin *locus* or *spatium*; that is, what the *finis* acts upon. Here are the main semantic lines. The first, *locus* or *spatium*, for a physical area or a field and its figurative value, signified in what a configuration represents, assumes both a physical confine and a temporal dimension. Bringing together the two semantic sets of *finis* and *locus/spatium*, three metaphoric axes would delimit the main conceptual fields from which one would think about spaces. They can be localised or inhabited. As to procedures of transforming them into places, they can be reduced to boundaries and limits that outline and enclose areas on course; fences and walls that contain or separate spaces as bodies; and borders and margins that circumscribe their contours.

A brief glance at the semantic structuration of *finis* is instructive. Through a relatively limited number of notions (border, clause, end, limits) the main values come to light. From the root *fin-*, they delimit two main intersecting lines. A first axis organises values related to notions of what is limiting or being assigned, standing as possible references for a spatialisation or a temporalisation. The second axis effectively organises values related to the notions of a beginning and an end, in a real or symbolic time-space. As a matter of fact, the second axis reproduces the first, but reduces its motion, its potential distance to or from its extremities, boundaries or limit points. By choosing the noun *finis* and positing it at the outset of his meditation as an equivalent of death, Derrida's interpretation paralyses the dynamics issued forth by the verbal root *fin-*. Indeed, *finis* may signify passing away, but it also, fundamentally, outlines the economy of what it encloses. In other words, *finis* can be perceived as a restraining force.

A philological study could focus, for instance, on what Varro's *De Lingua Latina* exposes. Indeed, the semantic field of *locus* will express the table that can be deduced from a contemporary edited version of the ancient treatise such as Roland G. Kent's two edited volumes in the Loeb Classical Library (1938, 1951). This implies that one may suspect beforehand that the picture could differ from those of, for example, respectable editions such as the 1846–54 one by the Italian Pietro Canal, or that of the German by Georg Goetz and Friedrich Schoell, published by Teubner in 1910. Certainly, Varro's conceptual field was more complex than the contours anyone may draw from the Loeb editions. On the other hand, the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* presents a more encyclopedic view. Using the index to Kent's 1993 edition, I checked attestations referred to for Books 5–7. All of

them correspond to the axes of the field already summarised. Of a relative interest are two values. First, in 5.15, a mention of *sic loci muliebres* is followed by an explanation, *ubi nascendi initia consistunt*, specialising a domain in the familial space. The second belongs to a religious lexicon on the sacredness and sanctity of certain spaces (7.10).

2. *Finio*

- i. to enclose, establish boundaries
 1. *to impose, describe limits in everyday life, and special vocabulary including scientific;*
 2. *figurative: to restrain, to set bounds, norms, to describe an horizon (a limit).*
- ii. To put an end, finish, terminate
 1. *usual active verb for ending anything (a conversation, fight, life, war, etc.); to appoint, to fix, mark out;*
 2. *figurative: to control, set rules, assign, define, determine;*
 3. *to accent what is last, as a technical definition: finiens orbis or circulus;*
 4. *passive: to lack, being deprived.*
- iii. To conclude, to end
 1. *to cease, to finish speaking, to come to one's end, to draw to a close, to end, to die;*
 2. *to describe with accuracy, in a technical language, to become extinct;*
 3. *to achieve, terminate properly, to put an emphasis on something last.*

Constraining a space: Between science and policy

The bleak picture of the Third World (particularly Africa) in the global economy demands an ethical view about directives of the World Bank and the IMF. It is rarely emphasised that Japan made an important declaration by publishing 'Issues Related to the World Bank's Approach to a Structural Adjustment: Proposal from a Major Partner' (OECD 1991). The document was a counter-statement to the 1991 World Bank Report.

There are troubling ethical issues to all of this. For instance, at the intersection of science and policy, we have the following case in setting bounds. On 12 December 1988, a confidential memo by Lawrence Summers, then an economist with the World Bank, was leaked to the press. *The Economist* of 8 February 1992

reported its content. As a valid measure for the welfare of international business, the document proposed the exportation of toxic waste to the underpolluted Third World: 'The measurement of the cost of health-impairing pollution depends on the foregone earnings from increased morbidity and mortality' and, 'a given amount of health-impairing pollution should be done in the country with the lowest cost which will be the country with the lowest wages'. According to this memo, Summers saw no ethical reason for not exporting the waste, which is carcinogenic, to countries where people are not likely to live long enough to develop induced diseases. The bracketing of the ethical reason is justified by economic imperatives. Says Summers, 'I think the economic logic behind a load of toxic waste in the lowest wage country is impeccable, and we should face up to that'. James Ferguson, of the University of California-Irvine, who has looked at the implications of this argument, writes in 'De-Moralizing Economics': 'The World Bank-IMF structural adjustment programs that have been forced down the throats of African governments in recent years are based on precisely the sort of spurious economic "proofs" and implausible suspension of moral and social values that are displayed so conspicuously in the memo' (1993: 79).

3. *Finitio* and *Finitor*

- i. Nouns expressing values related to what is finished or achieved
 1. *Frequent in post-Augustean technical vocabulary, the finitor is the agent who determines boundaries, defines limits.*
- ii. Strictly, the *finitio* is the limitation (division, section, part) defined by a subject standing for a *finitor*
 1. *Quoted by lexicographic sources, a phrase of Statius (Thebais 8.91) attests the link in an invocation of Pluto: o finitor maxime rerum.*
- iii. Technical values express semantic extensions of *finio*:
 1. *finitor for what stands as one's end of perspective, the horizon, or comically a mild impostor. Questori permittant, finitorem mittant.*

Allegorising a space: Ending a scientific theory

Attached to a letter Sigmund Freud sent to his friend Dr Fliess, on 24 January 1895, is 'Draft H: Paranoia'. Freud's problem is: a) his approach to delusional ideas and b) his own questions about paranoia as a *defence mechanism*. He then configures the concept. For example, on 12 June 1895, he writes that his 'theories on defense

have made an important advance'. Two months later, on 6 August, he claims 'an understanding of pathological defenses'. His letter of 1 January 1896 to Fliess is essentially about this issue and, importantly, it is accompanied by Draft K on 'The Neurosis of Defense'. The basic Freudian theory is now established, centred on what Freud calls 'Obsessional Neurosis', 'Paranoia' and 'Hysteria'. There is *a more* to the theory that most students of Freudianism prefer not to see: the subtitle that Freud calls a first schema of defence mechanisms: 'A *Christmas Fairy Tale*' (emphasis mine). He uses this expression again in his letter of 6 February 1896 to Fliess, apologising for the metaphor, 'A Christmas Fairy Tale'.

Looking at the psychoanalytical literature, how can one understand this image, *fairy tale*, at the genesis of the Freudian speculation on neurosis? Here is the problem. Freud seems to use *fairy tale* as a stylistic figure in both his letters of 1 January and 6 February 1896. It reads well in the context as a metaphor and as a metonym in the progression of his theory: a metaphor, the figure abstracts hysteria or paranoia from the configuration of the patient's everyday life; a metonym, it supports an image structuring a confusing space in existences. Quite clearly, Freud's usage *wordplays* the ordinary dysfunctional behaviours and, under the guise of Christmas, jestingly invokes the 'mythical' cultural background of the season. The apparent innocuousness of the figure (metaphor and metonym) its relation between an etiology of neurosis and the more or less unknown of a research, might not be that simple. Here are the facts:

1. In *The Complete Letters* (1986), Freud reports on his lecture of 26 April 1896 on the 'etiology of hysteria', known as the 'seduction theory', that he addressed to the Vienna Society for Psychiatry and Neurology. The session was chaired by Count Richard von Krafft-Ebing, who was then head of the psychiatric department at the University of Vienna. After Freud's presentation, here is the Count's evaluation, as rendered by Freud: 'It sounds like a *scientific fairy tale*' (emphasis mine). Angry, Freud adds: 'After one has demonstrated to them the solution of a more-than-thousand-year-old problem, *a caput Nili*'.
2. After the lecture, three facts can be observed. One: Freud complains about his professional isolation, scientific attacks and the slowness of his academic career. Two: researching, revisiting his own exploration and interpretation of his etiology of neuroses, he progressively revises his understanding. Three: on 21 September 1897, Freud confides to Fliess a 'great secret'. He

writes: 'I no longer believe in my *neurotica* (theory of neuroses)'. In brief, Freud has abandoned his theory.

3. A *fairy tale*, the seduction theory is gone. *Finitio*. Another *fairy tale*, the myth of Jocasta and Oedipus, can now surface. Traditional exegesis emphasises the functional effect of Krafft-Ebing's usage of the *fairy tale* metaphor, and not sufficiently, its usage as a metonym by Freud himself before 26 April 1896. One thing seems certain: the positive or the negative connotation of the figure (metaphor or metonym) has the same source: Freud. It haunts the space of psychological disciplines and all the psychotherapeutic territories. It closed a hypothesis.

The three entries on *fnis*, in relation to the *spatium* it defines or delimits, illustrate a commonsense perception. To equate *fnis* and *death* is to underestimate what explains the relation, the constraining and restraining value of *fnis*. In the metaphors I chose – Varro's text, an argument in international policy, and the end of Freud's seduction theory – the fundamental value of *fnis* is its delimiting capacity, which represents the conditions of death. Let us face this constraining capacity in how we think and administer our existential spaces.

Lambrettas?

No doubt. But co-existence, which in fact defines space, is not alien to time, but is the fact of two phenomena belonging to the same temporal wave. As for the relationship of the perceived object to my perception, it does not unite them in space and outside time: they are *contemporary*. The 'order of co-existents' is inseparable from the 'order of sequences,' or rather time is not only the consciousness of sequence. Perception provides me with a 'field of presence' in the broad sense, extending in two dimensions: the here-there dimension and the past-present-future dimension. The second elucidates the first. I 'hold,' I 'have' the distant object without explicit positing of the spatial perspective (apparent size and shape) as I still 'have in hand' the immediate past without any distortion to talk about synthesis, it will be, as Husserl says, a 'transition-synthesis,' which does not link disparate perspectives, but brings about the 'passage' from one to the other (Merleau-Ponty 2002b: 265).

Robert Todd Carroll, chairman of the philosophy department at Sacramento City College, is the author of *The Skeptic's Dictionary* (2003). Most of the entries are on 'strange beliefs, amusing deceptions and dangerous delusions', which is the subtitle of the book. They are illustrative of a collective imagination, which in fact, could very well include ideas that are related to our contemporary political economies. One could elect, for illustration, three significant spaces: our 'time' imagination, our economic imagination and our sociological imagination. They have in common something that can be related to Carroll's objective: what we need in order to understand these spaces critically is a commitment to rationality and an understanding that choosing rationality over chimeras is not necessarily an act of faith at all. Some years ago, Reverend Ivan Strong made a statement by publishing *High Weirdness by Mail: A Directory of the Fringe; Mad Prophets, Crackpots, Kooks, and True Visionaries* (1988). A clever critique shouldn't require an explanation. Yet we need to qualify it in order to grasp the dynamics of certain styles in postcolonial or transnational reason, media cultures, mindsets and power relationships. In *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things* (1988), Dick Hebdige makes one reflect first on the subject, a sceptical one, who might be there silent or noisy in articulations of our representations. It is the ego of 'I am this or that', a self-conscious, self-present subject. This subject, one would agree, equals the transparent self of communications who is unmediated in mediated performances in the world. It can be distinguished from the 'subjected subject'. Hebdige quotes a 'subject to the crown', but one can think of the 'subjugated' subject of some postcolonial studies. He adds that 'in the gap between these two meanings we became subject of ideologies, subject to the Law of the Father, and in the Althusserian and Lacanian senses respectively' (189). After him, one might extol arguments for political projects of today to meet the intention of 'freeing the subject from subjection to an abstraction'. Concretely, this would mean deflecting the subject from the stage and acknowledging its capacity in 'the play of power on the ground in particular discursive formations'. Doesn't this lead to something like a fictional space in which an individual might cease to exist as an ego submitted to the demands of his or her sceptical *cogito*?

Following Hebdige, we are accessing here issues worked out by the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard, precisely the particular moment of recognising the 'end of judgment, value, meaning, politics, subject-object oppositions' – the postmodernist artificial or real fiction. Concerning Baudrillard's positions on the fictitious Planet Two, Hebdige writes: 'The information that we "handle" changes

with each moment, all human life can pass across those heads, but we never own, or store, or “know,” or “see” the material that we possess . . . our lives get played out for us, played out in us, but never, ever *by us*’ (1988: 164). According to the French sociologist, the subject is standing on a limit line, a European frontier that could be perceived as a self-enclosed unit from which a number of questions become virtues: ‘What are Chile, Biafra, the boat people in Venice, Bologna, or Poland to us?’ (Baudrillard 1994: 164). Should one consider activating any regulation, one would have to deal with the evidence that Paul Gilroy reminds us of – how sociality and meaning are built from a ground which is intersubjective, according to Hebdige (1988: 214). As a consequence, there is no reason to deny that a Zulu nation exists in New York thanks to a rap institution, Afrika Bambaataa, with, among some of its pertinent features ‘Zululations’ and ‘the funk sign’ (a disco style proper to the South Bronx).

This creativity, and whatever impulses it silences, is proof of a consumer’s good life projections, along with a range of tourists’ representations. In *Hiding in the Light*, Hebdige extracts the following passage from *Travel Far, Travel Wide*, an 1954 Innocenti film: ‘A frontier. And on the other side, a completely different way of life, but whatever country you go to in the world there, you’ll find lambrettas and lambretta service stations’ (1988: 101). Such a justification for tourism is a powerful incentive. It sanctions a perspective that negates the idea of a difference in space, while strongly affirming it at the same time.

The Lambretta should be evaluated for what it is, an index to an axiomatic postmodernity. Todd Gitlin, in *Media Unlimited: How the Torrent of Image and Sound Overwhelms Our Life* (2002), details a world of ‘image-shocked markets’ that functions according to three global formulas, three types of movies: the western, the action movie and the cartoon. Obviously, they refer to the American space. However, they equally convey a culture that defines itself as a common global space. A CBS vice-president for television research once told Gitlin: ‘I am not interested in culture. I am not interested in true social values. I have only one interest. That’s whether people watch the program. That’s my definition of good, that’s my definition of bad’ (204). That’s an excellent, off-guard avenue to a global culture subsumed by its American paradigm, which, according to Gitlin, could be defined as ‘the rambunctious child of Europe and Africa’.

Another approach to the global culture would be to use ‘egonomics’, a key concept I am borrowing from Faith Popcorn and Lys Marigold’s *Clicking* (1996), which is one of the ‘seventeen trends to fix your life, your work and your business’.

The two American women are, as they put it, the driving forces behind egonomics. It is, they say, everywhere: ‘ “Me” wants customization, “myself” is a name, and “I” demand personal service’. To click into the ‘Trend of Egonomics’ is ‘one of the most effective ways to reach customers, by appealing to their individuality, the singular perhaps of them that says, “there is no one out there quite like me” ’. One remembers a word, *finis*. And may recall its symbolic value in Freud’s attitude about a ‘fairy tale’.

The American bestseller *The Popcorn Report: Faith Popcorn on the Future of Your Company, Your World, Your Life* (1992) typifies a cultural index. Like the Lambretta, or any of the three movie formulas from Gitlin’s analysis of today’s global media, it introduces one to a global configuration of coetaneous constraining value systems. With it, one can open any existing culture and submit it to the imperatives of a global performance. Latin American or African spaces and their paradoxes can be related to effects from without or from within, vis-à-vis a canonical paradigm, the space of their possibility. From *The Popcorn Report*, let me generalise the essentials of such frames:

1. In sociology of cultures, one would access entries on education, socialisation, interactions of groups, religion and politics in social institutions and their integration, global stratifications and dynamics, which includes environment and population, and traditional and modern constraints; thus, *finis* in politics of alienation.
2. In psychology of cultures, entries concerned with personality assessment in biological, social and cognitive processes; normal and psychopathological models, conceptions about human life, social influence and interpersonal relations; thus, *finis* in politics of exotisation.
3. In the economic imagination, one can access any topic from grids that distinguish micro- from macroeconomics, and then inscribe the desired subject in the structures of the world economy; thus, *finis* in politics of marginalisation.

It is in the last technical space that, for instance, global arguments on market systems of the labour force and management claim to lead the world economy. To focus on international trade one can freely consult trade relations, finances and the balance of payments, along with the world’s exchange systems. The economy chapters always include technical libraries of development that, although concerned with ‘industrialised societies’, are basically guided by socio-economic

and management experiments involving alternatives in programmes, requirements and a blending of market processes.

Turning tables, one can underline another range of paradoxical facts.

First, despite objective obstacles, there is a global world that accounts for the circulation of people and cultural goods. Quality is a different issue. Africa is an example. There are at least two Africas – one urban, one rural. A number of features make them both similar and different. The principle, inherited from the colonial empire, of the primacy of the political structures the modern states. It also, too often, justifies dictatorships, civil wars and poor management. Such an environment has all the conditions necessary for the development of virtual new cultures, including corrupt ones, vis-à-vis supposedly more traditional trends of rural areas. And often, the new ways come to affect the latter's relative day-to-day stability. One could, using metaphors, say that if a number of central governments still conceive their administration on the basis of a colonial model and claim to organise their tasks according to sports' norms, the far-reaching consequences of a poor performance would almost always tend to submit a politicised rural life to permanent social antagonisms; that is, to latent war norms and the constancy of violence, real or potential. The word 'tribal', generally favoured by journalists, might be completely inadequate here. A weak explanation, it confuses rather than helps in understanding social upheavals. Most of the so-called tribal confrontations, obviously the catastrophic ones, could be more convincingly related to a frantic pace of the political and the way it manipulates a lack of trust between communities. In her groundbreaking work *History of African Cities South of the Sahara: From the Origins to Colonization* (2005), Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch depicts the interrupted story that preceded colonialism and, focusing on sub-Saharan cities, shows how before the nineteenth-century imperial conversion that forcefully contributed to an acceleration of history, the ancient ensembles in their diversity (such as Atlantic, Islamic, Indian Ocean and hinterland agglomerations) had a plurality of cultural economies that were more coherent, or in any case manageable. Colonisation marshals a world, restructures its geographies.

From such a re-evaluation of a past vis-à-vis the colonial legacy, how are we to reconsider the African predicament within an alienating transnational political economy? Pragmatically, to begin with an analysis of a *beyond* the African predicament: (a) understanding economic projections in a global perspective, such as Africa versus Latin America, in tabulations of the World Bank for 2020; (b) revisiting the history of projections from intellectual reflectors, such as James

Kenneth Galbraith's clearly stated position on 'the crisis of globalization' in the 1999 summer issue of *Dissent*; (c) finally, confronting alternatives in terms of political implications, and what to deduce from references to Galbraith as well as John Rawls's positions on political liberalism. Indeed, one could accent such notions as the 'law of people' and the 'idea of public reason' and look for their possible effects on anticipated economic courses.

Let me insist on something else more perturbing. Even in highly technical studies, it is now frequent to face an unsaid, analogical usage of a natural sciences model. Indeed, we are told, this has nothing to do with racism. In the last three centuries, this model has allowed a transfer of concepts from biology to politics, quite clearly in the cultural politics of economics. The best test case would be, apropos the mechanics of the market, a deconstruction of today's hypotheses on 'African exceptionalism', its connections to technical contrasts between quantitative models and modal reasoning, and how they can justify theories about African optimism versus African pessimism. The often-cryptic coding, frequently uncritical, refers to ancient theories on ethics and inequality of cultures.

One of its theorists, being rediscovered by some contemporary sociobiologists, T.H. Huxley, the author of *Evolution and Ethics*, elaborated positions close to the ones in Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiment* (first published in 1893 and 1759 respectively). Huxley's arguments articulate three main attitudes concerning the future of human societies: (a) a 'speculative optimism', with the notion of a perfectibility hypothesis versus (b) a 'speculative pessimism', represented by the 'rags and bowls' metaphor of the mendicant, and (c) a middle position that would translate the official 'charity justification' of colonial projects: 'The majority of us,' writes Huxley in *Evolution and Ethics*, 'confess neither pessimism nor optimism. We hold that the world is neither so good, nor so bad, as it conceivably might be; and, as most of us have reason, now I begin to discover that it can be' (1896: 136).

Indeed, careful readers will recognise the connections being made here with Smith's ethics. In *The Wealth of Nations* (1937), capitalism is conceived as a system of natural liberty. In this position, at the genesis of capitalism, one faces ethical principles that Smith had already initiated in *The Theory of Moral Sentiment* (1801). Labelled in Germany as *Das Adam Smith Problem*, it comes down to a hypothesis about an interaction between self-interest and the source of what is moral, in relation to norms of approbation.

One century after the Berlin Conference and the scramble for Africa, historians are describing surreal regimes of failure, both political and economic, often without

determining explanations. Like any speculation, interpretations about economic workings are frequently wrongly identified with the reality they claim to explain. In other words, interpretation and fact are two different things; what is construed is rarely the real occurrence of a phenomenon. To invoke an excellent ongoing illustration, let me refer to the debate created by Jane Guyer's remarkable study on *Marginal Gains, Monetary Transactions in Atlantic Africa* (2004). The discussion takes on theoretical positions, the first reflected in Philip Mirowski's *More Heat Than Light: Economics as Social Physics, Physics as Nature's Economics* (1989), and the second expressed in a few publications of Michel Callon, particularly in an exposé expounding his thesis on virtualism and political impotence (2005), published as a reply to Daniel Miller's (2002) critique of the *Laws of the Markets* (1998).

And, as is often the case, what about misreadings that confuse economic and social questions with conflicting ethical positions? On 'the nature of ethics in management', today's ethicists – see LaRue Tone Hosmer's *The Ethics of Management* (1991) – dissociate two interdependent problematics. The first considers ethical problems as managerial dilemmas, reducible to a tension between economic performance (production and profit) and social performance (obligations) whose 'nature', Hosmer claims, 'is open to interpretation'. The second problematic concerns precisely the judgement of managerial dilemmas. Hosmer distinguishes three types of analysis: (a) an economic analysis whose 'underlying belief' is a harmony among good usage of resources, quality product and adequate service; (b) another type of analysis, whose underlying belief is the existence of a society governed by the rule of law that guarantees the right for everyone (individuals, institutions, organisations); and finally, (c) an ethical analysis whose underlying belief relies on normative instructions, or moral standards of what is good and evil, right and wrong; and, again, a question of a moral authority surges.

Useful distinctions of method are required. They are perfect in a classroom of ethics. In reference to state or business governance about today's ethical conflicts, it would be more expedient to negotiate than to invoke the Pareto optimality principle, generally brought up by economists. 'Unequal exchange' (to use the title of Arghiri Emmanuel's 1972 classic study on the topic) seems, alas, the best insignia for the game. The economic structure instructs a maximisation of profit for the management and, objectively, would tend to block any costly alternative in social performance. There is here an immense paradox. Liberal political economy has been projecting itself as aimed at Pareto-efficient management (in terms of

revenues, obligations and profits) but is there any doubt that it is actualising itself in an ethically puzzling contradiction, the continuous inefficiency of the social performance being contingent to its efficiency? An organisation passes from Pareto-inefficient to Pareto-efficient when it achieves a betterment of both performances, the economic and the social, on condition that no part of the latter should be worse off.

. . . And the (post-)colonial

Generally speaking, our perception would not comprise either outlines, figures, backgrounds or objects, and would consequently not be perception of anything, or indeed exist at all, if the subject of perception were not this gaze which takes a grip upon things only in so far as they have a general direction; and this general direction in space is not a contingent characteristic of the object, it is the means whereby I recognize it and am conscious of the same object variously orientated, and, as we have said, I can even recognize an inverted face. But it is always provided that mentally we take up position in front of it, and sometimes we even do physically, as when we tilt our head to look at a photograph held in front of him by a person at our side (Merleau-Ponty 2002b: 253).

From the preceding interrogations, in which sense could one state that postcolonial theory might be relevant to a moral sense theory in today's sociological contexts? A way of facing the challenge would be to look at some of its recent 'readers'. Let me suggest two of them: *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, edited by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (1995) and *Relocating Postcolonialism*, edited by David Theo Goldberg and Ato Quayson (2002). One peruses these editions and immediately observes that the articles are more in the fields of social sciences and humanities than in the domain of direct political activism. The authorship evidently qualifies the geography of a 'Third World'. Understandable, if one wishes, Latin America is absent, whereas the Indian subcontinent, for instance, is well represented.

Thematics are conceived through regroupings of issues that are mostly theoretical positions on universality and difference, ethnicity and indigeneity; conceptualities such as body, language, history and place; and disciplinary notions, as in the case of postcolonialism, nationalism and feminism. This type of classification, frequent in cultural anthologies, aims at covering a wide terrain.

Only with difficulty can it organise themes according to an order of priority. However, the Goldberg and Quayson reader presents an unusual structuration based on the editors' concept of a 'scale and sensibility' from their individual writers. If Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's publication is not really detachable from what could be labelled a critical, postcolonial spirit of succession; Quayson and Goldberg intend a philosophical stance, 'to shape itself from the standpoint of its imagined future irrelevance'. The choice indicates at least two things: on the one hand, a claim to reproduce a transdisciplinary intellectual space and, on the other hand, with or without introductory titles serving as keys, the general economy magnifies cultural transactions and these are supposed to be aspects for understanding intellectual and spiritual games, rituals and statements. The contribution of the French political scientist Françoise Vergès at the end of the book, a *post-scriptum* that is a political manifesto, rephrases the editors' horizon by accenting key lines. They are: (a) *(Post)colonial*, the parenthesis of 'Post' being a question in itself; (b) *Memory and Trauma*, in which an existential capacity is linked to a psychological code; (c) *Reparation, Reconciliation, Crime against Humanity*; or, political indicators for addressing the unusual apropos the concept of humanity as an ultimate figure opposed to the particularity of an ethnicity and its heterological cultural modalities; (d) *Diaspora, Hybridity, Creolization*, which Vergès interrogates as what does or does not belong to the capitalist propensity for commodifying notions and representations.

One could bestow on this postcolonial perspective the mark of a recommencement that categorised Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's book *The Empire Writes Back* (1989). Its aim is to express, as they put it at the beginning of the reader, a theory emerging outside of the metropolitan centres. And they emphasise a political dimension. Quite clearly, one also notices what these trends have in common in terms of intellectual recommendations: Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. All of these theorists are of the same family in spiritual obedience. They have been referred to as moral witnesses about relational problems and interactions between a historical centre and its margins of yesterday. In this sense, one may consider this vein of postcolonial studies as mainly concerned with questions about the management of a legacy and its impact on still-existing accords and discords. Another distinction of this particular trend in postcolonial studies, and possibly the most striking, is its transdisciplinarity. It qualifies the main feature of its esteemed theorists and their faithfulness to conditions of possibility, their native, specific locality from which they express intuitions of what is given

as a principle of principles, a manner of integrating the world, which is also the world of other people.

Sartre: African philosopher

THE WORLD AS PERCEIVED. My body is wherever there is something to be done. As soon as Wertheimer's subject takes his place in the experimental situation prepared for him, the area of his possible actions – such as walking, opening a cupboard, using a table, sitting down – outlines in front of him, even if he has his eyes shut, a possible habitat . . . The constitution of a spatial level is simply one means of constituting an integrated world: my body is geared onto the world when my perception presents me with a spectacle as varied and as clearly articulated as possible, and when my motor intentions, as they unfold, receive the responses they expect from the world (Merleau-Ponty 2002b: 250).

There are at least two ways of accessing, say, an African identity within lived languages. For instance, on the one hand is the *Négritude* paradigm, or similar ones; on the other are postulations of histories, or the problem of knowing how to handle what is required by a normative postcolonial discourse, as in 'to relativise' Western values. Indeed, the flow of information and skills for affirming one's vision in both cultural politics and policies of distinction could close on questions of attitudes. The first underscores particulars and the second reflects on conditions of universality, from a concrete particularity that trains it, manoeuvring what is believed to exist in itself, a particular experience, vis-à-vis others.

Léopold Sédar Senghor is, with Aimé Césaire and Léon Damas, one of the best symbols of the *Négritude* movement. In his *Ce que je crois* (1988), issued when he was elected to l'Académie Française, Senghor specified his philosophy of culture. Its articulation on *Négritude* (*l'ensemble des valeurs de la civilisation noire*) relies on two intellectual perspectives: African prehistory, and an interpretation of interrelations between biology and cultures, his responsibility. He based this upon a quintessential alterity, as a matter of choice, connected to differential stages (*francité* and *francophonie* – leading to the idea of a *universal civilisation*) thus defining a way of being and existing.

Let us not confuse Senghor with ideologues of faithful submission to a cult of an absolute difference and accept him as a rightly controverted but stimulating

intercultural symbol. Senghor is often wrongly opposed to Kwame Nkrumah from Ghana. Their political perspectives were, indeed, different. Yet everyone would agree that the two men were both concerned with an African situation to be characterised by its tradition, a test of modernity induced by the colonial encounter and the imports of Islam and Christianity.

There is a way of reformulating these traits as expressions of the same project. The overture would imply a return to one of the best philosophical renderings for the justification of an African difference claim, Jean-Paul Sartre's '*Orphée noir*' ('Black Orpheus' in Sartre 2001). In this text, a preface to Senghor's 1948 anthology of poetry by African and West Indies's writers, the 'black difference' is defined as an antithesis, featuring an anti-racist statement, that is, a 'weak moment' in a dialectic.

The argument goes back to *Being and Nothingness* (1956), in which Sartre describes the apprehension of one's relation to another person, or the self vis-à-vis another. Let me rephrase the issue by giving an example. In everyday language, I would state that in looking for the truth of my own identity as a subject, I must face an obvious fact: the discovery that I am myself an object for the other. In this sense, it is in the other, any other, real or imagined, that I can apprehend a perceived 'me-object'. Strictly speaking, the self is always a self elsewhere, establishing its being in the presence of another. But this self doesn't face itself only as an object. The self transforms this primary relation into a complex one: from the I, in relation to the other, and from the other back to the I. In this relationship, I recognise myself as a value, as a freedom, and manifest myself as a risk. At the same time, symbolically to be sure, which is difficult to express, somehow I wish the death of the other as a condition for my liberation. On the other hand, the other is perceived, within my own self-apprehension, as not being me and thus the fact of a totality, a whole from which to posit the evidence of a 'we'.

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre describes how the apprehension of one's identity is not autonomous from the discovery of other people, or evidence of the other's existence. In other words, a reflection on myself convinces me that I am always, and immediately, a consciousness facing somebody else. Let me straighten out three lines that can clarify this:

1. The whole fabric of my self, its history and determinations, unfolds before others. It reveals me in the visibility of having this body, this experience, this whatever is 'that' which might characterise it.
2. The awareness expresses itself in a paradoxical situation that defines my being-in-the-world as a self who is never completely divorced from his

ego and, at the same time, who is never perfectly identified with the ego. Put differently, apprehending myself as existing in a world where there are others, I am conscious of facing simultaneously others' presence, their freedom, vis-à-vis my own freedom as that which is properly mine.

3. Thus, human existence is understandable in its two fundamental aspects: on the one hand, an alienating outwardness and its givens (my nationality, race, religion, sex) which are always saturated by the other and, simultaneously, my self, an absolute freedom in its capacity for grounding and transmuting itself into a transcendence.

Sartre's definition of *Négritude* in 'Black Orpheus' (2001) retraces this approach clearly. Born of an evil, it negates it. *Négritude* is explicitly presented as the being-in-the-world of the black person who, exposing a privilege of suffering, at once states a solidarity with all the oppressed, independently of skin colour.

Yet 'Black Orpheus' is often misinterpreted for a number of reasons. Consider the following, for example. There is, first, the singularity of Sartre's role. Standing against effects of solipsism that justify racism instead of positing himself as a simple empathetic observer, Sartre connects to the black person as a witness; speaking in his voice, he addresses himself to white people and demonstrates to blacks how to take conscience of themselves. And you get questions on the 'why' of such an intervention, the credibility of the voice, the truth of the testimony. Generally, these questions miss what explains the motion. Indeed, it is possible to consider it from Heidegger's reprise of a Kantian perspective about a universal and necessary condition of the transcendental subject. In such a perspective, how to ensure the reality of margins?

Second, there is the immense and often highly emotional critique concerning Sartre's usage of the Hegelian dialectic, what its spatial levels (thesis, antithesis and synthesis) connote in actuality, when the process is transferred from the abstraction of a master-slave relation to a real context, say, of slavery, of existing inequalities. This is a serious point.

One would locate here Frantz Fanon's resistance to Sartre's analysis, predicating the more radical anger of Josie Fanon who, during the Six Day War, accused Sartre of going over to the 'wrong side, that of the powerful'. One could, indeed, choose another angle. Why can we not invoke, for instance, the Platonic distinction between intellection and reasoning in evaluating an application of the Hegelian model? Particularly, when, as in the case of 'Black Orpheus', it can be rearticulated

in a Marxist lesson or in concrete commitments exemplified by political choices documented in Sartre's *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*.

Rather than aiming at convincing anyone about Hegel's assumptions on the relation between human reality and knowledge, Sartre's *Négritude* was stipulating something else, an ethical demand, and a crushing one: how to relate to the field of always conflictual freedoms engaged in perpetual war?

There are the interminable discussions on semantics, apropos what Sartre meant in naming *Négritude* 'a negative moment', designating it as 'a triumph of Narcissism, a suicide of Narcissus' and, most important, labelling it, at the same time, a 'luminous night'. In fact, a rephrasing of *Négritude* as an antithetical stage that, by negating racism, stands for an anti-racist racism should not really surprise anyone. After all, without excusing its possible ramification, it is easy to account for an anti-racist metaphor by contrasting it with objective forms of bigotry, which still exist in our contemporary culture. But how to make the case for *Négritude* as a 'weak stage of the dialectical progression' and yet a 'pure surpassing of itself'? Born from an 'agony', says Sartre, *Négritude* is 'dedicated to its own destruction'.

This is the challenge. In brief, three things should be contained in the descriptive movement. First, a self apprehending its identity in a dialectic, in a succession of moments unfolding in time. Second, this self, a subject, affirming itself in relation to another, leads to an awareness of the self with others. Three, in the real world, one's consciousness of affirming and negating one's self before the other translates a complex experience, that of being aware of the other's intrusive presence while at the same time recognising one's own freedom, one's self-consciousness, and understanding this freedom as a concrete project in relation to oneself and to others, to an actual milieu, a real human space.

The popular understanding of *Négritude* equates it with the idea of what is proper to the individuality of a black person. The reference includes more or less clear characteristics and features related to a 'race', its social history and a number of dispositions induced by such a history. This approach makes *Négritude* what it is, basically, in a collective imagination: a francophone way of rendering 'a reality' that, in African contexts, one would oppose, say, to Nkrumah's 'black personality' movement. In this sense, whereas *Négritude* appears almost always in a double conditioning frame (a specifically francophone something and a high culture conceptualisation) the black personality ideology elicits a self-concept that is viewed as more empirical, linked to a less abstract perception of a history and inferred from concrete political tasks. Strictly speaking, one would tend, then, to

emphasise the behavioural approach of black personality in its elaboration from nineteenth-century theorists, such as Edward Wilmot Blyden or Casely Heyford, to twentieth-century anglophone intellectuals such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, W.E.B. Du Bois and Nkrumah.

The perspective enforces a more concrete 'we-us' socio-political event, its historical identity, as an enabling in-group for confronting and negotiating with out-groups. Pragmatic, its ideology should emphasise an external measure of difference, accenting its social coherence in reference to assumed features of an identity, an integrative experience that would have been functioning in time, determined in its specificity by symbolic and objective relations to a geography and its history. This outlook justified Nkrumah's doctrine of purpose for an alliance of positive cumulative effects of an African tradition with Western and Islamic efforts. How is this approach, really, different from Sartre's and Senghor's *Négritude*?

In Sartre's description, the affirmation of a singularity in the dialectic is made for a self-conquest, sign and measure for surpassing. In fact, the process is enacted by any procedure affirming an antithetical statement. Re-expressed, the problem of personal identity can't be distinguished from the more encompassing problem of permanence and change, immanence and transformation; the self is an always self-modifying entity, an unstable coherence. The eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher David Hume put it well: the idea of a permanent personal identity is a fiction. And, in fact, it is a beautiful one. To illustrate this, let me use one of the examples of the Oxford-based philosopher Isaiah Berlin: the body, any body, is a matter of fact.

A change in any considerable part of a body destroys its identity; but it is remarkable that, where change is produced *gradually* and *insensibly*, we are less apt to ascribe to it the same effect. The reason can plainly be no other than that the mind, in following the successive changes of the body, feels an easy passage from the surveying its condition in one moment, to the viewing of it in another, and at no particular time perceives any interruption in its actions. From which continued perception, it ascribes a continued existence and identity to the object. But whatever precautions we may use in introducing the changes gradually, and making them proportionable to the whole, it is certain that where the changes are at last observed to become considerable, we make a scruple of ascribing identity to such different objects (Hume 1964: 256–7).

We tend to resist this idea of an unstable identity for quite respectable reasons. They involve demands for managing our connection to things and beings, and managing the knowledge that such an activity supposes, in connection to our own changing course. From this background, the notion of personal or social identity comes to be confused with the *principle* of identity, one of the laws of thought. The complexity of the issue results from the fact that personal or group identity is generally conceived in the interaction of two things: a binding structure and a multiplicity of its perceptions – in sum, a contrast between the idea of a permanent equation and that of gradual changes: the first implying what one would prefer, an unchanging nature, an essence. This is the hard point of any cultural essentialism.

Without entering into technicalities, the notions of black personality and its variations ('Africanness', *Négritude*), as in the case of any identity notion, should be understood in their extremely dynamic intricacy. When politics of identity succumb to essentialism, they negate the obvious, the intricate process of a constant transformation, and they promote a form of cultural blindness; that is, an objective mechanism that impoverishes resonant angles of one's self-perception and neutralises the complexity of all relations to everything, including to one's own history.

About all these issues, my own perception might be hiding the banality of the fact that everything I am invoking should merely recount the simple bargaining of one's everyday life practice. A magnificent passage comes to mind from Alexander Nehemas's *The Art of Living*. The Princeton philosopher addresses lessons from others (Montaigne's *equanimity*, Friedrich Nietzsche and Foucault's *harmonisation of choices*) and he muses on the fact that, always,

we are . . . left with some very abstract principles, like 'be relevantly different,' 'accept everything about yourself,' 'organize your features in an artistic manner,' which are as empty as they are banal and useless. Once again, the art of living, like any art, does not obey rules that are both general and informative (1998: 186).

This brings us back to the essential line of the meditation, the primacy of singularities in the we-community, the *Mitsein* we inhabit. It is the language that speaks to us and that we live in as our *telos*.

Finally: Telos

And in Descartes methodical doubt does not deprive us of anything, since the whole world, at least in so far as we experience it, is reinstated in the *Cogito*, enjoying equal certainty, and simply labeled ‘thought of . . .’. But the relations between subject and world are not strictly bilateral: if they were, the certainty of the world would, in Descartes, be immediately given with that of the *Cogito*, and Kant would not have talked about his ‘Copernican revolution’ (Merleau-Ponty 2002b: x).

In the testimony of texts and discourses, entries to dictionaries and lexicons, the verb *finio* translates basic manners of cultural inscriptions. They include notions of measure and balance, as well as explicit ethical invocations of the Greek *telos* (τέλος) and *oros* (ὄρος). The concepts are often used by Cicero in both *De Finibus* and *De Legibus*, in which *fin-* indicates the highest summit of one’s life, in the sense of carrying off the maturity of age (*flos aetatis*), its full measure (*ratio*) and its purpose (*consilium*).

sentis credo me jam diu quod telos. Graeci dicunt, id dicere tum extremum, tum ultimum, tum summum: licebit etiam finem pro extremo aut ultimo dicere.

(And you have observed, no doubt, that I have all along been translating the Greek term *telos* either by ‘final’ or ‘ultimate aim’ or ‘chief Good’ and for ‘final or ultimate aim’, we may also substitute ‘End’) (*De Finibus* 3.7.26).

ad finem bonorum, quo referuntur et cuius causa sunt facienda omnia.

(To the highest good, the standard of all our actions) (*De Legibus* 1.20.52).

How can we now bring together the *fin-* concept, *oros* and *telos*? We can agree that *finis*, with the value of limit, qualifies beings and things’ ways of being, of existing in space and time. In articulating a *finio*, an agent describes or prescribes in an active or passive mode a particular way. Surges a *telos*, it is our responsibility.

Faithful to the meanings of the word, the original value of conceptual interferences, (a) τὸ τέλος (*to telos*) = τὸ εὔ ενεκα (*to ou eneka*), *telos* is the final cause; (b) τὸ τέλος = τὸ ἀγαθόν (*to agathon*), *telos* is the supreme good. And from the most ancient testimonies and the tradition, *telos* is what represents:

1. *our language*, in expressing our condition, performance, our achievement;
2. *the regime* of our language, in its power to decide what is good and what is not, from our locality, what is decisive between this and that;
3. *our locality*, in the singularity of its lack and need is the concrete condition of the chief good for all.

Polysemic, yet having a high frequency in the language of Plato and Aristotle, *telos* signifies a number of values close to those of *oros* and the verb *orouô* (ὄρος and ὀρούω). The first, a substantive, means a limit and the second, a verb, designates the motion from one place to another. Besides the central idea of boundary and limit, they concern signifieds referring to concrete as well as abstract *realia* to respect or transgress: standard and measure, rule and canon, end and cessation, achievement and attainment. In considering *telos* as the conceptual equivalent of *finis*, Cicero was exemplifying a way of adapting, indigenising in Latin, most of Aristotle's technical vocabulary from *Ethica Nichomachae*. This procedure is certainly visible in *De Finibus*. In fact, there are three types of action: borrowing, translation and periphrasis. Ethics and logic are essentially about *telos*, which, according to Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* (1094a18), is identical to *agathon*, the supreme good, itself inseparable from the final cause of *Metaphysics* (994b9, 996a26). In this perspective, Aristotle does not really innovate. Most lexicons quote Plato's *Gorgias* (499e), but it is Aristotle's *Ethics* that interests Cicero. In his writings, he keeps the Greek word. But let us also remember that in both languages, *finis* and *oros* function as metonyms and metaphors. The words initially designate a limit, or a separation, generally a physical marker such as stones or trees. Varro's *De Lingua Latina* (1.9) uses the term in this sense: *arbores constitui finem*. And the expression *facere finem* means, textually, to erect a separating sign. As reflections of each other, the Greek and Latin words condense *in absentia* or *in praesentia* the same values. They are often interchangeable in the language of *De Finibus*, which presents cases of synonymy between *finis* and *telos*, *finis* and *oros*.

Oros, for boundary, with values of canon, measure and rule, has been noted. In Plato's *Leges* (834c, 1899c) and Aristotle's *Ethica Nichomachae*, the same conceptual space is actualised by *telos*. The word signifies a norm that expresses the efficacy of law and its restraining power. It applies also to a degree in human maturity. Even in the most specialised vocabulary of Aristotle's texts on logic and mathematics, the metaphoric capacity of *oros* frequently translates a relation of synonymy with *telos*. In rare cases, *oros* designates what is binding, or is proper to

members (units or individualities) of a class and all these values are conceptually close to *telos* and even to *philia*.

From the semantic dynamics of ὄρος, it is clear that what the concept signifies can aptly apply to the figure of homelessness as it was approximated with the airport meeting at the beginning of this chapter.

1. ὄρος, designation of a marker, physical or symbolic, that signals a separation or stands for its capacity in approaching two different classes;
2. ὄρος, from the manner of installing a method, boundary, or fronting, is the reference by which the particularity of a class apprehends its identity, from the frontiers qualifying a zone of partial inclusion for two or more interrelated classes;
3. ὄρος, or a landmark between classes; as such, it is a measure and a standard – in fact, the pertinent name for model. It makes sense to see it (ὄρος μέσος) used for the middle term in logic, or equated with the abstract concepts of definition and ration in mathematics.

A technical term of logic, ὄρος designates the notion of ‘definition’. This specialised meaning, also attested in the Latin *finis*, is equally part of the signified of *telos*. It arrays semantic interferences that are frequent in the language of sciences. Thus, *oros* indicates the subject or the predicate of a proposition, an agent declaring ὀρούω (*orouô*), that is, I hasten, I rush to the end, *ego finio*. Also, *oros* designates the habitual term for the mathematical notion of ratio and proportion. With this meaning, *oros* is itself an approximate, translating value of other words such as ‘memory-steps’, ‘premise’ in reasoning and the middle term of syllogism. Finally, decoding the entries in lexicons of Homer, Plato and Aristotle, we face another type of correlation: *oros* and *orouô* on one side, vis-à-vis *telos* on the other. These two semantic areas intersect. From *telos* are values involving the idea of stability in the ending of something (a word, a sentence, a process) or what coincides with an attainment, a limit, a *finis* and, as such, a question. On the other hand, the verb *orouô* generally appears with words conveying the idea of motion, to be moving toward an aim, to have a purpose. The correspondence with *telos* is there, in this identification. It testifies to a key concept of ethics.

In brief, the semantic field of ὀρούω can serve as the metaphor expressing our project, to think and recommence our practice and its perspective. In what designates our very language, to think the locus of our alienation in relation to the very conditions of each possibility. Let me refer to three assumptions supporting

the statement: ὁρούω πρὸς τὴν ἀνάγκη. I am walking towards the necessary. This is not a quotation, but an affirmation. I have stated a need, mine, vis-à-vis an external condition that is irreplaceable. And the assertion is made in Greek. In other words, with this comment, I am assenting that the something I lack is ἀναγκαῖος, the best I can have, and I am aiming at it: ἀναγίγνομαι, I rise and, ὁρούω πρὸς, I am rushing toward it and, ἀναγινώσκω, I am using the best techniques for reading.

Now, three remarks are indispensable. One, the motion represented by the verb *orouô* includes the call for a complement, a grammatical function. It corresponds also to a necessary obligation, signified in my phrase by *ananke*. The symbolic story of ἀνάγκη is articulated in Plato's *Republic*. The goddess of destiny and death, that is, of the radical *oros*, *finis*, Ἀνάγκη or *Necessitas* in Latin, is the mother of Moirae, the inflexible signs of the *fatum*, who are sisters to Horae and who, among other charges, manage social order. *Ananke* symbolises the absolute moral obligation. The Latin equivalent has the same value. Yet I should emphasise the fact that *necessitas*, the word, according to Ernout and Meillet in their *Dictionnaire étymologique de langue latine* (1951), has a close parent, *necessitudo*, for friendship and kinship relations. The two words suppose a *necesse* (variants, *necessum*, *necessus*). My Greek statement translates in Latin as *necesse est necessitatem (haberi)*, an excellent tautology for the Greek moral imperative with a major semantic addition, the moral obligation, which is not detachable from the idea of kin and friendship, and thus that of a community of language that initiated this meditation.

Two, all of the concepts invoked so far belong to a religious lexicon. The whole conceptual field of *telos* and *oros* includes ethical valuations that Christianity invests. For instance, *oros*, in the Greek versions of the New Testament, indicates a 'mountain', a physical sign: a geographical one, as in Luke (9:9); a metaphor, in the case of 13:5 in which Luke, quoting Esaias apropos 'the voice crying in the wilderness', notes of every mountain (καὶ πᾶν ὄρος) to be made low. The marking of borders (ὁρύσσω) is digging in Mark (12:1) and Matthew (21:33 and 25:18), for example. Of real interest is ὁροθεσία (*orothesia*), with a unique attestation in Acts (17:26), for the definitive setting of boundaries. In his address to the Athenians, Paul uses this word to qualify God's creation, 'having determined the times before appointed, and the (definitive) boundaries of their dwellings, καὶ τὰς ὁροθεσίας τῆς κατοικίας αὐτῶν'.

Three, the last reference, in its relation to the semantics of *oros* and *telos*, summarises everything that can be said about the horizon of this intervention.

As such, it is also a first approximation of a response to the question, ‘Why this background, why this necessity?’ In effect, the ethos that surfaces in the way of a language speaks to my language. It is to be subsumed in the uniqueness of my obligation toward regional spaces as its condition for a logical universality and moral respectability.

In brief, from the basic structuration articulated in both *Ethica Eudemia* and *Nichomachean Ethics* (1094a18–1097a), it is possible to emphasise at least three views from the intersection of *oros* and *telos*:

1. *telos*, in a particular space of a political economy, postcolonial studies or sociology of knowledge, stands for the purpose of what exists, things and beings in their natural objectness as well as in their cultural objectivation; these ‘objects’ of curiosity are, at the intersection of spaces, the only ‘individuals’ who can speak with an experiential authority on the margin which is never a margin to itself;
2. *telos*, the mode of beings in transcending their activity as sensible and intelligible entities within a space they create, and this space is primarily subjective, an effect of this very process that organises ways of relating with other objects and beings;
3. *telos*, the higher purpose that, as an internal cause, motivates the mechanics of everything, things and beings, and what constitutes them.

To think in the proper attitude, Cicero creates the word *moralis*, reformulating Aristotle’s ethics of inscription and performance. *Moralis*, in this definition, concerns bad and good manners of interacting in nature and culture. The 1987 edition of Charlton T. Lewis’s *A Latin Dictionary* has maintained the essence of the nineteenth-century phrasing of the concept. It still informs the contemporary understanding of the Latin concept:

moralis, *adj.* [mores], *of or belonging to manners or morals, moral* (a word formed by Cicero): *quia pertinet ad mores. Graeci vocant, nos eam partem philosophiae de moribus appellare solemus. Sed decet augentem linguam Latinam nominare moralem*, Cic. Fat. 1, 1; imitated by Seneca and Quintil.: *philosophiae tres partes esse dixerunt moralem, naturalem, et rationalem*, Sen. Ep. 89, 9; Quint. 12, 2, 10: *pars illa philosophiae ἠθικὴ moralis est dicta*, id. 6, 2, 8; cf. also, id. 12, 2, 19 and 20: *epistolae*, Gell. 12, 2, 3. – Hence, *adv.*: **moraliter**, *in a characteristic manner, characteristically*, Don. Ad. Ter. Ad. 5, 8, 35; Ter. Phorm. 1, 1, 2 –Esp., *morally*, Ambros. Apol. David. 6. –*Comp.*: *morallius*, Ambros. In Ps. 118, Sermon. 1, 5.

The complexity of this synthesis is real. It is an exegesis that, from Cicero's intervention, elaborates an account and summarises the Latin indigenisation of the new term (*moralis*). Three remarks should be made. First, *moralis* is presented as the equivalent of *Ethikê*. Different from the two other philosophical disciplines, *naturalis* and *rationalis*, *moralis* is concerned with customs and manners, precisely moral character. Second, the translation and the meanings of the word suppose the Aristotelian *ta ethica*. In classical treatises, the aims of the prescribed coincide with the *agathon* or chief good. The references to Ambrosius bring in a Christian perspective. One thinks particularly of St Paul's normative reconfiguration of *telos*. In the letter to the Galatians, the concept of *deigma* (5.13–25) exposes the constraining function of 'the example' in regulating the tension between *en archê* (at the beginning) and *epi telos* (at the end). As a matter of fact, one could even speak of its fundamental structuration in the Christianity that St Paul organises coherently, as Donald Harman Akenson demonstrates in *Saint Paul: A Skeleton Key to the Historical Jesus* (2000). Finally, the preceding remark is indicative of a Christian effect upon Aristotle's lesson in relation to the dynamics of the conceptual space of *telos*, *finis*, *finio* and the way they accord *philia* to their economy.

In the course of any case, a *telos*, final cause or purpose, is to be invoked as principle of explanation. It is the heart of our language and the meaning of the spaces that justify it. Unpretentious, apparently indifferent to the florid certainties of postmodernity, a major book comes to mind. It clearly states an imperative: nothing can tire the tradition. It addresses us all: what else can be closer to the sun? An arc, our airport meeting that transcends times and spaces, might be more than what it seems. That is a sign of *Le livre de la sagesse et des vertus retrouvées* (1998) by Jean-Jacques Antier and Jean Guittou. In it, the mother of a sage, an almost centenarian philosopher, names friendship the bread and wine in the life of virtues. It is always local.

22 September 2008

Notes

1. This chapter was originally published in English as 'Quam metuendus est locus iste' in *Revista de Filosofia* 122 (mayo – agosto 2008): 65–114. It has been reprinted here with permission.
2. See Figure 10a: Reconstructed Kiva at Bandelier National Monument, Figure 10b: Interior Panorama of a Reconstructed Kiva at Mesa Verde National Park, Figure 11a: A Great Kiva at Chaco Canyon and Figure 11b: Grand Kiva at the Aztec Ruins National Monument.

About a Will to Truth On Terror

In ‘*Les conspirations de fabrique*’, in his *Histoire de la révolution française* (edited by Gérard Walter, 1952) Jules Michelet writes, ‘*On écrivit à Saint-Just: “Tu vaincras tel jour.” Il vainquit. Le bonheur de Robespierre lui donna encore cette grande et dernière faveur: une victoire sans Carnot, une victoire qui donnait moyen de faire le procès à Carnot, au Comité de salut public*’ (‘It was written to Saint-Just: “You will win that given day.” He won. Robespierre’s happiness gave him even a great and last favour: a victory without Carnot, a victory that made possible a trial of Carnot, a trial by the *Comité de salut public*’).

Instead of again directing attention to the relation of self and other in present-day international spheres, as prescribing politics of difference and somehow reflecting what one might consider a sign of resistance to American-led discourse on the war on terror, circumspection would advise a different angle, a clarification of some of the main concepts and their contexts. What exactly is the issue? Can we frame it in terms of what is right and what is not? And are there credible witnesses we may call up?¹

And the centre, and the periphery

To the traditional opposition between a centre and a periphery, let’s substitute a question: where is the centre? In a book published in 1996, *Bold New World*, William Knoke has a telling story on the nationality of products in a contemporary economy. It could symbolise the real situation we live today, as well as types of potential tensions:

Los Angeles is learning (something) the hard way. The water district bought forty-eight new American trucks – with engines made in Brazil. The work gloves were made from California cotton but sewn in Asia. The city typewriters were assembled locally, but the supplier is headquartered in Japan. Likewise, a municipality in New York rejected a \$40,000 dirt

excavator from Japanese-owned Komatsu in favor of an 'American' John Deere model costing \$15,000 more. It didn't know the John Deere unit was manufactured in Japan and the Komatsu model was made locally (150).

This more or less old example indicates a number of things, clearly the complexity of interconnections in the world's economy. It does not apply only to the nationality of products but concerns also the politics of appropriation of surplus. The problem was addressed during this same period by Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (1991). In a chapter on class conflict in the capitalist world economy, they distinguish the worldwide appropriation of surplus from the reality of groups participating in the chain of production (owner, merchants, consumers) showing how this chain represents a transfer of surplus-value that transcends geographies. What they deduced is of interest. On the one hand, it is difficult to 'perceive why the politics of states differentially located in relation to the world economy should be so dissimilar' in the unequal exchange, ergo in the impact on the bourgeoisie and proletariat of different geographical contexts. On the other hand, as a consequence, it is 'easy to perceive that using the political machinery of a given state to change the social composition and world-economic function of national production does not *per se* change the capitalist world system as such' (123). One understands the point and its implications as emphasised by Balibar and Wallerstein on the same page. It is today a banality apropos socio-economic conflicts created by geographic non-uniformity in the management of economic performance versus social performance. It follows that 'core and periphery are, then, simply phrases to locate one crucial part of the system of surplus appropriation by the bourgeoisie'. In a different language, that of John Naisbitt's *Megatrends* (1988), the tension comes down to the following observation: political autonomy, self-rule and local dynamics of capitalism intimately depend on determinations and alliances of transnational machineries.

From this viewpoint, is it not possible to correlate socio-economic conditions to localised aggressive responses motivated by exploitation and poverty, or even anchored in religious differences? On poverty, for example, look at the history of black people in the southern political economy of the United States. Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward have analysed the phenomenon in their *Poor People's Movements* (1979). They accent the fact that a transformation of the integration of black people into the economic system has always been a shift from one type of subjugation to another:

From slaves to cash tenants and sharecroppers; from cash tenants and sharecroppers to the lowest stratum in an emerging southern rural free labor system; and, finally, to the status of an urban proletariat characterized by low wages and high unemployment. In effect, the Black poor progressed from slave labor to cheap labor to (for many) no labor at all (107).

In brief, what Balibar and Wallerstein are suggesting meets Knoke's analysis. *The Left in Search of a Center* (1996), edited by Michael Crozier and Peter Murphy, addresses the heart of the question: 'How is it possible to maintain a coherent political and social identity in the face of the *dynamics* of the modern world? Dynamics both produces meaning and erodes it. This is the paradox of modernity' (3). It is erroneous to conceptualise imperialism as what invades an elsewhere; imperialism comes home. There is, thus, a necessity in reconsidering not only grids for analysis but also concepts inherited from the past. For instance, what is a good usage of notions such as 'import and export' for valuing national scores in the United Kingdom, India or South Africa? Should one not rethink also today's geo-economic interconnections in terms of invisible tasks such as engineering, designing and planning, which transcend time and space and render an article's country of production or the nationality of a commodity copyright inadequate?

A question of legality, a question of ethics

A discourse of resistance or rebellion, rejection or hostility, warrants a legality; in any case, an ethics should assure its validity and credibility. Explicitly or implicitly, such a discourse falls back on its own basic principles that allow it to qualify actions as right or wrong.

It is thus possible to consider what is sometimes called a resistance against Western hegemony from a different background. In his 1989 article, 'The Domain of the Political and Overlapping Consensus', published in *The New York University Law Review*, John Rawls suggests four general items for directing a 'theory of justice' as a 'theory of fairness'. That is: (a) to deal with a diversity of comprehensive doctrines as they have been conceived and articulated in religious positions in philosophical traditions of Western societies; (b) to consider evidence that only 'an oppressive use of state power can maintain a continuing common affirmation of one comprehensive, religious, philosophical or moral doctrine' (246); (c) to face the commonsense fact that democratic regimes 'must be willingly and freely supported by at least a substantial majority of its politically active citizens;

because, if they are not the system might cease to be secure' (234); and (d) to face the following final fact that 'the political culture of a reasonably stable democratic society normally contains, at least implicitly, certain fundamental intuitive ideas from which it is possible to work up a political conception of justice suitable for a constitutional regime' (234).

Rawls defines a framework. It addresses 'the consensus of citizens' and a world in which, as already noted, transnational capitalism controls a worldwide system of real power, characterised by the metaphor of a 'political (system) . . . left behind in the dust', used by Knoke. One can accent such a view. One way would be to refer to global paradoxes, including the most visible: globality of economic integration goes along with the progressive dissolution of governments' political authority. Yet Rawls's pronouncements are expressed in a language of service to political democracies of the West and, in principle, to regimes they have inspired. In this representation, the political is overemphasised. On the other hand, the lection, unreserved, coincides with a universal responsibility. Ergo, a metaphor: the West conforms with the Hegelian historical subject. Pluralised in the *we* of its liberal democracies, the West would incarnate effectively the political project for a theory of justice and its sociologisation in the 'consensus of citizens'. But how can one theorise universally on justice and fairness from the relative certainty of a metaphor? As a matter of fact, how is it possible to justify all empirical processes, from the rationality of a cadre determined by its own constraints, its own drift towards a universality that claims to transcend all transhistorical lines and their variations?

Let us ask the same question from an African interrogation. The fourteenth Kinshasa Philosophical Week (24–30 April 1994) was devoted to rationality and rationalities in social sciences and their developments; in sum, to the evidence of a multiplicity of their paths, their methods and commerce. In a major intervention, referring to the French philosopher Jean Lacroix, Professor Mvumbi Nseka of the Catholic School of Theology stated: 'An animal or a God cannot be properly moral, because they are what they are . . . On the contrary, a human being is what (s)he is not, (s)he is not what (s)he is: (s)he has to create herself, himself.' The classical invocation situates any human being in a situation in which one is always and simultaneously a given-being (*un être donné*) and being-in-the-making (*un être à faire*). Rawls's particulars support what is assumed here. Yet no one, nothing, can really transcend its conditions of possibility.

Here is a working hypothesis to consider. Ethical relativism affirms a challenge in cognitive and moral processes: on the one hand, the tenet that convictions are true for the believer and, on the other hand, the opinion that the singularity of a given situation justifies one in doubting absolute criteria of judgements since choices, like things, are relative to each other. Rawls's items are part of this theory oriented towards a general ethical system of justice. Relating it to classical schemes of ethics, one would easily recognise irritating limits and, concerning economic and socio-political performances in the world economy, one would then agree with LaRue Tone Hosmer's *The Ethics of Management* (1991): 'The question in ethical relativism is not whether different moral standards and ethical beliefs exist; they obviously do, and we all have experiences to conform that fact. The question is whether there is any commonality that overrides the differences' (104). There must be more ethical norms in economic management and, for sure, in the practice of everyday life. In fact, the question on any commonality states a knowing that entails a trust indicating that such might be the case.

On terror and terrorism: Testimonies

Could a hypothesis on a theory of justice in the international world contribute to thinking seriously about what 'terror' and 'terrorism' may signify in 'situation ethics', in supposing normative standards of truth and rationality?

For and against imprudent and restless models that often inadvertently restitute evolutionist grids, one cannot miss the reality of a *World on Fire*, the title of a book by Amy Chua subtitled *How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability* (2002). Ethnicity and indigenusness arguments can espouse ideals of Western democracy such as class benefits in the global economy, as illustrated in competing status for benefits by ethnic or racial minorities in Asia, Africa or Latin America. The arguments in the name of ethnicity and indigenusness can justify currents of anti-Westernism. And finally, the e-democracy, the media globalising culture and anti-Americanism can coexist, and they do. One needs to revisit economic factors in globalisation processes and the backlash. This was possibly foreseeable from the 1990s crisis and, concretely, the 'Sterling Crisis' and precisely from what David M. Smick calls the 'shrinking Central Banks' in *The World Is Curved: Hidden Dangers to the Global Economy* (2008). Instead of theories of destinies of cultures, we have the evidence of global economic forces and their paradoxes.

Chua marks three points. Of the late 1980s and the 1990s, she observes:

Global markets may well hold the key to long-term greater prosperity for the poor and not-so-poor countries of the world . . . Thomas Friedman suggested a few years ago that America is ‘the country that benefits most from today’s global integration.’ Friedman was recently corroborated by a 2002 *New York Times* report indicating that the United States, rather than the developing world, has been the overwhelming beneficiary of globalization . . . The report goes on to quote financier and philanthropist George Soros: ‘The trend of globalization is that surplus capital is moving from the periphery countries to the center, which is the United States’ (2002: 234).

Smick notes how Soros read correctly the 1992 Sterling Crisis: ‘If you really believe that exchange took place, up that to ten billion’ (2008: 175). Chua provides an evaluation of the atmosphere during the crisis:

Like the market dominance of any minority of the world, American market dominance provokes intense resentment. Indeed, the rest of the world, if anything, exaggerates America’s disproportionate wealth and power . . . Like resentment against market-dominant minorities in individual countries, anti-Americanism around the world is not a monolithic phenomenon. In some countries, anti-Americanism is particularly fierce among the elite, who in turn foment anti-American sentiment among the lower classes (2002: 234).

And she puts two and two together, an economic fact and an effect of the democracy: the paradox of a convergence. On the one hand, a dire inequality exists within the economy:

The spread of global markets in recent decades has unambiguously widened the gap between the developed and underdeveloped countries. Today, the richest 1 percent of the world’s population own as much as the poorest 57 percent. Half the world’s population lives on less than one dollar a day. Meanwhile, the top 20 percent of those living in high-income countries account for 86 percent of all the world’s private consumption expenditures (245).

On the other hand, resentment and frustration find an explanation in the objectivity of the perceived:

Today [7 December 2001], as London's *Financial Times* recently put it, 'Americans are richer while people in most transition economies and emerging markets still struggle, their frustration heightened by cheap, almost universal access to images and information about how much better Americans live.' While anti-Americanism used to be driven by what America did, 'now it is also motivated by what America is' (246).

This economic difference can be seen every day on television, the Internet, or on cell phones.

