Religion, Race, Multiculturalism, and Everyday Life

A Philosophical, Conceptual Examination

By

Christopher A. Williams

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FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book represents the culmination of over a decade of teaching and research at the tertiary level across the humanities and social sciences, and implicating foundational to advanced courses spanning philosophy, sociology, and history. As a result, I have incurred various debts along the way, financial and otherwise. Regardless, any misrepresentation in this offering falls strictly on me.

I will be forever indebted to my past, present, and future students, many of whom were initially leery of my critical approach to those streams of knowledge to which I was attempting to introduce them. Nonetheless, in quick course, they would come to appreciate the sobering enough truth that any knowledge acquisition generated from the relentless, systematic questioning of certain ideas, practices, and understandings deemed unassailable, necessarily involves healthy measures of conflict, discomfort, humiliation, and ultimately, gratification and triumph. It has always been quite fulfilling for me, usually after the fact of the classroom, when many of these students would go on to develop their own social voice, confident, intrepid, learned, and articulate in their egalitarian views. I am here reminded of the words of Denzel Washington in the second installment of the thrilling film franchise *The Equalizer*: *there are two types of pain in this world…pain that hurts and pain that alters*; I am honored to have participated in their "painful" growth as caring, compassionate, and even-handed thinkers.

I wrote most of this book over the course of the global lockdown prompted by COVID-19 in the first half of 2020. Initially convinced that this creative effort would be uncomplicated, let alone an affair in protraction, I commenced consolidating my lecture notes in March of 2020, comfortable in my thinking that it would take me no longer than six months to write my book. Of course, my expectations here were well off the mark, as these things usually are, and six months grew into one year and then almost two years, a development that must not have been at all pleasant for my

immediate family. As such, I am particularly thankful and grateful for my wife's long-suffering nature, especially in those seemingly eternal moments of lockdown when we both had to juggle teaching online classes and caring for our two rambunctiously lovely little boys; her level of sacrifice remains breathtaking to me as our world continued to become a terrifyingly more uncertain place and she stepped in to care for our children while I wrote mostly whenever I wasn't teaching. I am also all the more rounded in my thinking for those few intense moments in which my wife and I were able to honestly discuss our divergent religious views especially.

I would also like to acknowledge two of my colleagues who kept me focused as I wrote this book. Professor Livingston Smith read through portions of my earlier drafts, offering constructive input; our subsequent arguments resonated with me incalculably and I am appreciative of his influence on my contrarian nature, even if he may not be! I am also grateful to Dr. Stephanie Cooper for her words of encouragement and support while I completed this project. Her buoyancy and feel-good nature were most infectious and helped fuel my -at times faltering inspiration.

Final thanks go to you, my prospective readers. This book was written with you in mind, especially those of you who hold unpopularly "righteous" minority social views and have been apprehensive about verbalizing these for fear of ostracization, isolation, or worse. Know that you are not alone...I am indeed you in this regard. Social truth may be considered monolithically by some, but never be ashamed of voicing your divergent truth if that truth is grounded in understandings meant to better humankind by calling out injustice wherever and *whenever* it may reside. In the face of such injustices, as their enablers attempt to silence us by coercion and/or shame, never forget the extent to which some have become unwitting slaves to inherited generational truths grounded in inequity. Ours thus, must be a labor of love – *never* vindictiveness, nor aloofness – as we "labor" to overcome those intractable biases and one-sided moral impositions whose practical and proclaimed effects may well lead to deleterious outcomes; easier said than done, to be sure, but a necessary effort to be committed to in a social world whose intensifying human

fragmentation, it may be said, readily implicates those negative consequences associated with ratcheting anger, strife, and intolerance. Here's to spirited, sincere future discussions!

Christopher A. Williams, 23 January 2022

INTRODUCTION
THE GADFLY AS SOCIAL COMMENTATOR AND MEDIATOR

All definite knowledge…belongs to science; all dogma as to what surpasses definite knowledge belongs to theology. But between theology and science there is a No Man's Land, exposed to attack from both sides; this No Man's Land is philosophy.

Bertrand Russell

Our opening cue is taken from a fascinating novel entitled *Brushstrokes of a Gadfly* (Bucchianeri, 2011). The novel follows the life of idealistic New York debutante Katherine Walsingham. Katherine's father, a well-heeled CEO and businessman, is at once self-assured and sumptuously successful. High society mores dictate that Katherine follow in her father's prosperous footsteps, but try as she might, his world, for her, is too cold and clinical, too distant and cloyingly disingenuous. What is more, her passions lie elsewhere, well outside the expectations of her social standing; well-educated and the recipient of an immense trust fund, Katherine, a talented, trained artist, decides to open her own art gallery (*Ibid*.).