Let us face the problem from a different viewpoint by referring to three political assessments: *Europe and Islam* by Franco Cardini (2001), *Why Do People Hate America?* by Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davies (2003) and *The Age of Sacred Terror* by Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon (2002). Published almost at the same time by analysts who basically belong to what one might call, after Pierre Bourdieu, 'a class on paper', the three books examine political assertions and moral allegations concerning 'terror' and 'terrorism'. They adjudge acts of aggression, insurgency or revolt against Western hegemony explicitly from a framework postulated by the aftermath of 11 September 2001. In such an approximation, the books have an identical preoccupation and address it from the peculiarity of an American context. But do they really have the same objective?

Dictionaries of usage define 'terror' as a fear from within or without. In the sense of its literary value, 'terror' interferes often with meanings of 'horror', as illustrated for instance, in the anthology edited by Leonard Wolf, *Wolf's Complete Book of Terror* (1994), which includes classics of English literature such as Edgar Allan Poe, H.P. Lovecraft and H.G. Wells. Movies and books of horror tales prove this semantic interference. It is a question of taste: there are people who like this sort of mixture and some are even addicted to it. The terrifying and the horrifying come to stand as objects of fascination. In this sort of intense interest, it is not easy to know for sure where to draw the line between the aesthetically and ethically licit and illicit, and from which value system.

The axis calls immediate attention to the semantics of 'terror' and 'terrorism', in political and military languages. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, the two words relate to 'the unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence

by a person or an organized group against people or property with the intention of intimidating or coercing societies or government, often for ideological or political reasons'. As exemplified in the three chosen assessments, this definition merges ideas of brutality and coercion with their evaluation in an association with moral judgements about the violence implied. In fact, in this horizon, act and interpretation are called into question in terms of their legitimacy. No unaligned model, no possible neutrality: reason and truth are given as absolutes.

All three works correlate terror and terrorism with the notion of war. The semantic configuration of war supposes equally battles and conflicts, armed campaigns and military engagements, their knowledge and science, and all ideas connected to a legal confirmability and to an ethical verifiability. One should note also that the three chosen texts, by their focus on 9/11, entail a more general table of war classification that would distinguish types of conflicts thanks to keys specifying wars on drugs, prostitution or the slavery trade. These wars are, in effect, worldwide operations. Their effects testify to intensive and diffused confrontations between camps in geo-politics.

But is warfare an art or a science? Polemology, from its Greek origin, is the scientific and sociological study of wars, say the experts. They add that a war should not be confused with any armed conflict, in the manner that a legal military operation cannot be confused with conflicts borne out of frustrations that may express themselves in economic and political violence. In knowledgeable sources, besides Pentagon compendia on American-led confrontations in the world, one would quote the well-known *How to Make War: A Comprehensive Guide to Modern Warfare* (1982) by James F. Dunnigan. Inscribed in the tradition, Dunnigan's treatise possibly crystallises the Western perspective in military science apropos the technology and philosophy of waging wars, at least since the end of the eighteenth century. I am thinking of the 1790s, a period of immense socio-political transformations brought about by the American and French revolutions and the changes they mobilised in terms of industrial resources and investments in weaponry, on the one hand, and in terms of human rights, on the other hand. One has there at least two battlegrounds.

Dunnigan's book synthesises not only technical knowledge, but also the capital of a political history. Both enabled the European minority in the world's population (more or less 200 out of 900 million, at the beginning of the nineteenth century) to send off armies and colonists and, with its troops, control immense territories all over the earth. Since the fifteenth century, military tradition has moderated multiple

explorations. By the nineteenth century, in terms of knowledge and strategy, there are, on the one hand, rules for absolute winning, as noted in the nineteenth-century classic *On War* (1976) by Carl von Clausewitz and, on the other hand, esteem for realistically moderate precepts such as those presented in *The Art of War* (1983) by the Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu. Recorded around 100 BC, the work was introduced in the West in 1772, thanks to a French edition established by J.J.M. Amiot, a Jesuit priest who had been a missionary to Peking.

It may be claimed that colonial history everywhere has been a military history in terms of aims, agencies and actions. *Ad montem*, warfare atlases, such as the Cambridge ones, are functional topographies of expeditions detailing the nature and methods of war. *Ad vallem*, one may consult another type of illustration, *The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries* (1962) edited by John J. Johnson. This book presents the proceedings of a 1959 symposium on 'military-political development in some of the newly emergent states of the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa and in the countries of Latin America'. Sponsored by the RAND Corporation, the meeting took place in Santa Monica, California. The participants were 'historians or political scientists who combine an interest in military affairs with a knowledge of a particular area of the world'. Its stated objective was to compel 'thoughtful and realistic assessments of the contemporary role of the military' as 'a significant contribution to social and political analysis'. Of real interest is one of the main predicates of the collective reflection. Hans Speier, then chairman of the Research Council of the RAND Corporation, noted that preconceptions against the military had 'diverted the intellectual curiosity of (social scientists) to politically less important professions', asserting 'the challenging task of contributing to the understanding of the "illiberal" aspects of life in non-Western societies' (vi).

As it is, the statement underlines the fundamental vision of polemology as a strategic normalising discipline and a symbol of a given type of humanism. Consider often-quoted ancient maxims that justify military ethics and science such as, 'We make war, so that we may live in peace' from Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* (10.7) or '*Qui desiderat pacem, praeparet bellum*' (one who wishes to live in peace should prepare for war) from the prologue of a military treatise and *Epitoma De Rei Militari* of the Roman Flavius Vegetius Renatus. This is a variation of Aristotle's preceding principle that explains pre-emptive arguments and strategies. The 2003 United States intervention in Iraq is a good case of a pre-emption strategy.

Positions

The books by Cardini, Sardar and Davies, and Benjamin and Simon address this ethical paradigm in the plausibility of its intellectual genealogy and tradition. This major issue points to cultural paradigms. Concretely, the testimonies arrest the fact of an unexpected *casus belli*: being attacked on one's own territory. In fact, they read the rapport between the unmarked American space before 11 September 2001 and after. This is the main theme in *The Age of Sacred Terror* and in *Why Do People Hate America?* On the other hand, Cardini's *Europe and Islam* dissects a longer memory by historicising Europe vis-à-vis Islam in connection with the latter's prophetic declaration.

There are striking similarities among the three books. First, in *The Age of Sacred Terror*, one notes analytic descriptions apropos (a) the new American visibility as it is now linked to fields of jihad or 'God's path'; (b) the American lost paradigm of an internal invulnerability, a principle that is used to defy, articulate strategies for defeating or conditionally negotiate with an enemy; and (c) a new linguistic code that functions as a grid for symbolising publicly damages and engagements. Second, in *Why Do People Hate America?*, one has (a) a ground-zero platform that serves as a reference for analysing concrete relations with others as regulated by moral concepts; (b) this reference declines itself in the metaphor of a new daybreak, punctuating strategies in defensive and offensive arguments; (c) the instrumentality of a table that evaluates anti-Americanism as it is expressed in negative equations, as in the case of American 'hamburger' being associated with 'viruses'. Finally, Cardini's *Europe and Islam* offers a narrative that goes back to the origin of Islam and details three axes: (a) one of a permanent confrontation, an obliged dialogue between two cultures, two religions; (b) an axiological metaphor, *Inimicus crucis, inimicus Europae* (enemy of the cross, enemy of Europe); and (c) the sagas of two competing reasons: Islam versus Europe, and Islam versus Christianity.

In today's global culture, the three assessments reanalyse the interaction in terms of the centre and its peripheries (economic, cultural or religious) along with the question of legality.

Although dealing with the same issue, the three narratives are statements about three different ways of commenting on both the history and prehistory of a confrontation. The main issue stands manifest. In Benjamin and Simon's book, as well as that of Sardar and Davies, it is the transformation of an asserted internal invulnerability that is thematised. It coincides with a depiction of two foundational

arguments: on the one side, a secular culture subsumes a religion, Christianity; on the other, a culture identifies with a religion, Islam and, in actuality, with a Revelation. We can measure the enduring affect of stressing the value of jihad as 'God's path'.

The jihad designates a visible effort, the *sharia*, God's service and campaign for God. It blurs any possible distinction between the religious and the political. An absolute sign of God's will, Islam means a total deference, an exclusive confession, an all-encompassing code of ethics. Today's eminent Arabist, Gerhard Endress, of the German Ruhr University, Bochum, retranscribes a religious statement that is a total proclamation in *Islam: An Historical Introduction* (2002). This commitment was passed down in francophone countries by the work of Louis Massignon. It is a potent exigency signified by the Sura 3 of the Koran: religion is surrender; religion with God is Islam. From this 'act of faith', there are unsuspected domains for approaching the complexity of the American predicament. For instance, the 'Nation of Islam' is a community of historically new groups within the Islamic tradition, analysed by Sylvania A. Diouf in *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (1998).

Cardini's narrative is not detachable from a long story of love and hatred between two civilisations, between two worlds. The 732 AD Battle of Poitiers corresponds to a landmark in the wrenching conflicts and negotiations between European history and Islam. It came to encapsulate the essence of these tensions and Cardini thrusts its sign under 'the myth of Poitiers'.

One could introduce here a radically discordant voice: Gwynne Dyer's *Future: Tense: The Coming World Order* (2004). Dyer's book questions the frantic speculations about terrorism and tries to approach the other side on its faith, and would like us all to face 'the big problems' coming, which include global warming, population migrations and the five big powers of the near future (China, the United States, India, Russia and Brazil). Dyer dismisses the neo-conservative approach to terrorism, arguing in terms of effective technical references against circumstantial politics. A historian, he suggests an evaluation of violent acts that would distinguish real terrorists from fanatics, analysing 9/11 from 'a logarithmic scale for disasters like the one they use for stars'. This is an invitation to think about terrorism differently. Thus, to the attacks of the West, Dyer suggests that one consider how 'an Arab bill of indictment of the West would start' (67).

These books are magnificent testimonies of a present past in the contradiction of its past present. They illustrate the intricacy of words and concepts, their

ambiguous relationship to terrible realities, and witness a long history and a contemporary political economy.

The categories of self and other appear now under a realistic light. Unstable notions in shifting frameworks, they require constant re-examinations.

Concerning Africa, a French Dominican priest, René Luc Moreau, in *Africains Musulmans* (1982) urged for the harmonisation of a confessional coexistence among belief systems and institutions in postcolonial countries. In the 1990s, David Westerlund, a Swedish academic, also transcending preconceptions and ideologies, directed an international interrogation on the sense of state secularism and the necessary acknowledgment of the religious. Westerlund's *Questioning the Secular State: The Worldwide Resurgence of Religion in Politics* (1996) is an invitation to such dialogues, both spiritual and civil. Of course, political scientists have deemed such arrangements inevitable since the early 1960s. The University of Wisconsin-Madison scholar Crawford Young mentioned it in his 'Politics in Africa', a chapter in G.A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell Jr's *Comparative Politics Today: A World View* (1988).

More recently, Vassar professor Giovanna Borradori thought of re-examining questions of principles and reformulating them in philosophical hesitations. After consulting a number of distinguished American philosophers (Quine, Davidson, Putnam, Nozick, Danto, Rorty, Cavell and MacIntyre) she put in dialogue Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida, which led her to the publication of *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (2003). From lists of mythical, religious and scientific renderings, what should one trust more about truth? Habermas and Derrida agreed on a condition: the usefulness of the idea and reality of hospitality. This is also an injunction that depends on what might be true.

A conclusion to this complicated question might come from a brief text by Peter Levi. An ex-priest, chaplain of a prison and an archeological correspondent, he is a man of undisputed experience and the author of *Grave Witness* (1985). Levi's book depicts a police interrogation concerning the mystery of a sixth-century burial in Oxfordshire, England. Intriguing, it contains pieces of Greek pottery. The following extract may denote very well a terrifying parable.

'Can you formally identify this, sir, as your bicycle?'

'By what signs do you know it?'

'And where did you leave it?'

'What was that?'

‘Was it secured?’

‘How was it secured?’

‘Have you any witness to that?’

The interrogation was bleak. It was seldom aggressive, but it was relentless.

The worst thing about it somehow was hearing Mary referred to as ‘the murdered woman’ (70).

Between self and other, violence in its structuration and justification often transforms itself into abstractions or technicalities, objects and products of politics or the sciences. Violence may, this way, be erected as a monument to truth. What it meant is forgotten in arrangements, reasonable and unreasonable attributions, and the classification of rights and wrongs by a police of faith and knowledge.

Somewhere, a human being, possibly an innocent one, has been murdered once again. By how many millions can a polemologist multiply such a happening, here and elsewhere?

31 January 2008

Note

1. This chapter was originally published as ‘About a Will to Truth: A Meditation on Terror’ in *Itinéraires et trajectoires: Mélanges offerts à Clémentine Faïk-Nzuji-Madiya*, ed. Pius Nkashama Ngandu (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2008): 227–36. It has been reprinted here with permission. The argument summarises the main points of a seminar organised at Duke University on ‘Philosophy in Times of Terror’.

On Education and Anxiety

Interdisciplinarity, interculturality and diversity are three avenues that have marked the university over the last 50 years. Three international seminars directed from Duke University and Stanford University on expressions of alterity have persuaded me that the notion and reality of diversity as they function in the imaginary and political economy of our present 'global village' may be good keys to horizons we are already facing in today's university. From Simonides, an ancient lesson as a mediation, *polis didaskei andra*; the city is still a teacher.

Contours

From the published proceedings of the seminars, three entries would summarise the principles, themes and organisation.

In 1993, the first semester-long international seminar, 'Nations, Identities, Cultures,' which took place at Duke University, focused on these concepts and their relation to exile, to the ethnicisation of the political and to the recess of the social in our contemporary world. The proceedings were published as a special issue of the *South Atlantic Quarterly* (Mudimbe 1997). The historical background for our reflections was the nineteenth century and the progressive transformation of paradigms such as 'nation', 'nationality', 'class' and 'civil society'. Twenty-five scholars participated as faculty in this seminar. They included five Duke professors, professors from other American institutions and participants from Canada, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel and Sweden.

Each faculty member presented an original paper to the seminar participants and then led a general discussion. All the papers addressed, pro or con, a general argument that I had prepared in collaboration with staff members. They also addressed each other by focusing on theory or on a completed case study such as on Quebec; Israel's national borders; the Mediterranean basin; Eastern Europe; gender in rural Zaire; Kongo nationalism; the women of Lebanon; the Danish/Swedish border; and Rwanda.¹ The theoretical perspectives dealt with issues such as the identity of memory and the memory of identity; popular cultures,

race or ethnic origins and internationality; civil society and the contradictions of liberalism; dialectical identity in Hegel; and utopia and postmodernity.

Twenty-three graduate students from Duke and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill were registered in the seminar; however, the average weekly attendance was fifty participants. The seminar took place in thirteen weekly sessions of two and a half hours. Each session was briefly introduced, followed by the presentation of the first speaker's paper and a discussion. After a break, the second part of the session consisted of the presentation of the second speaker's paper and its discussion. Each presentation was videotaped and broadcast by Satellite Communication of Languages (SCOLA) to more than 4 000 colleges and universities in the United States, Russia and China.

Organised on the same pattern, the second seminar took place at Stanford University in the spring of 1996. The introduction to the proceeding detailed its articulation.

Its objective was a conversation on the differences – perceived, conscious or implicit – facing the concept of the diversity of knowledges and the unity of science. Essentially, this seminar was a continuation of the one held at Duke. The Stanford seminar similarly drew into dialogue scholars from several countries, institutions and disciplines in the humanities, the social and natural sciences, and law. It had three components: a research function, in so far as all participants presented original work; a pedagogical function, with presentations made in the form of televised lectures transmitted to more than 10 000 institutions of higher education in the United States, China and Russia via SCOLA; and a social function aimed at fostering contact between senior and junior scholars and students that might lead to future collaboration.

The seminar concluded with a two-day international symposium focusing on a question that had been implicit in all our previous discussions of diaspora and immigration: Which sciences for tomorrow? Our reflection took the form of a dialogue on the 1996 state-of-the-art Gulbenkian Foundation report on the structuring of the social sciences (published as *Open the Social Sciences* by Stanford University Press) and its analysis of the increasingly apparent disjunction between the traditional organisation of knowledge production in accordance with distinct disciplines and contemporary research that strains against the limits imposed on our thinking by this division of labour. Interestingly enough, most of the twenty-some symposiasts could claim as their original homeland a foreign country such as Canada, England, France, Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico, Switzerland or Zaire; now, however, they travel with American passports.

If the guiding theme of the Duke seminar was how twentieth-century thought, in feeding on the ideas and ideals of the nineteenth century, has rendered itself exiled, the Stanford seminar was more prospective and addressed the contemporary phenomenon of immigration and diaspora as a potential opening towards something new.

The third seminar, a nine-week theoretical exploration, focused on the idea of 'madness', the challenge represented by an innocent question: What is such a difference? Is it possible to face the difference it signifies in its own right as constituting its own system, with its own rules and norms? On the other hand, what do we do with controversial statements such as that of Michel Foucault, who says: 'Now, with me, madness can speak in its own language'. Is it really possible for any deviation to speak about itself in a language that is not in relation to reason?

In search of a paradigm: Drifts

One may consider alterity to be one's self-apprehension as this particular *alter* vis-à-vis someone else, other people, in a real or imaginary community. Indeed, in a reversed relation, the other becomes an *alter*, corresponding literally with the Latin meaning of the word: the other of two, one of the two, the other.

In order to bring together the conceptual fields of all these elements, let me investigate the metaphor of continental drift. Emily Apter used this figure as the title of her book: *Continental Drift: From National Characters to Virtual Subjects* (1999). Here Apter sums up the problematic, which, as she specifies in the preface, fuses a number of things being carried by moving phenomena, among them vision, cultural stereotypes and ethics of character in relation to modernity and futurity:

Unifying the book is an emphasis on the play between intellectual and disciplinary fault-lines within modern subject-formation, and the shearing away of landmass (literal and figurative) from continental or national perimeters. From earthquakes to race wars to 'astrocentric' perspectives on cultural universalism, the topographies of millennial identity are shown simultaneously to appropriate and transform age-old narratives of national consciousness, imperial time and place, and 'character-building' (vii).

The metaphor functions very well in Apter's analysis. It calls to witness cultural fragments that interact with cultural matter activated by conflicting forces that

present an anomalous behaviour, that is the aura characterising an originality. Anomaly, in the usage I am stressing after Georges Canguilhem, expresses both the expected and the unexpected. In physics, state manuals, anomaly designates an angle used to determine and fix the position of a body in an elliptical orbit, a planet for instance. In its technical value, the qualifier *true* anomaly indicates the angle between the closest point to the sun (or perihelion) in the orbit of a planet, the sun and the direction of the planet's movement. A *mean* anomaly, on the other hand, stands for the angle between the perihelion and a moving hypothetical planet that has the same period as the effective planet. From the vocabulary of psychology, we have come to accept conventions that, in everyday life, establish connections between anomalous patterns of behaviour in a given experience with altered states of consciousness. What is indicated concerns a deviation from norms considered to be representative of a milieu. This meaning has a parallel in the language that reflects and explains it: the language of epistemology, with a value popularised by Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). Within this context, anomaly signifies, in the practice of a discipline, a fact that appears and is not predictable from the theoretical background of a scientific system.

The two metaphoric poles, the first from physics and the second from psychology and epistemology, allow one to understand the intellectual mechanics involved in cultural appreciations entailing any anomaly as an eccentric phenomenon appearing within the cadre of functional regulations. Strictly, then, from the tradition, one is appraising an erratic event from a descriptive viewpoint. The prescriptive viewpoint would require its submission to strictures that regulate axes ordering statutes of distinction between what is true and what is false (epistemology), what is good and what is bad (ethics) and what is beautiful and what is not (aesthetics). Exegetical procedures have usually determined ways of commenting on, evaluating, implementing and, when necessary, adapting the orthodox. In their postulations, the negated, the reproved or the marginalised stand always as an anomalous something; that is, an infringement, an oddity qualifying itself as an irregularity. It is from the limits of prescriptive systems that one faces such alternatives as 'regional' epistemologies, ethics and aesthetics. But, then, what is the meaning of an alternative if, at least, logically and first of all, it corresponds to a two-proposition system in which one is true and the other necessarily false? Apparently incongruous even when used with the figurative value of a substitute, their peculiarity looms over the expected. This is the challenge of Apter's continental drift metaphor. This is also an angle from which to make sense

of some controversial practices of disciplines and, if necessary, to evaluate the signification of essentialist positions.

To respond adequately to the question, let me clarify three things: the theme, alterity; the viewpoint, an objective or subjective method; the practice, a question of disciplinary angle and a question of aesthetic taste. There is a passage from Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1966a) that I often refer to. It sums up wonderfully the three matters by situating them in the history of disciplinary practices since the end of the eighteenth century. To make a case, using mainly the constitution and the development of three disciplines (biology, economics and linguistics), Foucault suggests an exacting reading of their history from the dynamics of three pairs of concepts. He conceives of a grid having two columns with three sets of concepts articulated in binary relations. Without going into details, let us just note that each concept has an operating *raison d'être* coupled with an effective working capacity that authorises judgements on, say, what is logically expected and what is not; in other words, what, in a biological, economic or linguistic framework, is or is not aberrant, or deviating from models. Here is the grid.

- *Function* and/or *Norm*
- *Conflict* and/or *Rule*
- *Signification* and/or *System*

This grid serves well in order to understand how, over the last three centuries, social science disciplines have been inventing 'normality' and 'abnormality' through a constant interrogation of the 'anomalous'.

The schema suggested by Foucault is definitely productive. It supports a hypothesis about the history of operating paradigms in social sciences. For now, let me simply accent its effectiveness by synthesising how the notions of normality and abnormality are produced under the guise of the anomalous. When, in the practice of disciplines, the set of concepts in the left column (function, conflict and signification) is given precedence over that on the right side (norm, rule and system) in the description of mechanics of life (biology), work (economics) and language (culture), the disciplines classify very rationally experiences (beings' behaviours, social formations and vernaculars) according to their conformity with pre-existing standard criteria, the anomalous standing as the defining test. This leads to a supposedly valid separation between domains of normality versus those of abnormality. When the analysis is made from the viewpoint of the norm, the

rule and the system (in other words, when a methodological primacy is accorded to the right column) there is a huge challenge: anything can be approached as constituting a system in its own right, having its own rules and witnessing to its own norms. This is the situation in which we find ourselves today, thanks to a pluralisation of angles in the field of social sciences. Foucault's argument should be related to what makes it really understandable, Canguilhem's *The Normal and the Pathological* (1991). From its lessons, along with natural sciences, we should problematise the too-easy opposition between the normal and the anomalous and problematise its semantic interferences with other constraining exemplars, such as the normal and the abnormal.

You say what about the 'anomalous'?

The easy-to-accept semantic association between 'anomaly' and '(ab-) normality', as well as the similitude of inferences they can induce, can be accounted for, at least partially, by an erroneous popular etymology that, through notions of model, regularity and stability, connects them to values of the Greek *nomós*, or to the idea of custom. Thus, from this ancient Greek background onwards, the meaning of statute, of general law, has been expressed in political and legal sets such as *κατὰ νόμον* (*kata nomon*), in reference to the established law, and in *παρὰ νόμον* (*parà nómon*), opposite to the law.

Insists Canguilhem, contrary to a generally accepted opinion, assumed even in a number of respectable dictionaries of medicine and psychology textbooks, 'anomaly' does not come from *νόμος* (*nomós*), the idea of the law, but from *ὁμαλός* (*homalós*), an adjective, for what is average, equable, uniform and unremarkable. The confusion about the etymological value of *anomaly* probably comes from the fact that both *nomós* and *homalós* are frequent in the political vocabulary. For example, in Aristotle's civic lexicon, the verb *anomalizô* 'to restore to equality', is a synonym of *homalizô* or 'to make even'; both actions can be actualised *κατὰ νόμον* or *παρὰ νόμον*, according to, or contrary to, the law.

Etymologically, the (an-)omalous – *ἀν + ομαλός* – simply designates what is, or what is not, common regarding the Aristotelian evenness of a surface (in science) or of rights (in politics). There is, in Aristotle's *Poetics* (1454a27), a remarkable attestation of *anomalôs*, the adverb meaning 'what is regularly irregular'. The etymological value, in the positive and negative, would correspond to the notion of *value intermediate*, the arithmetic mean, and quite clearly to that of expected value in statistics.

In his intellectual landmark *The Normal and the Pathological*, which oriented me to these subtleties, Canguilhem draws necessary separations. A medical doctor and a philosopher, Canguilhem demonstrates how the anomalous should not be confused with the 'abnormal' or the 'pathological'. These terms imply differently interconnected values of the defective and the detrimental; in brief, effects of functional modifications with, sometimes inherent, *a pathos*, a feeling of inadequacy, a suffering or an unhappiness. The Greek conceptual field of *pathos* includes that which happens, such as an unfortunate accident, or a terrible experience involving the body or the soul, and notions connoting affliction, pain and suffering. To quote Canguilhem, speaking of the biological framework, what the pathological suggests 'leads us to nothing less than the general problem of the variability of organisms and the scope and significance of variability'. And, by bringing this statement into the general lexicological context, in order to distinguish the anomalous from the normal and the pathological, here is possibly the best working definition of 'anomaly': let us call it, writes Canguilhem, 'a fact of individual variation which prevents two beings from being able to take the place of each other completely' (1991: 289).

Canguilhem's perspective marked Foucault's archaeology of knowledge. Inspired by their views apropos the implications of politics of alterity, I have been connoting a number of things. First, in linking Apter's metaphor of a continental drift to questions on the instability of paradigms, I am recognising a claim that there is, today, transcending the limitations of regional styles, a common manner of speaking about the truth and of commenting on the constraints that specify this manner in disciplinary methods. Second, in the periodisation of this manner, changes of arguments have been testifying to a reformulation of languages in relation to what is to be known. Paradigms are instruments that produce approaches to objects of knowledge and, simultaneously, justify their own advent as a privilege in rarefying valid methods for bringing forth knowledge. Third, in this general process, the project spells out its path as identical with that of the guidelines to knowledge. At stake is a problem, however: Does not the alterity of the anomalous – an object, a stone or a human being – come to represent a difference to subdue, something to conquer, to submit? Or, a more telling figure, a thing that can be overrun, and transformed into a sign of having, into what is part of one's being?

These figures may seem inappropriate. Yet, they are adequate renderings of procedures for knowing. Jean-Paul Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness* (1956), very convincingly indicates how the language of epistemology is animated by military

and alimentary metaphors. In effect, Sartre observes this curious fact: to know seems to require a method specifying planning, organisation and strategies of engagement. On the alimentary side, one faces allusions to recipes, techniques for consumption and digesting. They can be extended analogically to ways of acclimating cultures and integrating individuals.

About a possible application of epistemological metaphors to alterity, one could bring in its dependence on socio-historical contexts. In a 1977 conversation with members of the psychoanalysis department of the University of Vincennes, commenting on the socio-historical cadre in which new disciplines organise themselves, Foucault stated that 'racism wasn't initially a political ideology. It was a scientific ideology which manifested itself everywhere.' The text, centred on thematics about 'the confession of the flesh', is included in *Power/Knowledge* (1980), a collection of interviews. The racism issue summarised in Foucault's statement is of interest for at least three reasons.

One, the conversation is, at that moment, focusing on the thesis of Count Henri de Boulainvilliers about the two different 'French nations': the nobility, supposedly of German blood, and the older stocks of Gallo-Romans. In order to understand Foucault, one has to conceive a dissociation between the scientific and the political ideology.

Two, Foucault's ordering is a challenge to Hannah Arendt's sequence in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). Although she mentions earlier forerunners, the American philosopher situates the eighteenth-century Boulainvilliers, a translator and disciple of Spinoza, at the genesis of the 'race thinking' movement of French aristocrats, and she insists on how he adapted the 'might-right doctrine' to racial qualities. Arendt considers the nineteenth-century Arthur de Gobineau to be the father of 'scientific racism'. His 1853 *The Inequality of Human Races*, she observes, 'was to become a kind of standard work for race theories in history' (170).

Three, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discourse on race is contemporaneous, as Foucault notes, with all sorts of new types of knowledge, as well as with colonial dynamics. The opposition between the normal and the abnormal is deemed to be a master key to any system. It is not a paradox that, among other theorists, Arendt demonstrates this type of intellectual extravagance as it is epitomised in Gobineau's thinking: 'This historian boasted of having introduced history into the family of natural sciences, detected the natural law of all courses of events, reduced all spiritual utterances or cultural phenomena to something "that by virtue of exact science our eyes can see, our ears can hear, our hands can touch"' (171).

The racial city

To grasp the essence of the problem, one has to bring race in equations with ideologies of difference and the veracity of their competing discourses. In the name of objectivity, mainstream textbooks generally deal with race and racism in chapters on social problems, situating race at the origin of racism and describing racism as a form of prejudice. The perspective raises questions about its own angle and what it presupposes. In an American context, we should consider at least the following. First, from textbooks' distinctions between in-groups and out-groups, to conceptualise race and racism entails the definition of fields: to suggest a hypothesis on how to contextualise minority groups, marginal sociological segments and subservient functions. Second, from the principle of such spaces, to think race and racism would correspond to sorting out other hypotheses on interrelations between groups, and presumptions about immigration, criminality, diseases and violence. Third, to think race and racism is then, basically, about reflecting on and evaluating procedures for social justice and equality; in sum, it is the arithmetic that promotes modalities of integration, or of differentiation.

These three entries indicate at least one major point: race and racism are questions that should be problematised. In affirming this, I am taking into account a number of factors, including a series of critical points; namely that an immense library exists on the issue and that, for instance, competing approaches to discourses on race and racism can be written and should be rewritten. After the academic interventions of the 1990s – especially K. Anthony Appiah and Amy Gutmann's *Color Conscious* (1996), Michael Levin's *Why Race Matters* (1997), David Theo Goldberg's *Racist Culture* (1993) and Naomi Zack's *Race and Mixed Race* (1993) and *Thinking about Race* (1998) – the new millennium began with renewed interrogations on the intellectual legitimacy of addressing the issues of race and racism.

Here are positions on keys to questions on thematising and periodising the issue and then a synopsis on race as an object of a philosophical discourse.

Let us begin with a historical statement, that of the Stanford historian George M. Fredrickson, from *Racism: A Short History* (2002). It explains both notions, race and racism, in relation to ethnic identity constraints and, within a methodological framework attentive to two theoretical poles, distinguishes, on the one hand, the possibly recent thematisation of race and racism in history from, on the other hand, their dependence on ethnocentrism and xenophobia. In sum, this depicts a statement on what it does not mean to reduce the question of race

to mechanics of what some theorists call 'the natural history' of social problems. Fredrickson circumscribes a confusion, specifically the history of the biologisation of race that is impacting on the present-day understanding of ethnicity, a very old notion for historians of socio-cultural differences. I say old because one can consult Herodotus's texts, especially Books 3 and 4, in which *ethnos* might be translated variously by genesis, lineage and nation. Thus, for instance, from the 1982 reprinted edition established by A.D. Godley that presents communities inhabiting the northern part of Africa, the following passage (*Historiae* 4.197):

τοσόνδε δὲ ἔτι ἔχω εἰπεῖν περὶ τῆς χώρας ταύτης, ὅτι τέσσερα ἔθνεα νέμεται αὐτὴν καὶ οὐ πλέω τούτων, ὅσον ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν, καὶ τὰ μὲν δύο αὐτόχθονα τῶν ἐθνέων τὰ δὲ δύο οὐ, Λίβυες μὲν καὶ Αἰθίοπες αὐτόχθονες, οἱ μὲν τὰ πρὸς βορρῶν οἱ δὲ τὰ πρὸς νότου τῆς Λιβύης οἰκέοντες, Φοίνικες δὲ καὶ Ἕλληνες ἐπήλυδες.

(I have thus much further to say of this country: four nations and no more, as far as our knowledge serves, inhabit it, whereof two are aboriginal and two are not; the Libyans in the north and the Ethiopians in the south of Libya are aboriginal, the Phoenicians and Greeks are later settlers.)

In brief, in this ancient quotation that reflects well a contemporary semantic predicament, *ἔθνος* or *ethnos* is an englobing concept that serves as a synonym of autochthonous societies (Libyan and Ethiopian) and immigrant groups (Phoenicians and Greeks). Needless to say, a number of editions translate *ἔθνος* or *ethnos* in this passage as 'race'. The most appropriate and possibly the closest to the Greek understanding would be the technical contemporary semantic value of ethnic stock.

Fredrickson's study presents the modernity of a scientific approach to race and racism. His reflectors, he tells us, are Ivan Hannaford's *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (1996) and Immanuel Geiss's *Geschichte der Rassismus* (1988). Theories in the Western conception of time and space, they interpret the genealogy of racist practices that could be checked comparatively.

Racism: A Short History can be evaluated from three lines.

The first, a diachronic one, distinguishes three approaches: (a) the invention of racism in the very actualisation of the being of Christianity, vis-à-vis its own roots in Judaism; (b) the invention of racism within the classical space of the constitution of new disciplines (biology, economics, studies on language); (c) the nineteenth-

and twentieth-century accommodation politics (South African apartheid, German anti-Semitism, American segregation, etc.).

The second line, a thematic one, illustrates connections between racism as a concept and the practice of historical discourses, equally in three main distinctions: (a) racialism and historical practices, (b) racialism and European history and (c) the traditional effect at the dawn of the twentieth century.

And finally, a critical diagnosis about the future of the present. A brief quotation can summarise the situation:

But in the twenty-first century, we confront a global capitalism that draws no color line, because it seeks customers and collaborators from every race. A de facto color line remains because the non-Europeans of the world are, as a result of slavery, colonialism, or a late start on the path of modernization, on the average poorer and more disadvantaged than people of white or European ancestry. But active racism is not necessary to maintain this 'new world order' (Fredrickson 2002: 148–9).

One can say that the discreet concept of a 'class on paper', defined by Pierre Bourdieu and designating a cultural-educational status in the transnational political economy, functions as an efficient substitute within this context that John L. Jackson qualified through *Racial Paranoia: The Unintended Consequences of Political Correctness* (2008).

Correspondents of *The New York Times*, from a different angle, have looked at how the reality of the racial distinction is still, and very vividly, part of our contemporary city. *How Race Is Lived in America: Pulling Together, Pulling Apart* (2001), with an introduction by Joseph Lelyveld, the *Times's* executive editor, makes one ponder what seems to be a human predisposition to intolerant attitudes. Ideologies tend to prevail easily in cognitive authorities (for me, an ideology is a body of simple ideas, coherently structured and aimed at regulating the social behaviour of a community in the pursuit of a cause, generally a nebulous one). Against the opinion of the sciences and the virtue of common sense, crude pre-judgements transform themselves in stereotyping any difference. In such a context, it would be wrong to consider prejudice or misinterpretation as irrational attitudes. They are not. They often witness to a perfectly rational mirror-effect informed by an ideology. This is possibly a master key to the perplexing stories collected by an initiative that postulated American culture as an objective task in co-operation.

Even in optimism, racial harmony seems to be envisaged in an imprecise future. Introducing the collection, Lelyveld writes:

It is obvious that *How Race Is Lived in America* is neither a demographic survey (with its protagonists duly weighted by race, ethnicity, class and geographic location and therefore perfectly representative of the nation) nor a cultural forecast of America's racial future. We set out to find stories across a broad swath of American life and took it as a given, we have to admit, that the central conundrum of American democracy can still be found in the legacy of human slavery and the relationship between blacks and whites. But, of course, that equation is being changed by the rise of other groups with their own issues, their own perspectives on race in America . . . In our reports from Miami and Houston, from Tar Heel, North Carolina, and Washington state, the reader gets a sense of these new issues and perspectives involving Hispanics and Asian-Americans – a sense also that while their road is not easy, it is neither as rough nor as twisting as that of blacks (2001: xvii–xviii).

Are race and racism topics of a philosophical interest? Philosophy professor Bernard Boxill, of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is the editor of *Race and Racism* (2001), published in the prestigious 'Oxford readings in philosophy' series. Nineteen contributions, including the editor's introduction, could be regrouped in three classes: the first on 'race as a concept'; the second on 'race as a social construct'; the third on 'race as an index'. Indeed, the classes are in relation of partial inclusion, to use a technical metaphor. Consider, for instance, some of the emphatic lines in the contributions. They address themes such as 'thinking race', 'racism and sexism' and 'Blacks and Jews'. Any careful reader is initially overwhelmed by the interaction of competing ideas. In fact, two images, to speak of 'interference', its signification, will do. They reflect two successive steps: first, the impression of jumbled signals, and second, the intervention of a dynamics that combines ideas, reinforcing some and weakening or discarding others.

The proper philosophical discourse on the practice of everyday life or on anything else – including race as an object of inquiry – submits its effort to critical requirements. Even in its best exercise, its own methodological constraints do not guarantee definitive statements. A good illustration is given by Thomas E. Hill Jr in Boxill's collection in his analysis of Immanuel Kant's presumed racism and

sexism. Of the whole collection, it can be said that, substantiating a prescription that qualifies the discipline as a perpetually recommenced discourse, the authors of this anthology dramatise a record, a measure, an obligation. A record, in the sense that ethnicity, race and racism are – one believes or one does not believe – objects to be reappraised in their histories and in the languages coding them today, from cognitive reflectors and social sources. In the same volume, Zack argues in her contribution, ‘Race and Philosophic Meaning’, that the recording of meaning must stand vis-à-vis the fact that ‘these days no one claims that human races are distinct species’ (Boxill 2001: 54). In fact, that is the volume’s unifying precept, which opens a great number of avenues, hypotheses and theses. Thus, Boxill’s anthology stands as a measure, in the sense that its position begs an interrogation about the bearers of truth: influences of conceptualities, individuals in the market of assumptions, scientific arguments and also social policies. Concretely, measures and mismeasures in a revisited history of ideas on sometimes too-well-known points. Consider, for instance, the following overworked thematics: Aristotle speculated on gender and slavery functions but not on race; Christianity thematised ethnicity within the constraints of a redemption economy and, in time, its thinkers adapted it to hypotheses from natural law figures; eighteenth-century race-thinking submits the concept to the period’s intellectual grids, corroborating in general its own premises, and so on.

Is there an obligation in reinscribing these truisms on today’s agendas?

Racism being an unscientific explanation issued forth from biological controverted hypotheses, why the rehashing of old ideas? Reconsidering a history, the philosophers’ positions state, restate and overstate a series of necessary intellectual commitments. They are ambiguous. In effect, in problematising the discourse of prejudice, the critique affirms a going beyond. An antithesis, it stands marked and signified by what it is negating. As such – and here I have in mind Sartre’s statement about *Négritude* being a weak moment of the dialectic – this negative instant cannot but be assumed in a new obligation, the surpassing of what it is, a lack. And the language of its reason and the validity of its arguments come to the fore. But why this particular repetition? What are the implications? Can we reformulate the limits of the instruction? In the process, confronting ways of going beyond anti-racist racisms and facing a more consequential awareness of essentialist temptations, could we, at least, consider a more critical manner for handling divisive clichés, all of them? Is this goal too ambitious? Not really, if we

proceed methodically. The multiplicity of discourses on race and racism is possibly the best sign of the racism reformulating itself into two main objections. There is, on the one hand, the language of socio-political correctness, from dominant values of a cultural majority; on the other hand, the language of socio-political dissenting *doxae*, from essentialist values, of a cultural minority. The two objections have been defining ways of a new and functional scientific racism. They state a future.

To deconstruct a biased legacy and comprehend its *raison d'être* in an increasing variety of discourses that justify essentialist dispositions, natures and perspectives on gender and ethnicity in respect to cultural difference and social stratification is – why not? – a philosophical obligation. This implies a rethinking of all our basic conceptualities from new angles. For example, a racialised conception of one's identity, writes Appiah, is retrogressive. He insists:

Every human identity is constructed, historical; every one has its share of false presuppositions, of the errors and inaccuracies that courtesy calls 'myth,' religion 'heresy,' and science 'magic.' Invented histories, invented biologies, invented cultural affinities come with every identity; each is a kind of role that has to be scripted, structured by conventions of narrative to which the world never quite manages to conform (Appiah and Gutmann 1996: 373).

We can decode divisive traditions through well-defined tasks. From the viewpoint of logicians, a first task may consist of collecting and discussing misleading arguments. Extremely frequent in everyday languages, and readily available in any discrimination and prejudice thesaurus, fallacies, called by logicians 'natural mistakes' in reasoning, most of them are arguments that seem to be correct until they are proven not to be so. Textbooks of logic discuss fallacies extensively. Among the most popular classes, even in academic circles, let's note the following: (a) the fallacy of relevance, in which the erroneous reasoning relies on premises apparently relevant to the conclusion, but which are not; (b) the fallacy of ambiguity, in which the reasoning relies on displacements of words' semantic values.

The language of socio-economic relations of production, that of political power as well as that of managing ethnicities and sexual differences, are equal-opportunity *banks of fallacies*. One can, for example, review fallacies of pertinence in arguments issued from ignorance (*ad ingorantiam*); that is, pronouncements based on pseudo-science or on ill-informed invocations of science. For instance,

an appeal to Mendel's laws on heredity is a fallacy of relevance in debates about inter-ethnic conflicts and wage packages in a multicultural society. Another kind of fallacy concerns arguments founded on inexpedient authorities (*ad uerecundiam*). For or against good governance, why on earth would anyone link extraterrestrial knowledge to good or bad political governance (as does Credo Mutwa)? Another type of fallacy can be seen in abusive assertions against certain individuals (*ad hominem*) in order to disqualify proposals, to assault programmes or to reject testimonies. It would seem, for instance, that references to Martin Luther King Jr's sexual life are irrelevant in judgements on the workings of American public school integration policies. But that does not seem obvious to many. Sometimes, the *ad hominem* argument functions as a subtle ruse in legal and academic disputes. Logicians have a magnificent name for it: the 'impeach-the-witness strategy'. Insidiously sophisticated in the manner it can manoeuvre the drive against a person and manipulate a damaging conclusive denunciation, it passes for a clever stratagem in many other fallacies of relevance. The invocation of generalised principles (such as what is socially expected of a good mother) and their blind application to hypothetically homogenous classes (those of single mothers, black women or Latinas) may produce efficient fallacies in a number of ways. In prejudice, such a practice can argue against individuals' choices by emphasising inconsistency or lack of responsibility from abstract norms of ethics or of religious precepts. Passive, and transcending all cultural boundaries as well as social classes, the false cause argument (*ad non causam pro causa*) is possibly the most divisive technique in today's sophistry apropos social identity debates. The fallacious argument is depended upon for explaining the cause (ethnicity, gender) of a problem (issues of biology and culture, deviance, structures of inequality) that, in actuality, is not the problem (gene, essence, IQ).

An intercultural anxiety

There is no immunity against ambiguous or irrelevant affirmations. Conscious or not, fallacies mediate most of our everyday projects. Their convincing style validates what defines them: a well-conceived proposition can pass for true as long as it is not proved to be wrong. In sum, the effectiveness of ways of argument states both a privilege and a barrier. A privilege of the well-educated elite, it is a knowledge; it represents both a cultural and class function. In this sense, mastering ways of fallacies creates parity between exclusive parties having a common background,

those who can at will play with their flexibility, recognise their traps and transform an unsound reasoning into a convincing argument.

Apart from its mastery by some experts, obedience to rules of argumentation is rarely considered the best strategy in position interventions on ethnicity. Textbooks are explicit. Here are a few of their significant marks. Even in the most esteemed philosophical practices, the presentations of a case do not always necessarily rely on logical principles. Any reasonable standard adjustment to a socio-cultural environment, its inherent ways of experiencing itself and other worlds, and witnessing to them, is often justified more convincingly in relation to ethical constraints than to an unquestionable adherence to modes of arguments. This is unfortunate, but that is our world.

‘Our predicament resides in the fact that we have been children,’ said Descartes. Socialised in specific group structure dynamics, all of us access the validity of our own difference in its unmarked invisibility. And this is the basic reference of all interpersonal transactions. One speaks from and lives by the evidence of a locus that comes to be justified in the absolute and its being part of a given topography and its history magnified in the excess of an authoritative index. Too often, one’s apprehension of a self proceeds in the singularity of a strictly localised universal reason. It follows that one’s first cultural conditioning largely determines ways of adjusting to the visibility of others, in positive and negative attitudes. The process begins at home, and very early.

In the global economy issued forth by the sciences and Western technological pre-eminence, the normative invisibility of other cultural scripts is, for sure, transformed into a visibility, that of an exotic otherness. A conquering history has identified with the time of the universe. This is a capital point: the Western *de facto* claim to a universal transcendence logicalises its regionality. The process affirms a referential pole, in its own right, from which one can state the universality of reason and contrapose the putative fragility of any other historical and cultural difference. Unifying the world, the same process divides it. From any region, in principle, another pole can be chosen, an absolutely new map of the world invented. One could invoke existing socio-cultural criteria and distinguish areas of a newly recreated global village, according to a revised geographic perspective (for example East and West), possibly still stable religious institutions (Christianity, Islam) and one might also expect more constraining partitioning (as in climatic backgrounds). In such an exercise, in its very practice – and its processes are, in principle, what would support all the configurations that can surface – in actuality,

all the mechanics and the inventions themselves. But why such an effort and what would be its real purpose?

Classifications are hypotheses. This is to recognise that cultural scripts always actualise regional rights to their own perspective. They spell out ways of relating precepts for interpreting the time of the world, remaking it and adapting it to the perception of an experience, their own. In terms of practical exchanges and the dialogue they imply, today's economic and information factors contribute to a regular reconfiguration of classifications within frames combining an interdependent world with its complex structuration of cultural ensembles. They are schemes that organise hypotheses.

Today's discourse on alterity is, one would suppose, about conditions of existing in the crux of competing requirements, those of objective demands, in relation to subjective needs, and those of scientific and unscientific explanations. A discourse of anxiety, it assumes generalities on origin, currencies of cross-cultural contexts, as well as a variety of interfering histories within one's own constraints.

Everybody builds on a personal good sense, the basic method and principles of a correct dialogue with others. From this evidence, let us emphasise three indispensable precautions. One, if it is illusory to consider logic the best key to one's introspection, logic is without a doubt a crucial art in any sort of intercommunication. It should be – regardless of context, topic or language – one of the best instruments of our effectual transcultural agendas. Two, experts in intercultural dialogues insist on the complexity of tasks. They tell us that there is a fundamental pragmatic consideration, namely that acknowledging a difference of backgrounds entails the reality of 'stumbling blocks' in intercultural approaches. Three, such an awareness implies obligations about how to access what the blocks represent, the meaning of their meditation and the orders they witness to. This is to say that they stand as propaedeutic subjects to, say, an analysis of the veracity of a claim to difference, or to any ethical qualification of the discourse. Indeed an enormous challenge, the three precautions submit to a metaethical questioning of languages and metalanguages involved in defining notions, expressions and principles about alterity and its main prerogative, to decline itself against external assumptions.

Essential to my three precautions, the expression 'stumbling blocks' was used by Laray M. Barna in his contribution to the volume edited by Richard E. Porter and Larry A. Samovar, *Intercultural Communication: A Reader* (1988). Common

in cross-cultural experiences, the blocks (assumption of similarity, language, non-verbal communication, preoccupations, stereotypes and practice of immediate evaluation) cannot but be compounded by high anxiety. This feeling, Barna thinks, would 'permeate parties in dialogue' – and all dialogues on alterity, I dare say.

3 September 2008

Note

1. The Kongo refers to the Kingdom of Kongo, which existed in Central Africa before the nineteenth century. The Congo refers to a nineteenth-century European invention. Thus, the Kongo here is a reference to the historical kingdom.

The Letter

Il est des visages comme des proverbes

Énigmatiques et symboliques

Ils appellent à la sagesse

Parce que la vie c'est l'avenir

Et que l'avenir c'est toi

(There are visages that are like proverbs

Enigmatic and symbolic

They call for wisdom

Because life is the future

And because the future is you)

— Wéréwéré Liking, *'On ne raisonne pas le venir'*

This remained equally true even for so thoroughgoing a sceptic as Hume: to find out the right way of life it is of no use to look for innate ideas or a priori truths. The former do not exist; the latter give no information about the world, only about the way we use our words and symbols. But is there nowhere to look? Indeed there is. Values are what men seek: they seek satisfaction of their needs. The science of empirical psychology will tell you what men want, what they approve and disapprove, and sociology or social anthropology will tell you about the differences and similarities between the needs and the moral and political values of (and within) different nations, groups, classes, civilizations.

— Isaiah Berlin, *The Sense of Reality*

Chapter 9

At the Genesis of *Présence Africaine*: 'La Nuit de Foi Pourtant'; Letter to Eric Van Grasdorff

Writing the genesis of an African cultural difference in the twentieth century is to pay attention to the symbolics represented by the quarterly journal *Présence Africaine*. Between the background politics of difference, supported by international committees, *Présence Africaine* actuated a humanist discourse that transcends all lines, both racial and ideological.

Chapter 10

Kata Nomon: Letter to René Devisch; On the Practice of Anthropology

A conversation on the validity of trusting the anthropological discourse. Anthropology can in principle provide for the best of outcomes, but it cannot ever guarantee its truth. Yet, its profane discourse could still assume the best in our transcultural politics.

Chapter 11

On Humiliation, Yom HaShoah and Sudanese Migration

Yom HaShoah, a negative paradigm symbolising evil and humiliation, brings together reasons to relate the unimaginable along with Evelin Lindner's book, *Gender, Humiliation, and Global Security* (2010), on the imponderability of assumptions governing humiliation all around the world, and the Sudanese suffering studied in the project of Indian scholar Deepa Rajkumar. They are all claims to safeguard reconstructed journeys on maps of evil.

Chapter 12

Aesthetics of Commitment: Preface to Yacouba Konaté's *La Biennale de Dakar* and For Bogumil Jewsiewicki: Letter to Justin Bisanswa and Muriel Gomez-Perez

Inspired by Theodor Adorno, in this statement on one of the cultural stories of *Présence Africaine*, Yacouba Konaté's *La biennale de Dakar* testifies to confluences and conflicts between a time of functions, submitted to tasks encouraging harmony, and a time of the clock, which would tend to challenge an African creativity. The interconnectedness could also be the key to the Polish-born Bogumil Jewsiewicki's Africanist vocation. In the commitment, Jewsiewicki's sign accords suppositions about, on the one hand, economic integration and, on the other hand, political and cultural intercommunications between autonomous configurations. Their conjunctions open up as interrogations in our time.

Chapter 13

Ibi Pote Valere: Letter to Ambroise Kom

Friendship is a good axis to focus on. It can allow compelling effects in intercultural accounts – the more fictitious, the better. Using an African condition, the question is: how to hasten the contribution of the Cameroonian Fabien Eboussi Boulaga within the field of an extended family (which one?) and measure all these weighty terms (affiliation, alliance, fraternity, kinship and sodality)?

At the Genesis of *Présence Africaine*

'La Nuit de Foi Pourtant'; Letter to Eric Van Grasdorff

Il n'est pas temps encore. La nuit de foi pourtant, ou même nuit, des profondeurs.

— Edouard Glissant, *Les Indes*

This meditation on the genesis of *Présence Africaine* and the intellectual space it came to organise, essentially is using public information, reconceptualised from a reflection on a book edited years ago. Some time in the autumn of 1993, at the house of the late Jean Doneux in Brussels, and after the publication of *The Surreptitious Speech: 'Présence Africaine' and the Politics of Otherness, 1947–1987* (Mudimbe 1992), the author of the acclaimed 1965 work *Les écrivains noirs de langue française*, Lilyan Kesteloot, made a comment that puzzled me. She had contributed to *The Surreptitious Speech* and, apropos the title, wondered whether *Présence Africaine* had been that surreptitious. Made half in jest, half in earnest, the point was perplexing. It stuck in my mind.¹

While writing this letter to Eric Van Grasdorff, an evidence imposed itself. There is a person who could have a more informed evaluation of 'surreptitious', Madame Yandé Christiane Diop, the president of *Présence Africaine*. She is the mother of the enterprise.

The legacy

Alioune Diop would have been 100 years old in 2010. Reporting on the event in 'Actualités au Cameroun' for the *Africa Presse* of 12 January, Muriel Edjo opens her survey by calling Diop the 'Black Socrates'. She was repeating a metaphor used by Léopold Sédar Senghor when the founder of *Présence Africaine* passed away. To give a sense of his achievement, she wanted to know about the style of tasks after Diop's period. To describe the contributions of Madame Diop who, in April 2009, had been made *Chevalier de la légion d'honneur* at the Élysée Palace in Paris, she

extracts a remarkable passage from an interview given by Madame Diop to the Congolese journal *Le Potentiel* in 2005. Madame Diop confides:

After the passing of my husband in 1980, I fully took over the direction of *Présence Africaine*. And it wasn't easy. *Présence Africaine* is an institution whose founders didn't accord an importance to a commercial politics. As a consequence, the institution is a place where Negro-African authors could visit any time to express themselves. For Alioune Diop, the most important thing was to make heard the voices of his brothers from Africa and the diaspora. Somehow, he never thought of turning *Présence* into a profit-earning commercial enterprise. Thus, my difficulty today in managing it (Edjo 2010).

Past 80, the new president has been looking at the challenge of organising a complex institution that could accommodate differently, but with efficiency, the spirit of the founders. In 1958, just more than ten years after the publication of the first issue of the journal in 1947, the philosopher Jacques Howlett, an insider, commented on what he called 'the heroic era', providing a picture of the initial spirit. 'In 1947,' he said,

while Paris was still thrilled by the great awakening of the Liberation, but terribly short on everything, the launching of a monthly magazine without considerable financial support seemed foolhardy. And yet, the idea of a magazine was there, solidly anchored, bravely and enthusiastically proposed to various people by Alioune Diop, a young Senegalese intellectual who had long and persistently advocated his idea – a debate between Africa and the West – in his contacts with leading contemporary French thinkers. His project was *Présence Africaine*, a review 'open to all contributors of good will (White, Yellow or Black)' (Howlett 1958: 140).

There was an 'African absence' on the cultural scene, a 'hole' and this image, used by Jean-Paul Sartre in his support of the journal, accords itself to what is symbolised in the name *Présence Africaine*.

According to the Wikipedia entry on *Présence Africaine*, 'as of the end of 2007, *Présence Africaine* has run 173 issues . . . publishing over 400 works, 322 of which are still in print. *Discourse on Colonialism* by Aimé Césaire published first in 1955 remains its best-selling work.'

Présence Africaine's catalogue is a wonderful map. First of all, there are its best-known authors. Along with a few anglophone writers, such as Cyprian Ekwensi, Wole Soyinka and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, one finds an impressive list of publications by mostly francophone writers, among them now classics that make francophone literature a reality in its own right. These authors include Mongo Beti, Ken Bugul, Bernard Dadié, Birago Diop, Roger Dorsinville, Henri Lopès, Sembène Ousmane, Jacques Rabemamananjara, Jean-Baptiste Tati Loutard, Guy Tirolien, Joseph Zobel and many more. In actuality, taking into account all the listings, titles in the catalogue can be regrouped in three main areas: one, literature (novels, shorts stories, poetry, theatre and literary criticism); two, human and social sciences (economics, history, languages and law); three, religion and philosophy. Finally, the post-independence global picture would have been a poorer one had not *Présence* met the need to make public the writings of its leaders, such as Félix Houphouët-Boigny (Ivory Coast), Patrice Lumumba (Congo-Kinshasa), Marien Ngouabi (Congo-Brazzaville), Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Julius Nyerere (Tanzania), Sékou Touré (Guinea), Senghor (Senegal) and Eric Williams (Trinidad and Tobago).

As of today, more than 40 countries are represented in the catalogue. In the weekly *Al-Ahram* of 18–24 March 2010, there is a long analysis by David Tresilian, extolling the project. It stresses a particular feature, 'Diop's insistence that African traditional art be given the same consideration as the art of other parts of the world'. On art, history and politics, one has for instance the November 1948 *Le Musée Vivant*. The cover is a symbol and a statement that links 1948 to 1848, the abolition of slavery. Devoted to African cultural issues, this special volume edited by Madeleine Rousseau and Cheikh Anta Diop dwells on an 'African past' as it is related to questions about itself, the 'meeting of Europe and Africa' and the possible time of an 'African renaissance'. Associates of *Présence Africaine* are part of the volume, including Richard Wright and Michel Leiris, who introduce it. The volume also includes a piece on the 1953 film *Les statues meurent aussi* by Chris Marker and Alain Resnais. This film, commissioned by *Présence Africaine*, was censored by the political authority for its anti-colonial posture.

The institution has a history. Madame Diop invoked it explicitly from a management point of view. During the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary, looking critically at the character of two books that observed preceding anniversaries – *Mélanges: Réflexions d'hommes de culture* at the twentieth and *The Surreptitious Speech* at the fortieth – the Cornell University director of Africana Studies, Salah D. Hassan, proposed a neat periodisation in an article on 'the cultural politics of

the early *Présence Africaine*, 1947–55,’ published in the 1999 summer issue of *Research in African Literatures*. Against a ‘tendency that can be observed in critics as diverse as Lilyan Kesteloot, V-Y Mudimbe and Paul Gilroy, that would assert a continuity from 1947 into the post-independence’, he suggests that ‘an ideological break . . . takes place with the inauguration of the second series in the Summer of 1955’ (194). Thus, in the mid-1950s, one would have two differentiated spaces, from ‘a redistribution of power among three main ideological formations that sought to determine the journal’s intellectual orientation, Liberal humanism, Pan-Africanism and Communism’. Concretely, one would get, before the break, a ‘liberal humanism based on the projection of a universal civilization and informed by European philosophical and ethnographic modes of thought’ and, after 1955, a new style of legitimacy, initiated from the periphery: ‘political Pan-Africanism, Nationalism and African Socialism, and non-alignment’.

Hassan’s hypothesised shift seems to make sense. No one would reasonably dismiss the political effect of the Bandung Conference. Yet it is safe to say that the roots of the 1950s currents are already there, more or less explicit in the 1947 statement. A discreet ethical capital has been presuming a promise; thus, the idea conveyed by the adjective ‘surreptitious’. An article by Danielle Maurice in *Conserveries Mémoires* (2007) describes the significance of *Le Musée Vivant* and the role of Rousseau, who is an active member of the Association Populaire des Amis des Musées (APAM), a popular association of friends of museums. This is an anti-fascist and anti-racist organisation, founded in 1936 by Jacques Soustelle and Paul Rivet, who is its president and a member of the *Présence Africaine* committee. *Le Musée Vivant* is basically anti-colonial, witnessing to a major principle of the APAM, namely, ‘museums should not be tombs of cultures, but present works of art from their sources within their original societies’. In other words, the adjective ‘surreptitious’ might precisely qualify the manner in which the shift is unveiling itself in the open, assenting an echo of principles that have been there from the outset of *Présence Africaine*; say, from the first issue, and its involvement from *Le Musée Vivant* to Marker’s film.

Here is another of those clues that may imply too little, or too much. On the list of those who, in the autumn of 1960, were the first to sign the ‘Manifesto of the 121’ in France, or ‘Declaration on the Right of Insubordination in the War in Algeria’, one finds five names that are in the first two issues of 1947–48 *Présence Africaine*: Howlett, Théodore Monod, Georges Mounin, Michel Leiris and Sartre. They were committed to a foundational ethical discourse.

A surreptitious discourse

Was this discourse intentionally surreptitious? From the *Random House Webster's College Dictionary*, 'surreptitious' is defined as: 'obtained, done, made, etc., by stealth; clandestine; secret' and 'acting in a stealthy way', which connects to the idea of secrecy or clandestinity that one finds also in the French *subreptice*. The *Collins-Robert French Dictionary* is, in fact, more explicable in its two entries: the first, on the 'illicit form of an exposé that surprises the authority invoked' and the second, on exactly 'what is obtained by surprise, or given in such a manner without the knowledge of someone'. The two words, the English and the French, descend from the Latin *su(-b)rep(-t-)o* (var. *-rap-*, *-rip-*): 'to creep under, steal along, to come on unawares, insensibly'. The venerable William Freund's *Latin-German Lexicon* (1853) relates them to *reptilis*, or 'creeping thing', attested in the *Vulgate*. This meaning came to interfere semantically with the adjective *surrepticius* (*-tius*). However, it is *serpo*, 'to crawl', progressing like a snake, which should be referred to, instructs the *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine* (Ernout and Meillet 1951). Technicalities on etymology such as these contribute to an explanation of the semantic structuration in a contemporary dictionary and a clarification of the concept. Consider the adjective *surreptitious* in any dictionary now, regarding the practice of everyday language. It is only normal that, depending on the situation, one might be more attentive to a pejorative connotation and understand *surreptitious* as sneaky and slinky, or that one might, in a positive connotation, read this adjective as a synonym for unexposed or latent.

Présence Africaine is a discourse in the ordinary sense of the word. Transsubjective and centring on thematics about colonised spaces, it couldn't but be ambiguous because of its own inhibitions, what it feared, or what it could threaten. Introducing its first issue, Diop writes:

The journal is happy . . . for being French, living in a French cadre. [The journal] addresses itself, and first of all to the French people we trust; I mean to all the people of goodwill who, faithful to the most heroic French traditions, have been devoting their existence to the exclusive cult of man and his grandeur.

The excerpt above (in French, under 'Alioune Diop' in Wikipedia) requires its own context. Of a moment and the culture it invokes, it needs to be qualified from the background supporting it, both intellectually and experientially.

This is to say that, to understand *Présence Africaine* should reasonably be to arrange perceptions and concepts that construct a signification and express a social milieu. Born a Muslim, Diop received a baccalaureate in classics (Greek and Latin) and then studied classics at the universities of Algiers and Paris. A socialist in politics, at 34, towards the end of the war, he converted to Catholicism. He founded *Présence Africaine* in 1947 and the publishing house of the same name two years later. Looking at the two programmatic first issues of the journal, it is easy to propose an interpretation of the journal in connection with the power sponsoring it; that is, to pay attention simultaneously to reflectors determining the validity of an agenda, thus its inscription in a normative horizon, and to the values that Diop's statement supposes. In '*Présence Africaine: Geography of an "Ideology"*', commenting on Diop's '*Niam n'goura*' (the introduction to the first *Présence Africaine*), Bernard Mouralis notes, rightly so, that 'one could say that the place in which *Présence Africaine* is situated is a utopian place – but one must not forget that utopia often consists of a framework that allows thought to preserve its independence and critical effectiveness' (Mouralis 1992: 10). This place can be approached from the background of an intellectual tradition and from the privilege of philosophies on the subject in the 1940s and 1950s, in conjunction with a renewal of disciplines exploring the diversity of social formations. Thus, the usefulness of invoking metaphors of irradiation and constellations in accessing what is explicit and supporting *Présence Africaine*. This is not detachable from ideals of a fraternity in equality and freedom that came to resonate about the colonial situation in the empire. Finally, there is the demanding experience of war, lived by all – some as prisoners and a number as members of resistance groups.

External and internal procedures guide the journal's discourse and control its admissibility, to use the language of Michel Foucault. This reference indicates a perspective in linking *Présence Africaine* to its founder and to an epistemological configuration. It relies on a distinction between contextual meaning and significance inspired by *Validity in Interpretation* (Hirsch 1967) from a point of view influenced by *On the Edge of the New Century* (2000) by Eric Hobsbawm, in conversation with Antonio Polito. The distinction can be summarised in 'What's left of the left?' – the left that historically contributed to the conditions of possibility of *Présence Africaine*.

Is such an approach anachronistic? Let me briefly synthesise, very schematically, the first two issues of the journal, proceed briefly with an elaboration on the tension between explication and meaning, and focus on members of the two boards of

the journal, the editorial committee and that of patrons, occasionally sketching connections *ad montem* and *ad vallem*.

Each issue is structured functionally in four parts: position interventions, literature, chronicles and book and art reviews. These parts translate an objective: to testify to a cultural capital. In the first issue, most of the position interventions are by members of the committee of patrons – three close friends of the journal (Marcel Griaule, Pierre Naville and Georges Balandier) and Howlett, the house philosopher. An extract from the nineteenth-century Edward W. Blyden is also included. Except for Blyden, all the contributors are French citizens. They deal in recognition of the black person and of a wronged human history, from the demands of the Enlightenment legacy within a situation attentive to both class struggle and the right to cultural difference. Such is the locus of debates about conflicts of rationalities. In the second issue are two position articles on philosophy, the first by Aimé Patri, which asks the now tedious question: ‘Is there a Bantu philosophy?’; the second by Maurice Watteau ‘on racial situations in Sartre’s work’. They are preceded by pronouncements on the ‘negro myth’ that opens the issue. Contributors include Emile Dermenghem, an expert in Islamic traditions; Mounin, a strict Marxist and specialist in linguistics and its relation to philosophy and literature, and also knowledgeably versed in biblical studies; and Madeleine Paz, a pacifist militant and well-known feminist author, the spouse of Maurice Paz, one of the founders of the French Communist Party. This is a step into politics from the first. Two years later, the orientation is assumed in the publication of the 1949 *Bantu Philosophy* of the Flemish Franciscan priest Placied Tempels. The French philosophical establishment warmly welcomed this first book of the publishing house. Doesn’t it actualise Gaston Bachelard’s notion of ‘regional ontology’? In any case, Tempels opens a horizon that still haunts African practices of philosophy. It has simultaneously conjured Herderian precepts and Bergsonian directions and lessons from hermeneutics and phenomenology. In English are, (a) excellent introductions to the history of schools by Barry Hallen (2002) and Bruce Janz (2009) and on practices by Henry Odera Oruka (1991) and Ivan Karp and D.A. Masolo (2000); (b) intercultural approaches by Emmanuel Eze (1997) and Kwasi Wiredu (1996), for example; (c) high-quality interdisciplinary collections such as those by Neil Lazarus on *Postcolonial Literary Studies* (2004) and David Theo Goldberg and Ato Quayson on *Relocating Postcolonialism* (2002).

About this paragraph, few points need to be accented. The first is that the racial factor is, indeed, addressed squarely. Yet, to play down the fact that French

citizenship asserts and reinforces a transcending of dividing cultural clauses might make crucial problems incomprehensible. For instance, if 'black' seems a transparent concept, 'African' might not be at all. Culturally, the anthropologist Griaule and the pacifist savant Monod, unconditional backers of the journal, are profoundly African. The second point concerns the neat visibility of an ideological diversity and the necessity of precaution in reading the composition of the committees and their members. This angle is intentionally aimed at the explanation of a structure and, emphasising its incredible coherence, tries to decode the function of its signs in representation. To read them satisfactorily, after Hirsch, who has reactivated a distinction from J.A. Ernesti's 1761 *Institutio Interpretis Novi Testamenti*, it is useful to differentiate a *subtilitas intelligendi* (that is, comprehension) and Hirsch's understanding from a *subtilitas explicandi* (that is, the deconstruction of a meaning, of its explanation). For instance, one thing would be to explain Diop's provocative, truncated quoted phrase by contextualising it; another would be to claim its understanding from the few lines of the Wikipedia entry. It follows that one cannot but agree with Hirsch when he says, 'the art of interpreting and the art of understanding are separate functions, too often confused' (1967: 131).

Interrelated features of a configuration

The axes of understanding depend on reason as it can be approached from the perspective of *Présence Africaine* itself. In the postwar climate of Paris, a number of wounded consciences and the singularity of a project meet around a reason that can be decoded. One thinks immediately of Paul Valéry's injunction after the First World War, 'We civilizations, we know now that we are mortal'. '*La nuit de foi pourtant . . .*': a night in faith, to think it from within this metaphor of Edouard Glissant that is drawn from elsewhere. It signifies a context and a work on the necessity of going beyond a negation. From this background, particulars take form in the vision of a venture whose agenda, in a first approximation, coalesces a variety of purposes. From a multiplicity of angles, one notes three interrelated features. Their combination accounts for the visibility of a mark: boldness of voices, interracial internationality and a restraint in expressing anger. The features are to be perceived in conjunction. Each can be a point of entry to an explanation of *Présence Africaine's* fundamental task: first, to welcome renderings about being and existing in a reifying situation; second, to channel the good will of friends; and third, to administer the generosity of militant voices and conflictual political visions.

The editorial board seems to be more of a fellowship composed of transient graduates living in Paris and junior scholars working abroad. On the African side, one sees members educated in Qur'anic schools and others coming from the Senegal-based William Ponty Institute, which teaches values expected by the colonial cultural policy. Often, they are completing degrees in France or participating in training conferences. With independence movements, a number of them, such as the writer Bernard Dadié, the economist Mamadou Dia and Dr Cissé Dia, move into active politics. On the European side, those such as Balandier and Paul Mercier are beginning their academic life and committing it to African studies. When he becomes part of *Présence Africaine's* board, Balandier is not yet 30, but he has a past, having graduated from a probing education in the Resistance. In 1956, Balandier and demographer Alfred Sauvy coin the term 'third world'. Balandier knows what it implies in relation to his experience in the Congo, Gabon and West Africa. His 1956 *Afrique ambiguë* has been deemed a realist figure of the black continent at the time. It inspired the award-winning *L'aventure ambiguë* by the Senegalese Cheikh Hamidou Kane (1961), a classic in francophone literature.

Equally visible is the youth of a transnational literary interaction and the variety of its trends. In the two first issues of the journal, one finds established names: René Maran (Martinique), Birago Diop (Senegal), Jacques Rabemananjara (Madagascar), Jacques Roumain (Haiti) and Richard Wright (United States). With them are emergent voices, such as Gwendolyn Brooks (United States), David Diop (Senegal) and Abdoulaye Sadjı (Senegal). They are part of the trends documented by Kesteloot (1965).

Concerning ethnicity, there is a noticeable restraint in most articles. About art and music, for instance, one has the notes of H.J. Dupuy, Marie-Madeleine Gautier, and Hugues Panassié, a friend of Louis Armstrong's. They are international music critics and some believed in an intimate connection of jazz to a racial experience of alienation. In time, Panassié became highly suspicious of 'be-bop', which, for him, signified a distance in the expression of an existential experience. Marthe Arnaud reports cultural exploitation of African arts, whereas Michel Decaudin pays attention to what the 'negro arts' bring to Guillaume Apollinaire. It is amazing to imagine Alioune Diop convincing such critics to have a dialogue with one of the most prominent art dealers of the period, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler. Yet, for sure, one has to trace the taming of well-intentioned strong dispositions to Diop's rigour in managing it within the journal.

On colonisation, looking at the first issue, one could wonder about the implications of an article by Albert Bayet on the topic of 'Roman colonization of Gaul'. Certainly intriguing, it is an early test of Diop's conviction in opening roads that can converge in a conversation about Africa. Later on, the publishing house will include in its catalogue an erudite research on Greek sources of African history by the Cameroonian Jesuit Engelbert Mveng and a study on representation of blacks in Greece by the French photographer Alain Bourgeois. It is with the survey on 'negro myth' published in the January 1948 issue that the journal expresses a measure in handling itself at the confluence of multiple arguments. These can be illustrated through the a few symbolic figures:

- (1) The Marxist instruction and dynamics on race and class as they can be related to Naville, philosopher and socialist who has been a communist, a Trotskyist. In 1947, he was a research director in sociology at Centre National des Recherches Scientifiques.
- (2) Ethnographic presuppositions on cultural diversity and nativism as related to Paul Masson-Oursel, philosopher and former president of La Société Française de Psychologie, who is a professor at L'École Pratique des Hautes Études.
- (3) A philosophical reason on subjectivity and embodiment as it can be related to Howlett. In his argument, it was indeed necessary that a reflection on African personality should pay heed to an exposition of indispensable conditions in development and liberation of the personality.

Within this confluence are two different minds and two different conceptions of African history and political engagement: Cheikh Anta Diop and Joseph Ki-Zerbo. These two friends of Alioune Diop have in common a solid education in Africa and Europe: Diop, in positive sciences and letters; Ki-Zerbo, in history and political science. They also share a faithful inscription in the religious tradition in which they were born: Islam for Diop and Catholicism for Ki-Zerbo. For both, the postwar climate forms their engagement in African affairs and their commitment to a democratic activism: Diop in Senegal and Ki-Zerbo in Haute-Volta, today's Burkina Faso.

A physicist and social science thinker, Diop is known for *Nations nègres et cultures* (1954) and mainly for its two thematics: his particular angle on assessing the history of Egypt and the cultural unity of the continent. They are set up in a

controverted study for a doctorate advised by Griaule in the early 1950s. Revised and amplified, the perspective led to a series of monographs, including *L'unité culturelle de l'Afrique noire* (1959), whose orientation is already visible in a 1948 article published in *Présence*. Other well-known works by Diop include *L'Afrique noire pré-coloniale* (1960), *Antériorité des civilisations nègres* (1967) and *Civilisation ou barbarie* (1981), all published by *Présence Africaine's* publishing house. Diop's inspiration has been assumed in the work of Théophile Obenga, his best disciple. Obenga is the author of numerous publications in cultural studies and Egyptology, including the massive *La philosophie africaine de la période pharaonique* (1990). Obenga's teaching in the United States furthered the diffusion of Diop's ideas and has substantiated the Afrocentricity movement of Molefi Kete Asante (1996).

Postulating the importance for Africans to write their own history, Ki-Zerbo's vision is emblematic. He has authored and edited publications at *Présence Africaine* and elsewhere, among them the highly acclaimed Hatier *Histoire de l'Afrique noire* (1972) and the Unesco-sponsored *Histoire générale de l'Afrique noire* (1971–91). A long-time member of the Unesco executive committee and, from 1975 to 1995, the chairman of the Association of African Historians, Ki-Zerbo is remembered for his extreme attention to necessary distinctions – in science, between hypotheses and norms in interpretation of data; in politics, apropos devotion to Africa, on why and how to oblige the compass on 'who we are' and 'where we intend to aim'.

Within this confluence, three important cultural initiatives with political implications emerge. The first, the two Congresses of Black Artists and Writers were highly symbolic expressions, the first held in Paris, at the Sorbonne, in 1956 and the second held in Rome in 1959. The second cultural initiative was the creation of the African Society of Culture in 1957 and the third was the institution of international festivals of 'Negro Arts' in 1966.

Of the two historical Congresses, one could underscore intersecting axes and the problematisations they induce from *Présence Africaine's* statements since 1947.

One, from the argument of his discourse at the end of the 1956 Congress, the idea of a '*rendez-vous du donner et du recevoir*', Senghor is reaching back to Enlightenment postulations with a prescriptive line articulated by Césaire within a communist perspective.

Two, 1956 is also the year of Césaire's *Lettre à Maurice Thorez*, which makes explicit two ideas: the radical tension between 'class struggle' politics and 'ethnic identity platforms' and the credibility of Marxist postulates on the proletariat.

Three, there is also Claude Lévi-Strauss's 'open letter' of 31 August 1956 to the Congress at the Sorbonne, published in the fall issue of the journal. It might serve to explicate the collective interrogation on some of the Congress' predicaments. Critical of both Renaissance aristocratic humanism and bourgeois nineteenth-century humanism, Lévi-Strauss's letter salutes the Congress's 'democratic humanism, not only by its object but also by its method'. The letter reminds the Congress of 'the integrality of human societies'. It calls in absent ethnic communities from the Americas and Oceania, after recognising the history of South-East Asia.

In the name of philosophy

This has been a sketch in 'explanation'. Here is another entry to 'explication'. Interpreting the body of *Présence*'s committee of patrons leads to the heart of the matter. A point of semantics: this designation, 'committee of patrons' (in French, *comité de patronage*) meant a task in endorsing a discourse. However, in this particular case, the double meaning of the word doesn't go unnoticed. Worse, the French *patronage* also designates, from the *Collins-Robert French Dictionary*, 'any institution that cares for the moral well-being of children, by organizing healthy activities to keep them busy during holidays'. Could not the word pass for a prejudicial stereotype? The ambiguity could even operate in the perception of friends of *Présence Africaine*, looking at its committee of patrons, but that's not an issue here. In 1947, the word, meaning what it intends, supported a discourse in its right to its own difference as a cultural institution.

Presided over by André Gide, to begin the list, the committee had among its members the philosophers Emmanuel Mounier, Albert Camus and Sartre. An acclaimed writer, the author of two books critical of colonial governance – *Voyage au Congo* (1927) and *Le retour du Chad* (1928) – Gide had just received in June 1947 an *honoris causa* doctorate from Oxford University and, in November, the Nobel Prize for literature. The first volume of *Présence Africaine* was published between these two events, with Gide's foreword inviting Europe to listen to Africa. Mounier, the founder of *Esprit* and the thinker of personalism, was the good conscience of the Christian left. Camus, a friend of Diop and Sartre, a communist in his youth, and the author of *Le mythe de Sisyphe* (1942) and *L'homme révolté* (1951), whose name is associated with the journal *Combat*, was a celebrity. In 1933, he was registered in the department of philosophy when Diop, also at the University of Algiers, was registered in classics. Sartre remembered Camus as 'the admirable conjunction of a person and a work', whose *oeuvre* was later recognised

by the Nobel Prize in 1957. Finally, Sartre himself, as the founder of *Les Temps Modernes* and the master thinker of an existentialist humanism, was the good conscience of his time. Ethically, all three have the same agenda: human dignity. After the war, they all opt for engagement as an imperative. Politically, a number of them justified engagement by the memory of the dead and the camps.

No one could compete with Sartre, writes Michel Winock in *Le siècle des intellectuels*: ‘Ni Gide, ni Malraux, ni même Camus, qui avait un grand public’ (1997: 400). Sartre’s presence on the committee is an event. His 1948 ‘Orphée noir’, a preface to Senghor’s *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de la langue française*, thematises *Négritude*. The preface immediately becomes an essential recommendation of the concept and of what it stands for. In the lesson, however, *Négritude* is an antithetical moment in the dialectic and has to be surpassed. This point alienated a number of people, including Frantz and Josie Fanon, who never forgot nor forgave it. Identifying with an alienated condition, in the singularity of his perception, Sartre did not invent *Négritude*; instead he thematised a vision as it had been illustrated by black writers since the 1930s. He doesn’t absolutise a difference; he accounts for its modality. He doesn’t essentialise a nature; he affirms a liberty in the world.

These are signs that can be situated in explications. Of Gide, in *Les Temps Modernes*, Sartre writes: ‘The whole of the French thought of the last thirty years, including re-readings of Hegel, Marx, and Kierkegaard, willy-nilly has been defining itself vis-à-vis Gide’. ‘A philosophical matrix,’ states Jean-Marie Domenach (successor of Mounier at the helm of *Esprit*) about personalism and *Esprit*. What Domenach is saying brings to mind thinkers associated with the philosophy, including Etienne Borne, Paul Lacroix, Paul Ricoeur and André Mandouze. A matrix is also a symbol that could properly be applied to Sartre and his ‘family’ of *Les Temps Modernes* and the current accompanying it in its ambition of ‘missing nothing of our time’, as Sartre put it. Diop knew such an ambition. His black friends on the committee knew this also, including Senghor, Césaire and Wright. The first was a communist before moving to socialism in politics and, in the early 1960s, moving to a surprising African socialism reconciling Karl Marx, Frederick Engels and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Also a communist, as is Wright, Césaire left the party in the mid-1950s in the name of the specificity of racial conditions in class struggle. *Discours sur le colonialisme* (published in 1950) is a well-known statement in the right to rebellion and *Lettre à Maurice Thorez* (1956) reflects the same spirit. In 1947, Césaire had republished *Le cahier d’un retour au*

pays natal, the best-known version. In the preface, André Breton salutes it as 'the greatest lyrical monument of our time'. By 1956, this long poem on black identity and alienation became one of the significant flags of *Présence Africaine*, which has released it over and over again.

Building the committee meant also Diop's appealing to the prestige of guiding scholars and go-between individuals. First, Diop appealed to Paul Rivet, an Americanist anthropologist and founder of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris and an institute of anthropology in Colombia. A highly respected teacher, known internationally for his anti-racist and anti-fascist militancy, during the war, Rivet was forced into exile by the Vichy regime. He next came to Théodore Monod, a naturalist and member of the Academy of Sciences who organised the Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire and was also a remarkable teacher.

In his knowledge of African cultures, Senghor has always recognised his teachers. Among them are Leo Frobenius, on the one side, and Rivet, Marcel Cohen, Lilius Homburger and Marcel Mauss, on the other. Frobenius, by his work, opened Senghor's eyes; the French gave him the knowledge and the method for reading African cultures in context. Is there a soul to a culture? In 1950, Monod directed a survey that led to *Le Monde Noir* that *Présence Africaine* publishes. This is an event that marks African studies for ever. Among his collaborators, Monod has Amadou Hampâté Bâ, J. Richard-Molard, Griaule and Senghor. Monod, the ascetic militant, lost all the members of his family during the war and spent his life in the service of science and a quest for the absolute, admired by many as the 'Sahara desert man'.

On the side of go-between associates, there is, first, Leiris, friend of Georges Bataille and Sartre, Picasso and Griaule, the 'Dogon citizen'. The author of *L'âge d'homme* (1939) and *L'Afrique fantôme* (1934), Leiris navigates between the worlds of art and science, the Musée de l'Homme and *Les Temps Modernes*, as well as that of political activism. In the early 1960s, he participated in the creation of *Les Cahiers d'Études Africaines* of the École des Hautes Études. There is finally, the Dominican priest Jean-Augustin Maydiéu, the least-visible member of the committee of patrons, but possibly the most influential. Behind the two friends, Diop and Maydiéu, was a steady, discreet protector, Daniel Pezeril. Associated with two journals, the troubled *Sept* and *La Vie Intellectuelle*, Maydiéu is Diop's spiritual father. He bestowed his first Christian name of 'Jean' upon Diop when he baptised him as a Catholic on 25 December 1944. How much *Présence Africaine* owes to Maydiéu is difficult to detail. In *Rousseau: Une dissidence spirituelle sous*

l'Occupation,² Pascale Pellerin notes that Maydiéu is a close friend of François Mauriac. He would have pressed Mauriac to join the communist-inspired Comité National des Écrivains. The information has been public for quite some time. In *Le siècle des intellectuels* (1997), Winock gives specifics about the birth of the group, initiated in June 1941 by Jacques Decour, with the participation of Louis Aragon, Elsa Triolet, Danielle Casanova, Édouard Pignon and Georges Politzer. The committee was organised in December 1941; Mauriac and Maydiéu were part of it, a group transcending ideological divides.

Maydiéu is a product of the 'renewal of a critical intelligence within Catholicism', to use Jean Lacouture's expression in volume two of his *Jesuits* (1992: 383). When Maydiéu gives his support to Diop and *Présence Africaine*, the two friends know of the toll of Dominicans who have lost their lives during the war. From the beginning, Maydiéu was supportive of the dialogue that *Présence Africaine* intended to promote among Islam, Christianity and African traditional systems of belief, as he was of the dialogue between believers and non-believers. From the beginning also, Howlett has testified that it wasn't simple or easy for a man expected to submit to another type of obedience.

Setting aside anecdotes about Diop's fondness for the Dominican Order, at least three effects of consequence should be mentioned.

One, although published first by the Dominican company Cerf, the 1956 *Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent* constitutes a milestone that initiates a problematisation in theology of mission and witnesses to *Présence Africaine*'s spirit. The publishing house reincorporated it in follow-up researches.

Two, the 1962 Rome meeting that Diop presided over, debating concerns on African identities and Catholicism, contributed to the Vatican Ecumenical Council.

Three, in the 1960s, *Présence Africaine* opened its doors to explorations in theology of inculturation and its search in understanding the Latin American theology and philosophy of liberation. However, the foremost line of preoccupation of the journal seems to have been to maintain a strict balance between interrogations on traditional religious experience, both Islamic and Christian. It is not an accident that *Présence Africaine* published the 1982 timely warning *Africains Musulmans* by the Dominican René Luc Moreau, urging a dialogue between Christians and Muslims in West Africa.

In brief, on *Présence Africaine*'s contribution to African independence, let me quote the journal's own words. On its website today, one reads the following, in my translation: 'From the beginning, *Présence Africaine* welcomed thinkers and

writers of authority, who were considered directors of conscience of France. It was an invitation to pursue their generous reflection in the name of their own faith in the equality of the dignity of humans.' As Diop puts it, the journal existed 'in order to face our dignity within a social and human universe predicated by their works'.³

Edjo, the reporter for *Africa Presse* whom I referred to at the beginning of this letter, asked David Simo, chair of the German department at the University of Yaounde, what he thought of *Présence*. Very matter-of-factly and candidly transcending periods, he commended a popular explanatory view. Simo stated: 'For intellectuals from Africa, West Indies and Americas, *Présence Africaine*'s existence is capital' (Edjo 2010). Emphasising the functional values of its structures – the journal, the publishing section and the library – he added: '*Présence Africaine* introduced a direct voice from Africa into the Parisian intellectual arena, inviting this one to realize that Africans have things to say. And they can say them in their own manner.'

A humanism?

Was *Présence Africaine* an accidental effect, or the initiating occasion of collaboration between humanisms for the cause of the colonised? Kal Mansur's sculpture suggests an intriguing 'façade sanctorum'.⁴ The front proclamation of a few *justs* in our time.

'Il importe avant tout de revaloriser l'Homme,' Mauriac asserts. Mauriac's phrase opens the conclusion of the Jesuit Auguste Etcheverry's doctrinal study, *Le conflit actuel des humanismes* (1955). The author was then the dean of the School of Philosophy at the Catholic Institute in Toulouse and, in this book, he works at demonstrating the pre-eminence of the Christian humanism over rationalism, existentialism and Marxism. It made me check the position of a pastor. In December 1963, at the end of the second session of the Vatican II Council, Cardinal Frings, Archbishop of Cologne, made an internationally diffused declaration to the *Deutsche Korrespondenz* about Christianity and ideologies. It has a striking note on 'the idea of tolerance, respect of the spiritual liberty of one's neighbor, and the unconditional will to reach the truth'. These values, he insists, 'attract the individual, and rightly so'. The Cardinal's statement began by marking what he considered the intrinsic weaknesses of contemporary humanisms, targeting in particular existentialism and Marxism. His challenge, however, addresses fellow Christians on why other people should exemplify better these values – a troubling question, from what it seems to imply. These are two views from the church

that Diop trusted. On the other side of the intellectual spectrum, some friends of *Présence Africaine* could make assertions relying on similar commitments to the human, leading to the privilege of this or that humanism and, in this measure, providing a key to the daunting task of *Présence Africaine* as it was informed by currents supporting it. Two precepts are important here: that of ‘insubordination as a right’, exemplified by Césaire and Howlett, and ‘insubordination as an act of faith’, to quote Mandouze, a committed friend to the independence of Algeria.

In a 1958 issue of the *Journal of Negro History*, Howlett recalls a meeting of the initial group. It was a Sunday, writes Howlett, the autumn of 1947, in a café of the Boulevard Saint-Germain in Paris. It must have been one of the first meetings. The first issue of the journal was about to appear, dated October–November. Howlett names a number of people, members of the committee: Gide, Sartre, Camus, Mounier, Leiris, Wright and Senghor (140). ‘Then and there,’ says Howlett, ‘the debate began, wide-open as its promoter had wished it. For it was important that the magazine shouldn’t be enclosed in a sectarian attitude; no ideology whatsoever must restrict its audience. And so, this sponsoring committee represented the most vibrant spiritual and political tendencies of the age.’

Attentive to the demands of coherence, this letter has tried to put the journal in context. The explanation has brought in elements that are part of the project, and at given moments of its trajectory, inflecting more an image than a message; more an attitude than an explicit pronouncement. Does the plausibility of such an explanation, if it is a satisfactory one, induce an understanding of the journal at its genesis?

Between the background of signs and the politics of difference, supported by its committees, remarkably by that of patrons, *Présence Africaine* actuated a discourse marked by a humanism that transcends lines. Initially a discourse on the cultural, it extended itself to the political. One thinks of the expressive title of Fanon’s book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). In her article ‘*Présence Africaine*: History and Historians of Africa’, published in *The Surreptitious Speech* (Mudimbe 1992), Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch analyses the historical tempos of *Présence Africaine*’s voices determining a course that, after 1948, steadily developed and amplified areas that contributed to African political independence.

No one could sensibly doubt the impact of the arbitration of the moral authority that supported the genesis of a venture. This one, in our time, may reasonably be qualified as a ‘surreptitious speech’.

16 July 2010

Notes

1. A translation of this chapter has been published as ‘*“Eine Nacht des Glaubens” – Eine Meditation über die Anfänge und die historische Rolle von Présence Africaine im Rahmen der afrikanischen Unabhängigkeiten*’ in *Jahre afrikanische Un-Abhängigkeiten – Eine (selbst) kritische Bilanz*, eds. Judith Strohm and Eric Van Grasdorff, Berlin and Windhoek: AfricAvenir, 2010. It has been reprinted here with permission.
2. <http://rousseaustudies.free.fr/Articlepellerin.htm>
3. <http://www.presenceafricaine.com/content/7-maison-d-edition>
4. See Figure 12: Façade Sanctorum.

Kata Nomon

Letter to René Devisch; On the Practice of Anthropology

- νομός, place of pasturage, herbage, habitation;
- νόμος, what is a habitual practice, custom, of the laws of God, law;
- κατὰ νόμον, according to custom, or law.

What a paradox is your ‘What’s an Anthropologist?’ (*Codesria Bulletin 1 & 2*, 2008), this discourse of the honorary degree, which you received from the University of Kinshasa. It identifies with and comments on an interrogation about the future of a discipline from its external conditions.¹ These, while contributing to a definition of anthropology, mark also the relevance of a space that allows a healthy exercise that the discourse seems to disqualify. Supported by an orthodox academic career and a commanding authority in social sciences, does not this discourse confuse domains in annexing the plausibility of a plea between North-South radical politics of solidarity and the demands of a scientific practice? At the very least, these problems should be distinguished, as they muddle competing duties and privileges of dissimilar fellowships. But if we suppose and admit the pertinence of an ethical generosity and possibly its efficient administration, does it matter whether the discourse is validated by the degree of credibility of the scholar, of the humanitarian, or both? Let me continue with the supposition. If we accept this as perhaps a legitimate way of engaging the apparently divergent responsibilities of the same person, can the valuation of interacting credibilities ignore the pillars that support them? These are two almost incomparable powers: on one side, the authority of a scientific practice issued from the empirical verifiability of its explanation, and, on the other side, the authority of a moral commitment that is warranted by a spirit of finality.

In its own right, you say, the discourse manifests a language that you inhabit. Translating its disconnecting past, it would signify its own purpose for tomorrow’s anthropology. In the awareness and the act of speaking, it anticipates something in your claim for instituting a ‘beyond’ of histories and geographies, cultures and their

idioms. On that account, depending on viewpoints, its expression would be, through and through, a metaphor and a metonymy. Within such an order, you are right, fascination may well be the other name of anthropology; on the matter of vision, nothing, absolutely nothing, would prevent anyone who masters its etiquette from interchanging the designation of 'Kwango Yitaanda villages' with your concept of an '*espace-de-bord-intercivilisationnel*', used in '“The Shared Borderspace”, a Rejoinder' (*Codesria Bulletin 1 & 2*, 2008). From an ordinary understanding of figures, this system allows a word to be used for something it does not denote. In the same manner, the signifier of one word could apply, without consequence, to another thing by virtue of their association. How could such a language correspond to the task of being an '“inter-memory space” between yesterday and tomorrow's societies' without being constraining as are those it would bypass? Surely a well-defended argument can, in principle, provide for the best of outcomes, but it cannot ever guarantee its truth, since each one of its premises might be problematic.

Let us 'walk' together while reflecting on the common idioms we use in order to clarify both what brings us together and what may explain divergences on ways of interpreting crucial issues in ethics for intercultural co-operation. Here is a metaphor. A postulant to the Benedictine life begins the formation period by relearning how to walk and, progressively, how to make the body a site of *The Rule*. The requisite of such a conversion does not erase dissimilarities of individual steps. Yet, assuredly, the poetics of an individual's effort, in according one's singularity to the horizon of an ideal, testifies to diverse procedures, somehow conflictual. As in the case of any discipleship, the effort means a double inscription for any difference in kind: vertically, to become a process of engraving oneself in the spirit aimed at by the letter; horizontally, to identify with the process through which one can invent a self from a common vernacular issued forth by this very letter. In this ascetic process, the basic idea of diversity coincides with the notion of a limit to be surpassed. An elsewhere of harmonisation echoes this perpetually recommenced inscription, in negotiations about the truth of an imperative letter and its symbolic figurations in time, and in the patience of the indefinite exegesis it weaves.

Inspired by his Catholic background, Louis Althusser adapted this very course into a Marxist grid in order to get the drift of the overtaking tension between the requisition of a language, the petitioning of an ideology and the construction of a history – in sum, the transformation of social totalities. Attentive students of Jacques Lacan would agree that it is in and from a deviation that, after Ferdinand de Saussure's lesson, one qualifies the procedures of a *parole* actuating a *langue* or, precisely, the *parole* as the concrete actualisation of the abstraction that is

the *langue*. By the same mode, one describes the structuring of a subject in the intersubjective space of a language, in an ever-changing abstract, a conventional social institution.

Now, René, allow me to read your 'walk', your Kinshasa discourse, from the particularity of my own steps, but within the cultural language we are supposed to share. My steps are my own steps, as yours are yours, but within a conventional system we are supposed to share. It is ours without being totally ours. It is possibly still marked by the demands of a cloister, whatever it may be, and the genealogy of its requirements regarding how, in the diversity of our personal differences, to disentangle the inside and the outside of anthropology, the word and the concept.

Legère (To read)

- *Practice: to read*
 - (a) to bring together, observe, survey, catch up
 - (b) to pick out, extract, elect, select, to find
 - (c) recite
- *Signs: the letter*
- *Activity: to perceive (lectio)*
- *Function: reading and understanding the given.*

I am biased in favour of the fundamental spirit of your discourse. Its testimony sustains its drive from a personal whole, unfolding a personal sense of duty to human solidarity, while maintaining faith in the primacy of a scientific inquiry. But I am equally partial in my surmise of the superiority of scientific explanation over unscientific constructions, especially those decided in politics of desire.

For more than three months, your affirmations have accompanied me over three continents. Countertext and pretext at the same time, they served as an argument, as a series of reasons for attentive scepticism in a number of public stations, which I was transforming into obligations for meditation.

I would like to pursue three lines of questions. Your address implicates them. Seeing them from other angles, they clearly represent the ambiguity of interculturality by the way they have been, for me, competing meanings of the lowest, and of the highest, degree of 'believing'.

1. (a) How to face questions on thinking globally from cultural hypotheses that intend to revisit foundational concepts in today's practice of social sciences;

- (b) Early October 2007: 'Re-Contextualizing Self/Other Issues: Toward a "Humanics" in Africa', a Joint Symposium: Makerere University (Uganda), Kyoto University and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.
- 2. (a) How to test, evaluate and apply explanations (scientific and unscientific) in conjunction with socio-political arguments of 'desire';
- (b) Early December 2007: Bogota (Colombia), an academic conversation for '*Una Propuesta de Maestria en Interculturalidad*'. Conceived by a group of professors, the colloquium's objective was to debate on interculturality in the education of teachers or, in short, to define a pedagogy.
- 3. (a) How to appraise intercultural agendas from a good usage of ethical and scientific agreements and disagreements;
- (b) Mid-December 2007: Durban (South Africa), Codesria Annual Social Sciences Campus, on Contemporary African Cultural Productions. Confirming individual research to Codesria's principles, the seminar's aim was to authenticate perspectives within scientifically valid boundaries.
- (c) Early February 2008: Vancouver (Canada), Africa Awareness Conference on Hope, Innovation, Vision: The Past, Present, and Future of Agency in Africa. Here, one faces a classical attitude in politics against prejudiced representations of Africa; a student organisation opposes a one-week celebration.

Consequently, we have three posts, three different engagements, three types of directions. They are exemplary by their explicit purpose. They are significant by the way they make interculturality one with extended academic or scientific institutions, objects of desire and intended possession. In such a command, as you seem to suggest in your intervention, does interculturality correspond to an extrinsic call in cultural differentiation? Could it be said to relate primarily to an intrinsic structure of its reality?

A role (expert, convener, keynote speaker) has determined a function that is a question: how to walk with 'seers', to be a companion of the road and to remain a voice which, within the liberty of a critical indifference, can rate the improbability or the perils of what may not have a precedent in the politics of knowledge, vis-à-vis the respectability of the politics of cultural rights? How, at the same time, to inhabit the very quest as it formulates a desire for a more ethical order?

Within specific frameworks profiling rules that would promote 'interculturality', I came to focus on propositions and a few precautions in handling them. Between empirical and allegorical lines, in order to reconceive the interculturality concept, it was easy to suggest, in and against plays of perspectives, questions on how to grasp your word, formulate its volume and its connections to other standpoints in theories of difference. A first precaution was, as a point of personal integrity, the usefulness of a detachment from Thomas Aquinas's principle, according to which 'the primary object of faith is not a proposition but the reality it designates'. A reflection testing itself from a culturally religious background can accommodate several sorts of interacting lines. In my disposition, there is no disapproval and no rejection of the definition of faith as a belief in doctrines of religion and the observance of obligations it entails. On the other hand, faith has been assented for what conveys trust, in confidence and reliance. In this sense, faith analogises Herbert Feigl's 'what is not always perceptible', what can be valued from a *justificatio cognitionis*, the coherence of propositions or, easier to handle, from the *justificatio actionis*, through commonsense criteria of efficiency and morality. The cause of a scientist would belong to the same order of faith as a sound discourse of political allegiance within a democratic tradition.

A second methodological precaution concerned a deliberate prudence about the very process of conceiving an intercultural discourse as a matter of faith. In a first approximation, I have been acknowledging it from an equation that integrates a subject and a statement about transactions, marked by the value of two prefixes, *inter-* and *trans-*. The first actualises two types of ideas: incorporation or integration (*inter-* as amid, between or among) and mutuality or reciprocity (*inter-* as correlation or co-operation). This prefix, of Latin origin, fully specifies its value when situated vis-à-vis proximates such as *trans-*, whose semantic field is dominated by the idea of motion, from one place to another. Its denotation, from the Latin to today's usages, includes significations of over, across, through and through, and beyond.

Finally, here I am now reading a silence and this would indicate meanings such as between, betwixt and, indeed, over. From this angle, one can guess some of the reasons of excitement in 'inventing', with the support of J. Allary, your Africanist library within the Kimwenza Scholasticate. In fact, you would like a challenge to the normative Colonial Library. As the Canisius linguistic minority, you were to access the African experience through empirical studies of ethnographers, Lilyan Kesteloot's thematisation of the *Négritude* literature (1965) and appraise

the 1960s speculative debate on African philosophy, which meant also to front a startling 'ethnic vindication': '*Flandria nostra*'. Strange, is it not? I am borrowing the expression, and its value in cultural shock, from Jan Vansina's *Living with Africa* (1994). Vansina uses it in introducing his return to Leuven, precisely to your faculty. And, here, I am diverting the design, imagining the moment you discovered the overwhelming Flemish contribution to the Central African knowledge. Since the mid-1960s, the successive bibliographies of 'African' philosophy by the indefatigable Alfons J. Smet have made this fact even more visible.

In 1982, with the accent of bad faith that always masks good intentions, I decided to correct a bit the excessive Flemish-Germanic presence and counterbalance its scale by publishing '*La pensée africaine contemporaine 1954–1980: Répertoire chronologique des ouvrages de langue française*' for *Recherche, Pédagogie et Culture*. Twenty years later, reflecting on the question of periodising themes in philosophy, I felt the need for a concept that could signify the configuration within which to think and rethink new conditions of possibility for an African practice of philosophy. The effect of such a viewpoint may or may not correspond to what could be expected in teaching the history of ideas, but would surely make a difference in the perspective that my friend Lucien Braun, the Strasbourg philosopher, had opened during this period with his massive treatise on a history of histories of philosophy (1973). Thus, a question of genealogy, and a question about the idea of 'a German crisis of African philosophy', came out in a personal testimony. My confession was released simultaneously in 2005 by *Quest* in Leiden, Holland and *Africa e Mediterraneo* in Rome. The expression was inspired by Claude Digeon's book, *La crise allemande de la pensée française* (1959), which analysed a *fin-de-siècle* cultural phenomenon in Franco-German relations.

'A German crisis of African philosophy'. Why German? To return to your initiative, solid and omnipresent, the Flemish and Germanic presence was there in your library. You had the references to Frobenius, the successful *Muntu* of Janheinz Jahn (1961). The original German was issued in 1958; the English version translated in 1960 had ten reprintings in the same year. Its sources and scope test a refusal of the anthropological task for exoticism.

There is also in the picture Léopold Sédar Senghor's curious intervention on 'Négritude and Germanity'. In time, you came to understand, I guess, that the history of Central African anthropology is not detachable from a Herderian conception of philosophy. First, ethnographic programmes for explanation through

questionnaires (art, custom, language, law and religion) have been transcribing faithfully a Herderian grid. Second, despite a Freemason intervention in the Congo at the beginning of the twentieth century, the colonial cultural 'impression' is constructed by two extreme but complementary axes: to accommodate assimilation (the French) or to adjust separation (the British) – or to combine these approaches (the Belgians). Missionising and ethnographic mapping articulate the same basic principles in social engineering determined by a convergence idea. Third, by the 1920s, diffusionist hypotheses from the Vienna school of W. Schmidt, with *Anthropos* for scholarly debates, informed ethnographic research everywhere in the world. A man of the cloth, moreover, Schmidt is directing one of the most ambitious projects to date on *Ursprung der Gottesidee*.

In brief, your interrogations are of a perspective. Is it excessive to frame them within the configuration that devises your cultural identity, your vocation and the duty you are conceiving for yourself?

- Between British and French imperial theories is the Germanic-style practicality in Flemish publications of the 'colonial sciences', from what became the Koninklijke Academie voor Overzeese Wetenschappen.
- Within and over trendy schools, historicist versus functionalist, you can observe the leadership in social sciences and in comparative linguistics, and notice the Tervuren team's role in the reconstruction of the proto-Bantu.
- Finally, you cannot miss the unmistakable charisma of some individuals in the field of your new cultural 'devotion': Hulstaert, Tempels, Van Bulck and Van Wing, for instance.

Anyway, the Congolese popular imagination has turned the term 'Flemish' into an onomastic generality: Flemish incorporates Belgian.

Complexity of a silence: there is the recognition of your ethnicity and, at the same time, extreme prudence in avoiding the unscientific notion of 'race' so well manipulated by cultural militants and theorists of essentialist doctrines.

To the essentially integrative consideration of *inter-*, amid and betwixt, *trans-* adds or opposes, depending on one's reading, the idea of a going beyond, what expresses a transcendence. At this level, from the original Latin meaning, the English prefixes, prepositions in Latin, initiate a dynamic that translates and reflects the challenging and basically perverse ideal of our concrete relations with other people. In the practice of our ordinary language, the *inter-* and the *trans-* plus *culturality* echo each other. Fundamentally, this is the theme of the Kinshasa address. To any

intercultural argument (convenience and correlation between words, or between statements) corresponds another one, always latent and always problematic: that of a position for going beyond, affirming the motion, or negating it, a transcultural argument. Referring to Jean Wahl in *Being and Nothingness*, in order to designate the original sin (what is signified in our always antagonistic human relations – any *ego* facing its *alter* as a subject, or that other perceived object, faces her or him in a perpetually reversible tension) Jean-Paul Sartre could elicit its character by cracking the very concept of transcendence:

... we are – in relation to the Other – sometimes in a state of *trans-descendence* (when we apprehend him as an object and integrate him with the world), and sometimes in a state of *trans-ascendence* (when we experience him as a transcendence which transcends us). But neither of these two states is sufficient in itself, and we shall never place ourselves concretely on a plane of equality; that is on the plane where the recognition of the Other's freedom would involve the Other's recognition of our freedom (1956: 529).

Now, let me add a third precaution, a reference to my agreement with points from Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. To the acknowledgement of an inapprehensibility of the *alter*, there is, at least, one necessity, contraposing the instability of any ego-identity as what induces its transcendence through the forces of permanence and change. One of the forces is a major 'extasis': any consciousness, in affirming itself, cannot negate the evidence of its being-for-others. In this manner, we agree to conceive the intersubjective space of correlations between *ego* and *alter* as a locus in which inter- and trans- culturality structure their quivering *being-with* within a paradoxical context: the we-subject or object of any discourse of co-operation, or of antagonism, being fundamentally a sociologisation of an ego's awareness. In other words, we must give thought to notions of 'doing' and 'having'; that means to desire, since as Sartre puts it, 'desire is the being of human reality'. This is a question of method and a question of ethics: how does one face this issue without 'racialising' the interrogation? Operating by implication, do we promote a parenthesis prone to fallacies within the discourse on the intersubjective space? There are two perspectives to consider – circumventing or opening the parenthesis: on the one hand, to consider an argument on whose 'desire' is being alienated or recognised and according to which principles; on the other hand, implication

being by definition a weak procedure, to estimate if we mind the content of the parenthesis in the manner we handle the functions of language in relation to laws of evidence.

Concurring, one can contemplate the claim about an *espace-bordure partageable* from the prudence of the three noted precautions. Is not this learned expression the equivalent of Edmund Husserl's *Lebenswelt*? In any case, it's a fabulous concept in what it allows and what it displays. In *The Prose of the World*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, one of the philosophers you invoke, makes the following declaration in a chapter on the principle of 'dialogue and the perception of the Other'. The reference has served my reading, in both an overestimation and underestimation, of your *espace-bordure*.

Merleau-Ponty writes, as a first step, about the discovery of

[a] singular existence, *between* I who think and that body, or rather near me, by my side. The other's body is a kind of replica of myself, a wandering double which haunts my surroundings more than it appears in them. The other's body is the unexpected response I get from elsewhere, as if by a miracle things began to tell my thoughts, or as though they would be thinking and speaking always for me, since they are things and I am myself (1973: 134).

After this quotation, a number of things could be used to sanction my use of the adjective 'fabulous'. It signifies a bending into legends. One imagines an extension of the usual into the unbelievable, in lexical terms. But it is the basic ordinary that stands there, visible, qualifiable by what it reveals. There is, first, the evidence of a body in its unexpectedness, the senses; second, there is the fact of an elsewhere that is a locus of one's revelation, that of being in a context; finally, there is the oddity of a process affirming shifts and reversals that leads to a metaphor about the thinking activity: *one invents what invents one*. Identifying a second step, Merleau-Ponty continues:

The other, in my eyes, is thus always on the margin of what I see and hear, he is this side of me, he is beside or behind me, but he is not in that place which my look flattens and empties of any 'interior.' Every other is a self like myself. He is like that double which the sick man feels always at his side, who resembles him like a brother, upon whom he could never

fix without making him disappear, and who is visibly only the outside prolongation of himself, since a little attention suffices to extinguish him (1973: 134).

I want to make three further remarks, essential to what interculturality represents. First, the power of the thinking subject, a thinking machine, is identified in the singularity of a perception. Thus, we read in Sartre's *The War Diaries*, 'I think with my eyes' (1999: 15). Indeed, we find an excellent rendering of René Descartes's *videre videor* in 'Meditation Two' (1990). The *cogito* is a machine, quasi-literally, that is very Cartesian. Second, marginality is issued from the limits of one's self-apprehension; thematised, marginality would state the visibility of the other's otherness. Third, perception as an acting *Verstehen* (to know and understand) actualises the Husserlian *Lebenswelt* by what it brings about, the gift of life.

Merleau-Ponty's third step synthesises wonderfully a quasi-mystical spirit. One thinks of David Hume's declaration that the pretences of any essentially permanent self-identity are a fiction; one accesses this fiction with a definite, sweeping belief about how real such a reason is, in derivation:

Myself and the other are like two *nearly* concentric circles which can be distinguished only by a slight and mysterious slippage. This alliance is perhaps what will enable us to understand the relation to the other that is inconceivable if I try to approach him directly, like a sheer cliff.

Nevertheless, the other is not I and on that account differences must arise. I make the other in my own image, but how *can there be for me an image of myself* (1973: 134)?

Is this the emigration of the *cogito* into the other's otherness? In an exalting procedure, the madness of solipsism has been erased. As a matter of fact, a number of things are declared by this implicated motion. And your Kinshasa discourse assumes them: the negation of the verifiability criterion, the work on the self-affirmation of *Verstehen*, as in Martin Heidegger's perspective, should now proceed from an interaction of ontology and hermeneutics. In addition, your Kinshasa discourse assumes an epistemology activating its process in the Acteon complex (alimentary or military metaphors and metonymies of wars and conquests, violation and destruction) against this poetics of force and, after Gaston Bachelard, Merleau-Ponty advances figures which, in Romance languages, are

charged by verbs (Italian, *cognoscere*; French, *connaître*; and Spanish, *conocer*) expressing the knowing process as a coming together to life. You substantiate this line in the chapter on the Khita fertility cult in your *Weaving the Threads of Life* (1993). Your sentiments echo those of Merleau-Ponty, such as this one:

Am I not, by myself, coextensive with everything I can see, hear, understand, or feign? How could there be an outside view upon this totality which I am? From where could it be had? Yet that is just what happens when the other appears to me. To the infinity that was me something else still adds itself; a sprout shoots forth, I grow; I give birth, this other is made from my flesh and blood and yet is no longer me. How is that possible? How can the *cogito* emigrate beyond me, since it is me (1973: 134)?

The time of this brief passage in the life of Merleau-Ponty – the late 1940s and early 1950s, Claude Lefort tells us in his preface to *The Prose of the World* – corresponds to that of a step in your intelligence of the world around you. In the mid-1960s, at Canisius Institute in Kinshasa, you can ascribe principles to a real confusion, your galaxy and its prose. Did you really distinguish that clearly what, now, you can name so distinctly?

1. The world of a political generation was exploring the idea of sovereignty, in theory and in practice, with Mabika Kalanda's 'mental decolonisation', Frantz Fanon's politics, Camara Laye and Sembène Ousmane and Sartre's 'Black Orpheus' effect;
2. the world of concepts, with its buzzing interrogations, was opening quarrels with the idea of regional ontology (Bachelard), Bantu ontology (Placied Tempels, Alexis Kagame), conversing with militant symbols of theories of alterity (*Négritude*, black personality);
3. the world of systems, around an emblem (Claude Lévi-Strauss's French original of *The Savage Mind*, dedicated to Merleau-Ponty), in an exponential dialogue between phenomenology and structuralism, was raising and explaining new challenges about the credibility of natural law, the meaning of history and the validity of a dialectical reason.

Certainly you knew about the explosion of the notion of literature. Like most of us, you could not measure its full impact. The epoch was also being marked by an apparently minor exercise in words. The sacred proclamation '*In principio erat*

verbum' had been expanded by new demands. Did the analogous expression, 'in the beginning was incorporation', desacralise an approach to the problem signified by the correlation between three symbolic notions (ἀρχή, *principium*, genesis; λόγος, *verbum*, the word; θεός, *Deus*, God) and the absolute they represent?

Disciplines were to focus on the issue. Psychoanalytical practice, in time (as a matter of fact, your time, today) has proved, pragmatically, the precise signification of the 'incorporation' phrase. In any context – interpersonal, intercultural – even when an alienation is highly visible, convincing work has demonstrated that incorporation, more prevalent than separation, is a marker in the process that comprises identification, integration and occasional fallouts.

In actuality, the passage from Merleau-Ponty qualifies the question significantly. It may explain also the way I am trying to treat your text. We are speaking about an ordinary way of relating to anyone and anything, in their capacity of having an infinite number of appearances. In the abstract, I propose three positions from what you were reading in the early 1960s: (a) We do not reduce being to phenomenon; (b) we believe that the being of consciousness is not identical with the object it perceives; and (c) from the preceding, we affirm also that the being of the perceived is not identical with its appearances.

In your speech (later published as 'What's an Anthropologist?') you insist on interpersonal relation, sensoriality, a living body. Thus, on 4 April 2007, addressing your Kinshasa audience, the relation of your integration into a discipline was an account of constructed physical maps. Each, a narrative in its own right, was reflecting or deflecting other diagrams that you could date, their lines transcribing your stories. Kimwenza, not far away from the place where you were making your speech, did let you, you say, invent new outlines. More than simple added dots, in 1968, creating a library of Africanist literature in a Scholasticate was an event, possibly more so for you than for anyone else. Basking in it while learning Kikongo, studying Merleau-Ponty, Sartre and Fanon was to magnify its signification and could not but transform it into the experience of a consciousness vis-à-vis the massiveness of the Colonial Library.

To go back to Merleau-Ponty's passage on interconnection, we have a puzzlingly complex passage in three parts. The first, an expressive interrogation, recites in the positive an ancient line that situates the subject in a sphere of belonging, depicted from the negative exteriority of the plurality of other people. The succession of verbs repeats the intellectual sequence of Psalm 115: '*oculos habent et non vident; aures habent, et non audiunt*'. The second movement, against the reef of solipsism,

posits the subject's reality *in the world* as *being with* another person, with other persons. Finally, the concluding two questions are there to ground the subject, its fragmented self in its relation to others, to the world. They are there to give birth, a gift of life and a gift of knowing.

This quotation asserts the priority of life over the *ego* of the *cogito*, pointing to what the condition is or, more exactly, that 'gesture which makes the universal out of singulars and meaning out of our life' (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 146). In fact, a unique genesis germinates when anyone is 'the world to himself' and 'the world to the social', this phenomenon that you refer to by the concept of a 'universal human', an uncertain concept for a dynamics. The measure you brought to your listener and then to your reader, magnified throughout the confession of symbols and of a fidelity assuming ruptures, illumines the complexity of a love story through a definition of interest. In the '*espace-bordure*', you write, 'we are here to bring about a new social reality'. The history of a life can be thematised from discontinuities that stipulate a continuous search in meaning, you show: emotional co-implication, mutual education, marriage or therapy.

The explicit dwells also on the unsaid. Stations of silence and indirect hints serve well your way of appreciation in the Yaka land, a nation, real and imaginary. You have become a master translator and etymologist. *Thunaha muyidika maambu* equals the French *con-naissance*, you note. And you insist that *popular etymology* means 'to be born together'. It is Bachelard's favourite, and acquiescingly your Latin *cum-nasci*.

Indeed, *popular* is to be understood as *unscientific*. Yet we can state that the conceptual value is a highly sensible derivation from the homonymy of the roots of the two verbs. Etymologists of Indo-European languages posit the reconstructed *g'enə* as the origin of both (a) *nōscō* (ancient *gnōscō*), I begin to learn and (b) *nāscor* (ancient *gnāscor*), I am born. This is to say that the value we are contemplating witnesses to a very consequential and skilled extrapolation. It calls to mind – shall we suggest – a definition of the semantic inference.

The dictionary definition of 'extrapolate', for instance, reads as follows:

extrapolate (ik-străp'ə-lăt') *v.* -lated, -lat'ing, -lates.

–*tr.* 1. To infer or estimate by extending or projecting known information.

2. *Mathematics.* To estimate (a value of a variable outside a known range) from values within a known range by assuming that the estimated value follows logically from the known values. –*intr.* To engage in the process of extrapolating.

You are right. *Popular* is the technical term for the type of etymology to which you are referring. It is *unscientific*, they say. *Nascientia*, from the homonymia, means ‘what comes to life and is known as such’.

What you say, and often imply, are neutral and softening events and reinstitute the past in a moderate context. Indeed, the idea of a missionary vocation does not necessarily belong to colonial motivations; the anthropologist’s manner of identifying with a culture might likewise be a manner of atoning for the unspeakable mistakes of his predecessors and, equally, the planetary vision in solidarity must also have its conditions of probability elsewhere than in the generosity of a farmer’s well-educated boy. The stories presume successive challenges in the measure of a man. They construct hypotheses for interpreting passages. Thus, from a Franco-Belgian frontier to the Canisius Institute of Kimwenza in the Congo, from an initiation into anthropology to its practice in Yitaanda, Kwango and then a career at the University of Leuven, now accompanied by a psychoanalytical practice. A self affects discontinuities, legitimates ways of becoming, of reflecting manoeuvres relating to others and so on. Exemplarity of R.D. Laing’s concept of a divided self that you frame rigorously: a self in and out of its own processes for temporalising itself, in and out of its modalities of reflecting on its reflected being and apprehending its existence as what its own stories reveal, a being for other people. Each one of these marks a rite, instituting itself in its own procedures, thus instructing them. As a matter of fact, they are statements of an ontological insecurity, as well as an appropriation of something, a way of investing spaces in the time of the world you project from a conceptuality. Possibly, interculturality. The obvious seems that they are given to us in voices erupting from a series of genitives, in attachment or in deviation. *Ainsi, amor patris, amor patriae*. And then you say: ‘One is not born an anthropologist, but . . .’. A conjunction problematises the entry to an existentialist tenet entailing a possible doubt on its completion: ‘. . . one becomes one’.

In the process, I may annotate the unexpected in the manner in which you fuse the logic of scientific practice with that of the political, that of a belief and in so doing interrogate the moral signification of the vocation you are invoking by erasing the Pascalian distinction between the *esprit de géométrie* and the *esprit de finesse*. But do you really efface it?

Reading your ‘What’s an Anthropologist?’ has been like reading a lesson from a witness.

Three tasks imposed themselves on me, three ways for accessing your testimony. First was to consider the ‘making of an anthropologist’, to refer to Lévi-Strauss’s

canonical chapter of *Tristes Tropiques* (1992 [1955]); that is, a narrative disclosing step by step the practice of a discipline, its origin and its meaning. In the ordinariness of the Greek etymology, ἀνθρώπου (*anthropou*, human being) and λόγος (*logos*), thus a genitive, what is given tests itself against what it formalises. Second was to design what is in presence. Two values are intimately linked: the subjective, the discourse of a subject qualifying himself and justifying the qualification throughout an acting out represented in a statement about a commitment, and an objective value, a *logos*, word and meaning, that expresses an abstraction, the discourse that contains the speaker. The awkwardness of any approximation of the genitive is there, in the form, sign and proof of the genitive as its grounds. Does its rendering qualify an agreement with a classical model that it calls to mind, the θεοῦ ἀγάπη, the *amor Dei* paradigm in Latin, with all its possible variations? Third was to observe the celebration of the Yaka poetics of life asserting its will to an essence, which strikes me as the ability ‘to admit others into [a] deepest singularity’, as Merleau-Ponty would say (1973: 146). One sees a horizon, he insists, the horizon of humanity, a style of being human that makes *Einfühlung* possible and, indeed, this horizon is humanity, *Mitmenscheit*, as an extensional concept and as an historic reality.

Meditari (To meditate)

- *Practice: to ruminate*
 - (a) to act, reflect upon, muse, consider, meditate upon
 - (b) to design, intend, purpose
 - (c) transf: to meditate, study, exercise
- *Sign: the source*
- *Activity: to remember*
- *Function: approaching and framing orders of significations.*

Returning to your discourse and addressing it as if it were someone else's, I am situating myself in its own movement in order to envision the task it describes for tomorrow's anthropologist. It is a meditation on your meditation, your covenant with a mandate.

Reflecting on a vocation, you summon up the conditions of its possibility, locating paths in the very act of remembering what could bring to light and contextualise both their origin and explanation. The process reactualises another

foundational one, Descartes's *at certe videre videor* of the second meditation in which the passive charges its own active form and brings to light the best signs of a reflection meditating on itself: and it seems that I perceive, I see that I perceive, I see that I am seeing. The habitual translation, 'I think that I see' justifies Sartre's often-quoted observation: 'I think with my eyes'. Sartre's formula somehow ruins Descartes's expression in which *videor* exposes the *cogito* and *videre* stands for the Husserlian *cogitatum*. In the economy of arranging a reconvened space, Devisch's perception of himself brings together what, on 4 April 2007, he intended to suggest to the audience. What conflux to expect from exerting silent arguments about cultural paradoxes in the postcolonial history of a Belgian Congo? The demarcation that would singularise a 'this' against a 'that' serves the efficiency of disjunctions and conjunctions in real life. They should be apprehended in the polysemic value of their function. An overemphasis of a disjunction often serves the cause of the discourse as an invitation to a transcendence of opposites. As in the most accented binarisms, in the opposition Africa or the West, the disjunction can be, as an intellectual exercise, turned into a hypothetical conjunction that also tests implications for a logical task. Did Devisch mean such a freewheeling game apropos of his discourse? In the second part of his intervention, and quite convincingly in its conclusive remarks, he emphatically charges the two logical operations with the meaning of his own life and its cultural symbols. As markers, they cannot be detached from the gratuitous, or the not-so-gratuitous intellectual games. The meditation signifies an order that emerges out of the ordinary intersection it represents: speech within its own language, speech on its own form and meaning; it is a *parole* commenting on its own performance within a discipline. To use an expression from Merleau-Ponty, Devisch's meditation stylises a perception of his own act.

Let me use the Latin *meditari* and designate an activity that witnesses to a distance between this reflection and underlayers of Devisch's meditation. The etymological organisation of *meditari* would clarify the 'question', the idea of Devisch's intervention. A question, in its own vicissitude – it sets out 'a request' addressed to someone, to oneself, an interrogation pressing out an exigency, 'a recognition of a lack', the fact of 'a partial knowledge' seeking 'a resolution' – and enduring its own indecisiveness. *Meditari*, a deponent, has a passive form with an active meaning. It expresses a relation between a 'me' and a 'me-in-a-context', an acting and acted-upon subject; a Devisch structuring himself as 'the question' of the meditation I am recomposing from its plural backgrounds.

Taken for granted, the complexity of the conceptual field of *meditari* and its semantic transferences in translation rely on subtle irregularities of Latin deponents. The economy of forms does not exist really any longer in our language; that of meanings still does and is, basically, accorded to the etymological value of the word.

From any Latin Grammar, the rules of exception are:

1. deponents have a present participle (*meditans*) that actualises an active value in *form* and *meaning*;
2. deponents have a perfect *active* participle (*meditatus*), whereas other verbs have only a perfect *passive* participle;
3. deponents have *both* a future *active* and a future *passive* participle, in *form* and in *meaning* (*meditaturus*).

Let us focus on the verb, then assent its function and contextualise what it allows in Devisch's meditation.

One, *meditor*, formally an iterative of another verb, *medeor*, which translates the ideas of exercising and healing and from the stem *med-*, there is the derived *medicus* (doctor) and the related *medicari*, *medicamentum*. The series 'exercise' signifies an acting upon one's mind and body. It affirms also in its own signified, an effect, 'to heal'. Thus, to meditate becomes a healing procedure.

To look at the dynamics of two values since the classical period, in Cicero's language for instance: (a) *meditari*, used in the physical sense, is the synonym of *exercere* (to exercise physically); it indicates a correlation between medical practice and gymnastics; (b) *meditari*, used in the domain of spiritual and intellectual activities, attestations in Cicero's texts, is the synonym of *cogitare* (to think).

Two, Emile Benveniste insists in *Indo-European Language and Society* (1973) on translating the Greek equivalent, μέδομαι, as 'to take care of', noting that 'the present active is hardly attested' (400). This angle of the conceptual field summarises the essence of a *lectio divina* in which the subject submits to an inspiration and the inspiration to the subject. It signals also the main articulation of *The Spiritual Exercises* of Loyola, including the points of meditation structuring the manual. A glaring example of its visibility in Devisch's argumentation could be the coherence of the seminar on the body he has been directing at Leuven Universiteit.

Three, *meditor* (to consider and to think; to reflect and design) attests to transferred values that essentially engage one's mind. The spiritual activity does not detach itself from the senses; thus an exercise in contemplation, even in these

days of ours, suggests the two ancient lines: in the active, 'to have an intention, a purpose, an object of study'; in the passive, 'to access a spiritual axis of communion'.

In reflecting on Devisch's intervention and meditating on his mode of reflecting on his object, one may choose to valorize competing keys to master the conflicts of interpretation: the fluidity of cultural borders or the rigour of logical analysis. Emphasising the first in the name of surpassing confrontations, and opposing it in supposing the latter as strictly proper to a scientific practice, any option seems to weaken what Devisch advances concerning connections among anthropology and interculturality, regional practices, and the intercultural 'poly-logos'. An overestimation of logical operations may confuse demands and criteria for evaluating explanations. In social sciences, the main entries to the issue constitute a basic code for any inquiry. First, a question of critical attitude: Is an estimation scientific or unscientific? Second, a question about an explanation: Is it relevant or prejudiced? Third, a fact: the scientific is social. And this means that a critical attitude is not the preserve of the scientist since, in theory, anyone can observe phenomena and construct a reasonable explanation from the observation, or in principle infer a hypothesis that is relevant, testable and exploitable. It is also a fact, as Devisch's critique of privileges of rationality correctly notes, that a relevant hypothesis may not be testable and another hypothesis may not be applicable. At any rate, who could assure that, despite their relevance, most arguments on interculturality are not ad hoc hypotheses?

Would a focus on the genitive that signifies anthropology be an underestimation of the word *anthropology* as a statement and a paradigm? Let me sum up the case, rephrase my bias about Devisch's vision and substantiate a perception.

Thus, the genitive:

- In words (substantives and adjectives) that express attitudes (physical or spiritual, sentiment and engagement) one faces generally a verbal ideation. The substantive, which is the object of this ideation, is known as an *objective genitive*. For instance, Devisch's love of Belgium, compared to his celebration of the Yaka culture, is X. Belgium and the Yaka culture are the objects of the verbal ideation present in love, an objective genitive.
- The substantive, which is the subject of the ideation, is known as a *subjective genitive*. For example, according to Devisch, the interest of the Catholic Church in the case of the anti-colonial prophetic movement of Bamwungi seems Y. The Catholic Church is the subject of the ideation present in the interest, subjective genitive.

- A noun is called a *predicate genitive* when it is in the genitive, with or without an adjective, and denotes a socially commonsensical attribute. For example, an anthropologist's fieldwork of several weeks every year for a decade sounds like Z.

Biased, though not prejudiced, I would tend to favour, beside the functional efficacy of the genitive in diffusing confrontations, well-defined and highly limited privileges as instrumental tools in conversations on interculturality. There is, first of all, the necessity of metacodes from which lines of agreements and disagreements can be engaged. Two major metacodes propaedeutic to preliminaries are: (a) an ethical position that would accord itself to a common grid of principles, the table of commandments in Abrahamic traditions as an *exemplum*; and (b) an epistemological position, the practicality of the ancient Greeks' conceptual grids being another one, although often controverted, which, discussed or rejected in its own terms, paradoxically ends up substantiating its usefulness this way.

The genitive to be encouraged in propositions is not a panacea. Of a highly limited efficiency, it may prove to be an effective instrument in conflictual exchanges. A well-perceived difference between a subjective and an objective genitive can clarify a situation and contribute to the conversation. The genitive is among the less known of technical facilitations that can be of good use in co-ordinating group discussions.

Ethical pronouncements in intercultural contexts are ambiguous in essence and almost always potentially divisive. They can be restrained in the name of the very reason that justifies them. They can also be constrained by instrumentalising simple distinctions between subjective and objective statements.

More concretely, my bias is an effect of the already-mentioned three precautions. In the dialogic relationship between the ethics of the Kinshasa discourse and the 'principles' of my own ongoing engagements in interculturality, I came to recognise three basic references from the preceding lines and the genitive in anthropology. My three references are delineated in Devisch's meditation:

- A *verb* coincides with an *attitude*; it signifies a meaning and determines the logic of the discourse: to be fond, to prize something.
- An *adjective*, a moral one, it contributes to a substantiation of the attitude, which is a *burden*; this adjective belongs in ethics, especially the grid-field of what is 'just' and 'virtuous'.

- A *substantive* designates the concern of the activity, and one possible way of expressing it, by thinking about a *relation*; thus the idea of what is familiar, a fellowship and then comprehension, knowledge.

These keys – a verb (defines), an adjective (qualifies), a substantive (grounds) – are conceptualities in Greek philosophy. They perfectly correspond to the following terms: the verb, ἀγαπάω (*agapaô*) and φιλέω (*phileô*) means to show affection, prefer, love; the adjective, δίκαιος (*dikaïos*) means ‘observant of the rule, observant of duty, righteous, just’; the substantive, δόξα (*doksa*) means opinion, judgement and ἐπιστήμη (*epistêmê*) means acquaintance, understanding, knowledge.

Central in the Abrahamic traditions, these keys – an attitude of closeness and love, the burden of duty and a knowing process – are at the heart of their κοινωνία (*koinonia*) or fellowship; with ἀγάπη (*agape*) or love being the all-encompassing virtue transcending all precepts. Exegesis says, in Θεοῦ ἀγάπη (*Theou agape*) – its Latin equivalent is the genitive *amor Dei* – and in this genitive, a judicial statement manifests its full declarative power. By the declaration, redemption would reflect divine righteousness meeting human unrighteousness.

Anthropology and ethics are mobilised in the transitivity of δικαιοῶ (*dikaïow*), meaning to hold guiltless. The genealogy of this justification is a story in ethics. Its interference with ancient Greek assumptions on justice and (in)equality is another fact whose history haunts any discourse on human rights. Our contemporary debates on interculturality are effects, in the patience of an infinite exegesis on the semantics of few Greek classes of concepts, which almost by necessity include *agape* and *dikaïos*, *doxa* and *epistêmê*. This is the real thing in the Kinshasa discourse. *L’espace-bordure partageable* clarifies its aspects.

The postcolonial anthropologist is a person who assumes a transcultural identity – symbolic or real, it does not really matter. He is Flemish, Belgian and something else. He comments on manners of identifying with a Congolese culture. The *lectio magistralis* unsettles the irreality of an identity, in sum, the idea of an essentialist identity. Of the order of symbols, Devisch’s conversions reflect possible forms by combining adjectives and substantives so as to signify what is being sought. There is, on the one hand, a diagram: the subjective is to the relative what the objective is to an absolute. On the other hand, an intellectual exercise in mental agility can multiply avenues for interpreting equations that can be constructed from the following statements:

1. The Flemish-Belgian is to the Yaka-Congolese . . .
2. The Congolese-Yaka is to the Belgian-Flemish . . .
3. The Yaka-Congolese is to the Flemish-Belgian . . .
4. The Belgian-Flemish is to the Congolese-Yaka . . .

These four analogies can speak to any imagination. They can also serve for a rational game on the identity of Devisch and introduce fallacies. Simply, (a) arrange an argument using one term as essential and make it appear at least twice; (b) qualify the term with an everyday adjective that would fit the situation – eccentric, good or normal; and (c) we shall be on our way to promoting fallacies on Devisch's identity from the instructions of the *lectio*.

Indeed, the challenge of the *lectio* was to witness to a dynamic manner of presenting oneself in accordance with truthful statements about the complexity of one's commitment. Did the *lectio* really support such a reason?

Devisch is a modern thinker whose practice is motivated by the Greek notion *diaphorein*, which he dubs a transferential sign. (I shall come back to the conceptual ambivalence of this Greek intervention.) 'Figure' may be a better designation than 'sign' for what he considers the norm of an overreaching and overrunning animation. In sum, *diaphorein* would represent the perfect, interpersonal and intercultural mediation that can exceed verbalisation and overdo translation, being in any one-to-one encounter what is beyond what can be said and what can be conquered. These are, just about all of them, Devisch's words. The redistribution, my responsibility, underlines the obvious: in the acclaimed, a Greek verb construes an intense mystical accord within the framework of an intercultural representation.

In my imagination, indistinct forms are lining up as if they could symbolise an active role, contributing to an understanding of what all this is about. Two old ghosts, one called the Giver and the other its double, are steering toward each other. On a straight line, in my image, one of the two is facing the *ad vallem* and the other the *ad montem*. The problem is that in the space they occupy, there is no point from which to decide where the valley or the mountain might be and therefore linking a cardinal or temporal point to the two characters is arbitrary. The Giver may well be an ancestor or a descendant of the other. A 'thinking eye', I can envision the area to be a moving sphere and, in this sense, gain a sense of reality by observing any tension that would rely on firm opposites. However, in this illusory construct, variations might well be just extrapolations of my perception. I do not doubt the shifting elements that constitute the Giver and his friend. They are of my

mind. Above all, they are feeding real spectacles, running the show by arranging sceneries, regulating a formless order, correcting its excesses. In brief, they are recording and setting up a climate, sometimes disfiguring the ghosts but, let us hope, never erasing them. These are, in effect, the question and an explanation of both the struggle and the truth of my perception.

One of the ghosts is in fact an image from a book, *The Giver* (1993), a children's story by Lois Lowry. *The Giver* is part of a course in predictability, which has come to an end in the life of a young boy, Jonas, with a rupture made in another universe, another time. Jonas has inhabited new memories and he discovers a reality; he is trying to comprehend the concept of the family or the puzzling existence (from his perspective) of old people. He asks the Giver: 'What is an old person?'

'Call them grandparents,' says the Giver. The story continues:

'Grandparents?'

'Grandparents. It meant parents-of-the-parents, long ago.'

'Back and back and back?' Jonas began to laugh. 'So actually, there could be parents-of-the-parents-of-the-parents-of-the-parents?'

The Giver laughed, too. 'That's right. It's a little like looking at yourself in a mirror looking at yourself looking in a mirror' (124).

This is an exemplary experience of a cultural border-limit that is pregnant with the three disciplinary varieties that, in *Aporias* (1993), Jacques Derrida separates apropos Heidegger's approach to death, the crossing of borders: (a) languages, objects of politico-anthropological disciplines; (b) discourse and knowledge that are the object of research disciplines, or discourses on discourses; and (c) the zone of demarcation between one and two. These disciplinary systems define themselves within two extreme symbolic limits, a beginning (or birth) and an end (or death), their own and those of the objects. They are symbolic in the sense that, being passages, they state the continuity of what they represent: in the positive, through birth, and in the negative, through death. Both, in actuality, affirm the unique anticipation of life. Here the generality of the Giver and Jonas becomes relevant. As his currency, the Giver can decode passages, thematise them from a mirror image and instruct an innocent; through teaching, the Giver can initiate a new way in a knowing process. A master, he introduces Jonas into a different culture, in which to exist is to make oneself both finite and mortal (finite as a singularity and a project of existing; mortal as a being knowledgeable in the genealogy of beings of death).

Jonas's education by the Giver is a gift of life as well as a gift of fear. On the one hand, Jonas has been exposed to the object of politico-anthropological disciplinary passages, all of them symbols of mortality. On the other hand, doubling the first line of initiation, the lesson on mirrors has exposed to the boy another object, that of disciplines on and about discourses and their relation to his finiteness. Looking at himself in a mirror, his consciousness will be, from now on, aware of its own wrenching away from itself, the intrinsic division of its reflection, that it has a self-for-other-people, the dead and the living.

And 'the Giver laughed, too' . . . A conversion happened and body and mind have been marked, an 'exoticisation or alterisation' actualised by what Devisch calls an 'inversion' in his *anthropologie réciproque*. Here are two designations, *conversion* and *inversion*. At the root, the Latin *cum* plus *uerto* (-is, -ti, -sum, -ere) for conversion; *in* plus *uerto*, for inversion. From Alfred Ernout and Antoine Meillet's *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine* (1951), their conceptual field is a picture dominated by two ideas: creation and reconstitution on the one hand, and composition, moderation and legislation, on the other hand. In both the proper and figurative significations stands the idea of shaping the physical and the moral. In the practice of everyday language, one observes a conceptual tension within the signifieds. *Convertère*, 'to turn around, in any direction' and, when transferred, 'to alter, to modify'. *Invertère*, 'to turn about, over'; transferred: 'to alter, to pervert, to transpose'.

From what the conceptual field delivers, one can imagine what Jonas's transcultural conversion would represent in a conversation. Interculturally, the capacity for a correct reasoning (method and principles) along with an investment in multiplying the usage of genitives in fundamental functions of intercommunication (expressive, informative, directive) generally proves efficient in constraining excessive subjective statements. From the conceptual atmosphere of a *con-* or *in-*version, reformulating Merleau-Ponty's lesson in a reading of Husserl's *Stiftung*, one conceives the richness of every moment, any individuality, all communities in the call for the possibility of recommencements. Why not admit what we have learned from Husserl, the necessity for all of us, individually and collectively, to accept 'the power to forget origins and to give to the past not a survival (*une survie*), which is the hypocritical form of forgetfulness, but a new life, which is the noble form of memory, the present as "traditionality" ' (Merleau-Ponty 1973: xxxviii)?

The whole process of Devisch's meditation testifies to something else that may problematise the preceding lines. In effect, from the swaggering symbolic background unclasped by a Greek verb, a vague figure slowly rises, every now and then, from Devisch's circumlocutions. The figure could resemble Devisch himself, his twin perhaps. After all, he is the first-person pronoun of the discourse. The Westerner's blurred features in the visage of Taanda N-leengi's ghost may be simply reconfigured in the reflection of one of its transcultural conditions of possibility, a Greek phantom for example. Transcending time and geographies, intransitivity and transitivity, the Greek mythological figure of Tiresias would be a sound explainer. Blind, he could see; man, he has been a woman; human, he is consulted by the gods, including the highest ones, Zeus and Hera, even on the most intimate question that puzzles the divine couple. A blind prophet and a visionary of all seasons in the Theban charter (compared to Alcmene and Amphitryon, or Oedipus and Jocasta), this personage is also a poorly regarded, shadowy man.

One easily imagines an African Tiresias and a Greek Taanda N-leengi. From James George Frazer to Lévi-Strauss in the field of comparative mythology, as well as in the African ethnology of Marcel Griaule and Luc de Heusch, prophets and seers parallel sorcerers and wizards. They are of all times and cultures. Of the day and of the night, by the negative and the positive, in the ambiguity of their very nature (not being only this *or* that, but instead 'and this and that') and the ambivalence of proprieties that bring them together and distinguish them, according to the privilege they stress and account for, they are all of the same transcultural 'race'.

One may introduce here the reality of a terror, a classificatory attitude inherited from the Greeks, which we still conceptualise in Aristotelian categories, the obliteration of difference: *aphanisis* – one must be this or that, one or the other, Lacan says. It is the supreme male terror – and it would represent the erasure of 'an identity'. Cultures are individualities. And anthropology, scientific anthropology and, a fortiori, African Studies have been the sciences par excellence of classification. The approach to human and cultural varieties reflect structurations organised from the operativity of the *vel*, from symbolic logic, which is a systematic usage of alternations reproducing a disjunctive rapport between a *same* and its *others*.

Devisch's Kinshasa discourse and its sequel on *l'espace-bordure partageable* seem to project a Tiresias in the figuration of tomorrow's anthropologist. A symbol, the discourse signifies a need represented by other levels of both the reality of everyday life and the fables about genesis. Eccentric, Tiresias is the very meaning

of a burden, that of compensating for limits, their constraints within the tradition and the laws they have erected. Master of connotations and denotations, Tiresias incarnates a quest that relies on symbols, a divine capacity for perceiving and designing the world as another world.

Does Tiresias need an ethics? Actuating breaks, he represents a perpetual and self-contradictory impulse within shifting instants and equivocations. Speaking of the anthropologist's image in *Tristes Tropiques* (1992), Lévi-Strauss underlines this ambiguity. Specifying a moral unsteadiness, he remarks that, by vocation, the anthropologist is a troublemaker at home and a conservative in his approach to different cultures in time or in space. In the transcultural economy that this 'manner of being' circumnavigates, this student and scholar in human variations lives a science by the anguish that comes forth, from contrasts substantiated in two verbs: the Greek *emein* (to vomit) and *anthropo-phagein* (to eat human flesh, physically or spiritually). That is an importunate terror. How can a science modify what its practice allegorises: one, to reject or the duty to alterisation; two, to incorporate or the duty to assimilation? The anguish consecrates a fear about one's normative ethics and the grid to invoke in order to respond to what is good and bad. Implied demands of the question transform it into an exacting interrogation on the meaning of the words 'good' and 'bad', what they carry and what they relate to. And, indeed, the issue emerges of the relation between moral judgement and action: 'Is there a universal moral value of acts?' The question transforms the anthropologist into a philosopher. In effect, the ethics of any anthropological practice cannot but refer to a metaethical dimension. The guidelines for inquiry in textbooks tend to ignore that they belong to a conceptual field and no longer to a scientific domain. Moreover, a new space of desire has been projected from the intersection of the anthropologist's 'elsewhereness' and a real 'elsewhere'.

By a sheer accident, Lowry's *The Giver* stands on a shelf in my study next to Devisch and Claude Brodeur's *The Law of the Lifegivers: The Domestication of Desire* (1999). With nearly identical titles and similar interrogations, they call for a need to understand the intelligence of desire in the articulation of interculturality through its symbolic trust.

Devisch's texts index a personal itinerary to the conditions of their definition. This is the position I am looking at and which claims to reveal a law signified in the canon of the Giver, symbolised by Tiresias, the seer and the knower. Why and how to read Devisch's questions within the mythical universe of a youth estranged from the memory of a past? On what kind of scale does one evaluate the hypothesis

of a science and appraise its effectiveness in a culture by what is being willed in naming a feature, such as ‘what is a grandparent’? A discourse able to do the job correctly must be of the order of explanation. Notwithstanding the precariousness of such an outlook, Devisch faces his personal commentary and its precepts and consciously names conversions, how they have been and are still leading him. He collects scientific feats and feeds the flux of his statements of solidarity in their materiality. Describing himself as the master of explanation, he would combine the virtues of the Giver with those of Tiresias.

Indicative and implicative, Devisch’s proficient code constructs a universe by deconstructing two worlds in a prophetic vision. Looking at ruptures that explicate conversions, can one gauge this intellectual manoeuvre by simply marking off its most visible sign, the inclination to overvalue weak systems and undervalue stronger ones? The preference induces a judgement that sets an impression and surely an ethical activity. These last two can be appraised. Independently from a valuation of criteria for a valid comparability of systems, reason moves the very notion of explanation, scientific and unscientific, to another, a too-often ignored problem: to be scientific, an explanation must not be a function of a scientific discipline in the restricted sense of usual definitions. Devisch makes a good point in invoking the dynamics of a Greek verb that he singles out, attaching to it a practice and its reconditioning. The inspiration, he thinks, could accommodate features of tomorrow’s anthropologist – the mythical body of the Giver, or a life giver, who, incorporating his Greek double, would transcend the conflicting versions of the story of the blind Tiresias, the wise man and the prophet.

A last sign of terror comes in. An explanation, Tiresias corresponds to predicaments, from which what should be explicated could be inferred rationally, but that is not to say logically. After all, prophets may have, as it is often the case, a terrifying spirit of consequences. Generally, however, most of them, as if it were a necessity, would rather problematise any correct reasoning. Any possible inference from the symbolics of the Giver in Lowry’s story may be very closely related to the explanation of the book, in the sense that, contingent upon the information procured, the conclusion estimated in a subjective reading can improve itself in terms of probability, instead of deductively. This is to say, bracketing its impeccable ethics in politics of solidarity, from propositions of Devisch’s Kinshasa meditation and its extension *l’espace bordure partageable*, in the clarity of their affirmation about the future of a practice – an attitude in relation to an explanation and the grounds for agreeing with it – one reads the exigency of balancing two

full measures against each other: on the one hand, the routine criteria for rating hypotheses supporting an explanation (relevance and testability, explanatory capacity and compatibility with other theories) and, on the other hand, creative impulses influencing hypotheses, the part of political engagement which, for better and worse, has sometimes conditioned the rules and mechanics of the sciences in general and the social sciences in particular.

Notwithstanding, perplexed and wondering, one comes to respect the spirit and its ability in articulating axes for action at the intersection of slippery presuppositions surrounding two conceivably conflicting explanations: a science to be invested and an ethics. From the stability of such a perspective, one sometimes worries just how real the enemy Devisch is combating may be.

Orare (To celebrate)

- *Practice: To celebrate*
 - (a) to argue, plead, treat
 - (b) to beg, beseech, entreat, to request, ask assistance
 - (c) to supplicate
- *Sign: an absolute*
- *Activity: to comprehend*
- *Function: actualising meaning.*

An *orant*, from the Latin *orare*, by its etymological meaning is an envoy and a spokesperson engaging another person, a community or a cause. Male or female, an *orant* is an advocate, an intercessor pleading for or on behalf of another. The feminine *oratrix*, accenting the dimension of a respectful petition or humble prayer, has tended to designate specifically a female suppliant. In the unmarked *orator*, as well as in *oratrix*, one finds the values they share with the semantic field of *oro* (-*ui*, -*atum*, -*are*): that is, on the one hand, with strong juridical connotations, ‘to appeal, to petition, pledge, urge’; on the other hand, with an essentially religious value, words related to the conceptual field that includes ‘to ask, implore, request, pray, supplicate’. If in Latin the two semantic orientations are equally manifest in words derived from *oro* (*oratio*, *adoratio*, *exoratio*, *peroratio* and the verbs actualising them) the religious one is, according to all lexicographic and etymological sources consulted, the most dominant throughout Latin history. It is also the one that is still testified to in Romance languages. *Orant*, from the Latin *orans* (present active

participle of *orare*), is a word used today almost exclusively in lexicons of religious affairs and their historical dimensions in disciplines.

If I am introducing this part of my meditation in this way, and progressively extending it from a Latin background to a classical Greek, it is for a number of reasons. There is, first, a set of methodological motives. First of all, the *oratio*, an integral part of the *lectio divina* whose articulation includes four phases – *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, *contemplatio* – constitutes a normal step in a reading inspired by this plan. Second, since the constitution of universities in the Middle Ages, the word *oratio*, which has always maintained its two Latin systems of values, juridical and religious, corresponds to ‘discourse’ and is in the general intellectual culture the correct Latin term for your lecture, whose technical designation is *lectio magistralis*, a public lesson by a university professor. The definition is an academic transfer of the monastic *lectio* that historically initiated it. Third, in a classroom or an amphitheatre, the *lectio magistralis*, contested during the 1960s’ student uprisings but still a prestigious institution, is an opportunity for a scholar to address a special topic in a programmatic manner that may include, as you did, a personal statement with ethical considerations.

There is a second set of reasons, more culturally determined. First, one may consider the titular *lectio magistralis* within the context of a celebratory function, a person transcending the medieval particularisation of charismas that differentiates a *lector* from an *auctor*, a distinction that Pierre Bourdieu reactualised in his sociological research of the French intellectual life. Succinctly, the *lector* analogises a ‘priestly’ function. A teacher, whose expected role is to transmit knowledge and savoir-faire, would be its best representation. The *auctor* (and its proximate *auctoritas* that gave our ‘authority’) – referring to Benveniste’s *Indo-European Language and Society* – represents a status meant to increase the power of an institution or a rank, to make bigger and more important what existed before. Technically, one has to refer to the ideology of the Latin Church in order to decode the two functions. A *lector* – a step (a minor order) toward the priesthood – is habilitated to read, comment and interpret in public the Scriptures and, in so doing, transmit the orthodoxy of a tradition. The *auctor*, on the other hand, has the power and responsibility of managing the tradition and guiding it into the future.

In contemporary secularised terms, from this ancient specialisation, Bourdieu suggested two functional classes of intellectuals: the first is those who, like any regular teacher, through a social habilitation, are expected to serve the culture

according to its exclusive directives, in fidelity to truth, a 'sacerdotal' function; the second class is those who, well or ill inspired, take upon themselves the daring task of exploring the margins of a culture and the unimaginable, a 'prophetic function'. A professional elected to deliver a *lectio magistralis*, in accord with the *in medio virtus* principle, would generally tend to situate the pronouncement between a *lector's* prudently innovative argument and an *auctor's* judiciously deliberate exploration. By the type of interest it has induced internationally, your *oratio* seems to have been an exemplar of such a measure.

One needs the Latin background of an *orant* – a word sometimes seen as a synonym for *orator* – in order to appraise correctly the symbolism of your *lectio magistralis* at the University of Kinshasa. Your dignified *oratio* has the double axis of *oro*, semantically and conceptually. On the one hand, the *orant* speaks as an ambassador, a juridical axis. He argues and pleads a cause (*si causa oranda esset* of Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita Libri* 39.40.12) and speaks to equals, to friends. On the other hand, the *orant* speaks as a client, addressing an authority, asking for assistance, beseeching and praying. In the two angles, the master of the day speaks with conviction, *kata nomon*, following the custom and the law and, a request or prayer, his address is made according to regulations and expectations but also according to conventional institution and practice. Accordingly, for an *oratio*, the *orant* follows rules and directives from a probable *ars orandi* (art) and *ars scientiae* (science).

At the intersection of Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian representations, thematically opposed to the *orant* who makes his *oratio* standing, sitting or on his knees, there is another face, that of the *gisant*.

Thus, a *logos*, the word of an *orant*, in its double functions and movements, is both subjective and objective. Singling the caesura in the plurality of possible genitives, qualifying your message (love or desire, action or faith), can we assess what it ratifies apropos the deflections of meanings it construes and diffuses in the speech? Yours was about a 'discipline' and its 'politics'.

Invisible, the interstice between the subjective and the objective is itself a letter. A break and a quiet internal period within an expression (form, locution, verse), it joins two unequally accented elements that it consummates and might dissociate. To read it, to understand the way it relates to the making of an anthropologist, involves a task: to reformulate the creative process of an idiosyncratic topography by modulating some of the axes that articulate it. Here are three possible keys: One, an observation of the activity of the caesura, by surveying and connecting some of the rings it allows; two, a tracking of symbols that it involves by skirting

and finding signs that it implies and masks, suggests and disguises; three, assessing some of your questions about an anthropologist's vocation, by reinterpreting what the caesura in the word *anthropou-logos* testifies to, in a manner of recovering the path of the *oratio*, the configuration of its meaning.

In praising your attitude and its testimony, one perceives a paradox as well as a psychological dilemma. I read the text as a riddle on justification. The narration of a progressive education in manners on how to relate to other people, the recording of how a vocation came to be inscribed on a body, your statement supplies additional information in relation to how its own impetus and momentum, which have been discontinuous and by no means certain, may or may not explicate the style of celebrating the Yaka culture. At any rate, traces are there. In an honest caution, rather than a full disclosure, your critique of the excesses of globalisation cannot ignore the Yaka desire in modernisation. To celebrate the Yaka tradition with or without restrictions apropos its internal counterpoints engages your individual credibility and moral standing, as well as those of the scholar, who is also a Yaka elder. As to the effects of the discourse, it will certainly have this outcome: with restrictions, any declaration may divide your own class of Yaka elders and cast doubts about your integration in the culture; without restrictions, any declaration might inconvenience your deontological integrity. Moreover, as a 'postcolonial' scholar, you know well that the anthropology of Yaka land in the Colonial Library includes exemplarily work by militant missionaries. To question their methods would not necessarily signify charging their good faith, as it would not apropos contending views of fellow anthropologists born Yaka. But is it absolutely unavoidable?

The explicit in the anthropologist's achievement (what has been done and said) states above all what has been lost. Ruptures in human journeys, the reorientations they govern, always comprise a measure of breakaway and renewal. Ephemeral or not, the disaffection or the loss of walls inform, for instance, the life on a family farm to Jesuit training, philosophy to anthropology, Belgium to the Congo. And of course, the constraints of an academic discourse are also to be considered. They comment on slips and lapses in one's intellectual confession. The explicitness of a reason in a disciplinary practice makes the best of itself by necessity, not only from crises and habitual professional trials, but equally from what conscience and memory can choose to weaken, ruin, or simply erase and forget.

Certainly, the declarative memory of a *parole* circumscribes its own density. A case in point could be your rendering of a transformation: one day, Devisch

becomes N-leengi. Does the symbolic metamorphosis merit a significant attention in the anthropologist's consciousness? The text circles the transfiguration in *le hasard de la petite histoire*. The adjective *petite* mismatches an event. In the name of privileges unknown to the audience, the *orant* has chosen to misplay what founds his *lectio*. In intent, as well as in its reception, it is a sort of stylistic drama.

It is unfortunate, this adjective *petite*, for what it half opens and closes instantly. In actuality, it also invests a memory with its secret. Charming in the interrogation it summons ('*Petite?*'), it can be used in variations that include implications like these: one, 'Am I not a situation that the character may not grasp?' Or, two, an emulating banality in the act of remembering, 'I mean a "play" for the audience, for I am simply a figure of a new immanence'. Here, with you, an adjective; elsewhere, in my recent experiences, a declaration that inevitably shields something like an evidence. Many would agree that anthropologists undergo an initiation that bestows upon them some kind of esoteric knowledge and, with it, a power linking them to local spiritual masters.

This opinion nurtures a doctrine. Does the anthropologist believe in what often smacks of mystification? If not by conviction, at least as a mode of protecting a good professional standing, the choice of a style of engagement, backed by solid reasoning can, in principle, safeguard the anthropologist's moral integrity. The entailment thesis would exonerate the necessary ambiguity of a satisfactory reason. After all, consider the frequent issue of paranormal activities. If in an academic field for example, people claim that they are certain that such-and-such is what qualifies an instance, and is the citation, surely they have a belief, and possibly the conviction, that such-and-such qualifies an instance, and is the citation. The reasoning is not bulletproof. Yet nothing prevents the anthropologist from using it, from describing a paranormal construct that may or may not incorporate morally controversial statements. From the outset, an anthropologist must have been a believer. I must not. And, one day, with or without an explicit consent, your authority could support controversial puberty rituals, or possible entries to a textbook for a high school intercultural history class.

Concerning *la petite histoire*, if it were essential to address the naming from what is called a reproductive memory, you could have mobilised it differently, *n'est-ce pas?* In fact, remembering one's life defines its own boundaries, since the act sets useful and objective restrictions on it and subjective ones too, by and in the manner to interpret. At the same time, such a problem can be managed by its commonsense specification and should not restrain us from using the concept

of memory without concern. It means what any dictionary plainly defines as the mental capacity of recalling or recognising previous experiences, real or imaginary, and Arthur S. Reber and Emily S. Reber in *The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology* (2001) dub it a ‘virtual blizzard of specialized terms’.

The precaution is expedient. In effect, the chasm between your *oratio* assumed as a discourse *pro domo*, which exposes urgencies, and the ambient air of the anthropological ‘nation’ reflects other courts. A carefully constructed miniature mirror, the *oratio* and its sequel summon up particulars about the Yaka in relation to your inscriptions in a number of intellectual streams and in relation to the history of a discipline. Indeed, invoking only the caesuras in genitives and the contextual signification of their statements (for instance anthropologists’ valuation of strange things, the Africanist’s sentiment for moderation, the Yaka’s reasoning in hunting the best interpreter’s friendship), it is easy to characterise how they are engrossed in other conceptual grids. Among a number of references, it is possible to bring in *The Law of the Lifegivers* (Devisch and Brodeur 1999), which I referred to earlier in my discussion of collapsing two myths – the Giver and Tiresias – into a third: tomorrow’s anthropologist.

In your dialogue between anthropology and psychoanalysis – as a matter of fact, between two psychoanalysts – the empirical information relied almost exclusively on your research and questions and thus on the Yaka as a foundational argument. This means – to use the mathematical definition of argument – that the Yaka culture stands as the parameter on which the value of all universal functions depend. My first reaction: Really? Then, an afterthought: Why not? You are there in good company, with a number of distinguished scholars, including Victor Turner to whom you have been compared by Jean Comaroff and Bruce Kapferer. At present, I also have in mind something else a bit strange. In *The New York Times* of 21 December 1987, Lévi-Strauss, of the Académie Française, speaking about himself to the American journalist James M. Markham, says, ‘One does not try to be a giant, one tries to be a good artisan.’ Later in the conversation, he warns: ‘All over the world, one is seeking more than one is finding.’ Are you concerned with this exercise in modesty? There is a countermeasure to this. In 1955, Plon published *Tristes Tropiques*. Lévi-Strauss compared the anthropologist to an astronomer. Was this only a metaphor? The figure was used again in the finale of *L’homme nu* (1971) – *The Naked Man* (1981) – 26 years later, this time as a comparison: the self, he writes, ‘is a point in space and a moment in time, relative to each other’ (625).

In any case, your conversation with Brodeur begins where it ends, with a question of mediation. And which one? In which code does one translate ‘the shock of a profound awareness that a people’s culture, including its unconscious dimensions, is what both deeply links and differentiates human beings’ (Devisch and Brodeur 1999: x)? Here I am connecting premeditated lines on the body of the ‘discourse’ and an apperception, constructing another space from a body of ‘letters’, which is this book of yours. As a matter of fact, *à livre ouvert*, Devisch’s liturgy at the University of Kinshasa – ‘What’s an Anthropologist?’ – and its ethical extension are connected, intermingling graphic signs and their histories. You are an astronomer, in your own manner.

The signs of your *oratio* seem to be variations of a thought, always the same, and concerning the idea of a body. I should be willing to let two models unmask a hunt and its risks. There is, on the one hand, omnipresent and somehow mute but overflowing, an obsession with the idea of a *homo faber*. On the other hand, loquacious, the Yaka argument, as it has been constructed by years of anthropological studies that have deconstructed a reality, is a phenomenon in its details. For hours, I looked at the photos reproduced in *The Law of the Lifegivers*. At first approach, one thinks about regrouping presentations of objects, of things in one group and those of people in another – on one side, worked objects and on the other, reified human beings. The ordering should be easy, yet it is not. Are they only things? The *Khosi* figurine (plate 1), the *Binwaanunu* (plate 2) or the *Mbwoolu* statuary (plate 9)?

An intention, a practice fuses with its own meaning and becomes an act of faith. In other words, two horizons face each other: one, life remembers, the activity of the letter and the signs of an origin; two, life does work, comments on a will to truth. The horizons can be approached from a series of concepts issued by disciplines (anthropology, history, religion); individual voices (native or foreign, colonial or missionary) and the intrinsic or extrinsic operators (schools, churches, social institutions). Whatever angle one takes, the most influential agents in the history of the Yaka land are the Christian missionaries who, in tandem with the Belgian colonial administration, have evangelised the region since the nineteenth century, possibly over an order marked since the sixteenth century. Such is the Yaka domain from which one may test your *terra firma* against points of dissent, points of orthodoxy in a normative transdisciplinary practice.

Did everyone perceive Devisch saying something like, ‘I may know one of my knots; it is a situation vis-à-vis these horizons? How could I say that you must

know how I think you see me thinking about the Yaka?’ The style, Laing’s, is recognisable. And Brodeur upholds Devisch’s quest in discipline and faith, but in which field to perceive the ‘more’ of a guiding practice, the anthropological or the psychoanalytical? Let me insist on two limits. The first, a question in the European practice of philosophy since the Renaissance, structures Brodeur and Devisch’s dialogue. It concerns procedures of knowing, the conditions of their normative functions in concordance with thematics that came to oblige hypotheses about a line which, transcending cultural dissimilarities, would validate a convergence theory. In this perspective, your model, Lévi-Strauss’s anthropology, is emblematic. Paul Ricoeur termed it ‘a Kantism without a transcendental subject’ (1969: 55) and, in the overture to *The Raw and the Cooked*, Lévi-Strauss accepted the label. In this celebration of your outlook, to know whether you would agree with the implications of such a concept is of no importance here. You still share something like a principle that submits a method to the primacy of human solidarity. It infixes the invisibility of a culture in what is settled as a prerogative from which to apprehend any alterity in its strangeness – that is, its visibility. Oddly, opposite to such an awareness that you tend to express in a Rousseauian vision, you formulate your stances in essentially political terms. I read your memoir on Lévi-Strauss at Lovanium 37 years ago. It was an inscription that linked you to what could be termed an ethics of structuralism. Is what you are teaching us today a deepening, or by the force of circumstances, a going beyond, another one of your conversions? In any case, you may be less pessimistic than Lévi-Strauss. He horrified Markham, the *New York Times* reporter. Their conversation ends with Lévi-Strauss saying: ‘History is whimsical and unpredictable, “progress” is uneven at best and certainly relative . . . I try to understand, I am not a moralist at all’ (Markham 1987).

The anti-Cartesian *I is an Other*, from Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Lévi-Strauss, can allegorise – why not? – the marginality of Arthur Rimbaud. Rimbaud as a metaphor of marginality allows flawless conceptual equations. Sure enough, existentially, the following platitudes will do: marginality is to the visibility of the *alter* (the exotic, the marked) what normativity is to the invisibility of the *ego* (the referent, the unmarked). No more entries favour anyone: everyone being the *alter* of someone else, the problem of possible confrontations might seem settled. You have magnified the truism in an *oratio* demonstrating that, for sure, the truism works in the abstract, not in the actuality of our shared human condition.

A tradition and a reason still house their own constructs. Is it wrong to hypothesise that their triumph could be indicative of your alertness to casualties,

to consequences or to the austerity of your terrifying secret, of Devisch's position on alterity? Its unsaid haunts anthropological systems for approximating an old interrogation on the body, but whose body? In the negative or in the positive, any body is the singularity that can equate the immediacy of a consciousness and the visibility of an object. You refer to two telling stories: at the University of Antwerpen, under 'therapeutic cults of Kwango', the sessions directed for physicians on 'the body and the world' and at Leuven, for decades – correct? – a popular seminar on 'anthropology of the body', the 'exotic Yaka culture' and its 'unusual way of perceiving'. Any student of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, after a careful examination of the section under the heading 'being-for-others', could connect the success of the seminars, at least partially, to the phenomenon of fascination. The reality of fascination, Sartre was convinced, is possibly the measure for identifying with a permanently emerging alterity, that body I can relate to and that is me without being mine. Thus, always in the same movement, fascination, that other name for the corporeal capacity of horror.

The brief reference to your seminars imposed itself upon me at a moment when I was involved in the work of a Chinese scholar on the 'doctor's body' in the traditional Chinese healing system. To conceptualise the difference between the Western medical practice that reads the patient's signs from the abstract constituted by a taxonomic table of symptoms and, on the other hand, the Chinese that moves the other way around (about impulse sensing, for instance, how the doctor's body, in its contact with the patient's, initiates both reading and analysis), Merleau-Ponty and Sartre's phenomenology of the body granted us a basic code for a dialogic semiology.

There are three ways to stamp the body. First, to apprehend *the body as what we exist in*, through the senses; that is, the frame of our individual history. And, reflecting on it, we make it more than the contingent thing it is; we turn it into a psychological machine that is aware of its limits and of its transcendence. Second, close to the Chinese pulse reading, we face an apprehension of the body as what it is in any social context, a body for other people, or the body *as something we assume in the revelation of others' existence*. Finally, we come to see and understand our body as a frame, as *a very concrete locus* from which we think, sense and organise all our relations with others; the body stands for all our connections with other people, as well as with things, our language, our feelings.

The Kinshasa lecture has been an opportunity to revisit your work and appreciate your phenomenological bent. Despite the technicality of the 'relational

body' in publications before the mid-1990s, due to your sense of detail, what one gets (on listening, on questions of the relationship of adults to children and on speech) does not disconnect the perception from the three ways of conversation in a dialogic semiology. However, the concordance raises at least two issues: the first, on the measure of a cultural loss, which is pivotal in intercultural explorations, and the second, on the mismeasurement of scientific loss in intercultural narratives.

To acknowledge what is presupposed in your *oratio* one might suggest two main lines of objection in the Western discourse on the human body. One line, in English, is represented by a classic, Margaret T. Hodgen's *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (1964). Her treatise analyses the pre-scientific representations of human families, focusing on the discourse, which through internal transformations, specialised into biological and cultural anthropology. Anthony Pagden's *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (1982) is also useful. Specifically sequencing narratives on Africa, and more militant in its purpose, is Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow's *The Myth of Africa* (1977). On the other line of objection, two excellent contributions in philosophical anthropology are Bernard Groethuysen's *Anthropologie philosophique* (1950) and Michèle Duchet's deconstruction of the Enlightenment's anthropology in *Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des lumières* (1971). Paduans' old maxim, '*I am human; I am a borderer*' is not detachable from today's essentialist and anti-essentialist debates on the body in its socio-cultural generations. The simple divergent chronology of 'race thinking' and 'racism' in Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) and Michel Foucault's *Il faut défendre la société* (1997) addresses what, with circumlocutions, you work painfully: race may not be a scientific problem but a cultural one. The problem, if it is one, might even be elsewhere, in the unsuspected question of racism as a philosophical conceptuality entailed in classificatory grids. Such an angle may probably permit a much more healthy reading of Immanuel Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1778), for instance.

From the texts of the late 1970s and early 1980s on bodily space-time, death, marginality and liminality to this discourse of your honorary doctorate, one is struck by a quaint feature. To offset an annoying poverty of strong leaders in today's philosophical anthropology, the awareness that you promote privileges a hardy critique of taxonomic economies against the background of ambiguous strategies for encounters. Sometimes, with the faith of an interculturalist, you go

so far as to identify with processes that would transcend usual distinctions, as in the following passage from your letter to Brodeur of 20 November 1994:

After so much simplification and ethnocentric disfigurement has already occurred in the discourse developed by the North about the South, and in a context of massive asymmetry in terms of the balance of powers, undoubtedly only friendship and very lucid and self-critical expertise might be able to offer 'the foreigner', in the postcolonial world, a legitimate forum for a critical study of cultural and communitarian practices and ideals.

Would you not agree that the formation of a collective unconscious, ever renewing itself at the ancestral foundations, is far more complex than the development of the individual's psychic life? It appears to me that only a profound anthropological knowledge of other cultures, when examined from the inside, that is, from the point of view of the structuring logic, and founding axioms and values which undergird a culture's practices and institutions, might provide an adequate basis for intercultural dialogues or even for the development of a critical regard towards ourselves. Anthropology is not a neutral form of scientific knowledge: it arises from the situated experience both of cultural creativity and the lucid encounter between cultures. Your continued interest has inspired me to dig even more deeply in the analysis of Yaka culture . . .

My ethnographic passion resonates with the theme of 'homecoming' or the 'oiko-logical' turn that many minority groups are making back to themselves and their cultures (Devisch and Brodeur 1999: 232).

This advocacy of *Einfühlung*, on the side of not only a disposition in solidarity but also a disciplinary practice, accumulates elements for a programmatic vision. First is a cause: the psychological note in the quotation has been preceded by an invocation of a transcultural psychoanalytic approach. Listening to the other, or the 'Yaka unconscious', would shun 'the negativity of difference and hierarchization'. In your parlance, four figures – the sorcerer, the diviner, the chief and the healer – each one an ambivalent entity, would be an adequate key to the Yaka unconscious. Second, there is the style of your intervention. Borne upon an intercultural motivation, the principle of North-South solidarity coincides with that of an alliance determined by a situational discipline. Their conjunction, depending on deontological angles, might raise questions of method for any discourse that would submit its precepts

unconditionally to psychoanalytical instructions. At any rate, to soften your precisionist grids, Brodeur, in a letter of 12 December 1992, had already insisted on an ‘indubitable’: ‘As soon as we pose the question of the possibility of this culture [the Yaka] evolving in a new direction, it will be useful to refer to models of different societies in order to understand these historic transformations’ (Devisch and Brodeur 1999: 230). Lévi-Strauss’s extensive *oeuvre* also comes to mind, especially the volumes of *mythologiques*. Third, one can remark on the singularity of your voice in the quotation from the letter of 20 November 1994. This voice is articulating itself simultaneously with a ‘priestly’ and a ‘prophetic’ accent. Does it not expect its credibility to be validated within a scientific community and, at the same time, connote an interaction aimed at modifying the very space that made it credible?

The ambition of your commitment seems tempered in the *lectio*, which essentially states a matter of faith at heart. The intervention, at the end, of companions of the road, those who departed and those who are still alive, gives to the arbitration a symbolic and existential importance, that of being a *speculum*. This reflector functions in a manner of cohering two aspects of a practical philosophy: a looking glass (the good old approach of Varro: *quod in eo specimus imaginem*) and a banner (again, an ancient approximation: *opus speculum formatum est*). This key, the entries to dictionaries, such as Freund (1853) and Gaffiot (2001), is not original. Its usage helps to ‘speculate’ on the coherence of your conversions as moments in a dynamics.

From your exchange with Brodeur, I want to articulate three lessons in the capacity of a *speculum* – to look and to behold, to gaze and to test – about (a) an anthropological position, (b) the *oiko-logical* milieu and (c) the activity of a Greek verb.

An anthropological position

The anthropological position, in a reflection submitted to the psychoanalytical, presents a strategy. It sounds militaristic, is scary and combines in the same intellectual instalment most of the Sartrean images against representations of an epistemology of force.

Here are three lines you enumerate (I am using phrases from your text): (a) The first strategy: ‘Analyze the relations of force’, ‘demonstrate the process of “assimilation-accommodation” ’ and ‘be like a scientist in chemistry or physics’; (b) the second: ‘Participate in a cultural practice’ using two tactics: one, ‘create and

define a role in interlocution', espousing 'a discursive strategy for those for whom "to speak is to make the world"'; two, attend 'to the daily practices of the family or household'; (c) 'be attentive to the manifestations of meaning that emerge from both encounter and confrontation'.

One would like to be convinced, on good faith, that this sort of prescription is well intentioned. To inscribe them in the symbolics of the activity of a *cum plus nasci* might be an illusion. And good heavens, what is the business of a projected book facing?: '... All this, as well as the contumacy and violence of Kinois in the public realm and in the informal economy, aims to set an end to the postcolony, and reverse the "whitening" of the African' (Devish and Brodeur 1999: 255).

A last interrogation might be the most important but also the least appropriate: Why would the collaboration between anthropology and psychoanalysis now appear that imperious to you? Is it due to the supposition of what exactly constitutes a science? This problem was summed up well by George Johnson, a *New York Times* science journalist, in his intellectual biography of Murray Gell-Mann, winner of the Nobel Prize for physics, *Strange Beauty: Murray Gell-Mann and the Revolution in Twentieth-Century Physics*: 'The issue that interested [Gell-Mann] was not how to bring psychoanalysis into the domain of science, but just the opposite: how to explain psychoanalytically why scientists are driven to understand the world through the formulation and testing of hypotheses' (1999: 228).

The oiko-logical milieu

And how can I fail to acknowledge your sense of grace and its risks? The *gyn-eco-logical* milieu you reclaim, and which is affirmed in the subtitle of your acclaimed *Weaving the Threads of Life: The Khita Gyn-Eco-Logical Healing Cult among the Yaka* (1993) – its symbolics are not only from Yaka land but also speak to a Greek imaginary. By its etymology, of course, it is feminine, and doubly so in the values it states semantically and denotes conceptually. In effect, *gune* means woman. By definition, the *eco-* from *oikos-* designates that which, opposite to the *politikon* (the *ager publicus* of Romans), indicates a dwelling place and infers ideas of generation, domesticity and inheritance. You knew what you were unleashing by constructing a hyphenated *gune-oiko-logical* and, with the composition, advancing a declaration, a *logos* on domesticity. The term calls up feminine and maternal thematics prompted by other symbolic exercises. Might Tiresias come in? Not

good enough, too much on the side of a universe regulated by a grand dichotomy principle. Why, then, not imagine a going beyond, say, of themes opposing ‘a good mother’ to ‘a bad mother’? The terminology raises difficulties. This is what you say to Brodeur about a female model:

Moreover, I confess that the terminology of ‘good and bad mother’ in my view raises difficulties. Is this pair of terms of any heuristic value to me when no corresponding expressions can be found in Yaka discourse? Is the Yaka unconscious which comes to light in the rite of chiefly investiture really bound up with fear of the ‘bad mother’ or driven by forces which push for the breakup or subordination of the universe of the Mother? Instead of situating the investiture of the chief within the order of the Father, as you do, I demonstrate, with considerable ethnographic data in my support, how the (Yaka) chief concurrently emerges in both his (re) generative function (as the supreme provider of life) and in his political function (as sovereign ruler of order) (Devisch and Brodeur 1999: 242).

The ethnographic data might prove one interpretation correct. In comparative studies, it could correspond to a variation in concordance with others, attested to in neighbouring cultures and past the Congolese basin. Certainly, the data permits a debate that transcends cultural areas and disciplines. Does it not presume a tradition marked by lessons from giants – Frazer, Georges Dumézil, Lévi-Strauss and Turner – who explored new ways of reading and interpreting transculturally the very practice of anthropology? Or was this only experimentalism? Also included in this tradition is, from 1984, your *Se recréer femme*; the above-mentioned *Weaving the Threads of Life*; in collaboration with A. Gailly, a 1985 study on a self-help group of Turkish women; and, released in 1986, a video on a Yaka female diviner you made with D. Dumon.

Your reference to the international feminist inspiration and its insistence on the contribution of a ‘Black feminism’, grasps a real world. Thus, to your authority, here is a question of principles: it should be possible, using every opportunity, to oblige at least concerns related to the *oiko*- interest. Since the *gune-oiko-logical* space is, principally, about and for women, why not raise our consciences about urgent issues? Here are some recent examples that deserve reflection.

One, according to the World Bank 2006 development indicators, in 2000 the maternal mortality rates per 100 000 live births was 10 in Europe; 194 in Latin America and 921 in sub-Saharan Africa.

Two, Mary Kimani, a writer for *Africa Renewal*, a division of the UN Department of Information, has made distressing observations in a 2008 issue of the journal. The World Bank's injunctions on cost-sharing in public services, for example, have indefensible moral effects. To get treatment at maternity clinics, women must make a deposit – a symbolic amount, but high for, say, a Kenyan patient living on US\$2 a day. No money, no service. Dr Shadrack Ojwang, a gynecologist at Kenya Pumwani Maternity Hospital in Nairobi, says: 'We are asking people to die because they can't [afford to] be treated'.

Three, putting priorities (which ones and defined by whom?) in perspective, should an anthropologist be concerned by all this? Can the author of publications on the body in African contexts ignore the controverted ethics of the World Bank and its consequences on human bodies? Does it not make sense to recognise that assessing the perverse by-products of today's intersecting universes should not derail attention from pricing concurrently the highest standards for the gift of life?

The activity of a Greek verb

One recognises in your texts the clarity of an intention and its politics, but in the complexity of a voice. Its sovereignty claims an ordinary right, its own. Is it not one of the measures in building an intersubjective locality? In any case, it can hardly be detached from the discourse speaking in and from the experience of an identification. Lines that support such a journey have been assumed in what a Greek genitive expresses, the indefinite work of anthropology, in its etymological exigency. Does it translate what you tell Brodeur is an 'intercultural sensitivity typified in bifocal thinking and reciprocal exchange'?

In the Kinshasa *lectio*, we are invited to understand your activity from a figure, what a Greek verb allegorises. I have touched on this already, briefly. Let me now clarify the point.

In the paper circulated after your intervention and now corrected, you write *diaphorein* instead of *diapherein*, translating literally as to transport, carry through or open to one another. Indeed, *diaphorein* is possibly the word one would think of in any approach to concrete relations. Here is what you say, its central phrase underlined:

. . . plus l'affinité et les sentiments de complicité affectueuse grandissent entre l'anthropologue et les réseaux-hôtes, plus la rencontre anthropologique est transférentielle. Et un tel transfert est mieux compris dans le sens littéral de

diaphorein, transporter, porter à travers, au-delà, transmettre, s'ouvrir l'un à l'autre. En outre, la signification et les forces qui sont nées et continuent à naître dans la rencontre de sujet à sujet dépassent ce que l'on peut dire ou maîtriser ; elles excèdent la verbalisation ou la traduction. Cette rencontre, interpersonnelle et interculturelle, peut devenir une authentique entreprise humaine de co-implication à plusieurs voix, demeurant mutuellement enrichissante (Devisch 2008a: 48).

Diaphorein effectively belongs to the lexical field of words that refer to social interchanges such as *diaphoria* and *diaphoron*. They imply the idea of difference. The Liddell–Scott–Jones *Greek-English Lexicon* (1996) indicates *diaphoreô* = *diaphereô* (419a). The entry is distinct (structuration and semantic ordering) from that of *diapherein* (417b), the one you intended. Here is a summary of the two entries:

- *Diaphorein* (variant, *diapherein*) has two main semantic lines. The first means (1) to disperse, (2) carry away, but also (3) to plunder, (4) tear in pieces and (5) break up. The second line, *diapherô*, means (1) to carry across from one place to another.
- *Diapherein* is the reference that fits your philosophy. Here are the semantic values you were referring to. A first area, attesting intersecting lines: (1) to carry over, through; to carry from one to another, (2) of time, (3) to move; to bear to the end and (4) to go through with, endure, support. And indeed, as expected, the passive attests to the idea of separation and distraction: to be drawn apart, separated, disrupted. In fact, the passive of *diapherein* meaning to disjoin and distract translates a disjunction, as in Aristotle's *Politica*. This second line includes to carry different ways. And then the just-mentioned passive.

To repeat myself, *diaphorein* reads as to disperse, carry away, tear in pieces or break up, the contrary of your attitude. Basically, its meanings actualise acts of distinction, everything that goes against your principle of 'sympathy', *Einfühlung*. This explicit question of meanings, my interpretative reading, is also an acknowledgement of a remarkable Greek *homonymia*. A similarity of the letter explains the entry *diaphoreô* = *diapherein* in its quasi-identical spelling. This equivalence translates a conjunction to which one can relate the ambiguous disjunctive value present in the meanings of the two words. The letter exposes its own alteration.

It is amazing that a *lapsus calami* would synthesise so well a question of attitude. The verb *diaphorein* (to separate) instead of *diapherein* (to go through with), the difference between an omicron (-o-) and an epsilon (-e-), might symbolically coalesce so dramatically the dilemmas of tomorrow's anthropologist.

One, it is possible for an anthropologist speaking in the voice of a Yaka elder to debate his Africa-discipline in Greek terms, in any idiom, and still be relevant in tomorrow's intercultural space.

Two, one of the challenges may still be in an old question of method: are there, concerning this very practice, ways of thinking of it outside of the negative socio-historical contingencies that have been determining it and that are symbolised in controversial usages of subjective and objective genitives, the two intrinsic dimensions of the discipline?

Three, in a slip of the pen or slip of memory, in the fluctuation of variants, the words testify to the story of the two vowels and the impact they might have on tasks more symbolic than real.

An anthropological encounter is transferential, you say. You are right. My emphasis on a possibly small problem, but in the very activity of verbs, can be superseded in what semantic interferences induce. A zone of partial inclusion of signifieds can be accessed. In effect, *diaphorein* and *diapherein* can be approached as two manifestations of the essential predicament of any discourse on what can be said about being human, that is to say any anthropological project. Occasionally, *diaphorein* means 'to go backwards and forwards', 'to distinguish by dislocation' or 'exhaust oneself by dissipation'. On the other hand, one can read in texts *diapherein* with close significations: 'to bear through, to the end', 'carry different ways' or 'put in motion'. Finally, I should emphasise that in the passive, ideas of disjoining and drawing apart are attested frequently and they animate an axis of synonymous areas (separation, disruption, distinction). They mark zones of conceptual interferences between the two verbs. The best reference may be Aristotle's usage. In a number of texts, *diapherein*, in the passive attests values of what is sectioned. *Diaphorein*, along with its kin (such as *diaphoria*, 'unlike' and *diaphoron*, 'difference') functions in the semantic proximity of *diaphora*, the technical equivalent of *differentia* for the designation of any alterity in kind, as throughout *Politica*.

In sum, we may say that within the genitive *anthropou-logos*, the *diaphora* is in the dislocation between the subject and the object of the *logos*. It corresponds to

Plato's notion of variance and disagreement and one could bring in the Aristotelian *differentia* of species in logic as well. To recommence the conversation about the Kinshasa discourse, let me accent the other dimension of the idea you intended: to face each other, *diapherein*, and affirm our diversity in Plato's 'to be a different person' (*Apologia* 35b) and 'it makes a difference' to me, as in his *Gorgias* (517b). Does such an approach that valorizes the word's etymological meaning fit into the conceptual field of mainstream trends? *Anthropology at the Dawn of the Cold War* (2008), edited by Dustin M. Wax, contains an intriguing piece by Robert L.A. Hancock called 'Reconceptualizing Anthropology Historiography'.

Coda

Despite everything, recollecting is a negation of the meaning it claims to contextualise. In the same motion, it sanctions the value of the past as a future-oriented affirmation. There is no incongruity in the arrogance of the opening statement: '*On ne devient pas anthropologue par naissance . . . mais tout de même*'. The emphasised words expand semantic avenues. Staging the sense of a *how* and a *why*, they hold impulses. The *oratio* has the form of a dissertation. Should one hypothesise on its undisclosed pillars? It states a humanist manner of elaborating the ambiguous dynamics of a *Mitgefühl*. Is it not an attitude that inspires exhortations and repetitions of what is fundamentally a love story entailing a justification?

Let me celebrate three steps on a scale of metaphors or of metonyms.

First, a recognition. Conversion accommodates a temperament and comes to be the sign expressing itself as an activity. To convert is the verb that animates an attitude in its complexity, 'to be fond of' and face the price of inflections. Such a verb would invest the mind of the reader who goes along with the legitimacy of its quest for an intersubjective and intercultural dialogue. The presuppositions do not necessitate demonstration. The Cartesian observation linking reason and the human condition extends itself fairly well to Rousseau's *Les confessions* (1968) and Yaka elders: to study oneself is the best bridge with others. One's mental activity can be correlated to others' attitudes and expectations. Reading Devisch, one concurs with a process aimed at a '*mieux vivre ensemble*'. To be fond, in this sense, renews the patience of existentialist phenomenology. We can reread, otherwise, Laing's anticipation at the beginning of *The Politics of Experience*: 'My behavior is an experience of the other. The task of social phenomenology is to relate my experience of the other's behavior to the other's experience of my

behavior. Its study is the relation between experience and experience: its true field is *inter-experience*' (1967: 17). This relation is also the attitude of a verb.

Second, a reckoning. We have a challenging *lectio magistralis* that unfolds other stories as if they were adjectives. It qualifies beings and things, attributes virtues and duties. A metaphor from physics, its structuration shows also an unaccustomed feature as if to demonstrate that what it narrates, the punctual scattering of codings within a construction regulated by internal and external requirements, could be consistent with a highly emotional testimony strictly framed in an austere grid. The techniques analogise clearly the way a beam of particles or a wave can be diffused when interacting with other particles within the same environment. One recalls here the book by Johnson on *Strange Beauty*. An accident? Not sure at all. At any rate, Devisch's narrative can be read according to three straight lines, each with its own chronological order, having neat tempos, marked by a symbolic light neatly delineated or implied from the fluctuation of a flash in the negative and positive. Here is a first axis, the most visible one, chronicling Devisch's life. To what is represented here – childhood, education, maturity – corresponds, almost term by term and step after step, to three courses: first, the story of a talented boy on a farm; second, the layers assumed in a number of successive communities (Kimwenza, Lovanium, a return); three, the calling, the invention of a Yaka elder and a Leuven intellectual. Parallel to these sequences, one can bring together two other axes, similar (structurally) and divergent (thematically), and connect them in what cannot be any longer a sheer accident: a personal psychological story followed by the intellectual line that one might (an easy temptation) call 'the making of an anthropologist on his way to becoming a psychoanalyst'. Three headings, three steps and the maturity: one, the family's novel and the alliance with war traumas; two, the Jesuit Institute of Kimwenza, the postcolonial imperatives; and, three, the 'initiated' as ambassador (fieldwork, marriage, career), researcher and teacher, election and effects, in the Congo and in Belgium.

The description pictures a life. It addresses its own organisation as a question of method and a question about a vocation. A scholar, Devisch uses a practical knowledge of intercultural frontiers, motivated by a question about his discipline in the present and the future. From interpersonal to intercultural face-to-face communication, experiential authority may tend to obscure the privilege of its own being as a lack. Devisch shows that the challenge of any commitment states its own activity by subordinating its lack to what it can unveil and affirm about itself.

Finally, a celebration. From what is given in this manner, there is, for sure, good reason to believe in what it justifies. Throughout Devisch's texts, there seems to be something like a silent rhetoric supporting an enactment. Along with my biases, I came to accept a preconception I had from the beginning. One can always confirm anything expected. In this case, the structuration of axes, from what I can now name, does assert what supports it, a subterranean work. What we are given to meditate on authenticates an ascetic reflection which, in a proven tradition under the guidance of reason, can deploy itself through exercises on thematics, such as the topography of meanings, the obsession and indeterminacy of ways of desire, our responsibility in this world's affairs and, in our time, the North-South agendas within a problematic political economy.

The rendition of a wrenching away from, paradoxically, an experiential authority gives to Devisch's texts a shifty fluctuation of what is remembered in a transitive activity. But it is to be spoken about in an intransitive recollection. In what the axes stipulate, a silent source doubles all possible interpretations. An avowed rupture in one axis proves to be a foundation for highly rational choices and vice versa, ambiguity of the memory in what it activates.

Does not Devisch's main preoccupation – discerning the grounds of principles – pertain to ethics, more exactly to metaethics, and not science?

10 March 2008

Notes

1. This chapter was originally published simultaneously in English: 'Letter to René Devisch: Kata Nomon', *Codesria Bulletin* 1&2 (2008): 31–49 and in French: 'Lettre à René Devisch: Kata Nomon', *Bulletin du Codesria* 1&2 (2008): 32–52. A Spanish translation has also been published as 'Kata Nomon: Carta a René Devisch', *Universitas Humanistica* 67 (enero – junio 2009): 257–305. Finally, another publication of this chapter in English has been published in *The Postcolonial Turn: Re-Imagining Anthropology and Africa*, edited by René Devisch and Francis Nyamnjoh (2011). It has been reprinted here with permission.

On Humiliation, Yom HaShoah and Sudanese Migration

ON HUMILIATION: LETTER TO DR EVELIN LINDNER

You asked for a pre-publication endorsement of *Gender, Humiliation and Global Security* (2010)? Instead, here is a heartfelt statement in recognition of the engaging lesson represented by your book.¹

Eyes they have, but they do not see;
They have ears, but they do not hear.

These verses from Psalms 115 and their perennial wisdom, which accompanies home the faithful after the Passover meal, feature vividly a symbolic, helpful entry to the lines of your exhortations and their skilful growth-oriented perspectives in a ‘globally interdependent knowledge society’.

Eloquent, compassionate, *Gender, Humiliation and Global Security* escorts the reader in most tangled paths aimed at an ‘I-Thou relationship of mutual respect and equal dignity’, through questions about the safety of the world of tomorrow. The paths are individual; they are collective. They are regional and, at the same time, they transcend all differences and borders.

‘This is a book by a Master.’

The predicate entails orders of semantic restrictions and their rapport to portraits. The recognition, a paradox, could also serve as an entry to this uncommon book. In flame-touches, it uncovers disquieting correlations between cultural economies of gender relations and everyday humiliation politics. Designating patterns from a good, worked-out induction, as the book does, is an achievement in its own right. Clearly defining objectives, a contribution.

What is the price in confronting an assertion about a ‘Master’ that seems to relativise the property it grounds? Should one eliminate a semantic ambiguity by modifying words, specifying their contexts, in order to assume the insecurity

induced by a predicate? Such a process would simply be displacing a linguistic constraint it needs to question, not erasing it.

Here is another entry: '*Gender, Humiliation and Global Security*, is indeed a master book.'

Authoritative, responsible, meticulously based on research, interviews and clinical analysis, Dr Lindner's book is a comprehensive approach to a universal phenomenon, humiliation, assessed in its expected and unexpected effects, as well as their risks. Culturally determined, these effects refer back to a line of alienation, attested in all human experience. This is the point of departure of this project that pays attention to features in the human condition, the singularity of its regional distinctions and the ambition for a 'world without humiliation that would dignify us all', as Professor Linda M. Hartling writes in the foreword.

Preceded by her foreword, the book has three chapters, three privileged angles. They decode humiliation in 'times of transition', in 'the world today', in 'the future'. Angles, they are designs planning ventures in understanding. A historical-dominated approach structures the first chapter, a more synchronic description rolls the last two. They circumscribe the being of the humiliation phenomenon. Revelation of a reality, it manifests itself to the critical consciousness of the reader. One recalls Thomas Hobbes's dread with regard to 'the natural condition of mankind, as concerning their felicity, and misery'. As it expresses itself in *Leviathan* (1682), there is, on the one hand, an affirmation of equality of minds, but difference of bodies' strength, and a remark about the human being prone to conflicts and wars. And, there is, on the other hand, Hobbes's plea for a strong governing power to civilise communities. The vision of the philosopher had to accent the fact that 'man' is an enemy to 'another man'.

In the modernity of such a thought that judges the barbarism of the English Civil War (1642–51), Hobbes was reformulating the old paradigm of Simonides of Ceos (c. 556–468 BC): πόλις δίδασκει ἄνδρα (*polis didaskei andra*), it is the city that educates 'man'. Like the Greek, Hobbes was concerned about the pervasive masculine violence in nature that the rule of law should domesticate. A wolf to another human, *homo homini lupus*, according to a popular saying. Is there a reason to believe also, according to some theorists, that the male throughout all species is prone to disorder?

In the variety of fields assumed by Dr Lindner's inquiry, signs and sites of humiliation refer to the same 'natural body', the gendered body of the individual, also the cultural body of a community. 'You give me your body, I shall inscribe

on it the law of the tribe', from which one could evaluate the fact that we inhabit our cultures in the manner we inhabit our bodies. Grounded judgements justify cultural models. 'Waging good conflict', to use Professor Hartling's words for this book's aim, means to deconstruct even apparently stable paradigms. Consider the Athenian grid of the 'good woman' that a Judeo-Christian tradition has universalised. She is the daughter of a citizen, the spouse of a citizen, the mother of a citizen. This is a theoretical definition. It is equally an explanation, in so far as it answers the why and how of the adjective 'good'. The notion of 'intension', from logic, contributes to symbolics of whatever must have a woman to be part of the class of good women. Including, the 'intension' excludes also. To use Dr Lindner's words, a 'female script' stands there. In languages in which exists a grammatical gender system, the feminine is a marked form vis-à-vis a regular masculine one, functioning in this manner as a perfect metaphor of the 'female script'. It assesses rules of inclusion and exclusion, total or partial. Politics of separation, politics of humiliation, are often motivated within this 'female script'. In our time, they have been allowing catastrophes like the Holocaust in Germany, the Rwandan genocide, all impurity-impetuses in ethnic cleansings, from the Balkans to Africa, to South-East Asia, for example.

One readily agrees with Dr Lindner in using the 'female script' as a sign that could account for correlations between transcultural economies of gender relations and humiliation politics. Simone de Beauvoir is right in *The Second Sex* (1953), demonstrating how the female 'exists' her body in a transitive manner, being a body-for-herself, yet enclosed within the body-for-others, thus existing as the absolute experience of contingency.

Among many twentieth-century testimonies, in her *Meeting the Madwoman* (1993), Jungian analyst Linda Schierse Leonard has convincing case studies. Casually informed, institutionally marked, or inflicted through abuse, a spirit may perfectly well identify in shame or in pride with a 'Caged Bird' or the 'Bag Lady', a 'Recluse' or a 'Saint' woman.

In her ambition to account for the ordinariness of humiliation, Dr Lindner brings together reasons to relate a priori cultural expressions and a gendered body, thus can name a produced assignation. In a sustained effort, she extracts the irony and imponderability of assumptions governing humiliation all around the world.

Beyond ways of doctrines, war-fighting zones of rights and security conflicts, from domestic to public, regional to global, yesterday and today, the body, any gendered body, stands as a facticity. It is the point of view by which anyone exists as

being-for-other-people. Through humiliation, this body is reduced to contingency, even when attempts are made at recognising its virtual transcendence. Dr Lindner's view, her whole book, is there, unique by her touches, the elegance of a style in grasping the immediacy of a utopian political economy. If it is difficult to provide a straight summary of it; for sure one can qualify it in its own task, a concrete obligation for the well-being of individuals, as well as for the security of the human race. In clear language, an approach to everything for and in equal dignity, Dr Lindner's view represents life-altering principles for a way to live on this planet within a fraternal global culture, in 'egalization' and 'co-egalization'.

The book's major assurance gives cause to empirical socio-psychology and to ethics. In rethinking a total vertical and horizontal collaboration, the book makes a strong case. Accentuating this aspect, Professor Hartling emphasises both the 'profit-motive and the love-profit, [which] entail the emotional power necessary for a re-calibration of world affairs and the creation of a decent dignified future'. The view seems simple; it is not. In effect, it measures an argument against a world of future violence, arguing that, along with a better ethical management of technological resources, today's world of conflicts might become a better knowledge universe, a decent service world-village. Because of its fluidity, humiliation is likely a key to pass everywhere for what should be controlled throughout levels in all social formations. To begin with, there is the necessity of a new rhetoric of gender, ethnicity, religion, aimed at signifying a normative goal for mainly those held to contempt in a loveless hell. There is, equally, the necessity to invest this goal into a terminal goal of human dignity for everyone.

The challenge can be met, demonstrates Dr Lindner. The evidence of a universal ideal stems from particulars. These are localised. As a matter of method, to treat humiliation and its relation to what it negates is to trace it back to its socio-cultural contexts. Societies, all cultural formations, have hierarchised expressions of humiliation, as they have of sins and bad manners; in other words, explicit and tacit taxonomies. A medical doctor and psychologist, Dr Lindner uses a classical approach. As the understanding of good health basically deduces itself from a positive knowledge of a diseased body, a diagnosis of negative procedures in relation to systems of values is propaedeutic to any action, including thinking proactively a plan for a transcultural critique of regional systems.

In sum, an important lesson of the book is its philosophical statement about humiliation. Between the polarities represented by, on the one hand, the inward-oriented anxieties or apprehension of any individual, an institutional system or a

transnational corporation and, on the other hand, the outward-oriented grids of fear, there is something like a space from which to understand humiliation and work against its pervasiveness.

'Hell is other people', from Jean-Paul Sartre's arch-quoted *No Exit* (1989) ought to reflect its other side, which is, for instance reflected in Claude Lévi-Strauss's citation from South American Indians, 'hell is me'. In fact, the two French thinkers state the same evidence. To exist, to relate to other people, is simultaneously to see and be seen. This fundamental paradigm of phenomenology is of consequence. In effect, to apprehend oneself as subject, to posit oneself as an eye perceiving a something, a someone, equals prevailing in a dynamic with a full weight for reifying, alienating the perceived. At the same time, any perceiver knows that in return, the perceived can exercise the same capacity, look back and stand as a subject having the same ability to alienate anyone else. And, writes Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*: 'This is the meaning of the famous line from Scriptures: "They knew that they were naked" ' (1956: 531). From this strictly agnostic approach, this is 'the original sin', which is being named in a professional language. Adds Sartre: 'Thus original sin is my upsurge in a world where there are others; and whatever may be my further relations with others, these relations will be only variations on the original theme of my guilt'.

No commentary is needed to highlight the connection between this metaphoric use of a biblical figure and the articulation of the prophetic voice of Dr Lindner's on humiliation.

Primum non nocere (first of all do not harm) was the ethical instruction of Peter S. Drucker, deemed 'the most important management-thinker of our time'. The lesson comes down from the guiding rule of Hippocrates, the founder of scientific medicine. Proactively prophetic, with an abiding sense of urgency, Dr Lindner makes a similar plea for a healthier global culture of solidarity.

YOM HASHOAH: LETTER TO ERICK RABIN

Remembering

From a series, here are a few questions extracted from Lena Romanoff and Lisa Holstein's introduction to *Your People, My People* (1990): 'Why did the world stand by? Where was God? How did the Jews find the courage to pick up the pieces and go on? If it happened once, couldn't it happen again? We must keep the memory of the Holocaust alive so that it will never happen again.'

These questions reveal something about the one doing the asking. In rephrasing them, I bear witness to what we share, a memory, in an attachment to the departed and an obligation to the present. The questions determine a singularity, being human and of this world. Indeed, in remembering the *Shoah*, we inquire about a reality and demand a response. We expect something. At the same time, as masters of our intention, we live in this remembering and assume the opportunity of death as what gives its measure to today's questions.

Ghetto

Signs and traces, they are marks in images. They outline a trail. What generates the process in me comes to be watching the same form of cloud in which I must assemble clues and hints. A track emerges. Yet, it is the recollection that imports meaning: watching the course of dots and thinking the command of an awareness. Once more, here again, a certainty: there must be a truth of a reality. I must be able to access the memory of its pictures over the subtraction of my own inadequacy. The journey seems, always, about objects before accessing individuals. How to settle with the dead? In this dissociation, an act states the recognition of truth. There is no possible option, apart from submitting to what is at stake: to reconstruct the unintelligible.

One street, a city. Between the synagogue and the cemetery, a neighbourhood. The image is a variation of another patron: an identical street but with one difference – on one side is a church; on the other is the cemetery. The style of the districts came to differentiate their designations, some quarters standing as semantic puzzles. What is a ghetto? The notion implies restriction and isolation, on the basis of economic, social or legal justifications. Today, I think of London, New York and Rome, which have their own disconnected zones. This is also the case in other places. In Africa: Cape Town, Nairobi, Lagos; in Asia: Calcutta, New Delhi, Taiwan; in Latin America: Bogota, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro. Is there a country in which one would not identify a ghetto and the minority inhabiting it?

Ghetto, as a word and concept, enunciates figures. They are clear in my reconstruction. In their multiplicity, they are statements and testaments. They always remind me the notion of *shtetl*. And if the *shtetl* stands for the city, what is sanctioned in the ghetto? I learned that ghetto might come from the Hebrew *get* for separation or divorce, but the etymology may not be certain. The conceptual field it conditions supports very well its own questions and the sauntering, in bad faith, through nightmares apropos the sanctity of humanisms, their universalisms,

as well as the arbitrariness of laws. Sure, virtuous contemporary proclamations do not erase yesterday's violence in the name of a confession, or a concocted racial difference. Marginality can be a blessing, sometimes. It helps draw easy comparisons. After 70 BC, the alterity of the Roman vis-à-vis the Greek could not give a key to that of the Jew. Since then, for me, ghettos have actualised both the authority of a difference and the opposite of a right direction.

Walking

Walking and remembering: in my ordinary, everyday practice, apropos the field improperly called 'French philosophy', *des lumières éteintes* exist. Between the generation of thinkers born before 1910 and the generation that came to cultural visibility and maturity after 1945, how many extinguished lights?

There are lists of names. In accessing them, I affirm a judgement: what, in recent history of philosophy, names shrouded and what those erased signify in my remembering. Members of my intellectual lineage have been subtracted from the universe of a common faith: our belief in the uniqueness of every human being and the uniqueness of our responsibility in the time of the world.

In the language of Simone Weil, from *Gravity and Grace* (1952), there is a distinction to be made between *de-creation*, that is 'making something created pass into the un-created', and *destruction*, which would indicate 'making something created pass into nothingness'. In the motions lie the unsaid: God's power, God's silence. Another view from *Gravity and Grace* is incomprehensible: to prefer real hell to an imaginary heaven.

Walking and remembering.

You may know the context depicted by Marcus J. Smith in *Dachau: The Harrowing of Hell* (1972). The only medical technician at the Dachau concentration camp, the first day after its liberation, Smith waited years before working on his pressing retrospection. That is a different word for retrodiction: that is, in any act of remembering, a reformulation of something in the past, so 'that we must never forget'.

From Smith, here is a story from a document by Peter van Gestel, a Dutch priest. In the summer of 1944, thousands of people from France and elsewhere arrived at the concentration camp. The suggestion was made that the Catholic priests could give up their chapel so that the new prisoners might be accommodated. The priests refused. They argued that the chapel was a privilege obtained for them by the Vatican, that it was not their job to care for the newcomers and that 'the temple of the true God' could not be utilised for another purpose.

The assertiveness of a good conscience, and its invoked apprehension of the fullness of 'the true God', is alarming. The priests' affirmation apropos human dignity and integrity account precisely, in words and deeds, for the moral uncertainty of a belief in the imperative of a *hic et nunc* transcendence. In the summer of 1944, for these priests, themselves prisoners among others, a real scandal: a convenient structure converted into a convenient chapel was ethically more authoritative than thousands of human lives.

Axes

Let us remember some axes in our understanding of the *Shoah*.

The first is about the Holocaust as a paradigm. The 1948 Genocide Convention of the United Nations refers to the *Shoah* as what should be remembered in the pursuit of universal peace. Thus it has an immediate legal and historical connection to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, signed thereafter by representatives of founding nations.

The second axis concerns the phenomenon itself, its analysis and explanation. One orientation is represented by the thesis of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1979 [1944]). In essence, from the tension between the *same* and its *other*, one approaches such a theme by focusing on signs of fascination and fear between Germans and German Jews. The second orientation emphasises a historical critique that, after Ralf Dahrendorf and Jürgen Habermas, accents the conservative structure of the culture. Thematising the notion of a faulty German identity narrative, it evaluates the successful stories of France and the United Kingdom from the way they managed coherence between universalism and particularism.

The third axis reveals a problem of semantics. In *Germany's War and the Holocaust* (2003), Omer Bartov demonstrates the present-day confusion created by competing concepts. The *Shoah* was genocide, but all genocides are not the *Shoah*. I have noted the invocation of the Holocaust as a reference for the 1948 Genocide Convention. What has been a semantic relation of partial inclusion or of a partial exclusion (from a different viewpoint) is, progressively, being replaced by a quasi-synonymy between genocide and holocaust.

Bartov is right when he states that our 'current fascination with *camps* and *genocides*, consciously evoked in the plural form (tend) to stress their universal implications' (2003: 165). And, moreover, 'speaking of camps in the plural, one is always in danger of confusing or making false connotations between, for instance,

concentration and extermination camps, on the one hand, and camps for prisoners of war, refugees, or displaced persons’.

In its own right, a polysemy can be pathological; thus, there is a usefulness in not ‘abusing’ words. In the twentieth century, the *Shoah* has been used as a reference for qualifying subsequent genocides. For its definition, we use, generally, three entries: one, a socio-historical context, Nazism and Germany; two, anti-Semitism as a determining factor in its conception; three, as prejudice and hostility, anti-Semitism can hardly be detached from Christianity and its teleological justification.

An ordinary truth

On Judaism and Christianity, here is a symbol. In *To Life! A Celebration of Jewish Being and Thinking*, Harold S. Kushner has this note: ‘Imagine how Coca-Cola drinkers would feel if Pepsi ads were suddenly declared to be an infallible scripture’ (1993: 270).

Remembering is, Kushner writes, investing in living rather than in worrying about dying. We know it. The Jewish calendar, a narrative of sanctuaries in time, articulates the code of a life ceremony and its meaning. Remembering doubles its recitation and is a ritual. The activity restores the coherence between ways of life and ways of death. In *The Prophets* (1962), Abraham J. Heschel voiced lessons from the dialectic of the divine and the human. In our time, Rabbi Jacob Neusner expounds in *Judaism: An Introduction* the link between death and resurrection: ‘The resurrection stands for the thoroughgoing metamorphosis of this-worldly experience: death stands for the opposite, life eternal’ (2003: 95).

This day of remembrance imposes on all of us an ordinary truth, irrespective of our philosophical belief systems: evil exists. Natural or moral, it is that which – a contradiction or a contrariety of the law, of goodness and virtue – diminishes or destroys the human, dignity and integrity.

FOR SUDANESE REFUGEES

A doctoral dissertation on refugees from Sudan, ‘Moving Sudanese Stories’, presented at the University of Toronto (Canada) in 2009 by Deepa Rajkumar, is simultaneously a report, an academic analysis and an ethical statement. One could qualify it briefly as a testimony on testimonies, dwelling on issues concerning Sudanese refugees, asylum management and hospitality politics in Canada. A

thematic arrangement of problems deduced from interviews, it has a format that is different from usual dossiers, reports and publications in the domain of refugee studies. Instead of the common approach in social science, Rajkumar chose to problematise it, considering refugees as subjects in motion, in conversation and in the research. Through storytelling and a rewriting of the experience, a critical vision came to reformulate and re-evaluate a shared responsibility.

The argument is lucid. It articulates the complexity of an intellectual and ethical principle. On human dignity, to the perception of a displaced person, any other migrant can relate a concrete knowledge. A dialogical authority can meet expectations of a scientific knowledge. In such an option, one might invoke lessons from Robert W. Friedrichs's dialectical avenues expounded in *Sociology of Sociology* (1970); Jean Lacouture and Benoît Verhaegen's premises for an *histoire immédiate*; and, more recently, from positions of Enrique Dussel in a philosophy of liberation. They have in common a critical attention to determining effects of social formation crises in the practice of disciplines. Their methodologies accent intersubjectivity and interaction between alter and ego, subject and object, in the process of knowledge production and political commitment.

Rajkumar's long narrative inscribes itself in the recent tradition of multidisciplinary and transnational perspectives. Instructed by deconstruction precepts, Rajkumar brings together critical interventions from Canada with her culture in poetics and storytelling analytics. She accords them to directives inspired by postcolonial scholars, notably Gayatri Spivak from India and Prem Kumar Rajaeram from Sri Lanka.

Unusual, the study is strictly speaking a story organised as a multivocal composition. From the beginning to the end, one moves through vignettes of refugees' voices. They surface, assuming or presupposing one another, competing with and completing each other. In variations of voices, the narrative recites the memory of some 150 individuals in dialogue with the author. Single yet multiform, anonymous yet signed, it claims to safeguard reconstructed journeys from Sudan, both real and symbolic. An absolute condition reflects itself within the threshold that welcomes and assails it. The Derridean notion of hospitality haunts such an empathetic description of an alienated experience of torn consciousnesses subsumed in a retrospective effort. The exercise, in effect, takes place in Canada.

As an ethical report of conversations, the narrative stands against the vigour of prevalent media and scholarly analyses of Sudanese refugees and asylum-seekers. Generally, their predicament is explained through the efficacy of a limited number

of interpretive grids. Often, apropos evaluations and events, analyses tend to blur the examination of a signification, political or social, with its understanding. At any rate, contracting Sudan and Darfur for an explanation, they would simply oppose the North of the country to the South, the Muslim to the Christian or the pagan, in coded presentations.

Rajkumar's initiative repositions contexts and meanings. It does it in a long account. Interacting subjects narrate shocks and illusions, speak of deception and discontent, exhilaration and hope. Indeed, there is a background to all this. Stories about South Sudan's signals cannot ignore concerns about Darfur in the West. One should, at least, quote Amnesty International's statement from 2003 and refer to the resolution of the UN Security Council in 2004. They are part of international interventions in the affairs of Sudan. From any Internet or bibliographic search, it is difficult to miss the staggering and conflicting information. For instance, a 2006 report of the World Health Organization approximated the toll of the Darfur conflict as 200 000 casualties. These figures were revised from an earlier statement, made public in the early 2000s, which underestimated the death toll by almost 50 per cent, according to the UN in April 2008. Yet a number of experts agree it is an overestimation, including distinguished academics.

On 17 June 2010, one could read the following question on the website of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (under 'Voices on Genocide Prevention Podcast'): 'National elections concluded, how will Sudan face the possibility of an independent South?'²²

'For Africa, a lot is at stake in Darfur,' argues the Columbia political scientist Mahmood Mamdani in *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror* (2009). Mamdani's research is to be situated in relation to other globalist views on Darfur and Khartoum in the world political economy; it can be usefully paired with the highly publicised book by Gerard Prunier, *Darfur: A Twenty-First Century Genocide* (2005).

Within such a context of 'making sense' of Darfur in Sudan and the world, Rajkumar's academic angle testifies in an original manner. Repositioning refugees' voices vis-à-vis their own pasts and clashing summons in recollection, she also tests a plural perception of a very effective administration in managing refugees and asylum-seekers. In this story, speaking names, or substitute pronouns, deflect and translate a we-object. They stand equally for what they intend to represent, a we-subject in this world today apprehending existence as a task transcending its own limits in accounting for a collective journey. Behind any grammatical subject

or object, a variety of attitudes engage the expression and transcription of this story. Willed in the author's patience, they commit her voice. The empathetic exercise stresses what it deems valid ethically, significant lines in remembering something physical or psychological. It elects certain signs in desire and grief. Induced by discontinuities, a refugee story cannot but attest its awareness in ways of interrogating itself from the strangeness of new spaces.

In sum, reading this study is to access linear dynamics of meanings. They are dynamics that create an incessant conversion of places into better spaces of habitability, the promise of any asylum, reminiscent of a distinction from Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). This reference could qualify Rajkumar's style in rewriting refugees' passion. According to De Certeau, place can be understood as a locus, specifically as a plane which is 'the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence' (117). Thus, place could be a recalled community, passages in Ethiopia, in Kenya, in asylum centres in Toronto, or one's home. On the other hand, space is rather a geography constituted by elements that meet, intersect, unite, cross each other or diverge. As De Certeau puts it: 'Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities'. Thus, space is here the reconstruction of processes in adaptation and integration, rendered by interviews first, then the transcription and rewriting. They brought about a new plane of activity that testifies to what made it possible and what it states. To expand De Certeau's idea, one would say that Rajkumar's textual position is a locus of organised signs obeying the logic of a proper place. Any reader can change it into an intellectual space of learning, from an initial point of departure, in Sudan, or any other locality that the narrative is referring to. A work of an active collective recollection, Rajkumar's constitutes its own place with its proper rules that any interpretation transforms into a new space. As a new product, it is a 'practiced place', a written conversation, something which is different and, in any case, could hardly claim to compare its dynamics with what De Certeau calls 'the law of the *proper* which rules in the place' (1984: 117).

In brief, Rajkumar privileges refugees' spatialising procedures in remembering the stability of hopes and their promises. Broken or kept, they articulate the coherence of her narrative, her voice. They converge in the space of her story. First, one discovers ways of being a particular difference and how these came to represent a journey. Second, one reviews ways of identifying with a membership

and how these came to mediate normalising procedures. Finally, one relates to ways of satisfaction, or of dissatisfaction, and how these came to transform a life.

This is a remarkable vocal composition. Its polyphonic partitions are harmonic variations of a unique theme, a Sudanese refugee's condition which, giving them meaning, assumes them in the signification of an ethical testimony.

2 July 2010

Notes

1. The first essay in this chapter has been published online as 'On Humiliation' at <http://www.humiliationstudies.org>. It served as a pre-publication endorsement for *Gender, Humiliation, and Global Security* (2010), a book of one of the website's founders, Dr Evelin Lindner. It has been reprinted here with permission.
2. See <http://www.ushmm.org/maps>

Aesthetics of Commitment

Preface to Yacouba Konaté's *La Biennale de Dakar* and
For Bogumil Jewsiewicki: Letter to Justin Bisanswa and
Muriel Gomez-Perez

AESTHETICS OF COMMITMENT: PREFACE TO YACOUBA KONATÉ'S LA BIENNALE DE DAKAR

'Think inherence,' writes the philosopher Yacouba Konaté. He called it upon us twice. The two instances reflect one another. In the first, Konaté refers to the historian Joseph Ki-Zerbo: 'In reality the most important debt for Africans, the most urgent one, is the fact that they are indebted to Africa itself.' In the second, Konaté takes up the idea of this debt from a lesson of Theodor Adorno: 'Every piece of art, including the literary one, refers to itself from a practice in which it refrains itself, as the creation of a legitimate life.'

La biennale de Dakar

One accesses Yacouba Konaté's *La biennale de Dakar: Pour une esthétique de la création contemporaine africaine; Tête à tête avec Adorno* (2009) in an act of support.¹ 'Organise for us an African biennial,' said the minister. Konaté did it and was involved more than once in the administration of biennales. And then came this book. It is African and it is in dialogue. To open it means to admit in particular the idea, which leads to a firm belief in Adorno's position. It is brought to life in the essays. These express a value: 'Thought is waiting for the day, when the memory of what was missed in it, would come to light, and transform it into a philosophical lesson.' The invocation of the patience of the thought reminds me of the personal path of Konaté, the history of his two dissertations presented at the Sorbonne. The first dissertation, in 1980, was '*Optimisme et pessimisme chez Adorno et Horkheimer*' and the second, in 1988, '*Identité et non-identité africaines: De l'esthétique à la politique; Aspects ivoiriens*'. Both studies are signs of an education in a foundational space and, as surprising as it can be, this is a space in which faithfulness seems to assert itself. It is a space of obedience, in the sense of a right

to and a duty of inscription, in what presupposes the education and which would explain better what links *La biennale de Dakar* to Konaté's dissertations. Obedience is also the element that connects Konaté to Africa. These links explain periods that reflect one another in the same requirement for a *recovery*. An obligation comes to terms with itself, starting from a critical report on an inadequacy in the African experience. Konaté reminds us that we 'must rethink the failure of history to keep its promises'. And, he reactualises voices from different horizons, the *Grande Royale* of Cheikh Hamidou Kane and Walter Benjamin's vision. And they do echo one another, thanks to his memory. They highlight a point of failure: 'Until now history has been written from the conqueror's perspective. It is now time to write it from the point of view of the defeated.' In this recognition, and for it, lies the conviction for a start that identifies itself with the duty of a resistance.

Thus, 'under-developed somewhere, we might not know where exactly, but very likely the African experience as a whole cannot be qualified this way in the field of arts,' writes Konaté. In this recognition, a reason affirms itself. It situates itself in a negative moment of the dialectic. It aims at observing all its best signs, including those of separation, deviation and possible eccentricities, and they include diverse works of art.

Certainly and, in addition to their variety, some financial parameters come to mind about the cultural identity of artworks. To the difference of being black or blue, we can add the requirements of the demand of the market. It justifies some negotiation of formats concerning the targeted audience. It explains as well the endless reinventions of works, their symbolic and real values. This means, for instance, the value of sculptures reworked from a tradition, along with the value of new creations taking place in ongoing exhibits in Algiers, Antananarivo, Durban, Lagos, Nairobi or Praia, and the traffic of fabrications required by airport and station cultures. Operate here the phenomenon that Ali A. Mazrui has called 'retraditionalization' (2005: 80). An unexpected coherence appears proving, as if it were needed, the fluidity of cultural identities.

Let's continue this close reasoning.

Konaté has chosen Adorno, whose texts became his favourite 'toolbox'. We can relate his reasoning to an analogue. Konaté frames a line of thought. From philosophy, he reads the 'indication of a decision in a revolt against inertia, as the seed for a series of acts of resistance against it'. His decision is inspired by Jean Toussaint Desanti, the author of an *Introduction à la phénoménologie* (1976). To understand his own *parcours*, Desanti used Karl Marx and Edmund Husserl as models. Indeed, in his own way, Konaté had to face also his 'burden of the world'.

This burden has been imposing itself daily from the nature of a knowledge and to modify it would require leadership. It unveils itself easily, sometimes. Desanti confronted it in 'the massive inertia of "things" admittedly'. Desanti insists above all on the persisting inertia of beliefs, institutions, words and again, on the compact dimension of terms and ideas called 'conceptions of the world'. Desanti reminded himself of the naive nature of a 'double truth', which would justify the opposition between a 'bourgeois science' and a 'proletarian science' with regard to mathematics, a difficult exercise against which one could test the fragility of a few forms of worship in essentialist otherness.

Critical and careful, Konaté unravels a 'toolbox', the instruction of Adorno in order to undo that which, under the sign of the biennial of Dakar, testifies to 'the strength of the vision of the Absent'. He refers to an intention and clearly so. From the idea of the biennial, and relating it to what it came to signify in the shadow of Léopold Sédar Senghor, Konaté discovers and names some incomplete moments to which it could be reduced. Could we, he notes, by following the example of Benjamin or Adorno, can we think about 'telling our history from the point of view of the defeated'? What would be, in this manner, the consequence of alerting histories that are not comparable?

Let's continue the exemplary reasoning of Desanti in order to grasp Konaté's ambition. For Desanti, within the practice of philosophy, when 'on the job', for the philosopher, the crux or 'the thing itself' was 'the factum of mathematics'. By *factum*, Desanti insisted, I designate this 'enigma' (a 'hardness', it seems solid); that is to say, to recognise that 'there is' something, mathematics today. What does 'there is' mean when we deal with this type of creation, this sort of lifeless term (if one does not bring them to life)? The overture to a something else, he wrote in the last version of his book, was introduced by phenomenology.

For Konaté, one can state that 'there is' a negative dialectic and 'there are' some manners of a negative otherness. Do we have to add that 'there are', and otherwise, the biennials (Dak'art, Cairo, the triennials of Cape Town, of Luanda)? These are currently organised. They are among more than two hundred events taking place in the world. Thus, what is to be found in the 'there is'? The question matters above all by what it signifies and also by the way it may reinvent itself before presuming celebrations. According to Konaté, these celebrations of an African creativity intend to express themselves in a double movement: 'reception of an under-estimated art' and 'reconstruction of oneself'. They might represent the concern of what could be called 'an art in an advanced borderlining process within a configuration'. This is the bet taken up by the biennials and successfully so.

To mark some of the meaningful insights of this book requires also grasping the legacy it takes on. I can refer, for instance, to an American classic in the field of visual arts, *Mainstreams of Modern Art* (1959) by John Canaday of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Its first chapter, 'Modern Art, Tradition, David', analyses the genesis of contemporary art with Jacques-Louis David as point of reference. Canaday asserts that the history of modern painting started with the rupture initiated by David. With works such as *The Death of Socrates*, *The Oath of Horace* and *The Coronation*, David would have actualised a discontinuity that allows the distinction between 'tradition' and 'modernity' in the history of modern art. According to Canaday, the history of modern painting would start with the David's break within the tradition, a rupture marked by his work. In a similar vein, the history of modern Europe would begin with the French Revolution, of which David was an active agent. Surprising at first sight, this reference to the French Revolution is metonymic. It puts light on only one out of three main dimensions exposed by the Enlightenment project. This one asserts mainly the instrumentality of the cognitive, a practical moral and an aesthetic reason, as Jürgen Habermas reminded us in the *laudatio* address of 1980, when the prize of the city of Frankfurt, Germany was given to Adorno.

However, a sign of the caesura in visual arts, along with the beginning of a modernity that Canaday describes, is articulated in the presentation of three problematic faces that open the chapter on 'Modern Art, Tradition, and David'. Next to one another, we have a Modigliani portrait of a woman (from the collection Louis Stern, New York, 1918), a detail of Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* (c.1485) and a head in wood from Congo (University Museum of Philadelphia). If what explains their display is justified by an aesthetic consideration, such as the style of lines, the mode of these three women's heads reflect different criteria. On the one hand, for the Congolese sculpture there is one function: '[This] African sculpture is part of the savage ritual of magic and incantation' and, on the other hand, 'Botticelli's Venus is a Renaissance intellectual's reverie upon classical antiquity'. A socio-cultural element fixes the three heads in a common history – the history of art – and at the same time, separates them in regard to their origin, the contexts created by the 'libraries' of this very history, including 'the Colonial Library'. In addition, while the two European heads are signed, the Congolese one is not and its presence problematises the illustration. It brings to mind, indeed, the very notion of 'African art'. Anthony Appiah addresses the issue very clearly in a book edited by Tom Phillips, *Africa: The Art of a Continent* (1996) which problematises Canaday's

book. In Appiah's intervention, the two major principles, 'art' and 'African', do not come into play within the creative procedures of the designed object. The contrast resides in the objectivity of the reference that differentiates the two concepts. It comes from knowledge and gives itself to science. From the harmony of the lines of a Modigliani, which, to quote Canaday, is neither a Botticelli nor an African sculpture, the art historian may very well deconstruct influences and interferences without being overburdened by the biases surrounding them. Today, would it be possible to ignore them?

From today's approaches and knowledge, renewals redefine the relationship of modernity to non-Western cultures. Some dialogues transcend cultural differences, including some in arts and philosophy and describe otherwise ways of modernity. This is the case in Enrique Dussel's book *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of 'the Other' and the Myth of Modernity* (1995).

With Konaté, the will to *recover*, the wish suggested by Dussel that affirms a modernity, espouses the genesis of a critical philosophical practice located somewhere in Africa. This practice would consider being indebted to itself. A recommencement, it comes from a singular place, from a particular experience. Among many other things, this practice knows that it is a quest for a kind of truth in obedience to what makes it possible, as discourse that desires rigour. It celebrates a view on works, platforms and expressions and, most importantly, the literary and the pictorial. Equally, this reflection deals with music, in particular jazz, which Adorno disliked. Finally, one should note the important responsibilities of the author in the biennials of Dakar.

The exhibited works at biennials appeal from their perspectives of a negative otherness. And still, this difference, which might not be one, must try to capture itself in its own way. This difference is concrete. It is the mark of a sign, a testimony in human finitude. From the tension, which takes place in all works between lack and need, insufficiency and excess, the less and the more, one comes into contact with an ordinary human experience and the question of suffering. Thus, with Konaté, we can go back to Adorno: 'The frequency of the true suffering cannot tolerate to be forgotten.' The theological wording of Pascal, 'one must not sleep any longer', must be secularised.

When reading Konaté, should one not admit a paradox, precisely the question Konaté raises himself: after all, what is African art? One might also, and differently from Canaday, choose to go back to the diffraction of figures that Canaday instructs in order to portray the Western artist. As he writes:

The past used to be a stream; now it is an ocean. It used to be a road, now it is a forest. Tradition in art used to mean a steady sequence of change within boundaries. Today the boundaries are vague, if they exist at all. Horizons are infinite; the artist is tempted to explore in a hundred directions at once (1959: 3).

In short, any artist today organises the world in contemporaneous motions.

Let's follow Konaté carefully. He thinks and rethinks 'the invention' of something else. His book provides an account of an organisation of creativity. Konaté problematises a space and a time, in their being. He grasps it in the history of a temporal imperialism. In this trial, he thinks through the acceleration of his own (hi)stories. These stories establish themselves in relation to images of Africa, of 'Africas', a continent in which one can observe confluences and conflicts between a time of functions – with tasks to complete and which would aim at encouraging harmony – and the time of the clock, referring to standardised time, which would tend to enslave humans. In the analysis of the biennial of Dakar, of its problems and its promises, Konaté comments on essentials. Against the idea of inevitability, he celebrates the evidence of all creativity in its perpetual renewal.

A beautiful declaration, generally attributed to André Breton, comes to mind. Diego Rivera or Leon Trotsky could have authored it. Let's extract it from the incredible context in which it was written and remember only the truth of its propositions:

To think, and rethink art, the true art, which cannot satisfy itself in being a mere variation of already established models, that is the challenge. The authentic art expresses an inner necessity of being human, and the meaning of a humanity within one's time. True art cannot but be revolutionary, it cannot but aspire to a complete and radical reconstruction of the society.

We should be grateful to Konaté for this book, for his will to reach the intimate quality of an art and its origin, its *maintenant*. *La biennale de Dakar* testifies to a way of being in the world. A subjective voice, it gives debt to a particular history and becomes a lesson.

FOR BOGUMIL JEWSIEWICKI: LETTER TO JUSTIN BISANSWA AND
MURIEL GOMEZ-PEREZ

The invitation for a testimony about Bogumil Jewsiewicki arrived yesterday, with the deadline of 27 March, which is tomorrow. To think of a statement that fits the ritual of a promotion to *éméritat* is to think of ways of both acknowledging and extolling achievements. In principle, discharged from active duty, the emeritus retains obligations inscribed in a vocation. From the tradition, it is often said that after the ceremony commences a new life, one in which a privilege defines a measure of obedience and exemption from an ordinary academic 'habituality'. And any new project comes to represent the magnitude of a devotion to one's causes.

When, a few months ago, Bogumil told me that he was considering retiring, my reaction was to emphasise the dizzying effect his decision would have. Sanctioning a style, the decision was going to make him busier than ever and everywhere, including at his own university.

This afternoon, between a session in the seminar on theories of difference and an obligation to work on the Greek *Bibliotheca* of Apollodorus, what imposed itself as the best figure to outline Bogumil's commitment was the concept of *economics* in its full semantic density. The word fits Bogumil in a number of ways. In the sheer embarrassment to confine him to one road, one could at least entertain the idea of an open field organised by the ancient Greek verb *oikonomēō* (οἰκονομέω), to manage and steward a house. There is, on the one hand, an entry specified by his first domain of specialisation, with his doctorate in economic history. There is, on the other hand, an entry that would bring out his international activity of almost half a century. For his service to the disciplines, Bogumil was recognised in 2006 with two distinguished awards (from the American Anthropological Association and the African Studies Association).

The following two entries exemplify the meaning of economics and economy, with two variations of determining manners in approaching a social reality. The first, as commonly understood, designates a discipline that deals with the productions and consumption of goods and services; the second, with its more encompassing value, concerns the management of resources. Only technicalities would distinguish such an approach from macrosociology, which studies world systems. Incredibly enough, macrosociology would be the domain within which to situate Bogumil's concrete activity. Such an approximation connects these fields to the theological account that circumscribes a divine plan for humankind as an economy.

Indeed, from textbooks, we know that all these orientations can be brought together as aiming at an understanding of the Pareto optimal-efficient principle, an abstraction which, in redistributing allocations, equalises sectors by making some better off without impoverishing the ones that had more. Thus comes a refreshing view of economy from the ancient Greek value of, first, οἰκονομ-ία, the management of a household or family and its principles of governance, and second, οἰκονόμημα, administration of the household, a community with adjustments to a purpose.

Is it not from such an inspiring line that one accesses Bogumil's maps of activities for reasonably ethical dispositions in organic ensembles? They are without geographic boundaries, but rigorously contained within the territorial space moderated by the Greek concept of οἶκος, house and household, locality and fellowship. In our imaginary, says Gaston Bachelard, the οἶκος is symbolically at the centre of the world, stands for the sign of an inner being. We celebrate the house of a thinker and a leader to whom, from the seminar of this morning, I would readily associate two statements faithfully related to the Greek sense of being, one from Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1956) and the other from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947). From *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, to read the features of Bogumil's house is to recognise an exemplary attitude: 'What we are given never affects us mechanically, never imprints on us in a relation of cause to effect.' At the threshold of Sartre's presentation of an existentialist psychoanalysis in *Being and Nothingness*, this statement that validates Bogumil's praxis and its proceedings: 'Truth,' says Sartre, 'is abstract; reality is concrete; truth results from another person reflecting on our objectivized freedom.'

These references are interpellations. They equally mark the picture of Bogumil in our contemporary political economy. This picture manifests a question about the mission of the scholar in its two conflicting capacities, the prophetic and the priestly. Between a romantic will for radical transformations and a critical work in the service of an ethic, Bogumil's work reminds me today of a short passage from Hugh Dalziel Duncan's introduction to Kenneth Burke's *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose* (1965). Let me put Bogumil where Duncan names Burke:

There is hope if, *if* we learn to think about action in society as a kind of action that arises in, and continues to exist through, communication. What Bogumil offers – and it is the reason why so many of us turn to him for help – is a methodology, a *way* of thinking, and of testing out thinking, about *how* we act as human beings (xlii).

Bogumil has successfully combined the gift for ascertaining a series of critiques: a critique of universal paradigms in political economy, of their adaptation to regional cultures and of the tension issued forth by the preceding critiques. In return, you hear appraisals that miss something. Bogumil is too much of a postmodern missionary; he should write scientific treatises of his experience of the world, that misleading charm of today's macroeconomics. Or, he is too much of a decision-theory practitioner; he should be against policies for the maximisation of the useful, that misleading alternative in structural transformations.

Interconnectedness could be the key to Bogumil's vocation. Among many things, this notion brings to mind suppositions about economic integration as well as political and cultural intercommunications between autonomous configurations. Their conjunction is a question mark. In effect, integration means the primacy of a world, of a set qualifiable by a predicate, over other sets or classes. The inequality signifies the precedence of a class. It calls for integrating procedures in ways of inclusion and incorporating diversities, whereas autonomy would value a relative independence, as of the will and choices of the integratable. So far the obvious tells of disasters. A significant sign would be the actuality of the question raised in 1950 by Raul Prebisch in *The Economic Development of Latin America and its Principal Problems*, now a problem for more than half the populations of the world. The gains from exchanges are not equally redistributed between systems exporting mainly manufactured goods and systems exporting mainly primary and natural products.

The two angles cannot be reconciled on suppositions that integrating procedures through attentive practices would meet local requirements articulating their own differences. That would mean to normalise a utopian dream which, transcending conflicts of reasons (economic, political, cultural), would accent the adaptive capability of the transnational and, in the autonomy of cultures, would bring harmoniously the diasporic experience of the transnational with regional fundamentals. All projections today tend to consider such harmony a dream.

One imagines a necessary specialisation of tasks. It could include, in practice, on the one hand, a valid critique of constraints concerning principles and politics of global economy and their relation to cultural specificities and, on the other hand, the ethical predicaments of the scholar as an administrator of tensions brought about in languages of concepts and empirical strategies.

From such a background, one recognises Bogumil's character and acknowledges his determination in promoting ways of existing in dialogue within conflicts of

systems. And, one revisits lessons in decoding orders that identify the economic reasons with scientific reason, which tend to submit it to programmatic agendas that transcend frontiers and rules of geography.

The context brings to mind the models of worldly intellectuals celebrated by Robert L. Heilbroner in *The Worldly Philosophers* (1972). We had, he shows, exemplars in the past. He names a few. They were theorists or activists, Adam Smith or David Ricardo, Karl Marx or Thorstein Veblen. In today's global village, the loss of interest in speculative thinking, along with its ethical confusion, has demanded a new search of method as a search of motives from an uncompromising ethics. To celebrate the promotion of Bogumil to *éméritat* is to remember the rapport that exists between ethics and one's way of being. They should not be confused with ideologies of becoming. In sum, what Bogumil has been expounding from his house is what we have learned from Emmanuel Lévinas: the word 'ethical' and the word 'just' are the same word, the same question, the same language.

26 March 2009

Note

1. The first essay of this chapter was first published as the 'Preface' to Yacouba Konaté's *La biennale de Dakar: Pour une esthétique de la création contemporaine africaine; Tête à tête avec Adorno* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009). It has been reprinted here with permission and, unless otherwise stated, all quotes in the essay refer to this text.

Ibi Pote Valere

Letter to Ambroise Kom

*Ibi semper est Victoria ubi Concordia est.
Iter est quacumque dat prior vestigium.
Ibi pote valere populus ubi leges valent.*

— Publilius Syrus, *Sententiae*, 327–9

Concerning this promised letter, how can I express my gratitude for your patience? Could this note respond to your expectation? It is about a simple awareness that may intrigue our friend.¹

Does our relation to the letter age the way it happens with things? We are told that a letter is infinite. Is there a short story between an author's version and mine? But you have advised this should be a contribution to a volume of *mélanges* in honor of Fabien Eboussi Boulaga. What should we repress? A letter or what it can imply? Straight, an eccentricity might seem convenient. Symbols: an 'angel' or a 'big brother'. Expletive? Your hilarity blew open my bad faith, in reference to what I intended from the discipline called angelology. Good, then, even from the last forest of kings, what to extract that is not too dull?

He has an education, culture and philosophy. In one week, I thought, a good anecdote could be worked out. I was wrong. Anyway, did it make sense to try something from the 'angel' and 'brother' lines?

The brotherhood seemed to be a good axis. It could allow compelling effects to be exploited for smart accounts of his life – the more fictitious, the better. But how to hasten Fabien against the family field (and which one?) and how to measure all these weighty terms (affiliation, alliance, fraternity, kinship and sodality)?

The 'angelic' side could not hurt. Little games with guardian angels keep the charm of childhood, theirs and ours. After all, do they have an age, the guardians? It was a place to investigate. Luckily, in Paris, Pierre Jovanovic had been up with the best sellers at Le Jardin des Livres: in 2000, *Biographie de l'archange Gabriel*, and in 2001, *Enquête sur l'existence des anges gardiens*. Well, it is rather a 'garden', as

the publishing company wants it, holier than churches. On this side of the Atlantic, I checked two non-theological compendia: first, J. Stephen Lang's popular *1,001 Things You Always Wanted to Know about Angels, Demons, and the Afterlife* and then the encyclopedic *Angels: A to Z* by James R. Lewis, chair of the department of religious studies at the World University of America. A cursory examination of its lists, which include an 'Angel Filmography' and 'Angel Resources', would unsettle any jester.

On the whole, the two possible inspirations appeared impracticable. And then, from the angelology business, I had an idea about the beauty of two poetic lines and what they can impart to imagination in a *mise en scène* for a philosopher. As John Keats (1970: 41) says in *Lamia* (2.231):

In the dull catalogue of common things,
Philosophy will clip an angel's wings.

Which winged ones? Between, on the one hand, the field of learned brackets of Plato's spirits in *Phaedrus*, their historical fate along with other movers in the celestial and human spheres and, on the other hand, the domain of psychological interpretations entertained from Carl Jung to his disciples – Robert H. Hopcke, Robert A. Johnson, James A. Hall, Barbara Hannah and John A. Sanford – there is a space in which it is possible to activate one's memory and structure a mythic adventure. According oneself to a central and foundational affirmation, an active imagination can bring about its own myth between something like what Eric Berne calls a stimulus and the variations of its response within a transactional analysis.

One

Languages diverse, horrible dialects,
Accents of anger, words of agony,
And voices high and hoarse, with sound of hands,
Made up a tumult that goes whirling on . . .

— Dante, *Inferno*, Canto III: xxv–xxviii

I am remembering an invitation from nowhere. A letter expresses transparent questions and rewrites the yearning of a mind. It also alerts a planned isolation in currents of learning capacities: Alexis Kagame vis-à-vis the priest Placied Tempels. As if expected, an exclusive link becomes a path between a puzzled conscience and

the picture of Eboussi Boulaga's 1968 '*Le bantou problématique*'. The text has not aged at all. Who is this man who can recondition conflicting knots? There is no trial, and it does not even appear necessary.

Two

Not without fear I bring myself to speak;
For 'tis no enterprise to take in jest,
To sketch the bottom of all the universe,
Not for a tongue that cries Mamma and Babbo.

— Dante, *Inferno*, Canto XXXII: vi–ix

The reason of my feelings meets its own touch. Am I not speaking to a ghost? On Sundays, he is from Lyon; and on weekdays, from Cameroon. His shadow ascribes a name to neat limits. To lay claim to a patience that goes back to an old art of reading becomes a way of taking a chance with an inner mind. One needs to imagine a moving train. A mind that flies abroad, Pindar thought. And, Plato adds in *Theaetetus*, should we really believe that such a mind disdains the littleness and other nothingness? No matter the genre of theory, anyone can rightly doubt any feeling from my command of his intelligence.

1977, the year of *La crise du muntu*, eclipsed something by transmuting a linguistic category into a philosophical conceptuality. How far back should we go in order to re-evaluate the force of a happening?

Three

I know not who, but know he's not alone;
Ask him thyself, for thou art nearer to him,
And gently, so that he may speak, accost him.

— Dante, *Purgatorio*, Canto XIV: iv–vi

There must be happiness in struggling with one's own gaze. Because someone else needed a voice, Fabien's values are letters. He has known from the beginning where he was heading. Heart, intelligence, senses; all of them, at once, are assumed in a manner. He believes what he says. His book *Chistianisme sans fétiche* (published in 1984 in English as *Christianity Without Fetishes*) did not format imperatives in 1981. Instead, a manner:

The only way to blaze a trail to responsibility in one's adherences is by doing it oneself. The eternal truths find their temporal, mortal modality in this or that concrete word, pronounced as it vanishes into thin air, in this or that concrete unprecedented initiative, taken and undone all in the same moment. Word and initiative flash forth in the presence of a moment, and disappear. In his momentary birthplace of the truth, the exercise of the truthfulness we have just accomplished will take up its abode (1984: 229).

Detached, aligned with San Benedetto's instructions, I marvel at the excellence of Eboussi Boulaga over my inner archetypal figure. The forest of signs is sometimes its own secret. A few years ago, at a festive lunch in the Kinshasa Provincial House of Oblates, a possibly distracted priest invited me to say the usual grace, insisting that it should be done in Latin. Fabien was at my right, impassible. I recited the *benedicite* and then said to him: 'Do you understand this?' He responded: 'It flows . . . it flows . . .'. Otherwise, possibly everywhere. 'O philosophy as a rule of life', 'O *vitae philosophia dux*,' Cicero wrote in his *Tusculanae Disputationes* (1.17).

Si placet . . .

Now the story passes for a legend. It stands also for the still side of a parable. This story stands for an unorthodox commentary vis-à-vis the commonsense value of Publilius Syrus's declaration – inscription and tradition, the privilege of the law as a sign of concord for everyone. A canon in the literature of friendship, it possesses the fragility of the unorthodox. The political framework is known. *Si placet, quatenus amor in amicitia progredi debeat* (indeed, please, let us consider how far love in friendship can lead). A political insurrection failed. Gaius Blossius, one of those who had supported the leader Tiberius, is pleading for pardon. The magistrate asks:

'So you are a friend of Tiberius Gracchus?'

'Yes, Sir. A close friend.'

'How close? Would you do everything for him?'

'My esteem for Tiberius is profound. It is my duty to meet his wishes,' responds Blossius.

'Even if he asked you to set fire to the Capitol?'

'He would never request me to do such a thing,' Blossius says firmly.

The magistrate insists: 'But suppose he had? Would you set fire to our temple?'

'Sir, if he had, sure, I should have obeyed,' confesses Blossius (Cicero, *De Amicitia* 9.37).

Its interpretation from Cicero reports a historical case. A commission under the consul Publius Popillius Laenas is examining the responsibility of Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus and his followers in political disturbances that would have put state institutions in peril the year before (133 BC). To avoid an indictment, the gravest accusation of *perduellio* endangering the republic, Gracchus had confronted by force the Pontifex Maximus Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica Serapio. Thus, the magistrate's question and Blossius's response were extremely important: Is Blossius most faithful to his friend or to the supreme temple of Divinities? 'Would you set fire to our temple?' (*Numquam voluisset id quidem, sed, si voluisset, paruissem*). 'If Gracchus had wished so, of course, I should have obeyed,' states Blossius.

Quam nefaria vox, judges Cicero, 'what an abominable statement!' Is it that certain? In the mid-1260s, writing '*De Regimine Principum*' along with the *Summa Theologica*, begun in 1266, Thomas Aquinas had Cicero's text in front of him. On friendship, he looked for cases in Aristotle's *Ethics* and in Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*. The reasoning and illustrations are sound: in public life, real friendship is a lesson for everybody, including tyrants. Aquinas stresses the exemplary model of Damon and Pythias: a remarkable faithfulness to the point of risking one's life. But, like in Cicero's approach to the case of Blossius, there is a conditional: *difficile est amicitiam manere, si a virtute defeceris*. Under the authority of Aristotle's *Ethics*, Aquinas emphasises a dictum in Chapter 9 of '*De Regimine Principum*': 'It is friendship which, by bringing virtuous people together as one, preserves and promotes virtue.'

The primacy of virtue in both texts appraises itself. Its power obscures another conditional, thus devaluing the meaning of Blossius's fidelity to a friend. Its price coincides with what history assumes as a negative precept. In fact, Blossius reactualises silenced semantic circles. The Latin may signify any eccentric passion. Of a conversation between Sappho and Alcaeus, Aristotle, in *Rhetorica* (1367a), has the following statement from the woman to her partner: 'If you had any love for what is good or beautiful, if your tongue were not brewing hateful words, shame would not lie upon your eyes, but you would speak of what is virtuous.' The man says: 'Modesty had prevented me from expressing myself fully.' The

pronouncement and its features reflect heroic paradigms, as does Blossius. The Roman can be read in what his gesture connotes, a Greek philosophical stance on virtue.

From one text to the following, through their own history, is a mirror effect. The repetition of a maxim affirms the primacy of virtue. How to qualify it? On one side, a constricting measure regulates the reiteration of the predictable. In a paradoxical reversal, it is the sixteenth-century Michel de Montaigne who rewrites what for centuries was unexamined. His attitude of 'I do not teach, I recount' made a difference. There is, for sure, a respect in which Blossius sums up the reality of virtue. It humanises the abstraction of arguments in the name of virtue:

For that matter, [Blossius's] answer has no better ring than would mine if someone questioned me in this fashion: 'If your will commanded you to kill your daughter, would you kill her?' and I said yes. For that does not bear witness to any consent to do so, because I have no doubt at all about my will, and just as little about that of such a friend. It is not in the power of all the arguments in the world to dislodge me from the certainty I have of the intentions and judgments of my friend (Montaigne 1958: 140).

On the subject, yesterday's and today's testimonies often reflect each other. Mirrors of words, they seem to express the same paths that allowed them. Do they always?

Indagatio

Thus, to bring *philia* and *amicitia* in what supposes them, the same conceptual field is animated by the meanings of two verbs in the active voice: *philein* and *amicio*, to welcome and to wrap. At the end of the sixteenth century, Montaigne, writing on friendship, inscribes more than these ancient traces in the reality of his *amitié* for Etienne de la Boétie. Associations assume, along with the Greco-Latin presence, an account of a 'voluntary servitude'. The reference portrays an emotional discipline. Its inspiration matches visibly what Montaigne collects in Aristotle's considerations: the tradition of his two *Ethics*, the *Eudemia* and *Nichomachea*, amplified in Cicero's *Laelius de Amicitia*, usually called *De Amicitia*. These citations mark out a friendship and its sacrality. Montaigne, an apostle of friendship, tests the motives of any reader of his *Essais*. His vision is at the basis of recent exposés on *philia*, including Jacques Derrida's *The Politics of Friendship* (1997).

Unique, adult friendship is different from other bonds. In any case, Montaigne writes, not comparable to what links a child to its parents, it cannot be confused with the harmony between kin or with the administration of social obligations. Not surprising, in the traces of the ancients, friendship provides other doors – doors rather than the flame or bargain of love. These do not equal a perfect friendship, the concept initiated by Protagoras and idealised in Plato's *Phaedrus* (279) and Diogenes Laertius's *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* (8.10). When motivated by pleasure or profit, public or private interests, a relationship is not a real friendship. Montaigne translates his classics, a demanding view: '*Quod sit omni ex parte in suo genere perfectum*,' states *De Amicitia* (21.79). In 'On Friendship', Montaigne advises that friendship 'has no other model than itself, and can be compared only with itself' (1958: 1.28). A book identified with the name and the body of friendship, Etienne de la Boétie's *Voluntary Servitude* opened up ways of explaining the light of an encounter, the light of an end:

[This book] was shown to me long before I had seen him, and gave me my first knowledge of his name, thus starting on its way this friendship which together we fostered, as long as God willed, so entire and so perfect that certainly you will hardly read of the like, and among men of today you see no trace of it in practice. So many coincidences are needed to build up such a friendship that it is a lot if fortune can do it once in three centuries (Montaigne 1958: 136).

The testimony celebrates a discovery. Unique in its rights, a transfiguration recapitulates a tradition, its exegesis. A repetition, out of an intellectual genealogy, gives to *philia* precedence over justice, considering the latter an induced effect of the former. For, according to Aristotle, a virtue for sure, justice is a conditional ability: 'When people are friends, they have no need of justice; but, when they are just, they need friendship in addition' (*Nicomachean Ethics* 8.1155a26). Montaigne, a political figure, reads the Greek with an eye on Cicero's detailed gloss over *amicitia*. Even in its singularity, *amicitia*, as the Greek *philia*, requires leaning toward the absolute of truth. '*Amicus Plato, sed magis amica veritatis amica veritas*', a medieval distich attributed to Aristotle, renders faithfully Cicero's stance: yes, he should be a friend of Plato, but the truth should be dearer. Moreover, there are several types of *philia*. The first, frequent among young people, is a friendship based on pleasure. The friends are then loved not for friendship's sake,

but for the pleasure they bring. The second is friendship motivated by interests, which is very common among older people. At an advanced age, as the saying goes, ‘people do not pursue the pleasant, but the beneficial’. Finally, the last type, rare and perfect in its form and style, is the friendship ‘between good persons who are alike in excellence and virtue’. In interconnected texts, from Aristotle to Montaigne, this friendship seems complex in what it demands and simple in its requirements. Its case stands like an argument. It does not need a reason, to quote Ibicos. The real *philia* means a complete dedication. ‘To be friends with many people, in the sense of perfect friendship, is impossible, just as it is impossible to be in love with many people at the same time. For love is like an extreme, and an extreme tends to be unique’ (8.8.1152).

The freedom of friendship constructs its own redemption without the inconveniences of love. Its primacy reflects an ancient enigma. The truth repeats older distichs: ‘My friend, the half of my soul’ from Andragathos and: ‘Though one might have all other goods, without friends no one would choose to live’ from Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics* (8.1). Expounding the foundation of Aristotle’s *Ethics*, Diogenes, in *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, emphasises the paradox of any friendship in the fact that it posits itself as a subjectively lived event in the objective universe of physics and logic: ‘To the query, “What is a friend?” [Aristotle’s] reply was “A single soul dwelling in two bodies.”’ To someone else who asked why much time is spent with the beautiful, he said: ‘That is a blind person’s question’ (5.20). The same response, a good reminder of Ibicos’s definition, is attributed to Zeno (335–263 BC). To the question ‘Who is a friend?’ Zeno’s answer was ‘A second self’ – ἄλλος, ἑφῆ, ἐγώ – literally an *alter ego*, he said (2.7.23).

The significance of friendship that Montaigne valorizes transfers the canonical values of his sources, including their part of misogyny. Zeus is the god of friendship. Quoting from Cicero’s *De Amicitia*, Montaigne addresses the most stable understanding of friendship in this classical tradition:

I return to my description of a more equitable and more equable kind of friendship. *Only those are to be judged friendships in which the characters have been strengthened and matured by age* [Cicero].

For the rest, what we ordinarily call friends and friendships are nothing but acquaintanceships and familiarities formed by some chance or convenience, by means of which our souls are bound to each other. In

the friendship I speak of, our souls mingle and blend with each other so completely that they efface the seam that joined them, and cannot find it again. If you press me to tell you why I loved him, I feel that this cannot be expressed, except by answering: Because it was he, because it was I (1958: 139).

This *parce que c'était lui, parce que c'était moi* has become the very paradigm of friendship. Linked to and differentiated from love, essentially spiritual, extraordinary in the reciprocity it crystallises here, friendship frames the virtue of loving rather than the situation of being loved, says Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* 8.8.1159a29–32).

From the ancients to moderns, through centuries of Christian exegeses, friendship seems to be a key to the distinction of Scholastic philosophers between *amor amicitiae* and *amor concupiscentiae*. The nuance recognises the adjacency and occasional intermingling of the two concepts. Indeed, *philia* implies *agape* and, in both active and passive voices, their verbs are synonyms. In Aristotle's *Rhetorica* (such as 1371a21), *phileistai* and *agapasthai* transcribe identical values. The synonymy becomes frequent and effective in the Christian tradition, whose teaching on charity and salvation is, fundamentally, one of *agape*. One should add contemporary re-evaluations of this traditional distinction. In the well-received study *Cities of God* (2000), Graham Ward, professor of systematic theology and ethics at the University of Manchester, constructs an analogical view of controverted resemblances: it blurs the distinction between *agape* and *eros*, most visibly in thematics about the church as an 'erotic community'.

In classical texts, *eros* generally translates as desire, entailing *pathos* and *oreksis*. On the other hand, the constant semantic values of *agape* and *philia* are related to ideas of affection and benevolence, fondness and loyalty. They are observable in almost all the signifieds of words derived from the stem *-phil-* we can refer to. Their composition being easy, the list is, in actuality, an open one. This acknowledged, one has to recognise the extraordinary fecundity of the stem. For example, there are 23 columns of terms derived from the stem *-phil-* in the 1985 reprint of the ninth edition of the Liddell–Scott–Jones *Greek-English Lexicon*.

Atque uerbum pro uerbo . . .

Is the case of Blossius a plausible ideal in a history of friendship? At any rate, can one entertain it today as a meaningful issue? Outside of a class of ethics or

a reunion of classicists, the story seems such an odd curiosity that few people would realise the extent of its impact in the history of ideas and in ethics. Then again, when its effects provide reasons for consideration, the story calls for a sober discussion at best, or a straight-faced laughing or easy rejection at worst. In the case of a debate, moral arguments could be reduced to politics of contradictions in logic: pick your weapon (reason, fists or fireballs) about Cicero's exclamation of horror, the restraint of Aquinas in getting around it, or Montaigne's intervention. Distinguishing act and intention, and emphasising the role of conditionals that frame Blossius's attitude, Montaigne appears to justify them, agreeing with Blossius's faithfulness to Tiberius Gracchus. An exception is rarely convincing. At least, as popular wisdom goes, the exception confirms the rule. But what is the rule here?

A number of problems are represented clearly. They include the notion of friendship itself, the relation between legality and morality, and the relevance of such a story. In fact, the way these problems call for discussion and the ethical grids they address engages the overriding *prima facie* responsibility of the presenter. Thus, I have to face a moral obligation. One thinks such an obligation within a situation in which freedom arises as both an absolute and a limitation. In our pluralistic world, in view of the story's context, the distance that supports it and the difficulty to define ethical frameworks, the Blossius story might be a good case for reconfiguring a number of questions.

In the name of friendship what, all things considered, can be said? The theoretical framework can be easily constructed. There are the binding areas of the law and their historically rooted principles, on the one hand; on the other, it is within this very context that I apprehend my intrinsic limits, the veracity of my objectively unfounded happening. In this recognition, another certainty posits me as this particular member of a community, its history and its ethics.

The 'who is my neighbour; who is my friend' question refers to concrete attitudes about existing as a being-for-others. Before being an abstract issue for specialists, the outlook is a practical question addressing one's insecurity of living and functioning within a cultural economy, taking into account conflictual natural and socially engineered forces. Indeed, the question reveals an invariant anxiety about existing in this world and working on how to fit in it. Due to our human activities, natural and cultural contexts are disharmonious universes with inherited and often institutionalised struggles and polemics. Of course, an imperative of any inner saga, one tends to delimit friendly areas from hostile ones.

Compendia of spiritual traditions and ethics describe, explain and prescribe rulings. They also offer blueprints for managing difficult choices. In today's culturally composite world, we have come to accept that there may be acts that are morally justified but not legal and vice versa. One would tend to believe that such a position goes without necessitating justification. But, supposing that the intervention of a legal support for something (act, choice, style) is not and cannot be an adequate answer to questions of justification, is it reasonable that a friend's morally controversial options (from the standpoint of a socio-cultural majority) always be made illegal? Apart from human dignity as a non-negotiable principle, on which criteria should we rely in evaluating margins of tolerance regarding morals?

Of today's world's culture, it would make sense to invoke the diagnosis made by historian Henry Steele Commager about mid-twentieth-century American society vis-à-vis its foundational beliefs and assumptions. In *The American Mind* (1950), Commager emphasises a historical discontinuity, or a drifting from a strong religious referential background to a secular one. This consideration was confirmed 26 years later by Martin E. Marty in *A Nation of Behavers* (1976). This is a simple invocation and not a way for extolling the North American situation as a measure for comparison. The point to mark is a theoretical model to situate strongly religious societies, mainly in the South of our world, and strongly secular-oriented societies, mainly in the North. From such a division and, in reference to the North's economic and technological leadership, the world might come to be substantially marked by secular values.

Using Narcissus as an analogical case could bring about figures *qui donnent à penser* and their similarities about living in cultures of lack. The paradigmatic symbol of Narcissus, or that of a vain fixation on one's self, derives from Ovid's version in *Metamorphoses*. Christian thinkers have linked the sign to the value of the Hebrew *hevel* and *shaw*, for undue self-esteem (Psalms 10:7 and Proverbs 22:8). In the New Testament, *hevel* can be read in the apostles' epistles (Ephesians 4:17 and 2 Peter 2:18) for the idolatry that characterises false prophets. *Hevel* corresponds to the Greek *ksenos* and mainly *mataiôtes* for perverseness and frailty. In Paul's Romans (8:20), it stands for human excesses and its traditional translation is 'folly' or 'lack of good sense'.

Should one consult another genealogic line, that which is represented in Pausanias – 'rationalization' of older mythical texts, says Pierre Grimal in his *Dictionary of Classical Mythology* (1985 [1951]) – one finds the following entries

to the Narcissus story: (a) the handsome young man is the son of a god (Cepheissus) and a nymph (Liriope); (b) he ignores the attention he suscitates among nymphs and female mortals; thus, revenge of the supposedly despised, his death; and, from his blood, the flower bearing his name; (c) in Pausanias, the real issue can be summed up briefly: Narcissus had a twin sister.

It is to the sobering axes of this symbolic grid that I refer when asking wrenching questions about cultures of lack. An imploded history and its unstable frames of reference led some thinkers to doubt the charismatic virtues of our new-found universe. In the process, some of them, identifying religion and ethics, deduced psychological consequences. Compared to many, Commager's analysis projects balanced observations. Gone the faith in the solidity of an omnipresent providence, the effect modifies 'the mechanics of living', 'the intellectual life' and 'character':

To suggest that the modifications were either for better or for worse implies the existence of a moral standard; all that can be said with assurance is that the modifications were, in important respects, departures from what had seemed the nineteenth-century norm. Some of the changes were in the realm of ideas, some in habits and practices, some in morals (Commager 1950: 411).

The interdependence implied here amounts to mild misonicism. Too easily, it links too many things in the same arrays of causes. The technological universe may be perturbing, with its bad magic opposed to past civilisations, but is it certain that today's standards, in their essence and ethical values, would prove to be radically different from Aristotle's, for instance? Let us confront some of the assumptions. A contemporary of Commager's, one who could have shared his view, may help. In the 1950s, John D. Williams was the head of the mathematics division of the RAND Corporation. He reworked a symbol that unimaginative intellectualism had converted into the sterility of a poetic figure. In time and in space, this world should be fancied sometimes, as it used to be, perfectly flat. Moreover, it is becoming smaller and smaller, more flat, and less and less friendly.

Let us briefly focus on this theme with contributions that are ethical statements, such as Barbara W. Tuchman's *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam* (1985) and Jared Diamond's *The Third Chimpanzee: The Evolution and Future of the Human Animal* (1991).

Is our understanding of friendship, its meaning and value, more sophisticated than that of students of Aristotle or the Roman readers of Cicero's *De Amicitia*? One would get wonderful answers from Williams's 'The Small World', published in Richard Thruelsen and John Kobler's collection *Adventures of the Mind* (1959). Unassumingly, Williams describes the mentality and productive capacity of a technically advanced society's 'head hunters'. On this, no doubt, Tuchman and Diamond are the best guides one can expect. They elaborate on some of our best 'achievements', including the slave trade, cultural exterminations, a twentieth-century account book of gas chambers, genocides (roughly twenty, from the 1950s to the 1990s), environmental disasters and so on. The usual angle underlining our scientific prodigies distorts the unsettling human faculty for destruction by a denying intelligence of its constancy. Herod's horrifying slaughter of innocent babies is, strictly speaking, an intimate part of our contemporary bad conscience. It should be. As should persecutions and wars suscitated by ideology and territory conflicts, warranted by vindictive pacifications or exterminations, activities and policies. All this cult of force, sign and expression of violence, bears witness to the dark side of our human condition. It exemplifies a negation of reason. By nature, a transgression properly translates the idea of a violation from the etymology of the word. The Latin *violentia*, for ferocity and impetuosity, implies the verb *violare*, to injure and dishonour, corporeally and, frequently, to mistreat and hurt, in the psychological sense. The word also connotes contamination and pollution. The human race is the most dangerous species in nature, Jean-Paul Sartre used to insist. In *On Aggression*, Konrad Lorenz has persuasively hypothesised on the efficacy of a murder-inhibiting mechanism in animals. Social or individual, a structuring or destructuring compulsion, in individual life (with Freud), in intersubjective group dynamics (with René Girard), or in serving an instrumental purpose (a just cause), violence is and remains the contrary of the goal of any ethics.

Not unexpectedly, the excess signified in violence and that, already in Plato's *Gorgias*, Callicles identified with desire, has been instrumented in a variety of intellectual and political trends. One knows, almost instinctively, on which side to situate doctrines of hatred. More difficult is discerning dubious shades and vague ends in the generosity of anti-ideologies. In what the title symbolises, Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1976) remains one of the best notices in intellectual and verbal prudence. But, almost everywhere on this flat earth, the hubris to dominate life has proved profitable. Historically, the constitution of polemology (the science of wars, initiated by the Athenian Thucydides) was demanded by a

necessity: to remember a lesson, a *ktema es aiei* (κτῆμα ἐς αἰεί). Its successful evolution has sanctioned its validity. Nowadays, the price of violence accounts even for mathematical applications in cost-benefit studies of murder. Certainly, as Claude Lévi-Strauss advises at the end of *L'homme nu* (1971) (*The Naked Man* [1981]), our present-day culture of death is directing this world to its own demise.

In brilliant novels such as *The Story of B.: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit* (1996), *Ishmael* (1992) and *My Ishmael* (1997), Daniel Quinn depicts the unfounded arrogance of our memory. His thesis may strain our attention, but it is worth meditating: 'We are not humanity, not at all; but just one culture' (1997: 40). It was possibly just a few hundred thousand years ago when *Homo sapiens* appeared. This is only yesterday in the millions of years that preceded the event, and billions of years to go back and envisage the genesis of life. Realist intersections of time and space force one to recondition a number of proximities.

All the preceding circumlocutions just to state a banality! Thucydides being a marker, since I have just mentioned his name, from his detailed analysis of the Peloponnesian War (431–411 BC) to the genocides of the last twenty years, military engagements, and all the ways of killing each other and destroying everything around us, no contest, the know-how and technologies of hostility have progressed tremendously. They have improved steadily. On the other hand, on the same flat dimension, we might not know better than Aristotle what friendship is or, more prudently, what it is not.

Thucydides (460?–400? BC), Plato (429?–347? BC) and Aristotle (384–322 BC) are, in time, our very close neighbours. In this small world of ours, using 70 years as a hypothetical lifespan, Williams calculated the distance between us and a number of past luminaries. The results are instructive. Only 33 persons separate us from Plato; 28 from Jesus; 19 from Muhammad and 4 from Newton. Unaware of Williams's computation, during the retreat of my fiftieth anniversary, I arrived at 30 people between Jesus and us. When I reported this number in my autobiographical work, *Les corps glorieux des mots et des êtres* (published in 1994), some charitable readers judged it a reckless exercise. Williams was interested in 'the explosion of knowledge', looking for keys 'to the rate of development during our time'. But years later, independently and using a lifespan corresponding to my Third World context, I was anxious to evaluate something different. In fact, my aim was simple: to measure the distance separating our time from the 'being a good neighbour to others' requirement and to assess such an imperative, not in the abstraction of scholars dating polemics about the Scriptures but, instead, in a hypothetically concrete transmission, from person to person.

One finds in Edmund Husserl's 1935 Vienna lecture an approach that singularises Greek culture in the sixth and seventh centuries BC. For Husserl, this period is the spiritual birthplace of 'a new sort of attitude of individuals toward their surrounding world'. In this particular lecture, he focuses on the origin of 'spiritual Europe', the Western incorporation of the Greek legacy and its historical *telos*. Bringing them together, he insists on the crisis he believed to be there, due to 'the apparent failure of rationalism'. Or perhaps due to ethnocentrism? Indeed, to repeat a popular saying, 'No one speaks from nowhere'. However, Husserl's preoccupation concerns something else, the task of knowledge. For him, this meant a new attention to 'the universality of the absolute spirit that surrounds everything that exists with an absolute historicity, to which nature is subordinated as a spiritual structure'.

The edition of Husserl's text I am using is an appendix in the American edition of *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1970). It cannot be detached from what precedes it or from the supplements that follow. All these texts are, basically, on the practice of objectivism and subjectivism in sciences. The discourse on philosophy and the crisis of European humanity speculates about itself, in relation to the 'intuition of the world'. In the world that Husserl envisages (how to define Indian or Chinese philosophy, he asks), philosophy can name its uniqueness in the plurality of its original connections (Babylonia, Egypt, Mesopotamia), the supranationality of its vocation (beginning as a Mediterranean thing), the universality of its inquiry:

Philosophical knowledge of the world creates not only those particular sorts of results (situational norms and truths) but also a human posture which immediately intervenes in the whole remainder of practical life with all its demands and ends, the ends of the historical tradition in which one is brought up and which receive their validity from this source. A new and intimate community – we could call it a community of purely ideal interests – develops among men, men who live for philosophy, bound together in their devotion to ideas, which not only are useful to all but belong to all identically (287).

From this perspective and in the context in which we live as students of philosophy, the paradox of our diverse and multicultural horizons provides meaning to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's concept of 'interweaving', an extension of Husserl's approach.

... Reddëre

Multiculturalism is possibly one of the most abused words these days, yet it is the one that best qualifies the uniqueness of being this and not another individuality on the horizon of humanity. The sheer impossibility of being interchangeable defines this uniqueness in a number of charges: one is unique, as a singular happening at a particular intersection of time and space; existing and sensing oneself, as this entity of flesh and blood, body and mind, dependent and free; unique in the distinctive way of incorporating the complex semiological systems of one's milieu of adaptation and evolution, with their symbolic value-flags; unique also in the particular manner one comes to inhabit a language, its constitutive universe of meanings, as one's tradition and legality, and from which one can engage in conversation with others (neighbours, fellow citizens of the same language, or strangers from different milieux). Strictly speaking, all of us exist in a multiplicity of cultural contexts, each one with its *bouillon de culture* (nutrient broth), to use a French metaphor from microbiology. This is also to say that, for instance, conversing with someone in a foreign language does not presuppose radically differing sets of exigencies than those demanded by successful existence in one's native cultural economy.

Activity and passivity, ascent to the heights of ideas and descent to the practice of everyday life; in this perpetual movement, the horizon is humanity. In effect, the other side of the law of a 'hunt and destroy mentality', as Quinn calls it, one can posit another type of instruction. Leonard Lawlor writes, in the foreword to Merleau-Ponty's posthumous *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology* (2002a):

The horizon of humanity is prior to the thesis of any humans or human communities, prior to any specific *Einfühlung* (empathy); it is the typic or style of being human that makes *Einfühlung* possible. Merleau-Ponty stresses that, since the horizon is not an aggregate of *Einfühlungen*, it is humanity, *Mitmenscheit*, in the double sense of the substantive: 'It is humanity as extensional concept and humanity as historic idea'. In fact, and this is crucial, Merleau-Ponty says that the horizon is 'between the two' senses, in the middle of the doubling, at the limit (xix).

Against what habitually nurtures the monster of human lack – aggression or fear, disease or solitude – its orientation ensures the revelation of a cardinal interference between the visible and the invisible:

Husserl has used the fine word *Stiftung* – foundation or establishment – to designate first of all the unlimited fecundity of each present which, precisely, because it is singular and passes, can never stop having been and thus being universally; but above all to designate that fecundity of the products of a culture which continue to have value after their appearance and which open a field of investigations in which they perpetually come to life again [*où ils revivent perpétuellement*]. It is thus that the world as soon as he has seen it, his first attempt at painting, and the whole past of painting all deliver up a *tradition* to the painter – *that is*, Husserl remarks, *the power to forget origins* and to give to the past not a survival (*une survie*), which is the hypocritical form of forgetfulness, but a new life, which is the noble form of memory.

For Merleau-Ponty, this noble form of memory or this nonhypocritical form of survival, which makes cultural products ‘relive’, only occurs through language (xxi).

Under a multiplicity of visages, the notion of humanity comes to reflect linguistic interpretations. They circle infinite traces of our sincere memories in regional foundations which, in difference and similitude, narrate ways of their inscription in what the Greeks called the process of that which could truly be or that which, possibly, simply is. Translated in the present of our global culture as a theory, the *Stiftung* unites and divides us. In any case, empirically, what works, writes Quinn in *The Story of B.*, is contrast and dissimilarity in the prose of nature and histories:

What works, evidently, is *cultural diversity*. This should not come as a surprise. If culture is viewed as a biological phenomenon, then we should expect to see diversity favored over uniformity. A thousand designs – one for every locale and situation – always works better than one design for all locales and situations. Birds are more likely to survive in ten thousand nest patterns than in one. Mammals are more likely to survive in ten thousand social patterns than in one. And humans are more likely to survive in ten thousand cultures than in one – as we’re in the process of proving right now (1996: 219).

As a matter of fact, today we are proving the efficiency of two movements magnified by the reality of contemporary borders that rule the topography of our flat global

village. In political economy, these boundaries tend to privilege the adaptation and indigenisation of migrants and goods and services, simultaneously promoting transnational mechanics and regional distinctiveness of tastes. In cultural economy, the same borders would contribute to an exoticisation of regional traditions and their fragmentation into minuscule islands, simultaneously accenting essentialist nationalisms and cults of difference.

Manifestly, somehow contradicting trendy dynamics in political economy and physics of cultural balkanisation, as students of philosophy, we obligate other risks. In solidarity or in disagreement, we articulate our relation to a gift on ways of inquiring, incessantly questioning themselves, their historicity, as well as their responsibility, obedience and ruptures of their genealogy.

In this meditation, the gift identified with the Latin Gaius Blossius is a metonym for an ethical challenge, an unimaginable one: *Tum ego, 'etiamne', inquam, 'si te in Capitolium faces ferre vellet?'* Cicero's report reads: 'I thus asked him, and if you were requested to set fire to the Capitol?'

In the name of what friendship signifies, including when it might demand the defiance of state laws or the profanation of anything sacred, we must go back to the Greeks. Why the Greeks? Cicero, yesterday, refers to their authority in judging Blossius. Michel Foucault asked himself the same question at the beginning of his *History of Sexuality* volumes. We do not go to the Greeks because they would be better than us, but because, as Foucault claims, that is the adequate path to understanding our predicament in the universe. We go back to the ancients, to a Greek practice of philosophy, because we acknowledge an attitude that coincides with a significant path in ways of relating to our humanity, to the world. Inscribed in the diversity of our surroundings, we access the Greek sign as a mirror that has endured an exacting vocation. An act and project always in the process of recommencement, the Greek lesson qualifies its practice as that of questions raised locally but aiming at a universal explanation. Rethinking its reflexes, one objects to definitive closures in relation to competing systems of thought. Thus, for instance, interrogating Blossius, a metonymic code, why not rephrase Montaigne's line by accenting Cicero's fallacious reading? In effect, its persuasive force emanates from a dubitable, but sagacious liaison of psychological relevance with logical relevance: '*Nulla est igitur excusatio peccati, si amici causa peccaveris; nam, cum conciliatrix amicitiae virtutis opinio fuerit, difficile est amicitiam manere, si a virtute defeceris*' (*De Amicitia* 9.37). Effective, the reasoning is a question that rests on a number

of assumptions apropos slippery moral concepts (justification, sin, belief, virtue), besides the very friendship that a normative understanding appraises. Cicero says to Blossius: ‘Therefore it is no justification whatever of your sin to have sinned in behalf of a friend; for since his belief in your virtue induced the friendship, it is hard for that friendship to remain if you have forsaken virtue.’

An excellent fallacy of relevance, Cicero’s reason offers a complex question whose truth is presupposed in the statement. A good student of Greek philosophy and Aristotle’s *Sophistical Regulations*, the Roman statesman’s summation takes on premises that were relevant to his ethical and civic presumptions, as therefore psychologically relevant to his conclusion.

In *Who Needs Greek?* by Simon Goldhill (2002), the author administers a humanist reason from the background of the maligned concept of cultural study. Who needs Greek? Better even: who does not need it, at least ancient Greek? Traces of this language can be seen in almost all fields of knowledge. Christianity needed Greek. Hellomania still stands for a perfectly respectable eccentricity. There are Greek ghosts at work everywhere in our world. Inspiring, they were the heartbeat of Romantic Hellenisms. In Africa, during his tenure as president of Senegal, Léopold Sédar Senghor was a strong advocate of Greco-Latin cultures and, in Latin America, Jorge Luis Borges kept intense conversations with the ancients. In Borges’s collection of poetry (1968–72), there is, in the name of friendship, a wonderful poem addressed to a minor poet of *The Greek Anthology*. The following passage makes clear a very moving closeness that transcends time:

Where now is the memory
of the days that were yours on earth, and wove
joy with sorrow, and made a universe that was your own?
...

To others the gods gave glory that has no end:
inscriptions, names on coins, monuments, conscientious historians;
all that we know of you, eclipsed friend,
is that you heard the nightingale in the evening.

Among the asphodels of the Shadow, your shade, in its vanity,
must consider the gods ungenerous (249).

Such a friendship reflects itself in the perception of a collective memory, its history assumed in particulars. Its recognition activates itself in the singularity of a spiritual community. To quote Husserl once again, friendship is 'a common cultural spirit [which,] drawing all of humanity under its spell, is thus an advancing transformation in the form of a new [type of] historical development' (1970: 217). In any case, now and more forcefully, one can make a good course with Goldhill's notion of 'rainbow bridges' in *Who Needs Greek?* It is here, accorded to what augured it superbly, the discipline and spirit of a style, *to hellenikon* or the Greek thing. Goldhill writes:

The question 'who needs Greek?' is not a classicist's triumphalism or despair, but rather an injunction towards a self-aware and informed exploration of one's own place in history and in culture – one's own stake in cultural value. As far as I am concerned, it's the *question* 'who needs Greek?' that we can't do without (2002: 299).

The question 'who needs Greek?' can be multiplied by its own variations. It crosses the question of 'who needs a friend?', which is not a neutral issue. Once again, ethics can be a good test. For example, just compare a few elements of normative ethics to questions of method in metaethics and you get cultural challenges of the present confronting intensely ancient grids, the Aristotelian being the most obvious. One might remember the harmony of a terrible admonition; in Homer's *Iliad* (14.214), for example, Aphrodite fuses love and desire, and in the new order, a 'blandishing persuasion can steal the mind of the wisest'. In our generation, we have come to disguise hard frights as moral dilemmas and evil standings as probabilistic problems. A good illustration is given in Octavio Paz's *¿Águila o Sol? Eagle or Sun?* (1970). Between a stranger's eyes and a good friend's madness, which should we rate more highly?

Before I could defend myself, I felt the point of a knife in my back, and a sweet voice: 'Don't move, mister, or I'll stick it in.'

Without turning, I asked: 'What do you want?'

'Your eyes, mister,' answered the soft, almost painful voice.

'My eyes? What do you want with my eyes? Look, I've got some money. Not much, but it's something. I'll give you everything I have if you let me go. Don't kill me.'

‘Don’t be afraid, mister. I won’t kill you. I’m only going to take your eyes.’

‘But why do you want my eyes?’ I asked again.

‘My girlfriend has this whim. She wants a bouquet of blue eyes. And around here they’re hard to find.’

‘My eyes won’t help you. They’re brown, not blue.’

‘Don’t try to fool me, mister. I know very well that yours are blue.’

‘Don’t take the eyes of a fellow man. I’ll give you something else.’

‘Don’t play saint with me,’ he said harshly. ‘Turn around’ (Paz 1970: 33).

This is an awful story but a remarkable case: the just against Salome’s fantasy, a neighbour or a friend caught in one of Narcissus’s self-destructive exercises in folly. In effect, once there is an agreement – if we can really negotiate one – on the meaning of the concepts of good and right, lengthy debates would respond to any of the following suppositions: (a) the good is the norm of ethical behaviour; thus, an axiological ethics; (b) the right is the norm of ethical behaviour; thus, a deontological ethics; or (c) the good and the right both can be declared subjective or objective; thus, ethical subjectivism or ethical objectivism.

An ancient testimony, by a minor writer, summarises the modernity of an ethical predicament. There is this brief observation by the Alexandrian Palladas from the fifth century AD, published in W.R. Paton’s *The Greek Anthology* (1917–83: 181), apropos a temple of Fortuna, Greek Tyche (divinity of chance and human destiny) that was turned into a tavern: ‘Things are turned topsy-turvy as I see, and we now see Fortune in misfortune’ (Ἀνεστράφησαν, ὥς ὁρῶ, τὰ πράγματα, καὶ τὴν Τύχην νῦν δυστύχουσαν εἶδομεν).

As students of philosophy and letters, but before everything else citizens of communities, we live in *The Company of Words*, to invoke the felicitous title of the book that John McCumber devoted to ‘Hegel, language, and systematic philosophy’ (1993). These words are concepts. Of course, they instruct our being here and now, in this small and flat village, about socio-historical determinations.

So, in the name of friendship, by the conflicting signs of its reality, or figures such as the forgotten poet Borges, the controverted lesson of Blossius, exactly as by the predicaments of my known and unknown friends and neighbours, do we not choose to remain inscriptions in an ideal task? In the language of Husserl,

that means a commitment to the universe of a demanding path. In his mind, such a cause refers to intentional phenomenology or, more precisely, to transcendental phenomenology.

4 April 2008

Note

1. This chapter was originally published as ‘*Ibi Pote Valere*’ in *Fabien Eboussi-Boulaga: La philosophie du muntu*, ed. Ambroise Kom (Paris: Karthala, 2009), 220–39. It has been reprinted here with permission.

Finale

*Je vis en silence ma parcelle du temps;
Pourquoi me plaindre comme un grelot
Au cou d'un chien errant?
Dans la nuit à fond d'étoiles
Je fends ma voix de peine . . .
C'est la pulpe d'un être qui sentait
L'eucalyptus et la saveur de la mer
Quand elle soulève sa rumeur.*

— Jean-Baptiste Tati Loutard, '*Le visage et le temps*',
Les normes du temps

Since the perception of scientific claims as universal, objective, and rational is itself locally constructed, not an internal, transcultural feature of any truly scientific process, any appeal to such notions should carry no more authority than the claims can command on other grounds.

— Sandra Harding, 'Is Modern Science an Ethnoscience?'

Chapter 14

Exodus as Allegory: Africa in Theories of Difference

To rethink the history of non-Western nations cannot but take into consideration what signified a right to autonomy in the name of ethics, of a metaethics. Its crucial moment was the Bandung Conference; the guiding principle of the Indian model was its axis of solidarity. Ideologically auspicious and cogent, it incarnated new paths to sovereignty and its allegories in the international arena. Are they only past symbols?

Chapter 15

Thinking the Black Intellectual: 'Masques aux Quatre Points'

An epilogue to academic statements on black intellectual responsibility, this meditation closes a class of exemplary texts. Their distinction was a reason for commenting upon them. It trusted presuppositions of their exercise vis-à-vis this sign of the epilogue as a question on its own manner.

Conclusion

Coda

Exodus as Allegory

Africa in Theories of Difference

*Ideo iuravi in ira mea:
non introibunt in requiem meam*

— Psalm 94

Nous croyons à un pacte républicain, comme à un pacte mondial... Aucune mémoire ne peut endiguer seule les retours de la barbarie: la mémoire de la Shoah a besoin de celle de l'esclavage, comme de toutes les autres, et la pensée qui s'y dérobe insulte la pensée. Le moindre génocide minoré nous regarde fixement et menace d'autant les sociétés multi-trans-culturelles. Les grands héros des histoires nationales doivent maintenant assumer leur juste part de vertu et d'horreur, car les mémoires sont aujourd'hui en face des vérités du monde, et le vivre-ensemble se situe maintenant dans les équilibres des vérités du monde. Les cultures contemporaines sont des cultures de la présence au monde. Les cultures contemporaines ne valent que par leur degré de concentration des chaleurs culturelles du monde. Les identités sont ouvertes, et fluides, et s'épanouissent par leur capacité à se 'changer en échangeant' dans l'énergie du monde.

— Edouard Glissant and Patrick Chamoiseau, '*Lettre ouverte*'

As if it were a machine . . .

'Humiliated once more' was the title of an article by Madeleine Bunting in *The Guardian* of 4 July 2005.¹ Well intentioned, the text was motivated by a trust and tried to identify with a good omen regarding two events: a scientific one, the first Congress at the University of London of AEGIS (the Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies) and a political one, the G8 Summit in Edinburgh, Scotland, which was accompanied by 'Concerts held in ten countries', whose leitmotif was a generous inclination: 'Make G8 history' and 'G8 will make poverty history'. The issue of the two events, explicitly or implicitly, can be related to

two assertions. The first introduced Bunting's article: 'The recent focus on Africa reinforces our perception of it as picturesque, pitiful, psychopathic and passive'; the second, a desire rather than a programmatic expectation, was expressed in the argument that followed:

The hope was that people would get back to see more of Africa than starving black babies on their screens. We would get to hear about Africans much like ourselves – with the same hopes, fears, and aspirations; we would, finally, begin to identify with them as human beings. That shift of perception offered a radical potential for a more equal engagement between Europe and Africa – the kind of sustained long-term relationship necessary to deal with the huge challenges to our species of climate change and AIDS. You may say that was ludicrously naïve. And I begin to fear that you are right. What we are seeing now in this unprecedented media focus on Africa is a very old theme.

As a matter of fact, Bunting links this state of affairs to a history of failures and, more precisely, to the 1787 Quakers' abolitionist argument on human brotherhood and its plea for a different representation it explicitly promoted, which was superseded by another image that reflected itself throughout two centuries, a supplicant Africa from the period of slavery to the present. Media tell stories. Were they going to illustrate, once again, something they know how to stage, as meticulously analysed by Susan D. Moeller in *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War, and Death* (1999)?

The picture of Africa creates an acclimated representation, more exactly a highly visible and routinised bang in the history of a domesticated alienation, its variations and occasional amplifications. It signifies a lack and this is generally identified with the negative of a normative advancement, thus symbolising both its negation and its inadequacy. Would this negative image that today seems to defeat all notions of a dialectical progress – transcending colonialism and anti-colonialism – be more significant than, say, the slave trade? Or could not one speculate that the slave trade, or the discord represented by the colonial rule in African histories, would or would not constitute its major conditions of possibility? Such a hesitation or doubt would imply the usefulness of questioning causalities that theories of alterity tend to establish between subjugation and autonomy, the colonial reason and postcolonial attrition that, in its own right, is an issue. Looked

at critically from the current African predicament, the representation correlates the idea of waste with negation in both the philosophical and religious sense. These symbolise an emblematic spectacle of an architectural ruin. On the other hand, the convenient grid of opposites as well as the overemphasised validity of rational, linear causalities may well obscure what does not fit into pre-organised schemas of binary sets and models unaccustomed to the efficacy of, say, the precept of the excluded middle. For instance, would it be sufficient to argue that the historic axis between two issues, the colonial paradigm of progress and the postcolonial reorganisation of power, would reveal a discontinuity in the field of economics that would account for the catastrophic images of postcolonial experience, as a direct consequence of both the rupture and a negative nurturing environment it brought about?

Without succumbing to the fallacy of determinant factors and their excesses, let me understand, apropos the idea of historical socio-economic transformation, the notion of development as a silent engram by supposing it to be a metaphor for the changes of an organism, imagining its future ill-fixed memory as a process initiated from a physical alteration in the organism. Let me invoke the image of a cell in a manner that would allow me to formulate anew, and in different terms, the conjunctive relation between a given empiricity and an environment and, from there, to qualify an allegorical view of present-day Africa. In both the metaphor of cell change and in the reading of an African predicament, my assertions and interrogations arise from these references as allegories, such as one finds in Walter Benjamin's work. They indicate an attitude (*Anschauung*) or a way of seeing things (*Anschauungsweise*); that is, the contingent signs of my impulsive mortal face in the experience of life and the world.

In modern Hebrew, Richard Lewontin notes in *The Triple Helix: Gene, Organism, and Environment* (2000), the conceptual field of the word *Lehitpateach* includes two signifieds to which to reduce all the derived ones: on the one hand, *out + growth* of an organism, or the process of becoming more intricate, a transformation from a simpler into a complex stage; on the other hand, development in the reflexive sense, or the structural modification of a photosensitive surface that, through the influence of chemicals, for example, makes visible an image, a positive print recorded by a camera. *Lehitpateach* is an excellent reflector because, reanimated in the lexicon of modern Hebrew, it basically expresses these two significations, exhausting the pathologically polysemic configurations of its European translations, as in the French *développement*, German *Entwicklung*,

Italian *sviluppo* or Spanish *desarrollo*. Certainly the main semantic axes of the English *development* allow an almost identical mapping of each one of their individual field of polysemies, namely: (a) the act of bringing from latency to or towards a fulfilment; (b) the state of expanding or enlarging and becoming more complex; (c) a significant event, happening or change; (d) an aggregation of constructions or dwellings, conceived and built by the same contractor or company; (e) an improvement in quality, made in a gradual elaboration; and (f) a causation. Compared to the Hebrew *Lehitpateach*, the English *development*, as well as its European equivalents, opens up a vast configuration of meanings and metaphors that, through complex relations of partial inclusion, interact with other semantic areas organised by signifieds of a multiplicity of signs. These relations can actualise both transitive and intransitive verbs related to the basic value of *out + process*. They are almost innumerable and contribute to theories of any development as that which appears in a genesis, is brought about, is cultivated or produced and then unfolds, evolves, matures and amplifies. And that is only one line of its possible semantic expansions. Its polysemy, as well as its highly productive metaphorical connections, point to the vagueness of the concept in English. This vagueness is a good reason for my using the concept with only the values of *Lehitpateach*, or the outgrowth of an organism and the duplication of an image. A semantic exercise such as this, which any linguistic thesaurus could accent by relating the concept to synonyms of 'development', such as evolution and progress and their correlates, such as effect and consequence, addresses clearly the implicit or explicit inconsistencies that assent to, store and transport any uncritical normative discourse on development. It dramatises both the deviation and the proximity that order a correspondence between the structuration of images and the factual dis-harmony they are supposed to reflect. In the introduction to his presentation on how, through analogy, one constructs the activity of a gene or that of an organism, Lewontin writes:

While we cannot dispense with metaphors in thinking about nature, there is a great risk of confusing the metaphor with the thing of real interest. We cease to see the world *as if* it were *like* a machine and take it to *be* a machine. The result is that the properties we ascribe to our object of interest and the questions we ask about it reinforce the original metaphorical image and we miss the aspects of the system that do not fit the metaphorical approximation. As Alexander Rosenblueth and Norbert Weiner have written, 'The price of metaphor is eternal vigilance' (2000: 4).

The intelligence of 'a media-oriented culture' crosses this paradox. In *White Lies: Race and the Myth of Whiteness* (1999), Maurice Berger insists on an ordinary fact: 'The vast majority of journalists, critiques, academics, seem not to realize how duplicitous, words and images can be' (96). Words, indeed, create mythologies doubling narratives about realities and 'hold us hostages to their smooth, elegant fictions'.

With Kenneth Burke, approaching trained (in-)capacity

Analogy, in its Aristotelian sense, as an identity of relations that establishes the possibility of a comparison between two sets or two systems, might still be the best conceptual device for organising a multilevel reading of our predicament. The careful and rigorous definition of Aristotle's *Ethics* combines an extension of both hypothetical inclusion and inductive assimilation processes. In this sense, one readily accepts, for example, Descartes's affirmation that there is a stronger analogy between colours and sounds than between corporeal things and God, or Thorstein Veblen's view apropos 'trained incapacity' or the 'perversity' whereby he arrives at declaring that 'invention is the mother of necessity'. Kenneth Burke, who suggests such an affinity in *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose* (1965), insists that

This concept of 'trained incapacity' is a titular telescoping of the underlying analytic process in such a way that the beginning and the end of the analogical extension are 'heuristically' (and thereby 'ironically') combined, in effect a sequence, as Hart Crane might say, 'clapped into a single stride.' All told, either such analogical extensions or their titular abbreviations are variations of the implicit-explicit, latent-manifest dichotomies whereby, as in comparative sociology, an institution that is explicitly present in one social context is shown by analytic transformations to be implicit in another, or vice versa (334).

In such a perspective, following Burke's reworking of Veblen's 'trained incapacity', one could revisit the sense of one's abilities to function correctly as being sometimes the sign of one's blindness and reformulate the lesson from Pavlov's dog as an effective reference from which to evaluate the structuration of a rational conditioning versus the arbitrariness of analogical generalisations. Both chickens and human beings are taught to correlate food and the ring of a bell and thus to inscribe rationally a behaviour in the structure of a conditioning regulation. What

such an order of things articulates as a rule of behaviour can be modified on a spur of the moment accident or by a change of policy: the bell rings and on the basis of a well-internalised education, our army of chickens or perfectly reasonable human beings march towards an objective, to have their heads cut off. The point of the matter in this allegory from Burke's text, at least one of the most antinomic from a critical viewpoint, is that impaired or ill-educated chickens and human beings might not have responded correctly to the bell signal and thus have their lives, unharmed. Pavlov's dog is therefore a good metaphor for a 'trained capacity' that accidentally may turn into an objective 'trained incapacity'.

Let us next refer to Bertrand Russell's *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits* (1948) and summarise how causality and interpretation might accent the ambiguity of correlations among facts, meanings and imagery. As Russell observes, patterns in behaviours are ruled generally by an external norm, a causal law of the form 'A causes B', where A is a thought, a feeling or an association of both and B is a physical occurrence. We sometimes observe a B when we cannot observe any A; we then infer an unobserved A. Russell emphasises the fact that 'it is evident that my confidence in the "inference" is increased by increased complexity in the datum and also by increased certainty of the causal law derived from subjective observation, provided the causal law is such as to account for the complexity of the datum' (504). In real life, such an impeccable model might account for perfectly opposite attitudes, should one forget to qualify the 'subjective observation' as a pertinent variable and the explanatory efficiency of the causal law in the structure of the complex entity as a propaedeutic condition. In effect, without the intervention of these caveats, within a uniform context, the same rule could explain a predictable behaviour motivated by a rational decision, as a testimony to a learned capacity, or an unpredictable behaviour equally motivated by an identical rational decision, a testimony to a 'trained incapacity'. As a matter of fact, the latter might witness to its predictability as a correct deduction based on an education. About such a case of an undiscerning competence, Burke makes an excellent clarification: 'Veblen generally restricts the concept [of "trained incapacity"] to the case of business men who, through long training in competitive finance, have so built their scheme of orientation about this kind of effort and ambition that they cannot see serious possibilities in any other system of production and distribution' (1965: 7). This description stipulates an attitude that can be observed in an infinite number of life paths and styles. It corroborates also, as its alternative, the necessity for a crucial awareness that transcends the paradox of a 'trained capacity' versus a 'trained incapacity'.

This awareness can be understood as a critical and vigilant exercise upheld by logical and moral principles. In so far as the management of a class or a community is concerned, one might consider, besides the required virtues for a public life, the all-embracing generality of the following three principles for ordering sets. There is, first, the idea of self-evident truth that Russell notes as a perpetual question mark: since no obvious proposition is always self-evident, any statement or decision relying on it should be determined as self-evident if, and only if, one would be justified in understanding it and believing in it. There is another exigency of the critical awareness attitude, the universality thesis, which postulates the requirement for any statement or decision to submit to the test of its universalisability. Finally, a good usage of the non-contradiction precept assumes that, indeed, in principle, a statement and its contradiction cannot both be accepted as true at the same time. However, a challenge is always represented by the excluded middle principle; it indicates that the disjunction of any statement with its negation is always true and admissible. This last maxim should not be confused with the bivalence principle, according to which a significant statement is either true or false.

The Bandung instruction: Non-alignment

Let me suggest a socio-political framework as a datum: the 1955 third World Conference in Bandung, Indonesia and the discourse of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India as symptomatic signs of a political philosophy, a premise positing itself as that which should suscite a cultural decision and a political affirmation. From what they knew about Nehru's history, listeners would have been expected either to concur with his intervention, which stemmed from an already well-known presupposition of an infraction in political life, distinguishing it from the colonial model, or to recognise a claim to a difference as a way of expressing a transcendence in the then-existing world divided by two projects, the capitalist and the communist. Nehru fulfilled the expectation by delivering a rationale for a critical indifference principle: the two sides, he stated, should be assigned the same suspicion, so there was not sufficient reason to oblige one over the other.

Why not, for an exacting decoding and valuation of this political reason and its limits, apprehend it as meaning an alterity argument in what it represented and a possible illusion in what it signified as an objective? Let us understand alterity as a symmetrical but intransitive relation from a self, an ego, to someone else, a you; its constitutive elements would always include a conventional identity and features qualifying its determinations and thus distinguish it as different from anything else.

The two notions, political reason and illusion, refer to Immanuel Kant's critique of Emanuel Swedenborg, which interrogates proximities and deviations between metaphysics and occultism, or between two illusions, dreams of reason versus dreams of feelings. Yet, indicates Kant, the dreams of metaphysics are to those of the occult what a waking dream is to hallucinations and the latter, a realm of shadows (*Schattenreich*), does not seem to have limits to its fantasies and figures. It is in this sense that one might consider it as an excessive allegory of a political space and its discursive practices. In effect, to the incommensurable horizons of these fields and what they often allow, philosophy opposes a well-circumscribed geography that reason inhabits and imposes to itself as its locus. To this first limit it adds another, its specific object, the transcendental, as what it can apprehend and know by its own capacity. And, in its field of perception as delimited by human experience, in its intention and signification, the philosophical practice identifies with a conscious and explicit critical analysis of itself as a waking dream; that is, a science of the limits of human reason as it captures them in its representations with their own differentiation effects. The political, in the traditional sense of the Aristotelian *Koinōnia politikē*, at its best, stands as a demanding *episteme*, or truthful science of the *polis* and its *politeia*, or structures. It actualises itself as a master *technē* and index for understanding ways of legitimate power for a good and just management of the state and civil society. A unique type of knowledge, the political does not necessarily exclude daring inspirations from illusionisms (doctrines according to which the material world is an immaterial product of the senses), utopias (idealist and visionary schemes for reforming and bettering the human city) and esoteric and mystical traditions. Unfortunately, by virtue of its vocation and motivation, the political, more often than not, colludes with disconcerting and sometimes mystifying conceptions.

Between 1955 and 2005, as Nehru's legacy, evolved a puzzling 50-year narrative of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) – an international organisation of more than 100 states that represent 55 per cent of the planet's population – in which the former Indian prime minister still stands as one of its best ethical exemplars and political paradigms. His political outlook on the colonial and postcolonial condition until now remains a complex statement despite its transparency. There was a willed message in the way Nehru posited such a novel project and conveyed the identity of a self-defined newly liberated subject. A logical subject to a culture conceived as a 'we-organism', in the manner one may conceptualise the authority of the subject of a phrase, the acting subject Nehru was characterising and stabilising

himself and, simultaneously, as the cognitive subject and the object of his own statement, standing as both its beneficiary and its guarantor. In this performance that involved the political destiny of NAM, Nehru was conscious of being a moral subject whose pronouncements were, as a matter of principle, to face the test of generalisability. In effect, he knew the mandate: What might happen in the world should his position become an ethical norm?

It was in his speech in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 1954 that Nehru presented five principles, known as *Panchsheel*, the constitutive pillars for Sino-Indian relations that became the foundation of NAM. They are: (a) respect for territorial integrity; (b) mutual non-aggression; (c) mutual non-interference in domestic affairs; (d) equality and mutual benefit; and (e) peaceful coexistence. At the Bandung Conference, these five principles were adopted as criteria for a sound common policy and the non-alignment concept coined by Nehru; that is, a refusal to be involved in the confrontation between East and West was institutionalised.

An idea coincides here with a political narrative. In the name of common sense, a moral allegory dramatises a programme that brings together the abstraction of a metaphoric transcending line and the reality of a political confrontation and thus institutes a space for both an infraction and the condition of possibility for other rules. The prominent figures of NAM – Gamal Abdel Nasser (Egypt), Nehru (India), Sukarno (Indonesia) and J.B. Tito (Yugoslavia) – initiated the idea of NAM summit meetings convening every three years. The first was held in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in 1961, with the participation of 25 countries; the second in Cairo, Egypt, in 1964, with 46 countries represented; and the third in Lusaka, Zambia, in 1970, with 54 countries represented. The summits have taken place every three years, like clockwork, the membership steadily increasing. The fiftieth anniversary commemoration on 20–24 April 2005 in Bandung, Gedung Merdeka and Jakarta, Indonesia, included more than 100 delegations, representing nation-state members, observer countries and international organisations.

‘A man is his epoch, the way a wave is the whole sea,’ wrote the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre in his autobiography, in a manner of exorcising and sanctifying the passion of his own life. Sartre’s metaphor fits perfectly well Nehru’s self-imposed mission, that of incarnating a universal moral code and a nationalist political calling. The media universally recognised his exceptional leadership: he was a ‘minister’ of great stature. The engrossment led him to overextend an ambition for a regional transformation to a praxis building of the world, far beyond the urgency of a reformation of the British Empire and the Commonwealth, as it

was postulated by internal utilitarian concerns of a postwar period. As witnessed by his 1955 intervention in the Bandung Political Committee of the Conference, in fact a response to Turkey's official position, Nehru affirmed and imposed his sense of place and mission. His practical reason situates itself in the autonomy of a secular topography that integrates essentially two traditions: on the one hand, an Indian trend in political philosophy that underscores notions of self-liberation, leadership and morality and, on the other hand, the Western critique of natural rights inventory versus the arguments for act and rule utilitarianism extolling consistent paradigms for maximising utility in political activities. To use medieval categories, recently revalorized in the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Nehru occupies the prophetic function of an *auctor*, the leader endowed with the moral prerogatives of a universal *auctoritas*, or an absolute founding power, as opposed to the exercise of a *lector*, the manager of a tradition, who is in charge of maintaining its regulatory mechanisms. Nehru neither proposes nor discloses a political revolution, in the sense of an outmost rupture and a historical recommencement; instead, he anchors the truthfulness of a moral attitude. Radically utilitarian in its intention, Nehru's authority sets forth the non-aligned vocation as that which is aptly immanent in what it conceptualises, the negation and rejection of existing lines, a way of exceeding their questionable connectives. Such a virtuous end in itself was objectively detached from, say, the programmatic agenda of Nasser, for whom the negation was to serve as an opportunity of Egypt's economic take-off, a step in the constitution of a pan-Arab sovereignty destined to substitute itself for the Anglo-French rule in North Africa and the Middle East.

What Nehru asserts is ethically exemplary, a circumspect norm akin to the principle of indifference: between communism and anti-communism, there is no sufficient reason to favour one over the other; at any rate, from the danger they might represent, in ignorance as well as in an enlightened intelligence, 'the weight of reasons' to disqualify one equals the weight of reasons for disqualifying the other. Thus, Nehru states, 'We do not agree with the communist teachings, we do not agree with the anti-communist teachings, because they are both based on wrong principles'. Skilfully, he stresses his peculiar role by identifying with his own country, India, which, since 1947, stands out as a highly visible infraction in the order of the Western empire. In an emotionally effective commendation of a we-organism, Nehru goes on to invoke a genealogical axis of solidarity that his listeners could not have ignored; neglecting it would have been ideologically impractical for most of them, since their countries were still struggling for or negotiating their political rights. He asks:

Are we, the countries of Asia and Africa, devoid of any positive position except being pro-communist or anti-communist? Has it come to this, that the leaders of thought who have given religions and all kinds of things to the world have to tag on to this kind of a group or that and be hangers-on of this party or the other, carrying out their wishes and occasionally giving an idea? It is most degrading and humiliating to any self-respecting people or nation. It is an intolerable thought to me that the great countries of Asia and Africa should come out of bondage into freedom only to degrade themselves or humiliate themselves in this way (Nehru 1955).

The argument is massive and in its own way unassailable; the main idea it conveys, the needful obligation for an unaligned area and what it supposes, an unaligned movement, appear as a logical deduction. The rest of its justification, a possible world war, the threat and scourge represented by atomic and hydrogen bombs with their annihilating risks, 'not an academic refinement', quips Nehru, belong to a rationalising contention. They are intellectually astute points and morally tidy, but were not really needed. Reasons to believe in a non-aligned jurisdiction and its political philosophy had been established on the effectiveness of another sort of foundation, the emotive meaning provided by an understanding of and belief in the solidarity of the dispossessed.

On inventing sovereignty

The fundamentals of the post-Bandung argument for implementing an organic unaligned space were to double the requisites of Third World political independence mainly by invoking a self-determination principle, or a right to political autonomy – a paradoxical claim, since such a principle could then be put to a valid use only in internationally confirmed conventional social formations. However, most visibly in the case of sub-Saharan Africa, the principle achieved two functions: the affirmation of more or less compact geographical and socio-cultural units organised by the colonial authority, structured kingdoms and cohesive empires sanctioned by it and the arrangement of these units into administrative ensembles, as natural states in the new order of things. Subsequently, they were to be reorganised as obvious statutory territories fulfilling manifest requirements of nations in the plenitude of historical possibilities and, in this capacity, recognised as endowed with all rights to sovereignty. Policies for constituting and establishing these new states did not always neutralise a latent insurgent statement for autonomy that meant an extreme disconnection from the colonial legacy.

In different countries, competing agendas coexisted, equally effective or very different in their efforts to assume the colonial discontinuity. As *Lehitpateach*, the change and duplication of images, the agendas insured narratives co-ordinating modes of alterity in antagonistic or benign prospects vis-à-vis the colonial rule. Even in hard-core nationalistic perspectives, unanimity dealt with concerns for administering the impairment resulting from decolonisation: descriptive or prescriptive, political programmes applied to governance issues, economic policies, public welfare and ways of managing conflicts between factions and interest groups in relation to the well-being of a multiethnic body-institution. Strengthening the structures of the new state, however, was the paramount objective transcending ideological inclinations. And the general culture was trusted to induce sentiments of self-esteem supported in the cumulative effects of a racial otherness engineered by ordering and activating metaphors around the master-slave dialectic.

Using a symbolic index, one may argue that a limited number of referential axes determined the critique of colonial reason. A first model was, through displacement of meaning-effect and meaning-affect images, servicing a game space projecting a polarised balance of the coloniser and the colonised through reversed roles of the 'minorant' defeating the 'majorant' in an archetypically fictional saga. Such a stage could generate a variety of compensation and values-introjection mechanisms of succession in power. Another model, through allegoric retrodictions, would invest in ancestral filiations and work on the nexus of 'our ancestors' and 'us – their descendants', their protection and our protectedness, overrating the blood relationship in order to magnify political rights. In any case, the procedures illustrate good reasons for enthusiasm and confidence in the authenticity of a cultural continuity; by the same token, they ritualise the undoing of a recent past, thanks to an identification with a mythical memory. In its apparent simplicity, this way of 'inventing' a history, witnessed by almost all African independence discursive practices, speaks to very efficient psychological lines. Specifically, these include biological networks that link political autonomy to the symbolic birth and life of an organism. This third model also expands into socio-political battlefields by what allows the opposition between a before and an after the independence ceremony. This range which, under colonial rule, was an entry to another type of grid, the grand dichotomy between binary systems – the primitive and the civil – the very basic structure of the right to colonise. The counterargument either undignifies or dignifies the regimes it compares in terms of age, opposing old age to youth and their intrinsic values. The before-after paradigm and its variations dominate a real cultural topography on which invented figures are negated. Their

conflicting allegories elucidate psychological transactions whose proprieties, in so far as non-aligned and independence politics are concerned, owe much to a legitimacy accorded to demands issued forth by reaction-formation imperatives. The sublimation of a solidarity borne on resentment might not have been an explicit conscious motive in the minds of postcolonial politicians and theorists. As a psychological defence mechanism, it was operative in rationalising an obsession to otherness by staging essentially figurative contradictions against the amoral doxic dictum that the stronger is always right.

Fifty years later, how to evaluate a configuration that Nehru, along with the other founding actors of NAM, shaped thanks to his charisma, but did not invent in actuality? The probability of a discontinuity he contributed to generalises flashbacks to many liabilities in the Colonial Library whose history is inseparable from what made it, the imperial expansion of the European space since the end of the fifteenth century and thus the will to knowledge and to power that account for it. Very early, the Colonial Library contained, with a Las Casas for instance, explicit signs for possibly revising the European colonial vocation, its agendas, or at any rate its style. Its reformulation in the nineteenth century was an anachronistic oddity in a post-Enlightenment climate. Destabilised by objective constraints in the eclipse of the mercantilist economy and its substitution by a 'strain-capitalism', this vocation faded away and it was doomed within few decades by the odds and ends of its rationale without any real connectives that could exceed its by-then inadequate parameters. To such a subjective appraisal of colonial history, it is now possible to compensate by inferring deductions from a clinical sociology of synchronic mechanics of power relations. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, in their regressive-progressive analysis of power machineries, *Empire* (2000), bring to light the multiple variations of axes operating from differential inequity and intolerance grids. Rules of competition and collaboration, disagreements and agreements are essentially reducible to a basic formula; as psychologists say, one's own outcome relation to one's input is structurally in conflict with the other's outcome and its connection to her or his input.

At any rate, in the 1920s, India inaugurated a process inscribable rationally in the dawning of a new global culture. At the first Bandung Conference, Nehru was interpreting the process as a relation to the future from the experience of a common past. This project was essentially a metaphor for an existential mode of extracting oneself away from something and thematising one's destiny in a future-oriented present.

I now suggest a distinction between Bandung 1955 and 2005 and then proceed with a critical presentation of what, apropos the notions of difference and change, could picture marked and unmarked forms of existing and interacting with others in today's global environment. Bandung 2005 might have emphasised its long-standing derivative functions and ministry, yet it took place in a radically new universe, which, compared to the 1950s, is characterised by a series of new factors, including a greater circulation of capitals, technologies, goods, services, human beings and their interests; an interdependence of economic structures and their links to financial institutions and global markets in an entanglement within which time and space collide; and remarkably, an international environment in which norms of deregulation accent the relative autonomy of economies and their evolution vis-à-vis political structures of power. A sign of distinction from Bandung 1955, the globalisation construct, is indeed the contextual system from which to portray the general climate of Bandung 2005. First of all, besides renewing their commitment to the basic principles of the initial meeting, the delegates reasserted ideals that are widely accepted by the contemporary international community, comprising recognition of diversity, dialogue based on mutual respect and benefit, sustainable co-operation and partnership, democracy and accountability, and promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental choices, including the 'right to development'. Most of these value objectives were depicted in the first Bandung charts. Second, the continuity exemplified in these programmatic principles, although adhering to the history of the movement, does not echo neatly the inputs and outputs from the dominance of the new international order that succeeded the Cold War period. The discretion provides substantial justification for questions on the effectiveness of the movement in the present-day context in which autonomy and self-reliance are difficult to conceive. In any case, the Cold War was instrumental in the definition of a right to non-alignment, yet as a body in a self-regarding project, the new Bandung chose to commit itself to major objectives of the new global world, in conformity with which it stood allied, even naming 'a right to development', a coded key-concept for the frustration of Third World countries apropos the power of rich industrial states to control policy prescriptions and, in so doing, accent to their advantage structural differences among countries. Finally, from the preceding two points, at a fundamental level of what makes them understandable in a global culture of interconnected issues, features and procedures, one suspects a silent axis functioning as a unifying grid, supporting and stimulating them, and attended to by three main agents: the acceleration of history, a common language and an elemental vision of the world.

A summary of the integration of sub-Saharan Africa into the Bandung story seems required here in order to finesse the substantive complex nature of its difficulties. Three interrelated points outline a general picture of the region between the 1960s and the 1980s. First of all, to provide context, the political reformation of the former colonies remained, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, defined by the grammatical preposition *from*, indicating in this relation both an origin and a connective filiation. In fact, the minuscule sign also stipulated a genetic framework for the transformation of the new organisms. If, during this period, a struggle for a democratic majority rule was still going on in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe and South Africa, the challenge of political independence was actualised in almost all other sub-Saharan regions. Belgium, France and Great Britain had detached themselves from their colonies and, later on, Portugal was to release its centuries-long occupied territories. One should add, however, that a qualified political objection to non-aligned directives was represented in the military role of France. At the outset, this military force was justified by a neutrality strategy in the US-USSR ideological confrontation and later related to the self-attributed mission to balance the effects of US hegemony in international affairs. Could not one wonder whether France was, as a matter of policy, reactivating symbolically the measure of an old institution, the Roman *tribunus plebis*, the officer in charge of defending peoples' interests? For sure, the mediation illustrates another symptom, namely that the non-aligned political agenda never implied real severance of ties with colonial masters. These powers have generally maintained complex collaborative programmes with their ex-colonies, as exemplified by the Commonwealth of Nations established in 1931, comprising the United Kingdom and both its present and a number of its past dependencies. The third point about the African general climate will synthesise *Ideology and Development in Africa* (1982), a diagnosis established by the noted Wisconsin University political scientist Crawford Young. In this study, the post-independence political performance is evaluated as ambiguously unsettling despite inspirational cases, such as Ivory Coast and Kenya. To support this diagnosis, Young combines a subjective qualitative reading with the results from six criteria of analysis: (a) growth record and economic advance; (b) equality of distribution and shares of national income; (c) political autonomy and self-reliance of the governing polity; (d) preservation of human dignity; (e) popular participation; and (f) 'development capacity', as suggested by James Coleman in a 1971 position paper on 'the development syndrome' or 'the power to create and an enhanced capacity to plan, implement, and manipulate new change as part of the process

of achieving new goals'. From Young's examination of the political culture in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, one can sort out at least three significant lines for appraising a political performance. First, to the exclusive Bandung principle of political non-alignment, the new states had put forward the idea of a preferential ideological choice and thus had established empirically divided political domains, Marxist and socialist regimes (such as Benin, Congo and Tanzania) and market-oriented systems in all other countries. Twenty years later, according to Young, it was difficult to notice 'an extensive overlap of patterns of state capacity expansion and ideology'. Second, in terms of growth judged from the World Bank gross national product norms, the real scale of transformation was indicating only exploratory trends in both types of regimes, rarely positive (in Congo, Ivory Coast, Kenya and Tanzania) and often mediocre in most countries and the distribution seems independent from ideological formulas. Finally, if the variability of positive scores about equality, health care, human dignity and political participation appears to unravel the pertinence of ideology, it nevertheless invalidates its relevance apropos the structural unpredictability of state competency. And from the background of the international economic principles, Young thinks that

ideological preference does influence, in significant ways, the matrix of policy. At the time of independence, there was little to differentiate Ivory Coast and Guinea or Kenya and Tanzania. The cumulative impact over two decades of sharply divergent visions of the future has made Ivory Coast and Kenya very different from Guinea and Tanzania (1982: 326).

In brief, an overall judgement of the political capacity indicates that African performance was, until the 1980s, still translating the permanence and extension of what in the 1960s was considered a 'transitional crisis'. It was to worsen in the following two decades.

This whole empirical failure could be related to nineteenth-century colonial assumptions, seen through an economic history of structured mechanisms that connect regional modes of organising power and production to global economic defects and their systemic amplification in a laissez-faire political economy. This context is complex, indeed. It should not, however, be overemphasised or underestimated. It reports also to the fundamental axes of twentieth-century economic movements as documented, for instance, by John Kenneth Galbraith in *Economics in Perspective: A Critical History* (1987). Galbraith's critical analysis

of the Keynesian scene, the far-reaching effects of the decade of depression and 'the new deal' model did not create in capitalist structures an 'autarchical mood', but strongly emphasised in Western nations individualised economic styles that impacted on the colonies. Such styles were reducible to a very simple argument that Galbraith formulates well in *A Journey through Economic Time* (1994): 'What would count was not what could be done [internationally] as an exercise in joint responsibility; it was what each country could do for itself' (107). Two observable effects that went beyond the immediate postwar climate were, on the one hand, the maturation of the capitalist system and its interventions across nations through transnational corporations and thus its positive effects on industrial countries and, on the other hand, in the post-independence period of the late 1960s and 1970s, a 'deeply disappointing articulation' between rich and poor countries that 'remained great and, indeed, has increased'. And, Galbraith adds, 'the assistance programs have done something to serve the conscience of the fortunate, they have done much less to lessen despair' (161). Galbraith's diagnosis also rightly emphasises the mishandling of democratic requirements by corrupt Third World governments and bureaucracies as a contributing factor to the gap between a capitalist centre and its peripheries. Galbraith imaginatively exploited this theme in one of his novels, *The Triumph* (1968): a treatise on public error, as he called it, a neat depiction of a collective stupidity in industrial nations concerned with who, on a small Third World island, is really serving the cause of democracy and a riddle on how American anti-communism can transmute into a contagious paranoia.

Against John Rawls's *The Law of People* (1999), which extols the idea that 'decent hierarchical people' do actualise liberal toleration and legitimate economic stability, philosopher Kok-Chor Tan, a former faculty fellow in the Harvard Center for Ethics and the Professions, has astutely analysed the structural genesis of the crisis by focusing on its theoretical presuppositions. In *Toleration, Diversity, and Global Justice* (2000), he succinctly summarises the explanatory scheme in the following retrospective:

The idea that a global economy based on the principles of free market is most conducive to meeting the needs of developing and underdeveloped countries informs the present global economic structure. Lynn H. Miller [in *Global Order*, 1994] writes that while '[t]he international economic regime established after World War II did not exactly turn its back on the problems of [the South], the international system was built upon several

general assumptions, often more implicit than explicit, in keeping with the precepts of laissez-faire liberalism.' One assumption was that development in poor countries would follow closely the revival of the economies of the North because growing demand in the North would 'presumably stimulate increased production in the South.' Another was that underdeveloped countries will come to their own industrial revolutions in their own natural course if market forces are given free rein. Yet another laissez-faire principle taken for granted was the 'theory of comparative advantage,' the thesis that poor countries would improve their performance by specialising in the commodities they are especially well suited to produce and export. But, as L. Miller goes on to point out, history has shown these assumptions to be blatantly mistaken (181).

In what it makes plain, this reading raises another issue – and a major one – about the real age of the economic articulation and what supports it, the historical context of modernity as a concept and a reality. The question even in its most universal hypotheses, as in the Hegelian abstract perception of a totalising history, stands impressed in what it formalises, a dialectic through the (un-)expected of its assumptions about its own genesis, singularity and course. Since the end of the fifteenth century, explicitly subsuming a cartography of the Earth it had organised, a linear axis projected itself as the history of humankind. Its reason identified with the modernity of human history. Founded and justified in axiomatics comprising a salvation ethics, a model culture and a normative economics, it was supported by two major systems of truth, both organically evolving towards perfection – Christian theology, on the one hand, and scientific paradigms, on the other. Critical of such a monological reason, but conscious of their inscription in its horizon, twentieth-century Marxist theorists, notably the dependency school in political economy, focused on a particular task: to deconstruct the historical a priori of our contemporary condition as it correlated to the concept of modernity, the idea of a world history, the empire-building project actualised in colonisation and the rise of liberalism. If, for example, in his acclaimed *Historical Capitalism* (1983) and *The Modern World System* (1974), Immanuel Wallerstein challenged the progressive continuum theory that this vision promoted, and in which an international 'proletarian revolution' was supposed to duplicate a European 'bourgeois revolution' during the transition period from capitalism to socialism, most Third World dependency theorists remained blinded by this orthodox

‘fundamental block of the strategic action of the world socialist movement’ (1983: 106). This viewpoint bolstered anti-colonial ideologies and dominated Afro-Marxist agendas and regimes. Political *ab initio*, ethical in its deductive declarations on postcolonial autonomy and economic equality, some leaders have streamlined evolutionary metaphors to transpose social structurations. By the mid-1960s, its most influential demonstrations by André Gunder-Franck on ‘the development of underdevelopment’ had given to the vision a technical respectability. It was extended in some imprudent exegetical narratives, including Kwame Nkrumah’s *Consciencism* (1970), Walter Rodney’s *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972) and, more recently, Partha Chatterjee’s *A Possible India: Essays in Political Criticism* (1997). The critique of the geo-political chronology of capitalism and its will to global power has been all along coextensive with discursive positions for appropriating the functional historicity of an invented modernity; in this sense, this critique has aggregated two orders of things: a political economy and its historical explanations, on the one hand, and their relation to an ethics, generally conceived as a simple political motion, on the other. This would account for an impressive library of interchangeable political liberation treatises, a limited number in economics and an almost complete absence of ethical studies. It is in the work of the Argentinean-born philosopher Enrique Dussel, a disciple of both Karl Marx and Emmanuel Lévinas, where one comes across modernity as a dialogical space in which the periphery stipulates critically the sovereignty of an ethics in a philosophy of liberation-equating theories of historical differences to the economics of globalisation. In *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of the ‘Other’ and the Myth of Modernity* (1995), Dussel remarks that ‘modernity appears when Europe organizes the initial world-system and places itself as the center of history over against a periphery equally constitutive of modernity’ (10). In this mythical framework of the European-claimed autogenesis, Dussel suggests that the fullness of modernity places itself rather in the alterity of the periphery, precisely in what his *Ética de la liberación en la edad de la globalización y de la exclusión* (1998) specifies as the diversity of exteriorities in systems of communication.

The 2000 millennium initiative

At the ‘New York Millennium’ in 2000, world leaders addressed the African predicament from the background of ‘Millennium Development Goals for 2015’ (MDG). At the time of writing, in 2010, the dispositions should be revisited from the Heiligendamm Process (HP) of 2007 that enlarged the G8 club. A plus-five

group includes Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa. Symbolically, the 2007 initiative killed the concept of a 'Third World' as it has been known so far. Andrew F. Cooper and Agata Antkiewicz edited the first comprehensive calibration of the event in *Emerging Powers in Global Governance* (2008). For sure, Cooper insists in the introductory chapter, 'the HP is as full of ambiguity, fragility, and the need for reassurance as previous big-bang structural reorderings' (15). For this meditation, the 2000 millennium frame suffices.

The plight might be symbolised in the general ineffectiveness of economic strategies that would explain a decrease in the number of poor people, from 27.9 per cent in 1990 to 21.3 per cent in 2001 in the Third World, whereas the proportion in sub-Saharan Africa increased, accounting for a new population of 86 million in poverty, in a total of 313 million from 227 million in 1990. The same year, sub-Saharan Africa's debt was US\$352 billion. Noting that by observable and measurable change, it may be extremely difficult for Africa to come close to the MDG goals by the target year 2015, the MDG leaders marked areas for urgent action. Of the pressing objectives summarised in snapshots published in *Africa Renewal* 19.8 (2005), from the United Nations' department of public information, the following three sets of imperatives are worth stressing. They concern major trends in sub-Saharan Africa that require corrections in responsible and dutiful performances:

1. On the general context, three ends: (a) ensure environmental sustainability; (b) reverse the loss of environmental resources; and (c) develop a global partnership for development that would include establishing an open, rule-based, non-discriminatory trading and financial system;
2. On the human capital, three ends: (a) reduce by two-thirds, before 2015, the mortality rate for children under five years old; (b) ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling; and (c) promote gender equality;
3. On health, three ends: (a) cut in half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation; (b) reduce by three-quarters the maternal mortality rate; and (c) combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

These injunctions cover catastrophic figures such as the following, which simply defy elementary common sense, should one consider the almost cost-free prevention and basic care exigencies: in 2000, the number of African women dying during

childbirth was 920 out of 100 000 live births, representing twice the average of 450 of all the Third World; second, malaria, which is preventable or at any rate medically manageable, represents 90 per cent of its 1 million deaths every year. The numbers here, all from the United Nations' *Africa Renewal*, address the poor management of policies regarding human well-being. In this sign of alarm, the political reflects the moral and vice versa; both have to face an estimate of strategies and technocratic arrangements whose rationality and functional capacity might have been distorted by their very compatibility with some trends in advanced capitalism requirements.

Such a conceivable structural link frequently transforms itself into a pretext for connecting descriptive and emotive meanings in evaluations eluding the distinction between veracity and falsity. When the two polarities are acknowledged, there is always the uncertain area of maybes, possibly, probablys and their extravagant narratives. Analysing multimedia formulas and styles for rendering and selling catastrophes such as disease, famine, war and death in *Compassion Fatigue*, Moeller concentrates on a typical reaction of the donor who becomes submerged by fundraising appeals and humanitarian pleas; the donor is still compassionate, but fatigued, 'as if we have involuntarily contracted some kind of disease that we're stuck with no matter what we might do' (1999: 9). Indeed, associated with a disaster or not, the fatigue might be reinforced by prejudice and substantiate the popular saying 'no one speaks from nowhere', but it certainly does not advance proving right a lazy belief pertaining to an international anti-African conspiracy.

This history of the African fix could be decisively conceptualised in its relation to the technical history of market economy prescriptions and, as a case in point, the structural adjustment paradigm in the global system with, on the one hand, its decreative guidelines from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and, on the other hand, its critique, as animated in antithetical policies promoted by an Asian bloc of countries that followed Japan's leadership. On the crucial issue of trade policy and systems of preferences, arguing for a critical going beyond the solid rationales of Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* (1984) and *Economics and Public Purpose* (1973), an increasing number of theorists, including Charles Beitz, Frank Cunningham, Ronald Dworkin, Moeller, Wallerstein and Noam Chomsky, have been suggesting different parameters both in redesigning sounder standards for well-trained critical capacities and in mapping the future of a more coherent cosmopolitan liberalism, a consistent style with egalitarian alternatives for a global justice.

On the side of an orthodox reason apropos Africa, normative-valued models are translated in manageable *Findings*, issued by the Knowledge Management and Learning Center, Africa Region at the World Bank in Washington, DC (1995–9). These technical instructions deal with specific topics of concern for the whole sub-Saharan region, or a particular country in the area. For instance, on regional agendas, it is possible to consult the following: ‘Special Program for African Agricultural Research’ (June 1996); ‘Cost Sharing: Towards Sustainable Health Care’ (May 1996); ‘Gender Strategies’ (April 1997); ‘Reforming State-Dominated Banking Systems’ (August 1996 and June 1997); ‘The Effects of Foreign Ownership’ (January 1998) and ‘Development Indicators’ (May 1998). On topics about individual countries, three references to *Findings* may suffice: ‘Restoring Urban Infrastructure and Services in Nigeria’ (May 1996), ‘How Do Industrial Enterprises Respond to Policy Reforms? Supply Response in Cameroon’ (May 1997) and ‘Listening to Farmers: Participatory Assessment of Policy Reform in Zambia’s Agricultural Sector’ (February 1998).

The mapping of a new topography of expectations takes place also from other responsibilities, interrogations on theoretical and practical methods for adapted programmes, and orientations of operations that can make a difference. Among many possible propositions, we could identify the following:

1. In the name of alterity, an African intelligentsia enunciates levels of transformation theories and policies, defining in this way windows for the formation of strategic axes for socio-cultural and economic intervention; one thinks of university programmes, research institutes and publication series that, in often difficult environments, maintain their right to dissenting opinions;
2. In the name of a difference defined by geography and history, non-governmental organisations, generally in conjunction with local initiatives, support and promote adapted operations having two complementary views: to suscitate an endogenous transformation and to respond to a real and concrete need in the region. In some fortunate situations, the interventions may be backed by research institutions such as *Indilinga: African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems* in South Africa; the Institut Fondamental d’Afrique Noire in Senegal; or the Centre de Recherche pour le Développement Endogène in Burkina Faso;
3. In the name of co-operation, former colonial powers have generally preserved privileged relations with their ex-colonies; if the avowed nature

and functions of such a commitment have modified themselves through explicit codes of partnership, they nevertheless still express a silent pact, the mediation that they represent between the particular and the universal, from which one can understand the character of conventional agreements apropos types of projects, their actualisation and financing.

The Gedankenexperiment and myths

The management of these activities is not detachable from that of a master plan. Their effectiveness is also dependent on a co-ordination with economic priorities as programmed for a region and, in this sense, they are submitted to an order relying on the World Bank directives. In any case, the *Findings* exemplify an integration process and explain the practicality of its rationale. They are fundamentally prescriptive in their arguments, which run as an operative unit expounding an orthodox path in three perspectives: (a) the inscription of the region in a history that goes back to a particular colonial experience and whose economic organisation might have been somehow disrupted by the independence ideologies of the 1960s; (b) the coherence of a 'scientific' management of the region and its countries, which means a logic improvement aimed at rationalising the interlocking structures of their systems as a sustainable entity and its co-ordination with international ensembles; and (c) the evidence of the historical success story of economic and political liberalism, its knowledge capital and experience.

'Africa south of the Sahara, with the exception of South Africa (a country with its own peculiar political problems), is the world's economic basket case. If God gave it to you and made you its economic dictator, the only smart move would be to give it back to Him.' This was the pronouncement made more than a decade ago by a professor of economics at MIT, Lester Thurow, in *Head to Head: The Coming Economic Battle among Japan, Europe, and America* (1992: 216). Thurow's diagnosis exposes a belief discharged as observation in speculative research on capitalism, economic power and competition in the twenty-first century. It seems indicative of the practical philosophy of some mainstream economists who specialise in theoretical projections from a free market game theory extolling conjectures on competitive and co-operative arguments. The course is admittedly inspired by the mechanical workings of international economic forces since the late 1980s, more specifically as they are functioning in a space limited on the one side by 'the end of the old contest between capitalism and communism' and by 'the integration of the European Common Market, on Jan. 1, 1993', on the

other. Within this configuration, a new rivalry for world supremacy stages a three-way economic game among Japan, Europe and the United States. In its margins, nations outside of this *troika* are classified as possible players on the merits of their contribution to the existing paradigmatic field of chance and power defined and regulated by international conventions between players.

And who plays? Thurow responds with a frightening metaphor:

As man-made comparative advantage becomes more important, many countries are becoming economically marginalized. What these countries do simply isn't important to the standards of living of those that live in the rest of the world. As a result, not every country that exists on the face of the globe is, or will be, a player in the world economy. To determine who is, and who is not, a player is to perform what the Germans call a Gedanken experiment. Imagine countries that could suddenly disappear off the face of the globe with no news reports of their demise. Would average citizens in the developed world be able to tell that something had happened from what they observed in their daily economic life? If they cannot, the country does not play in the world economy.

Saudi Arabia, for example, is a player. Without it, a shortage of oil would rapidly show up in much higher energy prices for the average consumer. Bangladesh does not play. If it were to disappear, economic life would not be noticeably different in the rest of the world (1992: 208).

Social organisms existing and functioning as human beings have been supplanted here by mechanics, simply being part of or rejected from a game. The prescriptions for individual and collective survival, we are told, consist in 'getting rich' by reactualising a capitalist teaching: 'a century of good economic performance' and 'a century of very slow population growth'. To this self-reflecting matter of necessity, Thurow adds the experience of Asian success and advises on three main ways 'to become a little economic dragon': one, an organisation for competition; two, the efficiency of an export-led growth; and three, a 'market of first resort', an available market of easy access, preferably the United States.

Is that really all, apart from internal, coded rules generated by an economic form of superconductivity, which should be the principal preoccupation of players? Whatever scenarios might be constructed to include a Third World party, totally or partially in modalities projected from interactions within the new climate among

capital, natural resources, technology and human skills, they cannot bypass what Thurow does not emphasise, the discerning principles of an ethics of management. The semantics of the *Gedankenexperiment* constitute the best entry to this ethics. In effect, it is fully pertinent in relation to moral exigencies that some theorists of the contest for supremacy in the free market might prefer to ignore: moral standards are applied to the outcome of a decision or an action (utilitarian theory) or moral standards are applied to the intent of an action or a decision (universalist theory). The *Gedankenexperiment* is an intellectual exercise that conceives hypothetical but useful solutions to difficult paradoxes, though the suggested solution may prove to be inadequate or inoperative in reality. In any case, the concept of a thought experiment may illuminate something that should have been obvious to Thurow, namely that the usefulness of an intuitive construction in the imaginary does not bestow on it an absolute stamp of efficiency as a solution to complex and paradoxical situations in our real world.

Certainly there is no such thing as a set of dogmatic lines in the free market ideology for the type of *Lehitpateach* to be promoted. In other orientations, one comes across an awareness of the need for an explicit humanist perspective in both management and ethics. A significant thread, for instance, is represented in the mandate for 'reengineering' the corporate culture, as expounded by James Champy, the founder of CSC Index and chairman of the group. His book *Reengineering Management: The Mandate for New Leadership* (1995) provides fresh views of human anxiety in today's market-oriented culture. The postulation denotes a number of propositions, which open multiple directions from at least the following three entries: (a) 'Work is as meaningful an activity for us human beings as love and friendship'; (b) 'Through work . . . we express our innate drive for competence, what noted economist Thorstein Veblen called our "instinct of craftsmanship" '; and (c) 'As we express that instinct, we do two things. We connect with a world larger than ourselves, a world that will go on after we are dead, a bit better for our having been alive in it, [and] we discover who we are' (88).

Champy observes:

It's a disturbing fact of our times that many other institutions in which we used to find a sense of our personal significance in a larger world – family, neighborhood, clubhouse, church, ethnic group, philanthropy, government – have lost much of their persuasive power. They don't connect us to each other as they used to, nor do they help us know ourselves as they once did.

And as a result, many of us may feel more alone and more insignificant. It has come to this for many people in the West: Of all the ancient, traditional supports of humane selfhood, only work remains strong.

At this point in history, then, we managers face both a staggering responsibility and a dazzling opportunity. We are the organizers of work, and of workplaces. We can make them serve our social and psychic needs, our needs for significance, or we can allow them to stunt these needs. That's what is truly at stake in values statements – our sense of ourselves in a larger human world. The choices are ours (1995: 89).

When the World Bank published its 1991 report, the consecration of neoliberalism, as it was dubbed by some critics and derided by others, Japan dissented and its Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) made public a rebuttal to the World Bank dossier titled 'Issues Related to the World Bank's Approach to Structural Adjustment: Proposal from a Major Partner' (1991). Japan's intervention was both a historic moment and an emblematic landmark. An unprecedented phenomenon had taken place: capitalism and the history of its possibility were being challenged from within their own rationality. Simon Winchester, a Hong Kong resident, correspondent for *Manchester Guardian Weekly* and Asia-Pacific editor of *Condé Nast Traveler*, framed what has been happening for years in a telling use of two metonymies, the rise of the Pacific and the decline of the Atlantic. His *Pacific Rising: The Emergence of a New World Culture* (1991) describes what he believed then to be the structural mechanisms of a new world leadership. It opens with a rather strong statement that helps illuminate the popularised idea of an 'Asian miracle':

The time in which a brand new era starts, a major new nation is born, an idea of global significance is bruited, an invention of profound importance perfected – such things have been there to be witnessed during the lifetime of us all.

Once such an event, a creaking shift in the plates of world history, took place at some time during the Eighties – or it could have been the Seventies; only long-term historical perspective will be able to fix the precise date – when the world appeared truly to change direction. This came about when the fifty-odd countries now grouped around the Pacific Ocean seemed to take the torch of leadership from those hitherto grouped around the

Atlantic, which in turn had taken it four centuries before from a smaller coterie of nations on the shores of the Mediterranean. The implications of such global changes of focus are ultimately profound, yet from so close a vantage point they are not always easy to recognize and define, nor to judge.

Although some historians question whether the primacy of the Atlantic is truly past, and wonder whether the Pacific indeed has the ability to assume the leadership of the world, I have to come clean: I do not (xiii).

Japan's counterstatement regarding the World Bank's 1991 report could be seen for what it was: essentially, a symbolic act in the international order of power. Politically, it was symptomatic of a rivalry for hegemony that Clyde V. Prestowitz Jr, a counselor for Japan affairs to the American secretary of commerce and senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment in Washington, has described in terms of 'cracks in the hegemony of the United States'. His work *Trading Places: How We Allowed Japan to Take the Lead* (1988) is a vivid economic triptych outlining: one, what makes Japan run (a sense of difference, industrial policy and military coproduction, churchlike business); two, what makes America wind down (the US Congress, management of trade and boundaries of negotiations, conflict between economic and national security); and three, a look toward the future (the United States or a colony in the making, prescriptions for the United States versus Japan).

Similarly, in *One World, Ready or Not* (1997), William Greider analyses the Japanese document in detail, acknowledging its crucial implications apropos the World Bank's policies and how these were bleeding Third World countries. In 1974, their debt totalled US\$135 billion; by 1981, it reached US\$751 billion and, in the early 1990s, US\$1 945 billion. Sub-Saharan Africa's debt had gone from US\$210 billion in 1984 to US\$352 billion in the early 1990s. Greider also notes:

Ashwini Deshpande of India School of Economics has estimated that the net negative outflow of capital from developing countries to wealthy countries totaled \$163 billion between 1984 and 1988. The picture improved subsequently as foreign investing revived and old loans were written off, but many poor nations continue to suffer a negative cash flow with their wealthy creditors (283).

In a collective research paper published by Paul R. Ehrlich et al. in *The Atlantic Monthly* (December 1997), one could learn that the 1960s' 'ratio of the income of the richest twenty percent of humanity to that of the poorest was 30:1; it was nearly 80:1 in 1994'.

Japan's intervention against the World Bank's standard concept and mechanism of structural adjustment, overprotecting the interests of lending institutions and burdening and ruining the borrower, was also a moral statement. It opened the possibility of an ethics of 'efficiency and fairness' in international affairs, but it failed. On the validity of what might be its foundation, after studying the World Bank's *The East Asian Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy* (1993), a comparative socioanalysis of eight 'high performance economies' – Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand – Greider highlights the fact of an 'alternative model' of economic take-off which could not 'follow the "market-friendly" strategies that the World Bank and International Monetary Fund regularly prescribe for poor countries'. In any case, the pre-arranged requirements for growth restrict local capacity for performance. They reduce its margins of activities to the extent that only a politically suicidal leader would apply them in a rigorously systematic manner. Some of the requisites for the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund financial intervention include programming cuts in food subsidies, deregulating local and regional economies, opening financial markets to international competition and strictly applying systematised processes of privatisation and liberalisation. Against a conditioning for trained incapacity, East Asian countries bypassed such a philosophy. In effect, as Greider puts it:

Since 1960 these eight economies have collectively grown twice as fast as the rest of Asia, three times faster than Latin America, twenty-five times faster than sub-Saharan Africa. Indeed, the strategy has worked so well at stimulating growth and storing up new wealth that the great political challenge facing the global system now is how to persuade the newly rich nations to back off their successful strategies, to open up their economies and become responsible consumers in the gluttonous trading system (1997: 276–7).

Would 'the Asian miracle' be an illusion? Culture and history in their consonance with Confucianism have been invoked to explain East Asian effectiveness and

prosperous political economies. Among many studies that have appraised this phenomenon, three are considered very dependable: Ronald Dore's *Taking Japan Seriously: A Confucian Perspective on Leading Economic Issues* (1988), Kozo Yamamura and Yasukichi Yasuba's edited volume, *The Political Economy of Japan: The Domestic Transformation* (1988) and Hung-chao Tai's *Confucianism and Economic Development: An Oriental Alternative* (1989).

In the 1994 winter issue of *Foreign Affairs*, the economist Paul Krugman published 'The Myth of Asia's Miracle', in which, using three main factors – capital, labour input and productivity – in comparison with the economic vitality rate of the first years of the Soviet Union, he hypothesised a possible slowing growth of overheating Asian economies. In a similar vein, Francis Fukuyama made a strong statement with 'The Illusion of "Asian Exceptionalism"', first published in the *Journal of Democracy* (July 1997) and later as a chapter of *Democracy in East Asia* (1998), edited by Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner. Exalting the Western experience of democracy 'born in the cradle of Christian culture', 'one source of both Western universalism and Western egalitarianism', Fukuyama compares it to the poverty of the cultural and political argument for an 'Asian exceptionalism', particularly the ethics of Confucianism that he belittles: they 'hold that individuals are born into a world not free, but encumbered by a host of social duties and obligations'. Asian exceptionalism would be an illusion from Fukuyama's three conventional suppositions: (a) modernisation as 'a coherent process that produces (transculturally) a certain uniformity of economic and political institutions'; (b) industrialisation as 'a modern industrial economy creates a complex division of labor that in turn lays the basis for civil society'; and (c) capitalism in a highly organised form as 'important to the democratization process because it both uses and creates social capital, and diverts energy from struggles for recognition (1998: 224–5).

One believes or one does not. And reasons to believe in this case, regarding the question as to why 'Confucianism or some other factor (might) be an insuperable obstacle to democracy but not to other parts of the modernization package' (1998: 225), asks Fukuyama, are one or another kind of motive for believing it. More importantly, let us face another question: Did the 1977 collapse of Thailand's currency confirm Krugman's and Fukuyama's opinions about the illusion or myth of Asia's miracle? Mark Borthwirck, who was then the US executive director of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council, addressed the problem in *Pacific Century: The Emergence of Modern Pacific Asia* (1992):

A humiliated Thai government had to request a rescue package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and closed 42 ailing financial firms. Meanwhile, a brief period of panic currency selling affected other Asian developing countries and several stock markets dived. Many observers suggested that an era came to an end.

In some respects, it had. The euphoric period of almost unrestrained growth in Thailand had ended, but contrary to Krugman's belief, in most developing Asian economies the fundamentals remained sound. Even so, Thailand served as a warning to those that might similarly be veering toward an easy-credit, low-reinvestment strategy governed by insider deals and corrupt government. Thailand is a case study in the dangers of economic success (320).

The East Asian 'miracle' still stands as an alternative in its own right. Fundamentally, this is correct. There is, as suggested by James Fallows in *Looking at the Sun: The Rise of the New Asian Economic and Political System* (1994), a future to the impact of this system now a model for the African elite.

On reading fault lines

'I lie, I speak', such is the beginning of '*La pensée du dehors*' by Michel Foucault, published in *Critique* (1966b). To apprehend the singularity of contemporary fiction and to think of this fiction in its own right, instead of claiming to relate it to an absolute truth, the French philosopher invokes the old argument of Epimenides about a liar. Charles Manson, in interviews conducted by Nuel Emmons and transcribed in *Manson in His Own Words* (1988), said: 'The more I speak, the more I lie; the less I speak, the less I lie.' Manson's rapport with Epimenides's liar (who expresses a truthful statement when stating it to be a lie) seems obvious. Its submission to the classical decoding elaborated by Foucault, on the speaking grammatical subject versus the object spoken about, also goes without saying.

What is less visible, at least immediately, is the deviation that the statement actualises. In Epimenides as well as in Manson's self-judgement, the acting subject, who is also the cognitive subject, separates itself from the object of cognition and makes any observer wonder whether the whole exercise might not be sheer fiction.

As a result, one no longer knows where to look for a credible, well-trained, moral subject and demurs at the suggestion of any responsible performer bearing witness to the truthfulness of an activity. One understands then how, reducing a

lesson from Epimenides's paradox, Foucault could hypothesise that the speech of a speech leads us through literature, but perhaps also through other paths, to this outside where the speaking subject disappears.

In confronting the allegory of the African 'exodus' as is represented by the years since Nehru spoke in Bandung in 1955 and up to the present, I thought that I could emphasise its dramatic significance by rephrasing Foucault's astonishment about the modernity of the Epimenides effect. In the 1950s and 1960s, contemporary with the Bandung project and often blinded by it and judgemental of measures by an international economy that, in the subsequent years, would marginalise its alterity and folklorise it in a more efficient manner than during the colonial rule, the discourse of an African difference surges, combative and perplexing at the same time. From the outset, it is multiple, diversified in competing theories. Heterodox, these theories are often framed by reflectors and schools of thought that are generally mainstream and whose intellectual and spiritual genealogies are stable, good mirrors of humanist assumptions and values. Self-referential, these theories are conceptualised and expressed frequently in foreign languages and addressed primarily to a non-African audience. Insurrectionary, they are testimonies for the promotion of a human condition and its particular interpretations, but within the historicity they claim to challenge. From these qualities they derive their outsidedness. These theories for an African difference are an exegesis on an organism and its contrivances in a teleological history, its discursive procedures and the variety of its postulations.

There is, first, the process of temporalising the organism as an object of knowledge in a retrojecting *parole* caught between an alienated present and its invented glorious antecedent achievements. The technique is well magnified in the fantastic constructions of Cheikh Anta Diop, the Senegalese nuclear physicist who, in the 1950s, turned cultural anthropologist and historian of pharaonic Egypt.

There is, second, the demand of expressing one's own concrete existential experience and its humanity, and translating it into the language of knowledge, expecting it to be a truthful discourse for oneself and discovering that, by the logic of its own requirements, such a discourse, true or false, is also and necessarily a discourse for others. The best illustration of this might well be the indigenisation of Marxism in the African socialisms of Léopold Sédar Senghor in Senegal and Julius Nyerere in Tanzania. In the same way, Cheikh Anta Diop's Afrocentrist theory in what it negates or affirms about racial identity, automatically obligates its own validation or rejection in the intermediation of an *alter*. From its relation

to the abstraction of an inclusive order, the Afrocentrist theory could be compared analogically to a unit of connectionist networks with learning abilities. The validity of Afrocentrist propositions may seem controversial and its postulates criticised or disputed, but what they stimulate does not necessarily take to the streets against capitalism.

Finally, there is a third *éxtasis*, a most telling allegory about the subject and its potential multiplication. In a critical self-detachment, the subject cannot but identify with a tension between two polarities, the thinking subject (I) and the direct object of thought (me). Indeed, the veracity of this divided self withstands the very limits of reason. The best of contemporary African practices in philosophy bears witness to the rigour of such an exercise. In its proximity, one would readily integrate explorations in regional psychodynamics and the extraordinary patience of the work of Frantz Fanon. Somewhere in a gradually opposite direction and concerned with the fate of the city, the political discourse, faithful or treacherous, appears as a fold of something else: of the mute estrangement of millions of people who cannot assume their own subjugation as that which is first contained by their own polarities, a self and a for-others and then empirically submitted to external determinations.

How is one to comment on this discourse without apprehending oneself as imprisoned in bad faith?

As students of a recent history of an unintentionally engineered major economic imbalance and its manifestations, probably an effect of a possibly widespread trained incapacity, we document it as a history of not-so-rational procedures determining the present conditions of the African presence in the world. The journey through decolonisation is not a negation of the Western journey through economic time. Metaphorised on a scholastic table of logical relations, summarised and reduced to what they might analogically express, the African theories could stand, from the arrangement of the traditional square of opposed propositions, as universal or particular, affirmative or negative and, depending on their reference, as contrary or subcontrary, subaltern or contradictory. Moreover, one could find thematics of conversion or obversion, contraposition or inversion. Conversion, in alterity theories, is generally understood as a simple interchange of the first concept, replacing the West and its virtues with a new historical subject, Africa. In this sense, conversion cannot be confused with its technical usage in logic. Obversion, the most commonly encountered thematic, administers the clearest operative value, closer to its canon in logic, namely the counterpart of a proposition

obtained by exchanging its affirmative quality for the negative, or the negative for the affirmative, and then negating the predicate.

It is from this background that, situated vis-à-vis imperial power and its justifications in the Colonial Library, Aimé Césaire's *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1995), Kwame Nkrumah's *I Speak of Freedom* (1964) and *Towards Colonial Freedom* (1962) or Julius Nyerere's *Freedom and Unity* (1968) are said to have obverted the colonial ideology. Strictly speaking, conversion and obversion, as well as inversion (to which they are sometimes surreptitiously assimilated), function habitually as devices for restraining or tempering the quality of propositions. Their usage in African political discourse rarely qualifies as technical. They can also be perceived in roles of screening the convenience of statements – in titles for instance. Thus, to use the language of semioticians, along with other signals, they might unveil in a 'genetic ritual', the implicit train which, thanks to discreet marks, encodes the nature of a course to be pursued. A simple presentation of tables of contents from two recent anthologies illustrates clearly how, through a simple thematic ordering and the authority of proper nouns, a genetic ritual proceeds in instructing theories of difference and gives relatively clear glimpses about their perspectives in fellowships of discourse:

- A. *An African Philosophy Reader* (Coetzee and Roux 2002)
 1. Discourse on Africa (Mogobe B. Ramose, Emevwo Biakolo, Kwasi Wiredu, F. Abiola Irele, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, H. Ocera Oruka, Tsenay Serequeberhan, Steve B. Biko, Issiaka P. Laleye)
 2. Trends in African Philosophy (Moya Deacon, F. Abiola Irele, H. Ocera Oruka, Paulin J. Hountondji, Lucius Oudaw)
 3. Metaphysical Thinking in Africa (Lebisa J. Teffo and Abraham P.J. Roux, Segun Gbadegesin, Godwin S. Sogolo, Olusegun Oladipo, Chukwudum B. Okolo)
 4. Epistemology and the Tradition in Africa (Didier N. Kaphagawani and Jeanette G. Malherbe, Mogobe B. Ramose, Kwasi Wiredu, Godwin Sogolo, Subairi B. Nasseem)
 5. Morality in African Thought (Pieter H. Coetzee, Kwasi Wiredu, Kwame Gyekye, Mogobe B. Ramose, Musambi Malongi Ya-Mona)
 6. Race and Gender (Jennifer R. Wilkinson, Gail M. Presbey, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Oyeronke Oyewumi, Uma Narayan, Emmanuel C. Eze)

7. Justice and Restitution in African and Political Thought (Mogobe B. Ramose, Paulin J. Hountondji, Ibbo Mandaza, Eghosa E. Osaghae, Ali A. Mazrui)
 8. Africa in the Global Context (Pieter H. Coetzee, D.A. Masolo, M.F. Murobe, Howard McGary, Wole Soyinka, Mogobe B. Ramose)
- B. *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism* (Desai and Nair 2005)
1. Ideologies of Imperialism (Christopher Columbus, Edmund Burke, Frederick Lugard)
 2. The Critique of Colonial Discourse (Aimé Césaire, Roberto Fernandez Retamar, Edward W. Said, Linda Tubiwai Smith)
 3. The Politics of Language and Literary Studies (Thomas Babington Macaulay, Alexander Crummell, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Carolyn Cooper)
 4. Nationalisms and Nativisms (Léopold Sédar Senghor, Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihechukwu Madubuike, Frantz Fanon, Paul Gilroy)
 5. Hybrid Identities (Octave Mannoni, Derek Walcott, Homi Bhabha, Jean Bernabe, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphael Confiant, Jana Sequoya)
 6. Genders and Sexualities (Leila Ahmed, Oyeronke Oyewumi, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Timothy S. Chin)
 7. Reading the Subaltern (Ranajit Guha, David Lloyd, John Beverly, Nicholas Thomas)
 8. Comparative (Post)colonialisms (US Congress, Amy Kaplan, Pal Ahluwalia, David Chioni Moore)
 9. Globalization and Postcoloniality (Stuart Hall, Arif Dirlik, Rey Chow, Simon Gikandi)

The two lists of essay themes bring to light the *Weltanschauungen* they reflect as explanations of differences in time and in space. Along with the dispositions suggested in the deviation between the language of philosophy and that of the political and the figures which, in the 1950s and 1960s, were facing the two opposing models – capitalism versus communism – I would like to advance a number of hypotheses that might clarify this meditation and suggest how we should revisit an alterity, the African, and what it means to address it as an allegory of an exodus that I shall define as, simply a quest for an exit from hell. Of course, the allegory of exodus has a biblical connection, as is evident from the Latin quotation from

Psalm 94, which introduces this chapter. The verse refers to the biblical 'exodus'. It speaks of 40 years in the desert, the decimation of a whole generation, the act of a vindictive deity: *Ideo iuravi in ira mea: non introibunt in requiem meam* (In reality, I did swear in my anger, they will not enter into my peace). I should state that in writing this chapter, another arbitration was guiding the trail of my wanderings – Descartes's metaphor of the traveller lost in a forest.

Intellectual paradigms, everyday lines

The two tables of contents above bear witness to our time and our questions about how we reflect on marginalised alterities. In what they reproduce as histories and organise as knowledge, they also testify as indefinite commentaries on an overused figure of our humanity, which says it well: 'You give me your body and I shall inscribe on it the laws of our tribe.' Further, they suscite a number of specific paths for discerning various lessons about regulations and our condition in a shrinking world. A way of summarising some of the most important problems raised by the two tables would be to outline a few of their boundaries.

Firstly, a critical awareness symbolised Nehru's 1955 non-alignment principle and its validation in a critical autobiography, *Toward Freedom* (1941). It identifies with an explicit statement, the sign of an ideal and the political measure of an intention. Since then, this book has been producing rhetorics of routinised values. Nehru chose an uncomfortable position between two forms of hubris and, rather than submit to what they represented as sovereignty in truth, he valorized a form of sublimation extolling to the skies an exacting consciousness cognisant of its own suspension between two conflicting mythologies of truth. The gesture did not secure all the creative paths it projected and somehow it still exceeds them. The politics of truthfulness in Nehru's testimony is signified in some exegeses whose entries in the tables of contents connect chains of meanings about political existence and human limits. They comment on the evidence of being an inscribed entity, frequently using the metaphors of the machine and the body, although the subject of the metaphor is always at cross purposes with the mechanical or the biological framework they inform. Within the determinations of these models, the whole of our condition seems regulated by arrangements of control over historical distinctions, which, as conceptualities, appear to be transcultural: false versus true, bad versus good, ugly versus beautiful.

From these distinctions, our heritages of different discursive economies translate in a variety of cultural experiences – ways of knowing, behaving and seeing. On

the other hand, a very simple reading of the historicities and their articulations presented in these readings divides us even more. Should we proceed with the task of interrogating and generalising what, in his meditative reflection, Paul Ricoeur called *Le conflit des interpretations* (1969)? Yet there is a dialogical intimation in evocations from today's interconnectedness that might unmask ways of going beyond our conflictual narratives of genesis and the interposition of their disciplinary axioms about our supposedly irreconcilable identity histories and politics. Duty might be a matter of individual liberty and choice on a course of moral response and behaviour. The problem was already well addressed by Kant and inscribed in the connections existing between moral action, moral law and loving my neighbour, my enemy. For instance, in *The Black Image in the White Mind: Media and Race in America* (2000), Robert M. Entman and Andrew Rojecki unveil interacting forces in ordinary conversations as they are reclaimed in American mainstream culture, their influences in terms of needs and limitations, and how all this is related to evolving economics of media industries, themselves shaped by new technology, global market competition and government policy decisions. Thus, against any dream of authenticity in assertions of 'I ought', one faces the objective fascinations of the communication industry as well as the exigencies for personal growth in conflict with economic expectations as orchestrated through media content, both news and entertainment. The whole issue of a structured alienation within the atmosphere created by the present global economy and culture topologises a racial figure in 'black and white' as a palimpsest. This work confines to a political awareness an unstable creation supposedly unaffected by properties invested in it in a history of inequalities. In the movement, the operation transforms the process into its worst traumatic fear about diversity. In effect, beyond the legibility of traces given to a 'racial' consciousness, the operating act might obliterate what it makes visible – the confusing anxiety of knowing that a denial possibly covers the evidence, namely that the constructed figure in 'black and white' is just a simple entry to the infinite ways of existing in the complexity of the world today.

Second, it is certain that such a perspective on alterities and differences transliterates our beings as lack, defining our anxieties and motivating them through regional definitions expounded by reality, and processing them into neurotic and moral narratives of our defence mechanisms. What better perspective to refer to and in which to collapse both the mechanical and the biological models about the machine or the organism we are supposed to be?

Despite Nehru's suspension of the usefulness of what we have inherited from Marx as a lesson about the dialectic of the infrastructure and superstructures,

how could one ignore the correlations between processes of production and social relations; organisation of power, political discourse and social classes; and how they operate diversely in different societies, in different periods? From contemporary prodigality and an extravagant diffuseness of conjectures, no Third World intellectual can choose to ignore deductions about our common future-oriented present as they are clinically interrogated by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in *Multitude* (2004) in and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's work on alienation, particularly her *Critique of Post-Colonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (1999). Would it be useless to consider the intellectual pertinence of this orientation, in so far as its warnings might allow a way of transcending, at least theoretically, the contradictions of an argument, political liberalism fails qua global theory, and help to formulate the real quandary of any organism defined as an abstraction by the rules of contemporary transactions that contain it in overmystified systems of productivity?

Third, on the procedures exercised on the organism, normalising principles and terminology lists conceived and stretched in the name of a diversity, the major issue appears to be about an abstract and constrictive 'law' articulating criteria for distinguishing the 'normal' from the 'pathological' and the 'developed' versus the 'underdeveloped'. (These days, 'underdeveloped' is relabelled 'developing', as a way of silencing the implicitly negative moral value of the original term.) If one agrees that the normal rationally takes precedence over its negation, genealogically it is the other way around, the normal always succeeding what it has normed, thus one admits the anteriority of the unexpected as what defines normalcy as a reference. Georges Canguilhem demonstrated in *Le normal et le pathologique* (1966) how these constrictive figures establish the decrees of each other. Foucault expanded the debate and generalised a suspicion about the experience of axiomatic systems of classification, as well as the history of their privileges and their culturally derivative procedures for organising systematology and systematics, or sciences of systems of knowledge and their constitution. For the study of 'differences' as 'alterities' or vice versa, his regulatory principles allowed him to qualify new objectives that could handle reversals, discontinuities and specificities in their own right. Now let us face the astonishment created in 1975 by the publication of an anthology that included contributions from renowned naturalists: *Ants, Indians, and Little Dinosaurs: A Celebration of Man and Nature for the 75th Anniversary of Natural History Magazine*. The collection celebrated a pluralisation of knowledge and commendation of respect for all beings and things as comprising individually their

own systems, with their own regulations and norms. It offered itself as a testimony on the diversity of the world and the richness of that diversity. In the conclusion of the book, significantly titled '*Vive la différence*', Marston Bates, then a professor of zoology at the University of Michigan, dwells on the excesses of both the politics of uniformity and the politics of diversity. He echoes a collective preoccupation well signified in our shared experience of cultural aloneness and relatedness. Policies of diversity and normalisation might be contributing to an excellent encyclopedia of ethnographic curiosities that itemises domesticated habits as well as folklorised customs. Thus, for instance, among many examples in the anthology, there is a discussion of the 'missionary symptom', a manifestation of normalised sexuality of Third World converts to Christianity and an exploration of the American fascination with 'the British skill in stashing peas in the mash potatoes on the back of the fork, held always in their left hand'. This paradox should bring us back to Kant's advice, which, in its simplicity, might consign the highest criterion for solidarity and tolerance between dissimilar histories and cultures: common sense is what unites them and 'madness' prevents a necessary dialogue. But, as Bates observes: 'Commonsense. But whose, yours or mine? We can't all think alike – that would be uniformity instead of diversity. So let's argue – but let's not kill each other in the process.' (1975: 372).

One way out of the paradox might be a return to the practicality of notions such as conversion, obversion and inversion and their instrumentalisation as operative images in transcultural solidarity dialogues. They can serve as connective concepts in allegories for reading differences and, against prejudice, from one region to another, accord possibilities of comparisons in illusions of identities. In their everyday acceptance within any 'we-community', it is certainly meaningful to invoke and designate the implications of their less technical understandings. Thus, conversion embodies, beyond a logical operation of permutation of terms, the complex mechanism through which repressed ideas, values or conflicts are expressed by a healthy organism in order to suscite a change. On the other hand, obversion, or alteration of an appearance and its transformation into one of its alternatives, may be the closest figure to David Hume's image of identity as flux. Finally, inversion has determinations that convey emulation-values in taking the roles of the opposite. The process permits anyone to be occasionally the minority to someone else's majority. In so doing, inversion combines and arranges into reassuring metaphors possible figuration activities of mutual toleration in what Will Kymlicka has dubbed a *Multicultural Citizenship* (1995).

I have invoked the power of Nehru's initiative in awakening consciousness. One could also refer to the compelling alternative of the so-called Asian miracle in the global economy. The countries participating in this miracle symbolise vivid metaphors of fecund organisms and dedication against mechanically instituted cultures of delinquency. What they enunciate is also a principle at the time of action in the Third World, as the other side of a consciousness inscribed in its own history of an alterity assumed and negotiated with other histories and cultures. From what such a horizon outlines, the phrase 'Third World' can productively substitute 'East Asia' in this quote from Tan's *Toleration, Diversity, and Global Justice*:

But while the student of international relations ignores issues of power, domination, and nation-interests at his or her own peril, it is just as distorting and misleading to squeeze entire debates into a 'West against the Rest' framework, as many defenders of the East Asian position tend to do. This realist paradigm does not do justice to the complexity of international relations; it fails to see that foreign policies are motivated by different competing realist considerations as well as idealist (normative) ones. A constructive cross-cultural human rights dialogue can commence only if both parties set aside 'absolutist' frameworks – the West as imperialistic, the East as socially unprogressive – that have tended to poison the dialogue to date. And in this regard, to counter this (not entirely baseless) perception of liberalism, liberals have much work to do toward demonstrating the sincerity of their commitments to a better world (2000: 145).

This quote can be transmuted into a lesson about a competent usage of statements in what, since Kant, it is customary to call a legal order of peace. The enigma of any individuality reflecting itself to itself in an embodiment of multiple histories (of family, community, people and culture) unfolds in what should be for everyone the burden of responsibility and freedom. Categorically, any individual should be acknowledged as unique: an a priori alterity, which is simultaneously, *sui generis* a posteriori, an unabsorbable person in the order of things. Yet what such an enigmatic alterity might signify because it is an incommensurable experience in the world seems, in the aesthetics and ethics of the media, almost always reducible to crisis-capsules of today's global culture. In *Compassion Fatigue*, Moeller remembers:

Reporters love the word ‘crisis’, said Bernard Gwertzman, now editor of *The Times* on the web. But what makes a crisis? ‘I don’t have a definition,’ Gwertzman said, ‘some things feel like a crisis and others don’t. Stories traditionally are published or fronted or aired depending on the answers to a range of questions. *Timeless*: Did the event just happen? *Proximity*: How close is the event, physically and psychologically? *Prominence*: How many people have some knowledge or interest in the subject? *Significance*: How many people will (potentially) be affected by the event? *Controversy*: Is there conflict or drama? *Novelty*: Is the event unusual? *Currency*: Is the event part of an ongoing issue? If not, should people know? *Emotional appeal*: Is there humor, sadness, or a thrill? And when the medium is television, a final question looms: How good are the pictures (1999: 17)?

The questions, in their specificity, are indicative of media procedures for inventing beings and contexts of crisis. These should be empirically marketable. This means that the crisis phenomenon, whatever it is, should obey very precise requirements. These would include consumers’ preferences as tabulated by market analyses, as well as the market value – an objective price at which it can be bought or sold. As a matter of fact, a media product (an advertisement, for instance, or coverage of an assassination, a natural disaster or the New York celebration of New Year’s Eve) has a market share or the specific percentage of its sale during a particular time frame. The title of a book by Todd Gitlin, a New York University professor of sociology, captures the spirit of this universe: *Media Unlimited: How the Torrent of Images and Sounds Overwhelms Our Life* (2002). Everything in the order of this culture can be equated to a product value in the marketplace, from basic commodities such as clothing and food to ideals of human brotherhood and interspecies co-operation. Among the items popularised recently, for instance, one might list: anger management in Scandinavian countries, laughter training in East Asia, sampling church services in the United States, virginity testing in South Africa and assisted death rituals in a number of countries. Contrary to what most of us might believe, however, capitalist market-makers have an ethical grid of reference whose fundamentals were theoretically epitomised in a little-known 1759 treatise of Adam Smith: *Theory of Moral Sentiment* (1801). This thinker who, in his 1776 *The Wealth of Nations* (1937), expounded the free market basics, was also a moralist preoccupied by connections between economic self-interest in the pursuit of happiness and a morally virtuous life. He saw a solution in a self-referential and

individualistic conception and put it clearly at the beginning of *Theory of Moral Sentiment*:

Every faculty in one man is the measure by which he judges of the like faculty in another. I judge of your sight by my sight, of your ear by my ear, of your reason by my reason, of your resentment by my resentment, of your love by my love. I neither have, nor can have, any other way of judging about them (18).

This formula functions effectively in the contemporary normative economy. It can be coupled with the inequality and exploitation outputs predicated by its systemic application, thus leading to a necessary distinction between the evils it produces. If one agrees that human dignity is, in principle at least, an evidential value index in all cultures, to degrade or negate it qualifies as evil. And, in good method, one would then have to dissociate domains: the domain of a pre-moral evil that comprises inescapable limits as represented by natural catastrophes, disease or death; the domain of a human-engineered evil that is the result of an activity or a volition that diminishes human quality and value without a sufficient reason test and, indeed, the intersecting area of the two domains. Surely, in today's global world, hunger, lack of education and poverty, for example, would not inevitably belong to the strict field of pre-moral evils.

In 1976, inspired by Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), Marilyn Ferguson published *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in Our Time*. She affirmed the fact of a major alteration in the general configuration of contemporary individual lives and collective work – a major shift in organisational principles. The rupture could be characterised by some of its effects: confusion, dislocation and uncertainty. A decade later, two businessmen, Don Tapscott and Art Caston, overtaxed the concept in *Paradigm Shift: The New Promise of Information Technology* (1993), using the term 'paradigm' to 'define a broad model, a framework, a way of thinking, or a scheme for understanding reality'. From the double awareness of an interdependency of nations and that which creates it, 'global telecommunications networks [that] energize the metabolism of world commerce and move us inexorably toward Marshall McLuhan's global village', they concentrated on four open paradigm shifts that would circumscribe a new global geography: (a) a geo-political order, for a volatile multipolar world; (b) a networked information-based enterprise

organisation; (c) a business environment that is a qualified, competitive and a dynamic marketplace; and (d) a new technology conceived as user-centred; that is, a network computing system with new goals for information technology.

Because media are businesses structured by agents, work organisation and information frames, they are coherent elements of the new space. Through an economic necessity, these shifts would integrate all the countries of today's world into a global trading market. In consequence, their engineering policies, as well as technical performances, are dependent on a number of factors in an action-oriented architecture whose principles deduce specific rules. Among these are 'diversity', or the promotion of the most adapted types of information technology for a given purpose; 'inter-changeability', or a way for maximising performance; 'workstation orientation', or the best system for activating and delivering functionality; and finally, a 'network orientation', which, relying on the preceding principles, develops useful linkages for production. The whole machinery operates thanks to the efficient conjunction of determining rules-sets that I am rephrasing here while maintaining their definition from *Paradigm Shift* (1993). These include:

1. key-drivers of the new environment: productivity of knowledge, quality of service programmes, competent responsiveness, a 24-hour globalisation activity, outsourcing of key areas for value-added capability, partnering and social responsibility;
2. an innovative computing network of information technology that Tapscott and Caston describe through eight 'critical shifts' from outmoded models: (a) from traditional semiconductors to microprocessor-based systems; (b) from host-based to network-based systems; (c) from proprietary software to open software standards; (d) from single media forms to multimedia combining data, text, voice and image; (e) from account-control to computerised vendor-customer partnerships based on free will; (f) from craft to factory in software development; (g) from alphanumeric interfaces to graphical, multiform user-interfaces; (h) from stand-alone to integrated software applications;
3. the principal condition for a successful implementation of this paradigm shift would reside in an original new type of leader. The new leaders should be managers of 'work-groups environments' and 'responsive organizational structures' who, instead of figuring themselves as 'information technology executives', view themselves as 'business

executives'. This concept requires leaders to be managers of customers' expectations while concurrently managers of enthusiasm and focused on business results.

This analysis of what the paradigm shift brings about reveals structurations of mechanisms and the general horizon of a globally oriented activity. They surely distinguish it from the recent past and should one have to characterise such a deviation, one might consider testing some of the effects defining the new political economy as John Naisbitt, a specialist of megatrends, was projecting in 1994 in *Global Paradox*. One may quote the four main paradoxes he foresaw:

1. the world's trends point overwhelmingly toward political independence and self-rule on the one hand, and the formation of economic alliances on the other;
2. the bigger the world economy, the more powerful its smallest players, and all the big players are getting smaller;
3. the study of the smallest economic player, the entrepreneur, is merging with the study of how the global economy works;
4. big companies are breaking up and becoming confederations of small, entrepreneurial companies in order to survive (56).

This presentation encompasses a number of problems related to the dialogical approach suggested by Tan. It also suggests the intricate topographies deducible from our two anthologies' tables of contents. But how is one to exhaust significant topographies vis-à-vis the transformation described by Tapscott and Caston, and what might their model ignore, delay or repress? Before everything else, there is a demand: an interrogation about the meaning conveyed, which requires a hermeneutics of suspicion that could search for idols and strip away masks of a fabled reality.

Let me pinpoint, as clearly as possible, three accessible entries to such a debate. First, the abstract integrated environment of the new economic paradigm shift is a text on rational choice strategies for organising a global economy in which interactions of capital, technology, work and skills are strictly aimed at productivity. The product to be sold by the machinery does not really matter. It can incorporate any commodity, including news, knowledge, pestilence, even intelligence. Productivity depends on the machine's functions, inclusive of its internal capabilities for potential expansions through enterprise partnering, cross-

licensing mechanisms, interchangeable standards and so on. In brief, efficiency summons productivity and, thus, profits. But for whom and corresponding to what needs? The new promise born of the synchronisation of information technologies, in its explicit intention and policy, does not spell out its own complement, or the supplement of its self-preserving megalomaniacal productivity objectives. They can possibly prove to be a disservice to the interests of the subject.

Secondly, the paradigm shift theory brings the other of modernity as a simple opportunity agent in its own mechanical structure of surplus-value productivity. The text of the paradigm defines its own normativity in terms of the efficiency of its functions, rules and significance and thus, from this background, orders of all other collective experiences are to be subsumed as modalities in its exteriority and fused in the master narrative. A number of things should be noted here concerning the self-referentiality of the topography. The arguments for adhering to the paradigmatic economy – say, Third World territories blending into the newly affirmed totality – are not negotiated, since these arguments supposedly coincide with the evidence of better conditions of existence. Subsequently, in integrable orders, enabling appropriate guidelines might provide concrete procedures for effective incorporation in the regulatory scheme, such as time-management grids, computer-based learning tools, job diagnosis evaluation indices, well-tabulated resources for high performance and the like.

An overvaluation frames this new order, prescribing it to be the most advanced achievement of humankind. Its scientific and political programme came to be identified with both the will to truth and with an unconditional truth itself. Thus, most visibly during the last six centuries, the history of its anterior statements has been doubling the authority of the emergence of truth and all its possible relations to human experience. In this context, the convergence idea asserts the sovereignty of a model from widening data and the sciences, and legitimates the thesis of a correlation between economic determinations, their systems of values and a total history. Since the nineteenth century, this concern has expressed itself in the conjunction of a search for civilisation's origins, its historical necessity and the primacy of its continuum. Such a hypothesis, translated into a justification, outlines convergence paradoxes and their multiple semantic lines of discussion. In one, pragmatists and realists have been debating whether the truth can be defined in terms of intersections, or in those of successive inter-approximating approaches. In another, theorists talk of a co-ordination in transformations that can accent compatibility between members of a variety of classes, giving rise to the concept of assimilation in evolution theories, or to social engineering, as in the case of

French colonial doctrine, which attempted to colonise meaning in order to erase the differences and promote a core conformity. A third approach, found in political economy, is offered by the work of Jan Tinbergen and, in a special manner, John Kenneth Galbraith, in *The New Industrial State* (1967). These thinkers have been associated with economic convergence theory because of their belief in an intrinsic validity of capitalism over socialist models and their demonstrations of the unifying effects of liberalism. From the constructed interference of disparate, often conflictual imports, no method in convergence theories has succeeded in answering George Cantor's question: what is the identifying nature of continuity that makes thinkable the convergence hypothesis? However, one should note that the same genealogical and structural characteristics, series and schemata validating the convergence hypothesis can objectively support the authority and verification of discrimination policies, including class and racial platforms. The relation to a cumulative combinatory table allows, in effect, inclusion or exclusion on the basis of value judgements bestowed on types of filiations.

Thirdly, and finally, the concepts of diversity and differentiation, with their several prongs, designate a host of strategies in the global economy's styles of expansion, a question of instruments and programming, their usage represented in the symbolic universalisation of Kal Mansur's *Peg Board*.²

Among strategies, one might distinguish internationalisation programmes of a multinational company from the organisation of global-scale activities of another company; or the planning capabilities for worldwide-adapted interventions of a third one. Whether or not it makes sense, one would demark diversity in its most popular understanding; that is, the quality of being different, from the strategic abilities to adapt, manage and exploit the knowledge and policies of an institution in international larger-scale operations. On account of both its technical legitimacy and cultural imperatives, the diversity problem was taken up in *Managing across Borders: The Transnational Solution* (1998), a comprehensive study by the Harvard business administration professor, Christopher Bartlett, and the London Business School director of the Strategic Leadership Programme, Sumantra Ghoshal. For them, the reliability of the diversity concept can be related to both economic logic and cultural grammar, through three thematic mediations. First, a theoretical cadre analyses the transnational in its specificity as an emerging model that transcends differences in a worldwide integrated reason; accordingly, this could be apprehended in the transnational's capability, challenge and administrative heritage. Second, a discussion on the nature of the transnational would present

its structural dispositions for building integrated networks, processes for multiple innovations and flexible roles. Finally, for the triumph of the transnational, a diversity symbol; the authors describe its capacity for varying flexible junctions, perspectives, character-qualities, cultural dynamic tasks; in sum, write Bartlett and Ghoshal, one could conjure up a biological analogy: 'Formal structure defines an organization's basic anatomy; systems and information flows shape its physiology; and culture and value represent its psychology. Change strategies that work through only one of these elements are less effective than those that address all three' (1998: 286).

This is the closest I have come to recognising, in a contending interpretation, the symbolic efficacy of a dynamic organism for imaging the life capacity of a socio-economic ensemble. The metaphor might well duplicate the organic constitution of vital functions of the transnational as a body, yet without accosting what Dussel calls the 'material principle of a liberation ethics' (1998). This refers to concrete rules for surviving and existing as a worthy human being in this newly organised global economy. Moreover, this material moment has a co-determining formal principle of 'truth' and 'validity' in an intersubjective community of dialogue. The beauty of the biological analogy in the 'transnational solution' could be affixed to another figure used by Tapscott and Caston in *Paradigm Shift*: 'software as art' and how a program might become a 'symphony':

We estimate, for example, that somewhere upward of 150 billion lines of code are written in an era I language called COBOL. Like a musical score for a symphony, a single mistake (one note in the second cello part) could mess up the entire program. Finding the mistake and fixing it is typically a major challenge, and (unlike a symphony) by changing the cello part you're likely to have a ripple effect that messes up the tuba. Moreover, the size of these intricate programs means that they take a long time to create. Like a symphony, the era I software composer could labor for years creating the work of art. Unfortunately, many software works are never completed – leaving many later-day Schuberts with at least one unfinished symphony to their credit (1993: 167).

Art or not, the new international political economy articulates its textual reflexive systems within a history and, at the same time, formulates implicitly their rival methods, aims and objects. Nonetheless, the rationality of other, possibly divergent arguments, such as those designated in the entries of our two anthologies' tables of

contents, belongs also to this same history? All these undertakings equally witness identical conditions of possibility. Yet in the contradictions diffused by all these texts (global liberal theories and anthologised cultural statements) and echoed in multimedia, critical voices surge sometimes from what must be moral anxieties. From *In the Name of Humanity: Reflections on the Twentieth Century* (2000), here is the banality of a nineteenth-century lesson that still runs beneath efficiency and productivity paradigms, as it is rephrased by the French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut: 'For Marx, in effect, nothing is natural in either man or nature. Evil and suffering are socially constructed. They are not intrinsic to the human condition. Things are not things: they are social facts' (27). The conclusive statement at the end of Finkielkraut's reflections addresses the very heart of this meditation on Africa in theories of difference:

Have we reconciled ourselves? In the name of diversity, worldwide webs are building a global society. Angelic, busy, and vigilant, their apostles believe they embody resistance to all acts of inhumanity. But to exchange old demons for new networks of communication is to make a mistake. Beneath the edifying appearance of a primordial combat, information technology obscures the fact that friendship has disappeared into sentimentality, and mass tourism has erased traditional distinctions between near and far. This, in the end, is the worldwide victory of those who have succeeded in bringing together the same with the same over those seeking to build a common world with a shared idea of humanity, based on gratitude. Life goes on, things happen, but nothing seems exciting enough to change modern man. Feelings reign freely, and ideology is defeated – at least for the time being – but the new age has not conquered the empire of resentment. Has the twentieth century therefore been useless (2000: 112)?

To this powerful interrogation of our contemporary mythologies, why not add a word from Galbraith's *A Journey through Economic Time*: 'The sale of indulgences did not end with the church reform' (1994: 164). It is true, Galbraith was depicting a Third World case of trained incapacity. Only?

Concluding?

With competing orders of difference in the interdependent political economies we inhabit today, basic common sense might still be the most decent and reasonable

option, despite its precariousness. The media have an immense responsibility here for accenting our trained capacity or incapacity. Indeed, alterity and difference, as well as the theories they suscite, have become a business in the ordinary sense of the word. Their relation to human dignity seems to depend, more and more, on calculations of actual or symbolic investments. As a consequence, why not, in the name of good faith, suspend judgements and, independently from normative grids of political economy and the validity of their inferences, simply acknowledge human challenges as they are signified in our conflictual conversations and allegories? Demonstrations of absolute and definitive rulings, in terms of truth and falsity, are probably always relative to something else. I personally choose not to qualify any affirmation or negation made in good faith as an error, a failure or a sin but instead, each time, as an unexpected response on a progressive quest, approximating not a truth, but a more truthful expression of a need.

15 December 2005

Notes

1. A portion of this chapter was published as 'In the Name of Similitude', an epilogue to *Media and Identity in Africa*, eds. Kimani Njogu and John F.M. Middleton (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009: 308–24). A French translation of this portion has also been published as 'Au nom de la similitude' in *Dire le mal 4: Balises 13–14* (Brussels: Cahiers de Poétique des Archives et Musée de la Littérature: 67–92). It has been reprinted here with permission.
2. See Figure 13: Peg Board.

Thinking the Black Intellectual

'Masques aux Quatre Points'

Masques! Ô Masques!

Masques noirs masques rouges, vous masques blanc-et-noir

Masques aux quatre points d'où souffle l'Esprit

Je vous salue dans le silence!

— Léopold Sédar Senghor, '*Prière aux masques*'

An epilogue to a special volume, edited by Grant Farred, of *South Atlantic Quarterly* 109 (2), Spring 2010 and devoted to 'thinking black intellectuals', this chapter is a meditation on the coherence of such a project in relation to African fault lines.¹ It does not intend to summarise the ways the learned studies of the *South Atlantic Quarterly* approach the idea of 'thinking black intellectuals'. Instead, its aim is to reformulate otherwise their statements by rewriting the obliging atmosphere of reading the content of this issue of the journal. In relation to the preceding chapters in this book, the metaphor from Léopold Sédar Senghor's 'a prayer to masks' illustrates a challenge, a manner of facing questions about alterity and designating it as a particular sign within an englobing cosmopolis. Such a position would like to mark clearly the conditions of probability of dissenting cultural accents along with expressions of their compliance to an ethics of justice and human dignity.

Facing an epilogue

As an epilogue to the *South Atlantic Quarterly* issue, this meditation reads classes of texts. Their individual distinctions are in themselves an argument for commenting on them – thus, the necessity from the beginning to state openly the three main presuppositions of this exercise, an approach to the epilogue as concept. These are precautions.

The first is subjectivism; that is, recognising a personal commitment in reading and understanding this special issue of the *South Atlantic Quarterly*. In

‘Existentialism Is a Humanism’, Jean-Paul Sartre writes: ‘It is impossible for man to transcend human subjectivity’ (1993: 37). In fact, it is opportune to reconcile the positions of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Sartre in defining such an angle within a democratic humanism in the manner of the anthropologist. In *Claude Lévi-Strauss and the Making of Structural Anthropology*, Marcel Hénaff observes:

The humanism that he calls ‘democratic’ is by far the most truly universalist since it aims [at grasping] the intelligibility of the differences even to the slightest manifestations of forms of life and culture. This is the goal of structural anthropology, *and from this point of view* it can unhesitatingly call itself eminently humanist (1998: 241).

Testifying to a way of being in the world, the reader’s consciousness could be compared to a flame leaping from a surface. From Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness* (1956), this image might describe the intellectual effort of reading anything as a metaphor and, to twist it, one has the impression of apprehending aspects of a hesitating flame from the tip to its base, in a variety of points of view.

There is, in the second precaution, a symbol. It comes from Grant Farred’s contribution to the special edition of the journal, ‘“*Denn keiner trägt das Leben allein*”: The Thought of St. Augustine’. There is this declaration apropos Augustine: ‘None of his African successors struggled so painfully, eloquently, and publicly with fundamental questions of God and faith, with the relationship between “man” and God, because of philosophy’ (Farred 2010: 415). Time is transcended here and the contemporaneity of Augustine theorised. In what the figure represents, it is possible to decode an appeal to something else, given in a reconstruction made by James O’Donnell in his recent biography of the bishop of Hippo, *Augustine* (2005). A record depicts a restitution of the end of Augustine’s life, an epilogue that stands coextensive to a text not limited to its appearance. In effect, relates O’Donnell,

When he lay down to die, Augustine wanted to be alone. For ten days in August he lays undisturbed . . . Alone, he stared at the walls where he had made them put up copies of the Psalms of repentance for him to see and to read . . . Until those last days, Augustine had been working quietly on one more lonely book (315–17).

O'Donnell is referring here to the second instalment of the *Confessions*. Augustine died that summer in 430 AD; he was 75 years old. Re-evaluating the history of the book, O'Donnell contends: 'To read the *Confessions* alone is to fall squarely into one of Augustine's most cunning traps and to miss something of great importance about him' (317). It surfaces only when the *Retractationes* (Reconsiderations), a book on books, is consulted.

Death, the end par excellence, 'considered as the final boundary of human life,' writes Sartre (1956: 681), escapes us at the very moment it rounds us. In fact, it does not exist as long as we live and ceases to signify anything with the passing away. Yet, *mors ianua est*; death is a door. A sign of facticity that could be called a proper feature of the 'ethnicity' of being human, death articulates a value only because there are other people around us, in the experience of 'being-with' (*Mitsein*) and the actualising of a 'we' subject and 'us' object. In the passing of Augustine, a world appropriates the triple confession of the man: the demise of a life, the testimony of a mind attentive to the text and the legacy of a believer. An inscription in a collective memory, Augustine identifies with the meaning of death itself, θάνατος (*thanatos*), his passing reflecting both a verbal sentence and a kind of death. Rightly, Sartre affirms: 'Death becomes the meaning of life as the resolved chord is the meaning of the melody. There is nothing miraculous in this.' In death, Augustine became a text, an infinite one, and began to function like a sovereign corpus in the explanation of his own difference.

The third precaution pertains to the very notion of *epilogue*. The word designates what concludes a work, the final part of an *oeuvre* and generally it applies to an intellectual production. The epilogue can be used with more restricted semantic values by invoking its Greek origin and referring to the geography of its conceptual field. From its entry in the Liddell–Scott–Jones *Greek-English Lexicon* (1996), ἐπιλογ-εον/ος, *course*, *chaff*, is better circumscribed in relation to:

Verbs such as ἐπιλογ-εω, to levy arrears of taxation; -ιζομαι, to reckon over, to consider, to address the peroration; and substantives such as ἐπιλογισμα, for reflection, afterthought, later consideration; and finally adjectives, ἐπιλογιστικος, prudent, able to calculate, to take into account; and thus the notion of inference, and that of a concluding part of speech, but equally the portion of a plea.

The reference to the Greek is strategic. It exposes a perspective for reading the text from a critical reflection that, rephrasing the course of an original, brings

about a meaning as to the how and possibly the why of an obligation that is an expectation. This cannot but be the locus where a calculating thinking confronts a waiting thinking, to paraphrase Heidegger.

Augustine's epilogue to a life goes along with that of an unfinished book, a visibility surpassing the knowledge of an intervention. Augustine writes in Latin. Did he know Greek? That's not a problem here, except that the question allows a closing on the notion of the Greek ἐπιλόγειν, as what can be understood for a linguistic 'mark of distinction'. In two histories of the Latin language, Nicholas Ostler's *Ad Infinitum: A Biography of Latin* (2008) and Françoise Waquet's *Le latin ou l'empire d'un signe* (1998), one finds subtle notes on reflexes of this language in articulating differences. Ostler observes, quoting a letter from John Sarracenus written in 1167 to John of Salisbury: 'In Greek, one finds certain compounds by which things are designated elegantly and to the point; Latin must inelegantly, ineptly, and occasionally quite inadequately paraphrase the one word with two or more expressions' (216). The Greek citation singularises the vitality of things and beings through declensions (five cases), gendering (three forms: masculine, feminine, neuter) and pluralising (three varieties: singular, dual, plural). In this sense, Greek and Latin express with precision, but differently, the complexity of what they specify, a way of accounting for difference. Grammatical functions contribute to expressing valued tasks in morphology and semantics.

From the Greek instructions apropos an epilogue, a method guides associations in classifying the essays of this issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly* in three classes, according to their relations to the meanings expressed by words – verb, substantive, adjective – of this family.

In the first class, the verbs ἐπιλογ-εύω and -ίζομαι describe a way of existing, of manifesting a way of existing, in a venture that could use Sartre's expression in *Les chemins de la liberté: L'âge de raison* (1945): facing oneself as 'se boire sans soif' (20). In other contributions to the journal, this type of sign is recounted under biological figurations by Stephanie Li in enunciating a race without the 'cling' or in the economic figurations of Ashley Dawson particularising 'green capitalism' and 'human waste', as well as in cultural figurations of Ben Carrington portraying the oxymoron represented in 'black Britons' and detailing its relation to cultural and 'racial identity'.

In sum, in this first class of texts, naming establishes a process, a dynamic relation in the activity of the verb, the act of 'epiloguing' on beings and things. The verb is inflected by the texts, all of which tend to support the idea of a measure of something in the world, the 1960s referential of Carrington's study, for instance.

The substantives ἐπιλόγ-εον/ος and ἐπιλόγ-ισμα, the second class of texts, point out a belonging, the possessing of a condition that can be signified as substantial, in pride or in shame, and the interrogation of one's being as a unity exploding towards something beyond itself. Commenting on acting and reflecting, the consciousness of being, the consciousness of existing, an epilogue designs a symbolic overture everywhere: *en avant, en arrière de soi, jamais en soi*, the reality of a constant elsewhere, to express it in existentialist language. The subject of the 'black intellectual' actuates to the foundation of one's being tied to a universe, in which to apprehend one's contingency and invent one's necessity in procedures of having, doing and being. To quote again Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, these are 'the cardinal categories of human reality, [and] under them are subsumed all types of human conduct' (1956: 407). The text here that can relate most appropriately to such a perspective is Judith Byfield's consideration about the 'job' of the intellectual in her article on 'Finding Voice, Giving Voice: Gender Politics and Social Change'. The invocation of the freedom is alerted in the figure of the woman artisan. In an exemplary manner, in Byfield's own confession, she seems to state that this is her testimony. Byfield brings to mind a picture from Edmond Joly's *Le cantique du vitrail* (1934). Issued from what Joly called 'a Goethe secret', a decoding by Faust of women's enigmatic power, it coincides with the forbidden mystery par excellence, the origin of knowledge and the aim of things. That is the privilege of mothers: '*les régulatrices conscientes de la suprême aventure du Destin ultime*' (the conscious regulators of the supreme venture of the ultimate Destiny) (190–1).

In the same style of modality, one would align the contribution in this issue of David R. Roediger on 'A White Intellectual among Thinking Black Intellectuals: George Rawick and the Settings of Genius'. Roediger deals with the question of who is black and in whose cause to list the politically motivated. This piece transcends boundaries in racial experience, exacts a humanist vocation, accounts for the Rawick model and the communist lure. In the same vein, there is also Jeffrey Allen Tucker's piece, with its focus on Samuel R. Delany's science fiction, which opens up challenging horizons. It unfolds connections between cultural history and imagination, in the recognition of a strong interconnectedness between fiction and disobedience, all equally testifying to the real world.

Finally, in the third class, the adjective ἐπιλογιστικός qualifies, attributes and predicates with the usual sense of affirming, asserting or denying something of the subject. In the *South Atlantic Quarterly* issue, to read Marlon B. Ross's thoughts on whiting a monument, whiting a body, Olúfémi Táíwò's reflection on

reading history as practising philosophy as history, or Farred's on St Augustine and the poetics of confession is to face at least two main topics. The first is an awareness in deconstructing the histories of racial conflicts. An illustration is given in the concordance of a monument that symbolises a cultural body. What it names raises questions vis-à-vis the case that names itself: Joe Louis. There is more – the second topic. As in Farred's reading of Augustine, it concerns the meaning of the project itself, that of the subject, the consciousness-of-an-object in a self, a subject affirming a self in the foundation of possibles about anti-racist critiques.

It is obvious here that, to refer to an approach such as Paul Saka's *How to Think about Meaning* (2007), through intuition, knowledge comes to be. Saka says it well about negative knowledge: 'We often have negative knowledge, knowledge that a proposed truth-condition is incorrect, even though we virtually never command positive knowledge, knowledge that a proposed truth-condition is correct. But negative knowledge isn't possible where there's no positive knowledge. Denying truth-conditionalism pre-supposes truth-conditionalism' (100).

This regrouping of the texts brings to light a presence, the immediacy of a fascination. Through their awareness of and intention for balancing cultural economies of the world, reading metaphors – confronting their predicaments – substantiates the ambiguity of any revelation in ways of existing, of knowing, from the negative it witnesses to. To accent it, shouldn't one then re-evaluate this collection from principles of distinction and test the notion of an archaeology of knowledge?

Understanding this difference

In *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (1993), Cedric J. Robinson uses the notion of 'historical archaeology of the Black Radical tradition' (125). Among the keys to such a particular history are, first of all, mere slaves, black for red and, finally, resistance of the subjugated in North America, Brazil and the West Indies. They mark narratives about the sociology of human relations. For roots of the consciousness that cemented this radical tradition, Robinson names two main factors. First, there is the privilege of a dominant historical thought as it is. Second, linked to the destruction of the African past of the enslaved, there is an interrelation of marks that extends the condition of humans to the genesis of 'modernity'. On this point, the notion demands postulates. For example, referring to W.E.B. Du Bois and C.L.R. James, Robinson writes:

Marxism has been the prior commitment, the first encompassing and conscious experience of organized opposition to racism, exploitation, and domination. As Marxists, their apprenticeships proved to be significant, but ultimately unsatisfactory. In time, events and experience drew them towards Black Radicalism and the discovery of a collective Black resistance inspired by an enduring cultural complex or historical apprehension (5).

The memories of a destiny parallel the experience of a radical trauma; the recitation of the past reflects the destiny to which a consciousness relates for a necessary reinvention in the continuum of time. Contemporary with Robinson's Marxist analysis, one might bring in its mirror other statements of the period from which to speculate about the positions of this issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly*.

Let us refer to a few significant statements and correlate them to essays in this issue:

1. A radical feminist position: Patricia Hill Collins's *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (1990). A professor of African-American studies at the University of Cincinnati, Collins asserts epistemological shifts that would explain a new type of dialogue within the American discourse made possible by the experiential authority of African-American women. In terms of 'rethinking black women's activism' and 'sexual politics of black womanhood' (to take the titles of two chapters in *Black Feminist Thought*), she asserts that these 'must be substantiated by Black women's sense of . . . their own experience' (194–5). In opposition to the dominant epistemology, she upholds an 'Afrocentric feminist' one and situates herself in a dialogical rapport with Barbara Smith. For her part, Smith stipulates the radical as 'trying to make coalitions with people who are different from you', to which Collins responds: 'I feel it is radical to be dealing with race and sex and class and sexual identity all at one time.' There, an accent seems to make a difference. The similarities of the objectives implicate each other.
2. A sociological interview: *How Race Is Lived in America: Pulling Together, Pulling Apart* (2001) by correspondents of *The New York Times* and Joseph Lelyveld. This report, exploring the economy of race relations, brought to light a paradoxical situation. Lelyveld, the executive director of the *Times*, notes in the introduction that the 'central conundrum of American democracy can still be found in the legacy of human slavery and the

relationship between blacks and whites' (xviii). Impacting on the future of democratic possibilities, the relation to this past would imprint new issues, 'perspectives involving Hispanics and Asian Americans – a sense also that while their road is not easy, it is neither as rough nor as twisting as that of blacks'. He concludes with an affirmation that 'in simplest terms . . . race is still very much lived in America, that the story of our struggle to become one nation is far from over, that the challenge has not receded' (xix).

3. A political affirmation: Christopher Edley Jr, *Not All Black and White: Affirmative Action, Race, and American Values* (1996). Edley, who served in 1995 as special counsel to the president of the United States, analyses the history of inequality and its constraints. He positions himself vis-à-vis how and why to make choices about values in a vision of a colour-blind society. In the final analysis, it is safe to sort his three introductory chapters by what they engender: a sense of affirmative action as intimately related to the very history of the country.
4. A moral dilemma: *Subjugation and Bondage: Critical Essays on Slavery and Social Philosophy* (1998), edited by Tommy L. Lott. In his contribution to the collection, Joshua Cohen deliberates on the measure of an ethical judgement. Connecting the history of the country to that of slavery, he emphasises a point: 'To be sure, an explanation of the demise of slavery might proceed without embracing the ethical account of that explanation, simply by citing the injustice-making properties – the properties moral reasoning singles out in condemning slavery. Injustice, in short, is not indispensable to the explanation' (317). His sober reflection about relationships of satisfaction of interest and the viability of social arrangements leads him to consider 'whether more reflective forms of historical and social inquiry condemn that practice'. His response: 'My answer is qualified: no.'

These four statements might be representative of ways that some intellectuals have reflected on their commitment to their own history and the history of the United States. This was more than ten years ago. Using the three axes defined from three Greek concepts, it is of interest to see how they accentuate conceptual areas of interferences. They seem to be mainly of the order of moral judgement. Could they be restrained from the historical archaeology of Robinson and, in terms of efficiency, be conformed to principles of a different angle in the archaeology of knowledge? One could stress the following observations from Michel Foucault's

The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language (1972a). This schema correlates remarkably the intellectual coincidences between the essays in this issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly*, in the perspectives of Robinson and Foucault:

1. The *principle of reversal* permits an analyst to 'recognize the negative activity of the cutting out and rarefaction of discourse' (Foucault 1972a: 229). To this reversal that demands a new attention to its object, defining a practice vis-à-vis the tradition it wishes to transcend, one can connect the meaning of most of the essays. They would include, for instance, connecting the trauma of slavery and the anger created by the whitening of Detroit's Monument to Joe Louis. Other essays comment on cultural integration through metaphors that might be more than a figure, as in Toni Morrison's classification of Bill Clinton as the first black president (in Li 2010). Finally, the critique of green capitalism from an attitude of expediency engages what Dawson calls 'the ethnic cleansing of New Orleans in the wake of Katrina'. This exercise can easily be continued, collecting explicit passages, the implicitness of some significations and figures from essays, by moderating them along the principles of both Robinson's and Foucault's archaeologies, thus consorting Robinson's criteria on the roots of a radical tradition and Foucault's methodological hypotheses.
2. The *principle of discontinuity* would accent the 'discontinuous activity' (Foucault 1972a: 229) of an African-American experience within a plurality of discursive orientations. In the very deviation they establish vis-à-vis other practices, they would testify to impulses about a diversity of objects but still be strictly controlled by at least ethical norms of justification. On this, one can easily quote Byfield's 'Finding Voice, Giving Voice' and Táíwò's '“The Love of Freedom Brought Us Here”'.
3. The *principle of specificity*: this idea postulates 'that a particular discourse cannot be resolved by prior system of significations' (Foucault 1972a: 229). It magnifies the arbitrariness of the relation between a discourse and what it translates, its own objects and experience. This is a privilege that it would recognise in any field, including the very space that explains it. The best illustration, indeed, is Carrington's description of the interdependence between British ethos, intellectual oxymorons and cultural studies.
4. The *principle of exteriority* for any discourse is described by 'looking for its external conditions of existence, for that which gives rise to the chance

series of events and fixes its limits' (Foucault 1972a: 229). It defines an activity, questioning procedures in order to depict marginal and subjugated knowledges, which should credit the contradictions in the history of ideas with their own conditions of possibility. Good illustrations are given by Tucker's essay on Delany's utopian perception and science fiction creativity and by Farred's remodelling of St Augustine's features.

The conjunction of Foucault and Robinson restrains the procedures of the essays as statements of subjects attentive to the fact that the past can be reduced to a brute thing. It can be reinvented in a way to highlight the ambiguous opposite of a heaven of values or to accent its mythical splendour.

In general, a meditation such as this, on a list of exemplary works, brings about an uneasy feeling regarding how to elicit the unthinkable of history and to translate human traumas into conceptualities. From all of the essays, learned positions tend to correspond to moral sentences. Often they are inclined toward metaethics.

Inscribed in a history of dissatisfaction from which to advocate the interdependence that, from Cornel West's suggestions in *Postmodernism and Black America* (1993), would cohere 'black intellectuals' in an organic link with 'black life' and 'black resistance', a collective memory demands a straight obedience to what it signifies. Its compendia maintain an orthodoxy of a truth. Its valid interpretation is held by, for example, Thomas R. Frazier's *Afro-American History* (1988), John Edgar Wideman's *My Soul Has Grown Deep* (2001), Kai Wright's *The African-American Archive* (2001) and Elizabeth McHenry's *Forgotten Readers* (2002).

The price of faithfulness to one's memory can hardly divorce itself from the quest for an authentic identity. That is a major issue. On this point, bell hooks has magnificently synthesised this difficulty in her essay 'Postmodern Blackness':

The unwillingness to critique essentialism on the part of many African-Americans is rooted in the fear that it will cause folks to lose sight of the specific history and experience of African-Americans and the unique sensibilities and culture that arise from that experience. An adequate response to this concern is to critique essentialism while emphasizing the significance of 'the authority of experience'. There is a radical difference between a repudiation of the idea that there is a black 'essence' and recognition of the way black identity has been specifically constituted in the experience of exile and struggle (122).

In reason, the *South Atlantic Quarterly* publication attests to judgements about political rights and wrongs, for instance, in terms of green capitalism and judgements about the politics of race, as in the case of George Rawick's engagement in a black cause. They oblige finally the myth of roots. Yet, all of them are critical of the shortcomings of the democratic project that still actualises a dilemma in terms of power. Referring to the symbolics of 'black for red' in Robinson's archaeology, this quotation from William Poundstone would illuminate a number of knots: 'When two reds interact for the first time, each cooperates. When two blues with no history interact, both cooperate. But when a red and blue interact, each defects ("because you can't trust those guys")' (1992: 252).

Who can give credit unconditionally to history and to judgements of its ethical readings? Sources of instability, they promote and condemn simultaneously narratives entailing their truths. There is a question about the rationality of historical dynamics and another question about the moral coherence in conflicts of interpretation. Thus, for instance, from *Subjugation and Bondage*, Cohen notes the following views, introduced by the metaphor of 'Scaffold and Throne': 'Appeals to the injustice of slavery can play a role in explaining the demise of slavery. But that role is limited, no greater than the advantages conferred by moral improvements. Those limits in turn underscore the length of the arc of the moral universe' (1998: 317). One can branch here into two avenues from the *South Atlantic Quarterly*: on the one hand, Ross's 'An Anatomy of the Race Icon: Joe Louis as Fetish-Idol in Postmodern America' and, on the other hand, Tucker's approach to the universe of intelligence in Delany's science fiction.

The task, a manner

In her introduction to Jesse Redmon Fauset's *Plum Bun: A Novel Without a Moral* (1990), first published in 1928, Deborah McDowell relates an interrogation with respect to black intellectuals and the production of knowledge about 'race' during the symposium organised by *Crisis* in March to December 1926: 'The Negro in art: how shall he be portrayed?' (1990: xxv) The question posed by Du Bois, *Crisis*'s editor, interpreted the publishing industry's demand for the 'primitive exotic' as the demand for the depiction of black sexuality. Du Bois asked a variety of writers – both white and black – to respond to questions such as:

Is not the continual portrayal of the sordid foolish and criminal among Negroes convincing the world that this and this alone . . . is really and essentially negroid . . . ? Is there not a real danger that young colored

writers will be tempted to follow the popular trend in portraying Negro character in the underworld rather than seeking to paint the truth about themselves and their own social class (xxv)?

In a critical detachment, the manners of this issue of the *South Atlantic Quarterly* present ways of existing, processes in reading them today, in facing issues of one's name at its best or at its worst. It is a manner of being, ἐπιλογεύω; a manner of doing, ἐπιλόγειν; and a manner of having, ἐπιλογιστικός. The exemplarity of a few successive codes can explain this epilogue. First, Byfield's on a manner of existing, which extols what counts in truth, identifying with one's job. It brings to mind the special volume edited by Eustace Palmer on *Of War and Women, Oppression and Optimism* (2008). And, certainly now-classical positions of Obioma Nnaemeka, for instance (see 1998). Secondly, there is Tucker's view on a utopian manner of doing it. In sum, the idea of a 'Sense of Wonder'. He states it convincingly, quoting Delany: 'Living on a world where, if you want to know something – anything, anything at all! – all you have to do is think about it, and the answer pops into your head' (2004: 253) And finally, Farred's on a manner of imagining and having a model, from a hypothesis that 'without philosophy Augustine would not have had the intellectual means, the epistemological conditions in which he could struggle with faith' (2010: 416).

Byfield comments on a doxa, an expected opinion and a duty, within the practice of a discipline. A historian, she dwells on the origin of a vocation. Remembering reflects on its conditions of probability and a freedom recites a context that can link it to a taste for intellectual work, to perspectives in a global experience. Remembering comes to signify a work of decoding stories and bringing together work on women artisans and gender along with understanding the literature on colonial history. Tucker accents two rules of belonging and acting accordingly: faithfulness to a tradition, more exactly an inscription in one's own cultural history and, at the same time, a will to knowledge committed to creativity. With Farred, imagining the best in one's project corresponds to the demands of a perpetual recommencement, the task of a constant grounding of one's ideal.

For each manner there is a hero: the self of Byfield, the fictional character and universe to invent in Tucker and the rediscovery of Augustine's transcendence in Farred's study.

The singularity of the essays, the search for a heroic name, could be read as accenting the meaning of being a black intellectual. In this sense, they transform

the preoccupation that would explain Randall Kennedy's deconstruction of a name in *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word* (2002). It is the negation in representation of what such an antithetical code might still inspire. Take the book that sparked a marketing revolution – Al Ries and Jack Trout's *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind* (2001). On the name that hooks, to use its language, the name that doesn't belong to the past, the marketing principle for selling recommends actions such as 'bringing the product out of the closet. The same principle is involved in the shift from colored to Negro to black' (76). Does this imply that this issue of the *South Atlantic Quarterly* would endorse without reservation the entries on *race* and *ethnicity* in the American Psychological Association's *Dictionary of Psychology* (Vandenbos 2006)? Two essays elaborate on this problem: Li's, on how the 'development of "race-specific, race-free language" has important consequences in the public sphere' and Ross's, on the correspondence between symbolics of beings-of-lack versus beings-of-transcendence.

Names are concepts. Erected in symbols, they expose moral norms. In ways of existence, an individual such as Rawick fuses with a political paradigm in commitment. In ways of acting, the foundation of cultural studies exemplifies a modality for reflecting oneself. In ways of having, Farred's St Augustine brings to the fore the sign of an election, the intellectual's wish to become the alter ego of a divinity. On this point of crossing, aesthetics meet a teleological purpose. Associations with absent voices might commend Afrocentrists' allegories. One recalls Exodus 7:1: 'I have made you a god to Pharaoh.' In Richard Elliott Friedman's stimulating study *The Disappearance of God: A Divine Mystery* (1995), one discovers the identification of the human and the divine, a union of minds. In the passage of Exodus just mentioned, the first-person 'I' at the beginning of the quotation refers to God: 'Thus said Yaweh: about midnight, I am going through Egypt' (146). In the last lines, the 'I' refers to Moses: 'So that you will know that Yaweh is distinguishing between Egypt and Israel . . . and, after that, I will go' (147). Human mediations transfer Yaweh's commandments to its own responsibility.

What is being raised here outlines an idea that belongs to rational consensus in formulating the question of an intellectual's responsibility within a community of work. It brings to mind Enrique Dussel's analysis of rational consensus in his *Twenty Theses on Politics* (2008). The notion implies for Dussel an exegesis and the conjunction of wills for members of a class. The aim of organising a 'common will to live' and following the 'possibility of uniting the blind force of will is the

proper function of practical-discursive reason', the commitment of intellectuals meeting a *consensus populi*; that is, an expectation out there, expressing itself through a 'communicative power' (14–15).

In this spirit, the epilogue, at a critical distance, has been reading its own process of commenting on the issue, thanks to movements suscitated by its internal aspects: a verb exposing and commenting, ἐπιλογεύω; a substantive substantiating the complexity of its object, ἐπιλόγεον; and an adjective guiding a prudence in association and judgement, ἐπιλογιστικός. Indeed, one could critique the method of such a reason and its cultural resources that might seem far away from the condition described in the issue.

Going back to Greek conceptualities was a manner of conceiving a strategy in cultural bargaining, a distance, a double bind that, in serenity, could expose its strategy for subalternating multiple aspects of questions to the authority of texts and qualify the effects of the exercise as a manner of managing existential anxieties. The awareness of thinking one's being in the world, the face of the other represented by the texts and the power of authorship, is an absolute experience of one's search for an impossible totality. One might then believe that, through the exercise of an epilogue, a knowledge might come out and, within the limits of interrogations, contribute to an appraisal of possibilities allowed by texts. In brief, writing an epilogue comes to signify how to try to recapture one's consciousness in the fascination about manners of others' writings.

As the Cameroonian philosopher Fabien Eboussi Boulaga puts it in *Christianity Without Fetishes* (1984):

Not being this, or not believing that, is unimportant. The only important thing is the manner of not being or not believing. The sharing that it initiates is located beneath allegiances, doctrinal allegations, and programmes. It founds and justifies them. As Kierkegaard put it:

Altogether equal in importance to the truth, indeed, even more important than the truth, is the manner in which it is accepted – and it would not be of much use to lead thousands to accept the truth, if, precisely by the manner in which they accepted it, they were to find themselves excluded from it (229).

14 October 2009

Note

1. This chapter was originally published as 'Masques aux quatre points: A Meditation', an epilogue to *South Atlantic Quarterly* 109 (2): 431–46. It has been reprinted here with permission.

Coda

*To the memory of Franz Crabay, philosopher
To the École Normale Supérieure, rue d'Ulm, in gratitude*

There stood god-like Plato, who erst in Athens revealed the secret paths
of heaven-thoughts virtue.

— W.R. Paton, *The Greek Anthology*

Two years after the 'Introduction: *Refaire*', this coda is to serve as a statement. It closes a time of reflection on fault lines and concludes this book. The coda is a *reprendre* and comments on a way of revisiting the chapters of the book and a way of resituating them within a moral epistemology. Somehow a process, it expresses ways of relating to issues that made possible the chapters. It refers to them and reproblematises angles from what should be an agent's ethics in relation to a non-negotiable line about human dignity.

One lesson contributed to the process. 'From where exactly do you speak?' Clear, the question seemed odd. Yet it was opening a window. It did not seem to have a clear connection to a lecture on technicalities concerning alterity and some of the Enlightenment paradoxes on human nature. The question seemed concerned with the origin of my speech. To a response that referred to a few consulted sources from the French tradition, the question reformulated itself differently and seemed to focus on filiations. In other words, the same issue. A polite confrontation was taking place and was focusing on how a particular claim and a universal one can stand in the same effort. This seemed a minor aspect of the presentation. If a belief in the singularity of a subjective voice was the problem because it was posited from Claude Lévi-Strauss's 'Kantism without a transcendental subject', this evaluation of Paul Ricoeur's accepted by Lévi-Strauss himself, then an elegant exit from the now, a public tension, was to bring in the issue of liberty and invoke Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophy.

One

Standing in a corner, the speaker seemed to be challenging something else. How many people were present in this medium-sized conference room? Possibly around one hundred and fifty, perhaps sixty. Facing such an international community of philosophy students and a few academics, mostly from the social sciences and humanities, one is concerned by two attitudes, politeness for a public conversation and truthfulness to a method. A way of combining them might be dialogical and in that case it does not raise eyebrows, or confrontational then it passes for rude. A sound exit was to package an argument around the right of a *parole*. On liberty of translation, and concerning non-Western cultures, a *parole* can convey conditionals vis-à-vis the abstract reality of a *langue* and accent its relative aspects. The response seemed to relax the atmosphere. And the conversation took on an expected routine. Years after this experience, it still stands as a good case to be used in order to problematise manners of inscription in a disciplinary tradition and manners of affirming an African presence in the discipline. In other words, here is a *parole* reflecting on its own faithfulness to both a *langue* and its own liberty and apprehending its own practice in the discipline as a statement within an intercultural space.

To remember this happening translates a reading in anxiety. A picture and its patterns preserve something that resembles a text and hidden ideas to be apprehended. There are two entries. On the one hand, the picture of being a cultural migrant in relation to Sartre and the intellectual atmosphere that can be reconstructed. On the other hand, the conviction of being a full citizen in a tradition and testifying to it from the solidity of its own legacy and in the Greek language.

Did what was being perceived then correspond to the image that is imposing itself now within a recollection that attempts to reactualise a climate? A subject is discriminating facts from sets of sentiments and directing a meaning, objectively determining the topic of the presentation and consequently a manner of engaging one's own inscription in a discipline. To chronicle such an event memorialises a dynamic about one's limitations. One, a reading of crucial points and their genealogy in competing positions. Two, a discerning of politics of reading from today's political engagements and their implications in racial representations about who is what in humanities and social sciences. Three, facing explanations about the history of a variety of practices in reading. A Greek norm commands ways of commenting about the said and the unsaid in philology and philosophy. It

states an unconditional obedience to what texts command in their own linguistic expressions. In sum, we should all be speaking Greek and Latin. There is no sufficient reason not to submit to such a basic requirement. To accept such an angle and recollect the scene of confrontation might bring too easily dissociations in terms of cultural registers in disciplines. A more decent way could translate the whole affair in terms of an analogic experience about a matter of faith and its variations apropos what Paul Tillich in *Dynamics of Faith* (2001) refers to as distorted intellect, commitment, emotion.

The chapters of this book are fundamentally, after all, mediations in faith, understood in the ordinary sense of the word. They cover roughly fifteen years of an obedience to a way of relating to African experiences and expressions in today's global world. They reflect a perception and a personal conviction. They address issues in intellectual perspective. They testify to ethical choices. Indeed, these are assumed in subjective views from intercultural predicaments. All of them are obsessed with two demands. There is, on the one hand, the issue of an inscription in a Greek tradition and there is, on the other hand, the issue of a fidelity to a cultural singularity. It has been ridiculed by people whose competence can be easily questioned. In sum, the chapters are works relying on demands of both a disciplinary practice and the cultural origin of an African-born student of human and social affairs. My subjective consciousness submits freely to intellectual and spiritual requirements. In the disciplines, philology or philosophy, there are rules that can be synthesised from elementary demands about setting coherent views. One, present methodologically a case, construct it, deconstruct it, and rewrite it by dissociating its internal parts. Two, through disciplinary quotations and references and commonsensical rules, reformulate the case in your own language. Three, finally, conclude by marking opposed merits of deduced statements. Indeed, one inscribes oneself subjectively in this type of elementary requirement for a way of reflecting on texts and experience.

The chapters of this book have something in common. They obey a choice to face problems in a meditative mood. They do not avoid repetitions; they multiply boundaries of interpretation; they are commentaries on past and present ethical propositions. The processual method deals in contradictions. Thus, it creates and recreates conflictual spaces without relaxing demanding rules. There are issues concerning information and research and those concerning an analysis immersed in the tension between good reasons to agree and good reasons to disagree on racial particulars. All of them always engage in an unconditional fidelity to texts they remember and those they quote.

This is to say that objective determinants have contributed to a cultural model. One can easily reconstruct this model by hypothesising on procedures that, through selection and education, contributed to the promotion of a type of African intellectual in West and Central Africa at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. This model should be restrained and localised in African francophone countries from which the debate on African philosophy sprang. Almost all its practitioners were born into an African language and within Christianity or Islam. At seven or eight, the boy was selected for an education in French at a boarding school. By the time he was twenty, the young man was accessing a higher education in ecclesiastical things. That is a tunnel in intellectual conversion. In other words, a Western schooling system cuts a young man from his native milieu. Protestant and Catholic environments trained most students for the ministry. A long education would often include philosophy beside religious and philological studies of Hebrew, Greek and Latin. The sociological reality of the model can be tested from three entries. One, the debate on African philosophy is initiated by ecclesiastics. Two, till the early 1980s, almost all African contributors to discussions on African philosophy had been trained by missionary institutions. Three, until the interventions of Franz Crahay in 1965 and Fabien Eboussi Boulaga in 1968, all foundational texts about philosophy, those by Placied Tempels (1945), Theodore Theuws (1951), Alexis Kagame (1956) and Vincent Mulago (1955), for example, have all of them a Christian apologetic aim.

Africans, who directly or indirectly were also associated with Christian churches, made critical appraisals and critiques in the following years. Before attending university, most of them had been trained in seminaries. The concept of model should be used here to designate a grounding structure, which through procedures of segregation and selection, invented a type of intellectual within the colonial context of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth. In different words, born within these structures, the cultural agent was to correspond to an objective measure in cultural inclusion in terms of values and exclusion in terms of political rights. Indeed, one might bring in references to more englobing mechanisms. For instance, policies predicated by applied anthropology and their trends in social engineering or Christian conversion policies and their trends in politics of religious integration. Indeed, strictly speaking, it would be excessive to compare applied anthropology to Christian theologies of mission as expounded, for instance, by Pierre Charles who is presented in Chapter 2 of this book. All these elements illustrate interactions apropos cultural conversion. They are about methods in the

domestication of human minds. They created a type of mind for Christian values. One would distinguish, for instance, this Christian model that discriminates the domain of faith from the domain of the profane, versus that of an African Muslim intellectual who cannot but be a total believer. It is from these distinctions that one would invoke the challenge of the diversity principle and how it was to correspond and not to correspond to what today is called a diversity thesis. Let us quote a normative definition from the excellent book edited by Stephen Satris, *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Moral Issues*: 'The diversity thesis. What is considered morally right and wrong varies from society to society, so that there are no universal moral standards held by all societies' (2004: 21).

Two

A cultural fault line is a symbol. Along other lines and their effects, it cannot but reflect its own paradox. In this book, a metaphor, it functions in variations. Its figures explain, contradict or correct models. It looks for an explanation. For instance, on the one hand, meditations on Maya Angelou or on a will to truth and terror and, on the other hand, the letter facing the concept of symbolic mediations, such as Sudanese migration or the aesthetics of commitment about the Dakar biennial with regard to Yacouba Konaté's book. All these events look for an explanation. For instance, concrete illustrations are represented in other interrelated chapters on political economy: the genesis of *Présence Africaine* reflects debates on politics of conversion, or the idea of *Lex perfecta praelecta recta*; the meditation on 'What is a line?' reflects reading 'Kata Nomon: Letter to René Devisch' on the practice of anthropology today. And so on.

In different words, reading and interpreting, these chapters try to explore more than affirm, celebrate more than judge. The obvious is not always transparent. In effect, to read anything brings to mind semantic values of words concerning the very exercise of reading. It includes demands for deciphering and understanding something, discovering and comprehending, penetrating and recognising what is not obvious. In all these paradoxical couples, to access a meaning seems to postulate an act of violence. In sum, one faces here the ambiguity of any reading. An inscription, reading is a decisive insertion in something else.

Let us put aside the idea of an expert system. It seems useless against the objectivity of fault lines. Yet in this book, this concept has been used as a metaphor to be understood from hermeneutic theories, mainly from the idea of resistance in intercultural confrontations. This idea delineates deductive and causal hypotheses. In their contexts, all things considered, exposés speculate on hidden or visible

causes, presuppositions and often cultural preconceptions. This dimension should not be neglected. Often a grammatical object in discourses, the African is still a simple direct or indirect complement in propositions.

There are here at least three interacting lines that a consciousness has been facing. There is first a reality that one would designate under the name of an African question in relation to ongoing globalising theories and processes. In effect, it is a reality commented upon in terms of three factors: an acceleration of history and an epistemological direction that has been determined by both colonial measures and an alphabetical revolution. We go to school to learn from Western grids. They refer to an intellectual reliance on economic and social sciences. They orient cultural exegeses. In the early 1960s, as a student of economics, such an intellectual submission led me to work on agricultural issues in East Africa. This was one of my first modest publications on induced constraints in our new world. In fact, it was a lesson on how the demands of the new world order expose constraints and how they orient our approaches to cases, quotations and analyses supporting positions learned from economic prerogatives of models. There is finally the line of a faithfulness to philological demands and their ancillary function to the service of an African practice of philosophy.

Not inscribing modalities, the perspectives made me an unbeliever in economic and social sciences signatures. In effect, fundamentally they are arguments supported by mathematical renderings from dominant figurations. This is through hypotheses. In effect, applied mathematics are hypothetical projections issued forth from fundamentals. Nothing else. People are impressed by mathematical figures. Often, these representations are mystifying projections in power relations. Then their prescriptions turn in the sense of both a devotion and its metaphorical values; that is, a code. Enclosed within another code by way of a critique of mathematical understanding and its social sciences projections, a case in testimony and dependence imposed itself. An induced anger led to *L'autre face du royaume* (1973). Its frustration may seem excessive. On the other hand, its critique still rings right.

In good method, let us reformulate all this business from the authority of an intervention, *L'affaire de la philosophie africaine: Au-delà de querelles* (2011) by the Cameroonian Fabien Eboussi Boulaga. The book is an event. Its title expresses a puzzle. In fact, one can say that it is enigmatic in the ordinary sense of the word. From my 1948 *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language*, enigmatic stands for what 'puts in difficulty as to the course of action or choice'. The apparent clarity of Eboussi's title is the first problem; the second is the ambiguity

of the word *affaire*. In principle, the French would distinguish semantic axes. From the Robert dictionary, let us separate two entries. There is, on the one hand, the idea of occupation or obligation and, on the other hand, through a semantic extension, this idea might meet issues of honour and right. The Robert quotes for illustration, the '*affaire Dreyfus*' and the '*affaire de la guerre d'Algérie*'. The first concerns a matter of ethnic prejudice; the second brings about issues of colonisation and decolonisation in North Africa. The two *affaires* cannot be separated from the matters of ethics they imply. In the early 1990s, an ambitious Cameroonian student doing research in Germany with funds from a Roman Catholic organisation confided in a young Central African graduate student on manners of preparing for the future. In order to make himself a celebrity he was going to devote himself to a critic of Eboussi's philosophy. Good Lord, even Christian churches still buy this type of cheap service. In his book, Eboussi expresses a puzzle by transcending the *affaire*. It is learned; it is elegant.

Related to Eboussi's title and in need of clarification in relation to African philosophy, let us note the following. The word *affaire* accents a need that is required for an explanation of the subtitle, *Au-delà des querelles*. Yet the concern of Eboussi's book might be elsewhere and cannot be detached from an interrogation about a disciplinary practice of philosophy in Africa. Between competing positions that are documented in *A Short History of African Philosophy* (2002) by Barry Hallen and by Bruce B. Janz's *Philosophy in an African Place* (2009) and the very practice of Eboussi himself – from his major works, including *La crise du muntu* (1977) and *Christianity Without Fetishes* (1984) – the best from unexpected *affaires* is the statement represented by his most recent book, *L'affaire de la philosophie africaine* (2011). The two first chapters introduce a question in its complexity. First, *Le bantou problématique* on the practice of the discipline and *Le retournement ou la relecture de Tempels*, which problematises a vision of the world. These are chapters that rewrite an intellectual cause and its equivocations. Second, the reflection of the last chapters: *L'époque de la philosophie africaine*; that is the saga of 'what is an African philosophy', is followed by *Aristotle et les bantoustans post-apartheid*. They reformulate tasks of a philosophical practice as a 'social and historical phenomenon in the world of today'. In another perspective, African modernity vis-à-vis the Enlightenment in interacting axes is concerned with the promotion of reason, the promotion of a courage to think, the promotion of a neat distinction between the limited freedom of action and the unlimited freedom of reflection.

The context references a variety of *affaires* in the practice of African philosophy. All of them could be situated from Eboussi's masterful book on *la crise du muntu*, and in relation to the debate on a good usage of the *Aufklärung* legacy, versus the idea of a service to the Christian church in Africa. In other words, one has, on the one hand, the 'Bantu philosophy *affaire*' and its extensions and, on the other hand, Tempels's *Jamaa affaire* and its expansion. They have been documented by an anthropologist and a sociologist: in *Jamaa: A Charismatic Movement in Katanga* (1971) by Johannes Fabian and in *The Jamaa and the Church: A Bantu Catholic Movement in Zaïre* (1977) by Willy de Craemer. These works bring to mind the concept of the dependency thesis and its cultural determinations. The concept could be understood as standing for a right to 'act in a certain way, depend[ing] on or . . . relative to the society to which one belongs'. This line is from a textbook we use to introduce first-year students to moral issues: Satris's *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Moral Issues* (2004).

The debate on an African practice of philosophy has been on necessary distinctions. The first intervention was from Franz Crahay, who was my philosophy professor back in the early 1960s. In his intervention on the conditions of African philosophy, he does not use the word *ethnophilosophy*. Marcien Towa uses the concept in his *Essai sur la problématique philosophique dans l'Afrique actuelle* (1971). Yet the word can be found in generally very poor ethnographic works on customs and beliefs in Africa, works of specialists in 'primitive philosophies'. Crahay ignored them. It is not an accident if one notes his remark on the innocuousness of Paul Radin's *Primitive Man as Philosopher*.

Domains should be distinguished. Each one is, strictly speaking, an *affaire* in its own right. On the one hand, the ethnophilosophical *affaire* and, on the other hand, Crahay's argument for the promotion of a disciplinary practice, another *affaire*. The two entries belong to a cultural history profoundly marked by a long nineteenth-century legacy. They are not neutral. Impractical and irresponsible would be the claim that in the name of science, anthropologists perverted the cultures they had studied. However, it would be simply naive not to see the catastrophic effects of the anthropologist on African traditions they have reified and modified in the name of disciplinary demands inaugurated by evolutionist trends and accented after the nineteenth-century Berlin Conference. One mocks easily someone who pretends to be God's spirit or voice. It is more difficult to deride in the same manner a text by someone speaking in the name of an unverifiable science. Let us be serious. What is really scientific in the practice of cultural anthropology compared to physical anthropology, demography or even sociology?

The two suggested entries to the *affaires* belong to a cultural history. At stake, disputes. One, what is the problem about being dispossessed and colonised, and lectured and sermonised about a science? Two, disputes about what is politically implied in necessary distinctions between knowledge and disciplinary systems.

In the language of Crahay, one is reading a tension between a system of knowledge and its opposite, an expectation in scientific knowledge. Crahay faces a pedagogical exigence for grounding a right to knowledge and a right to a discipline. Here is an approach to a matter of distinction. One, anthropology as a scientific project that intends to describe human ways of being and ways humans administer their cultures. Two, there is nothing wrong in calling philosophy any organised vision of the world. Three, the philosophical practice faces itself in the negation of a minority status. One remembers Kant's metaphor that rises with a decision the use one's reason and using it freely and systematically without relying on any authority argument. This is a principle. The good Kant contradicts himself elsewhere, including in the preface to his 'Conflicts of the Faculties'.

The *affaires* of ethnophilosophy really begin with a long article by Eboussi Boulaga on *bantou problématique* published in 1968 in *Présence Africaine*. In one sentence, it deals with what it means to practise a discipline. To say the least, the paper incommoded the direction of the journal. It recognised Tempels as a marker and the school he had initiated. One should situate the text and its dynamics against a number of interventions by African ecclesiastics. Eboussi's intervention was followed by two main publications: *La crise du muntu* (1977) and *Christianity Without Fetishes* (1984). Their distinctions transformed the *affaire* of African philosophy into a question about relations between two things. On the one hand, 'a rational way of knowledge, a science in the most general sense of the word', to quote Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (1.1.993b.21), this definition that opens the entry on philosophy in the French *Lalande Dictionary of Philosophy* and, on the other hand, a concrete practice of the discipline as he illustrates it brilliantly.

The *Lalande* definition has the merit of clarity. One might relate to it, from the practice of a history to be thought of from someone else's 'mat', to use Joseph Ki-Zerbo's expression. Giving to words their meaning, let us note the obvious. The anthropologists' presupposition on worldviews often for a good or bad reason tends to confuse its perspective with philosophical views. Ethnocentrism is not a disease. It is a position of oneself reading a different culture and, as such, a relation that is biased from two angles: one's own vision and that which is enacted by the intellectual grid used. One addresses a relation to objective constraints of

thinking within a culture that is not one's own, its discourse and its conditions. Yet, from a theoretical perspective, the discourse is ours in the manner we can relate to a long nineteenth century as a key to horizons of African predicaments within globalising panoramas. Here is one angle in political economy, according to John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge's *A Future Perfect: The Challenge and Hidden Promise of Globalization*: 'Most of the forty-five countries at the bottom of the United Nations Human Development Programme are African. The average African home consumes 20 percent less than it did a quarter century ago, and it is the only place where the proportion of children not attending school is rising' (2000: 256).

Here is a second angle to a cultural history. A number of similar statements could be multiplied. They obsessed chapters of this book. Going back in time, there is Pathé F. Diagne's *L'europhilosophie face à la pensée du négro-africain* (1981). Diagne's publication intended a reconfiguring of Edward Blyden's nineteenth-century project: 'Not on an emergence of "African philosophy" nor on a "philosophy in Africa", but a renaissance of a thought, a discourse, a modern vision of the world, proper to the Negro-African and efficient for his being in the world' (9).

Something should be emphasised: Diagne's book was an administrative report he had prepared for Alioune Diop, the director of *Présence Africaine*. An evaluation of a colloquium on philosophy and science that took place in Cotonou (Benin) in December 1978, the book can be summarised from two arguments: One, the intellectual ideology of *Présence Africaine* and its fault lines, which are analysed in Chapter 9 of this book and, two, its declared devotion to Cheikh Anta Diop's intellectual positions. The most striking features of the report are its critique of primitivist preconceptions; its rebuttal of what it labelled 'Europhilosophy'; that is, African propositions unconditionally submitted to canonical models including Marxist variations; and the promotion of African-based initiatives.

Diagne's careful reading of Franz Crahay's intervention is a challenge that should be revisited and corrected at least from one point. Crahay is not a colonialist. One reads carefully his intervention on the dubious justifications of colonisation published in *Lovania* in relation to the 1950s. Here is a third angle in methodological points. One faces the issue on how not to agree with Diagne's African nationalist view about Diop's obsession with ancient Egypt. In a careful reading of the ancient geography of the Mediterranean history, Egypt should belong to Asia Minor. As to requirements of philosophical practice, Diagne

does not validate Crahay's point. That is to be reconciled with the challenge they clarify. Yet his position could be reconsidered from an African responsibility. One would link it very easily to Michel Foucault's impatience apropos the unjustified arrogance of philosophy. From his *The Use of Pleasure* (1984), the following:

There is always something ludicrous in philosophical discourse. When it wants, from the outside, to dictate the law to the other discourses, telling them where their truth is and how to find it, or when it takes upon itself to inform their development into a naïve positivity; but it is entitled to explore what is, in its own truth, can be change through its exercise of a knowledge that is foreign to it (9).

Three

Here is a discipline, and that is one thing. It is to be situated within a history and its tradition that go back to the Greeks. One would accept it the way it is a discipline. As a matter of principle, like biology or physics for instance, philosophy is a branch of knowledge and an object of study conditioned by a complex cultural history. It has its own requirements. And absolutely nothing prevents it from adapting itself to non-Western environments. Here is the definition that Crahay suggested in his 1965 intervention on the conditions for an African philosophy: 'Philosophy is a reflection presenting precise characteristics: it is explicit, analytical, radically critical and autocritical, systematic at least in principle, and nevertheless open, bearing on experience, its human conditions, significations as well as the values its reveals' (63).

The definition has merits. First, there is the simplicity of its coherence. Second, by positing the discipline from its own internal features, this definition marks also possible ways of its practices. And, on the other hand, a closed figure, such a definition does not exclude other possible understandings and applications. Absolutely nothing prevents a reading of Edmund Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* (1977) that would parallel an interrogation on what is a subject in an oral tradition. Or in reading Descartes's *Discourse on Method* or *Meditationes* (1990) against a few African foundational narratives. Third, absolutely nothing in this understanding prevents anyone from accepting also, and otherwise, the concept of philosophy. To give precedence to Diagne's notion of Europhilosophy would mean to opt for a legible allegory about the tension between knowledge in general and disciplinary knowledges in particular. Yet, between the position of a friend, against the position of my former philosophy professor, let us not mystify ourselves.

Diagne is right in diagnosing the non-equivalence between knowledge systems and disciplinary practices. One thinks, for instance, of a remarkable illustration. A cultural transformation in a knowledge system induced a scientific hypothesis that distinguished oxygen from hydrogen and justifies Louis Althusser's reading of a discontinuity between phlogistical grids and scientific grids in chemistry. That is one thing. It does not convince anyone that it would reflect explicitly Marx's discontinuity in economic science vis-à-vis the Hegelian system. In brief, analogy is not equivalence. Crahay is right in elucidating elementary conditions for the practice of a discipline. For a telling illustration, astronomy is a science in its own right, and Laird Scranton's book on *The Science of the Dogon: Decoding the African Mystery Tradition* (2006) is a respectable treatise on the Dogon knowledge of stars. It is intriguing, yet it is not a treatise on astronomy. This case illustrates that one accepts the practicality of accepting disciplinary demands within their intellectual coherence and their inscription in a given speculative tradition. Any esoteric knowledge can be situated against scientific mysteries, more exactly, can contribute to new hypotheses. They can transform themselves into scientific formulations by being reformulated in the language of the discipline.

Everyday's respectable entries to the question of what philosophy is might include other values besides the technical ones. Philosophy as a body of requirements about ways of rendering the order of the world and philosophy as a corpus of intellectual systems, having explanatory functions within a community in relation to its own cultural past as well as being attentive to endogenous existential conditions. One might add also that it is without consequence that philosophy could be accepted as designation for manners of functioning proper to a social and professional group. In this sense, indeed there is a philosophy proper to professions, lawyers or medical doctors, and depending on cultural areas. Such an approach simply designates a way of being and of acting. In the same way, sure enough, there is a philosophy proper to nomads and agriculturalists. And this understanding designates a cultural style. One would also agree that the polysemy of the concept is a fact. Another fact is that, in Africa and elsewhere, philosophy should represent a disciplinary practice in its own right and with intrinsic specific rules.

We might do well to go back to Crahay's metaphor of an African philosophical 'take-off' and its five conditions. Here they are commented upon:

1. *The existence of a body of African philosophers living in an intellectually stimulating cultural milieu resolutely open to the world.* Three main propositions interact in this first condition. One, a body of practitioners;

two, a cadre of work; three, an unconditional openness. On the body of professionals in the discipline, there are today hundreds of Africans who are members of professional philosophical associations. They serve in academic settings, research centres, as well as in education and a number of auxiliary fields such as media, pedagogy, psychology and even politics. The openness has surely been testified to by their work. The exemplary history of *Negritude: An Annotated Bibliography* by Colette V. Michael (1988) illustrates mirror effects between dynamics of cultures and disciplinary demands attentive to anthropological effects on African systems.

2. *A good and critical use of external philosophical 'reflectors', which through the patience of the discipline, would promote in Africa a cross-cultural thought.* This issue should be related to the first condition. Moreover, one would observe that even where the structure of the milieu is poor, an exemplary philosophical activity might exist. Let us mark the following facts. On the one hand, a variety of books and articles by Africans deal with Western philosophers including Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, Sartre, etc. On the other hand, in departments of philosophy, the curriculum has integrated subjects dealing with local belief systems and these are interrogated according to rules of the profession. One should add three other facts. One, as to the openness, why not emphasise the dynamics existing between the analytical and continental orientations in the practice of the discipline and the effect on the African practice? No doubt, this is one of the very clear modalities of intellectual inscriptions. Two, conceptual horizons testify to 'reflectors', which are commented upon or which are inspiring explorations. Crahay used Spinoza's relation to the Jewish tradition as a model. Let us be clear. Briefly, in a philosophical practice, a reflector inspires an orientation; it does not necessarily determine it. The relation of Spinoza to Descartes is one thing. Another thing is Spinoza's way of relating himself existentially to the Jewish tradition. Three, from the preceding, an analogy can be constructed about the relation of African philosophers to Christian spiritual traditions. One would even suggest, for instance, that an African relation to Benedict of Nursia's *Rule* or to Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* could determine styles in inscriptions and indeed in philosophical expressions.
3. *A selective and flexible inventory of African values – be they attitudes, categories or symbols – which would possibly provoke a thought in the*

sense proposed by Paul Ricoeur. Of all the conditions mentioned so far, this one has been the most explored. And often abused. A number of factors contribute to its success. One can quote three determining factors. The first was initiated by Christian evangelisation and has been marked by the activity of collecting traditional customs for the sake of adapting them to the demands of a Christian conversion. Then there are, a second line, reports of travellers and merchants. Some of them go far back in time. One adds more recent documents and, in principle, more reliable renderings by social science researchers. It should be useful to emphasise the limits of credibility of some of the testimonies. Thus, for instance, a traveller's account might lack the anthropologist's methodic reflexes. Yet one should access critically anthropological works and distinguish the scientific from the tourist. This to say that if a traveller's account might lack the anthropologist's rigour, this does not mean that the traveller's information is necessarily inaccurate nor that the anthropologist's presentation would be necessarily faithful. We face the obligation of distinguishing the scientific and the rich variety of anthropologists in African studies, including the tourists among them.

The anthropologist's knowledge rightly passes as more exacting, but this does not imply that it is always unbiased. One admits the immense contribution of twentieth-century anthropologists to the library of African studies. Inspired by Kant's anthropology or often marked by Lévy-Bruhl, a few anthropologists have taken upon themselves the project of tracing new roads in philosophical avenues. This is for sure a stimulating challenge to philosophy when their work is critical enough. Such a transdisciplinary initiative crosses the road taken by a few Africa's philosophers who, after converting to social science or specialising in both philosophy and cultural anthropology, have decided to interrogate African traditional customs and knowledges.

Now might be the opportunity to focus on the idea of an inventory to be interrogated by African practitioners of philosophy. Comes to mind again the Spinoza model referred to for the way it situated itself vis-à-vis the Jewish tradition and impacted on an orientation in Western post-Cartesian philosophy with its political features. One would face then, the case of Christian policies and their conversion effects. One notes both the politics of evangelisation vis-à-vis research orientations and mainly the constancy of the translatability and untranslatability test of Christian traditions. And

now comes to mind Father Wilhelm Schmidt's *Die Ursprung der Gottesidee* (1933–49), the work of the journal he initiated and the work of his followers, including Father Schebesta. They marked approaches that transplanted philosophical explorations into pastoral politics of conversion, adaptation and inculturation of Christian precepts and concepts. From the 1950s onwards, the orientation influenced teachings and research in a number of ecclesiastical institutions of higher learning in Rome. African clerics began writing works marked by this orientation and looking for stepping stones in non-Christian cultures. It contributed directly to the ethnophilosophical debate. In actuality, as already mentioned, it is at the origin of the debate. Half a century after Crahay's intervention, one remarks on a paradox in inscriptions. Of the main academic histories of African philosophy, the best known and most quoted are works by Westerners: In English, Hallen (2002) and Janz (2009) and in French, Father Alfons Smet and Jean-Marie Van Parijs.

4. *A clear dissociation of reflective consciousness from mythical consciousness, which would imply and amplify major contrasts (subject versus object, I versus the other, nature versus supernature, sensible versus metaphysical, etc.).* This pedagogical wish of Crahay's does not need to be questioned, at least in principle. Transparent, it states an objective. It goes without saying that African students of philosophy assume themselves as subjects and objects of their own *paroles* within conflicts of traditions, a history of slavery and that of colonisation in relation to the history of Africa. And against the history of a discipline and the history of its traditions, the history of today's disciplinary requirements and their expressions from analytical or continental languages. As to the African background, almost half a century after Crahay expressed this condition on necessary dissociations, it has been read, and wrongly so, as condescending. That is a different problem. This condition has implications. The dissociation issue comes to mind immediately. It has been marking a necessary relation to paradigms of disciplinary trends as well as to a cultural responsibility vis-à-vis the Greek genesis of the discipline and its historical amplifications. They have been determining a language and its aims. Equally they reflect back on sociological conditions of the African practitioner. I am thinking of references to gender, class, race. The gender issue reflects itself in tensions of the international debates about feminism. The class concept is a variation of

something else that has nothing to do with African milieus. It approximates both the struggling of individuals in relation to classifications of philosophy departments and the rank of Western universities that delivered a grade to an African philosopher. In other words, it is the class of the Western institution that is giving a credibility to the voice of a practitioner. Finally, the racial factor. An englobing concept, race is also a lazy concept that, in philosophy as well as in the social sciences, seems to orient a practitioner. A black person is expected to be a specialist of black things, to read and interpret them according to academic grids. The demands do not name and cannot name what the black things are in the practice of philology or philosophy, for example. In relation to the African context, it follows that academic and cultural conditionings have been inducing asymmetrical rapports to the discipline. The mark is excessive and real. The voice of an African philosopher is read and evaluated from the Western institution class that gave to the person an academic diploma. One can state simply that in the discipline, we are observing already a progressive constitution of disciplinary 'bantustans'. This concept, used for the first time by Eboussi Boulaga, might be used to name an objective 'apartheid' in the discipline. Three features would qualify it. First, a supposedly poor linguistic expression of the practitioner; second, a geographical marginality in relation to ongoing trendy currents in the West; third, a marked style that would enclose it in past anti-colonial or postcolonial perspectives. The African fascination for Egypt becomes an expected way of responding to structural procedures of marginalisation.

As to trends of political scientists, the expected practice of the discipline would include three models, three *affaires* that are still major points of references:

- a) The ethnophilosophical issue and its effect. The debate tends to consider Tempels as the initiator of this trend. He is European and a Catholic missionary. Tempels's project cannot be detached from both its colonial milieu and the missionising objective that justified its expression. The last chapter of *Bantu Philosophy* (1949) is a testimony. Tempels's project intended to contribute to both a better colonisation of Africans and to a more efficient policy of Christianisation. Decoding the complexity of such an experience does not guarantee the truth of the commitment of a man who used philosophy as a key for a better

colonisation and Christianisation of the new people in the milieu he had chosen to assimilate with. Simply put, one decodes here a passion in the ordinary sense of the word. A Belgian priest had succeeded in converting himself into a Muluba. And in the name of his pastoral programme, his thinking carefully organised paradigms from the philosophy of Aquinas. *Bantu Philosophy* is the work of Tempels, a Muluba philosopher. One insults a generous commitment by forgetting its conditions of possibility.

- b) Comes in Eboussi Boulaga. A few concepts would possibly qualify the most original African philosophical work and its immense patience. It is organised by notions of duty and catharsis. Assuming an African condition totally and critically, it reactualises the Greek lesson and apprehends it through a reflection of a Christian affect, as well as the Hegelian lesson. Eboussi's work testifies to the singularity of the African condition today.
 - c) Paulin Hountondji should also be referred to as a model. He is one of the best-known African philosophers. His book, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality* (1983), a translation of a 1977 French publication is well known. One cannot forget here Diagne's critique of Europhilosophy and his critique of Marxism. They are critiques of misunderstood intellectual reflectors. Readers of Hountondji often miss the methodological demands that the project articulates. The book's positions basically meet those of Crahay and particularly his invitation for a critical dissociation of reflective consciousness and mythical consciousness.
5. *An examination of African intellectuals' main temptations – choices of philosophical systems apparently in accordance with urgent African needs (as in the case of Marxism and a pervasive cult of alterity which, despite its respectable objectives, might become an end in itself).* One should dissociate things. Thus, for instance and first, orientations that from lines of beliefs and from alterity principles have been actualising projects for a cultural difference in authenticity. It led to a disastrous political mystification in the Congo and in Togo. Second, a trend that has been using explanatory Marxist arguments in order to account for a difference in the political economy of a worldwide modernity. The two trends cannot be confused. One would add, third, that the postcolonial city has never been really

submitted to a Marxist vocation. The anti-colonial rhetoric has been engaged mainly in a questioning of colonial prerogatives from a critique of its policies. The short-lived African Association of Marxists might be its best illustration. Paradoxically, the stances for a cultural neutrality vis-à-vis one's own history would represent one of the best political questions. As a paradox, Achille Mbembe's approach is exemplary. It interprets under negative grids what in rigorous Marxist analysis Benoît Verhaegen qualified a consequence of the colonial rule.

Against the theoretical imperial discourse of today's left, there is something else. A trendy Western argument is missing the vigour of ethnicities' resurgences in globalisation processes. Its arguments might objectively be accenting what they pretend to negate about cultural dispositions in modernity. They end up comforting racial dispositions within class distinctions. In this sense, they convey signs of a possible scientific racism.

One would invoke now three names, the impact of their work and their arguments vis-à-vis Crahay's view on African temptations: J.F.A. Ajayi, Joseph Ki-Zerbo and Engelbert Mveng. Here are three Western-educated intellectuals, historians who have contributed immensely to the reconstruction of the African past. They are also thinkers who have involved themselves in politics with a Christian agenda. Here are three exemplars of their work: Ajayi's 'Colonialism: An Episode in African History' (1969), Ki-Zerbo's *Histoire de l'Afrique noire* (1972) and Mveng's *Les sources grecques de l'histoire négro-africaine* (1972). From the reception of their works, which are rarely discussed by philosophers and often ignored by anthropologists who tend to emphasise the empiricity of their own practice, one would note where the critiques miss the point about the practice of a discipline and the meaning of an ethics. One can reduce the *problématique* to three points, which transcend the conditions of Crahay and, at the same time, illustrate them:

- a) An emphasis on the tension between reason and unreason instead of the will to truth is criticised and often reduced to presuppositions of relativism. This critique ignores a political perspective. It ignores what the view is transcending. These are arguments apropos a history of Natural Law and its instrumentalisation in the nineteenth-century colonial project.

- b) An emphasis on intertextual commentary and on the discipline would be seen as a lack of originality in history and in philosophy. This critique ignores that the disciplines are a perpetual recommencement of what they have been exploring themselves. Unjustified and often biased, this critique ignores that the historical exercise in philosophy and in the social sciences cannot but aim at revindicating horizons of past explanations (exegeses) and revisiting lessons of originals (philology).
- c) An emphasis on fellowship of discourse and not of doctrine would be a sign of apostasy or of an African incapacity to integrate an intellectual tradition and assume its conditions philosophically and philologically. The other side would be that the inscription should be read as a poverty in thinking independently from models. This critique ignores that both the fellowship of discourse and the doctrine (whatever it is) demand an obedience. In *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Heidegger makes a good point when he writes: 'Real exegeses must show what does not stand in the world and is nevertheless said' (1969: 136). Thus we recreate it and comment on it.

Four

There is rarely a good explanation apropos a storm, in philosophy at least. The presented arguments emphasise an ethnicity by its intellectual inscription and account for a vocation. The recondition of such a view allows another aspect of ethnicity. From now on, why not consider ethnicity in its reflection for the singularity of a freedom, its facticity and belief in a discipline? These dimensions, each differently, might well illustrate a lot of things, including a will to clarification. In sum, also a question of justification. From the period of Tempels's *Bantu Philosophy* to contemporary critiques, there is no way of ignoring the violence of bad faith around us.

Reading the ancient text of the good old Lucian in the edited version of A.M. Harmon (1925) on 'Slander': *Calumiae non temere credendum*. It states what to think and what not to believe about an unfounded rumour that is propagated and amplified about practices in a political field. In a professional field, it has the same political and ethnic effects. Its objective is to disqualify someone or something. The image that comes to mind is the negation of harmony. This concept translates a combination of sounds that create a melody. A slander puts together negative representations with an intention of producing a noise that can be amplified. Instead of a musical note, the slander begins with a lie in a discipline. And the process of

amplification intends a demeaning narrative in an extended measure. Lucian's text begins with a commonsensical fact. It renders an obvious consideration that one admits easily. A slander is a political generality in its motivation and objective.

A slander, Lucian writes, is an accusation in secret. Furtive, as he writes, 'it is made without the cognizance of the accused and sustained by the uncontradicted assertion of one side'. This is wonderful translation by Harmon. To consider the whole narrative of Lucian from what's happening against some of us in philology and African philosophy is to face secondary structures, both ethnic and racial. The thought being slandered is approached from external reasons; that is, a language in which a 'me' is distorted by false affirmations. And finally, the accusers who have access to a supposed origin of the reason – published things or unpublished – have misread the language. More than often, these accusers do not seem to understand the passion and commitment that supported an original project – of a missionary, (Tempels, for instance); a thinker (Eboussi Boulaga); an African philosopher (Hountondji). What is being discredited is an otherness. That is the objective. What is constructed by things they claim to see is an idea they dislike; that is, an original inscription, its style and difference in the Greek legacy. The accusers fear the idea because they probably hate it. Or they hate it because they fear it. It is that simple.

To understand the word *inscription* from its Latin origin and its main semantic values means to comprehend what it signifies to 'write down' and to 'be written upon', to 'transfer to the writer', to 'ascribe'. The verb 'to inscribe' is to be related to concepts such as *inscriptus* from *inscribere* to 'write down'. One acknowledges what is written and what is transcribed. Fixed or attached to something, it is always a sign that can restate another reality. One can refer to a well-known case. By choosing to accommodate in Latin the Greek *ethicos* into the Latin *moralis*, Latin thinkers, Cicero and Seneca among many, process an inscription with its original Greek values. The idea of transfer, the second axis, can be illustrated by referring to the work of Septuaginta in establishing the canon of *scripta* at the genesis of Christianity. As to the idea of ascribing, the third axis, an excellent case would be Aquinas. For their apologetic success, the *Summa Contra Gentiles* and the *Summa Theologica*, impressive achievements, testify to a double inscription: a faithfulness to Christianity and representing a junction to the Greeks, and mainly to Aristotle. Specialists know how to decode this remarkable dependence and also how to name its genealogical conceptual marks and relate them to particular ancient sources. In Aquinas's work, 'admirable' is the adjective for his act of conjugating Greek

sources and Arab exegesis under the figure of 'The Philosopher'. Centuries of work by Islamists are rearticulated in a project that has reconstituted the Greek canon. An orthodox police has presided over brilliant procedures of reconstruction and inscription.

Another exemplary case of inscription is represented by Jean-Paul Sartre's *Dirty Hands*. In the play, there is a fascinating scene in which Hugo, the main character, has been drinking. And for a good reason. Against the principles of his education, he has promised to kill someone. Confronting his own consciousness, three things impose themselves: the issue of violence, its political reason and the values of his bourgeois education. There is a fabulous moment during which the character reflects on the identity of beings and things, including 'what a father of the family is, and at the same time, is not'. The meditation rings right. It also reflects a long memory. Sartre might not have consulted Diogenes Laertius's 'Pyrrho' (9.98). His text reflects faithfully the Greek.

On the father who is not a father, one rereads the play and admires the synthetic language of Hugo. On the concept of causality that surfaces in his language, one revisits Hume's consideration on the concept of cause. About inspiration or about the reproduction of inscriptions, one can create infinite processes by accenting cultural continuities and lacks. One could ridiculously even suggest that versions circulating about Mamy Water in the Brazzaville markets and among Dakar vendors these days would be stolen from the *Fifth Discourse* of Dio Chrysostom. And also, Dio's story itself directly comes from Homer. The cases are excessive lessons in prudence. Any educated student can find them, fabricate them, indict and annoy good and honest people.

Five

Jean Toussaint Desanti suggests in *Introduction à la phénoménologie* that the philosopher is 'simultaneously the *last born* and the *first recitant*. He gathers what is there and inaugurates the expressive *logos* of meaning' (1976: 136). The 'last born' is an inscription by his own *parole*. The prospect stands for a vocation. The subject declines himself, herself, as a *logos* that preceded its own experience. The recitant reflects a legacy within currents in the House. *Inscriptus*, *inscripta*, the 'last born' identifies with the recitant and cannot but be the one written upon and who recommences the experience of one's own reason in the past and the present of the discipline. My past is Greek and is not only Greek. My past is African and is not only African. My present is African.

The Latin *inscribere* strictly means to write and to inscribe. It tells of delivering something with marks on it, explicit and implicit. In this sense, the words testify to values. Through semantic extensions, the verb *inscribere* and thus those of the participle, *inscriptus*, *inscripta*, the concept expresses equally an affirmation and an attribution. In other words, the process; that is, the remembering of confrontations that initiated this Coda and exactly how the Coda has demanded this approach to inscriptions.

One might remember Michel Foucault's 'The Discourse on Language' (1972b). Its basic hypothesis rings solid: 'I am supposing that in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected . . . according to a certain number of procedures' (216). If such a project registers, very strongly, a will to truth, as a question mark, it inscribes itself in the practice of a discipline. Inspired by intellectual reflectors – Georges Canguilhem, Georges Dumézil and Jean Hyppolite – and facing the idea of philosophy as what it is in actuality, 'an endless task' and 'in process of continuous recommencement', among major issues that the text raises, there is one concerning the singularity of a practice. It cannot but be posited in relation to a history and vis-à-vis non-philosophy everywhere in the world, including in its own space. This is also the central theme of all non-Western practices of philosophy. The issue states itself within the genesis of a question mark. From such an understanding, one faces a reason and a justification of Crahay's conditions for an African philosophical take-off.

Contrary to Crahay's intervention in praise of the discipline and its demands, Foucault aimed at questioning a will to truth. Explicitly, he proposes new methodological principles in the work of the *logos* (reversal, discontinuity, specificity and exteriority); he also advances regulatory principles. They were to oppose an archaeology of knowledge to a traditional history of ideas. Two practices, a classical (Crahay) and an exploratory (Foucault) face the same tradition (Greek). They are this very tradition. The first emphasises a few requirements for a better appropriation of the practice. The second attempts a critique of the traditional practice in order to go beyond its own internal barriers.

For an easy illustration, on Crahay's side and his African expectations, Kant and Hegel for instance, should not be a problem. They are a question. On Foucault's side, on the other hand, one of the main questions centres on the possibility of thinking against Hegel. Yet carefully analysed, Foucault's project reformulates itself as what would be implied in not facing Hegel. Crahay's conditions have been presented and commented upon. Nowadays, they testify to dynamics of an African

practice of the discipline and indeed its *affaires*, especially the thorny issue of the conjugation of anthropology and philosophy.

In order to accent the power of disciplinary inscriptions, one could usefully refer to Foucault's list of procedures and emphasise the efficacy of determining features that might concern an African practice of the discipline. First, of external procedures to the discourse of the disciplines (rules of prohibitions, division of reason and unreason, the will to truth), a determining primacy goes to the will to truth. Two, of internal procedures controlling the discourse (commentary, author, discipline) and determining it powerfully is the exacting demand of the commentary in relation to the discipline itself. It cannot be separated from functional expectations of the fellowship of discourse vis-à-vis the discipline itself. To quote Foucault, let us be clear. About the fellowship of discourse, its 'function is to preserve or to reproduce discourse, but in order that it should circulate within a closed community, according to strict regulations, without those in position being dispossessed by this very distribution' (1972b: 225). On the other hand, as to the discipline itself, one remembers that 'a proposition must fulfill some onerous and complex conditions before it can be admitted within a discipline, before it can be pronounced true or false. It must be as Monsieur Canguilhem might say, "within the true" ' (224). Three, about the coherence of the discourse in relation to practitioners (ritual, fellowship of discourse, doctrine, social appropriation of discourse), a determining power would go to the ritual verifying those who can speak with an expected competence.

Docility and rigour are virtues in inscription. They also serve as grids in a language and its variations. They mark traces and guide the recitant. Ethical requirements are part of the very process of reciting the *logos* that is recommenced. In other words, the point is not really the truth, but how to speak about the truth according to expected rules. The dynamics suppose that moral absolutes on good and bad exist and concern mostly the idea of human dignity. How to guarantee such a belief?

In the name of a rigorous moral epistemology one can rightly ignore people who pontificate hypocritically on the basis of infinite exegeses strictly dealing with effects of a long nineteenth century and its conversions of the slave trade effects vis-à-vis dubious consequences of the Enlightenment's stances. Often they do not speak Greek, cannot read Latin and choose not to face requirements of inscriptions that demand a relation to the Christian tradition and its controversial influence in the history of the discipline. Descartes is also be read from the impatience of Spinoza's political philosophy. A necessary reappraisal of Kant's legacy in a

scandalous anthropology situates itself and equally vis-à-vis Descartes's *cogito* and Hume's positions as well as the recommencement represented by the Hegelian nightmare that obscures our paths. Husserl's *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1970) in relation to the Vienna lecture has allowed a measured consolation that justifies the understanding of a philosophical ethnicity that transcends our cultural preconceptions and assumes the anger of this Coda.

Ways of inscription and reverence to precepts aim at the absolutes. Our relation to the past of the discourse and its histories submit to ethical exegeses. Here is a line for this concluding lesson about Athens in the past and, say, in relation to Kwasi Wiredu's work on Akan people in the present. It refers to the same ethical principles about human dignity. What is expected details contingent problems as to what the discipline prescribes: to read and understand, to comment and reassign objections against one's feelings, to work from marks of a tradition. In sum, one subscribes in obedience and, in so doing, states a way of belonging, body and soul.

Here is a path to a meditation about such a vision and what it entails concerning the soul and consolation: 'If I didn't know, Marcia that you were as far removed from womanish weakness of mind as from all other vices.' This is the beginning of Seneca's Book VI, *On Consolation*. Indeed, it is a consolation to Marcia. Also to any reader. Times of evil, times of consolation; in any case, this sign of death. And the incredible statement imposes itself on 'the souls that are finely liberated from conversation with humans and have an easy way to the gods. Lightness, liberation, no earthly problems.' The theology of all this might seem uninteresting. The good souls would want liberation from the earthly body. Yet here again this story about the soul attracts attention. The story might be reciting Plato's *Phaedo* (94–5). One way or the other, the story speaks about a harmony led by the conditions of the body in connection with the soul within a spiritual tradition. Comes in Socrates: 'Charge the foe, and test the worth of what you advance.'

The realist unexpected of apparently something else imposes a question: 'But how shall we bury you' (115c)? In actuality or symbolically? A number of things are alluded to. There is, first, a lesson on death and consolation. There is, secondly, from Seneca back to Plato's *Phaedo*, something about inclination in concordance and plagiarism. Finally, of relative interest for this reader, after more than twenty centuries, an issue of how to confront the statement witnessed to here. From the incredibly ambiguous charges of the Greek and the Latin comments about the soul, nothing would prevent a reader of Eboussi's *Christianity Without Fetishes* to relate

the business on consolation, death and the soul to a cultural African difference. Finally from Plato's *Dialogues* to Seneca's *Consolation*, how to read the values of the *anima* (soul) and the interest of all this business? The singularity of my consciousness facing its uniqueness vis-à-vis all these texts and their weight in self-apprehension against the context of an African practice of the discipline. Reading the objectivity of their marks, they bring suppositions in the history of different types of affirmations. Apparently unrelated, they are events about death, symbolic and real; existences and cultures, disciplines and their constraints.

In human terms, there is, first, for me, an unparalleled face-to-face with the memory of millions of dead people during the slave trade. My consciousness cannot but acknowledge a belonging to the kind that explained such a reification and face the question of how it is possible to relate to such a knowledge and to discourses it contributed to.

There is a second observation. The Afrocentric arguments initiated by African-American academics in the 1970s and 1980s found themselves almost immediately doubled by hardcore pornographic industries and 'Afrocentric' galleries actualising under the same label works from a sick and racist physical anthropology of yesterday.

Third, assigned by birth within a Christian status, how to react to all these stories from the memory of conversion policies and objective reification? They attended to the violence with which Christianity engaged in the destruction of all things labelled pagan, including souls. Individuals, including my own ancestors, were reformulated in the name of conquerors' souls.

There is, finally, the fact of a consciousness apprehending itself as this particular symbol, which can refer to Seneca and Plato as a choice against what anthropology has been and is still stating, often wrongly, about non-Western cultures.

A difference names objects of a science vis-à-vis the historicity of Plato's and Seneca's comments on souls. It is cultural. Equally cultural, the objective failure of my Benedictine vocation. And also cultural, the scars of a failed marriage. Transcending these failures, an inscription in the *Rule* that has always guided an unconditional fidelity to the 1960 Roman breviary in Latin and its daily recitation. Moreover, there is here a concrete experience of the uniqueness of an African memory in relating itself to this particular askesis that has been engaging ways of a discipline. This discipline contributed indeed to mercantile projects, the missionising saga of conversion, as it is contributing to the luxury that allows me to decode Seneca's *Consolation* vis-à-vis Plato's lesson. To the singularity of situating oneself as an object in a history of alienating forces – a commerce, a religion, a

science – parallels the singularity of a freedom that can face the reality of an ascetic inscription. And in the name of the discipline and its ethics, acknowledges the liberating spiritual autonomy that the *Rule* induces.

A beautiful picture of the *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*, Salzburg, Abbey of St Peter (c.1050) makes me conclude this Coda. The Virgin Mary seems an adult. She is not the child of the foundational sagas of a conquering faith. This does not really matter. A story of faith is here a question and a useless one probably. Culturally, in effect, the young woman, like her mother, is detached from the Jewish origin of what allowed her story and the representation that is here my possible consolation. Something states an absolute. It is credible. Divided, the reflected is reflecting itself. It negates and fulfils its contingent condition. Who could believe that an allegory like this does not orient its own representation elsewhere than towards imperatives of lines in a Credo?



Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple. Gospel Lectionary, in Latin Austria, Salzburg, Abbey of St Peter, c.1050. 267 × 210 mm. The Morgan Library & Museum, William S. Glazier Collection; deposited in 1963, given in 1984; MS. G.44 (fol. 2).

The *Presentation* testifies to a time and its inscriptions in an acculturated past that is not mine. Today, it might symbolise the very dimension of its own conflicting interpretations from my reading. Thus, here are fault lines. And that is the beauty of the represented. One, here is thus a cipher in its own distinction. Two, comes in a discipline that brings about the wonderful metaphor of Dante about this woman elected to become the mother and the daughter of her own son. Three, the Christian parable is a magnificent rendering of a measure for any philosophical promise. To be the recitant of one's own voice and in perpetual contradiction, the *Presentation* tells of how to look at oneself and simply as a beautiful narrative in its own right.

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