In time, Katherine comes to discover all that is wrong with the world and genteel upper society in particular; of course, this discovery was only possible for her own assertive, often guileless nature hastened by a crushing disillusionment with a hypocritical humanity that professes, with all the muster of big emptiness, to be advocates for equality for all. In the midst of her own cascading failures and tragedies, Katherine approaches the painful realization that she is at odds with high society, although she has immensely benefitted from it. Driven by an unrelenting idealism, Katherine, ever the Socratic gadfly, '…endeavors to make her fellow citizens stop and reflect upon their culture, lambasting the follies of the human race as she sees them with her scathing images questioning

contemporary issues including…genetic modification, religion, absurd holiday customs, the equality of women, [etc.]' (*Ibid.*, blurb).

From hindsight, both ours and the great Greek philosopher, Plato's, it seemed inevitable that the physically and hygienically unspectacular Socrates, ancient Athens' foremost philosopher, would, like Katherine, eventually fall from grace with the potentates of that polity. Given that Socrates wrote nothing and that any important assessment of his ideas is entirely second hand, it is difficult, if not impossible, to confirm whether he lived at all (Russell, 2005, 89-98); if he did live, he traveled throughout his city state besieging any of its citizens who would entertain his relentless, potentially offensive questioning. Armed with his namesake interrogative method – also known as the *elenchus* – Socrates became an enamored figure among the Athenian youth, primarily, it is suspected, because of his paradoxically fearless, disillusioned, and idealistic disposition: he was not afraid to ask questions deemed iconoclastic of *anyone*, especially of those of societal repute (Denyer, 2019); and if that was not enough, his questions on the nature of morality, courage, piety, truth, *inter alia*, only seemed to become more probative and prying every time an answer was supplied; as if to say, here were shallow, superficial replies, by Socrates' reckoning, that were never adequate enough, always prompting a follow-up question aimed at guiding the discussion towards the ultimate truth behind which hid the competing *why's* of our human nature – *why* do we think and act the way we do? Socrates' mediated statement, 'the unexamined life is not worth living', indeed provided the philosopher's practical modus operandi its energizing muse (Fowler, 1966, 38).

A natural gadfly, Socrates' approach to truth was really meant to get to the bottom of our understanding about our place within a flawed, ubiquitously imperfect existence, in addition to satisfying Socrates' own philosophical outlook that as humans we can never really know anything but should always strive to know the "right" things. It was Socrates himself who said in so many words, "I know nothing," mindful of his social and philosophical obligation to provide moral cues for the honest pursuer of truth, together with his unwavering imperative to hold his pious fellow Athenians to account given that they thought they knew everything, but whose ignorance everywhere loomed lustrously (*Ibid.,* 23). Needless to say,

Socrates could no longer be abided by the reigning cabal of his day and was found guilty of the suspicious charge of impiety and corruption of the Athenian youth. A refreshing aberration in an otherwise intensely religious, normatively unequal society, Socrates was to become the ultimate scapegoat for all that was wrong with his polity, from natural disasters to embarrassing military defeat, to the increasingly bold, "iconoclastic" rebellion against so-called sacred knowledge. Allegedly sentenced to death in 399 BC, Socrates, in what was to be his final insult, was forced to imbibe the executioner's poisoned hemlock brew. Yet if it achieved nothing else, the ultimate gadfly's death, whether he lived or not, beckoned extensive attention to his driving philosophical motivation via his final lesson to humankind in the mediated *Allegory of the Cave*. Here was an apt Socratic tale in which a manacled group of cave dwellers who had never before seen the light of day decided it wise to execute the only one in their midst brave enough to venture outside before returning to inform the others that the reality of that limited, sterile cave, in light of the vast complex world outside it, could not *at all* be deemed reality (Jowett, 2019).

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The present offering represents an attempt to analyze the social features, effects, and practices of religion, race, and multiculturalism in the Socratic *gadfly* philosophical tradition. Utilizing arguments grounded in philosophy, history, sociology, and cultural anthropology, this book's overall objective rests on its author's motivation to ask of civil society what may well be construed as uncomfortable existential questions for some. Questions of this nature, in their so-called contrarian impulse, have been known to encourage, at worst, the querier's blacklisting, or at the very least, render her an annoyance for those who would, for whatever the reason, rather not earnestly address such canvassing. Such questions are all the more jarring for some because not only are they sometimes provocatively posed in any articulation and corroborating descriptions of them, but within these very questions are also couched inevitable cues to the flawed, if otherwise commendably progressive nature of our development as human beings. Where many pundits of the human condition are likely to conclude that life has improved dramatically for virtually all of us, quickly discerned through the various indices of positive human development, the

author would likely agree (*e.g.*, Pinker, 2011; Putnam, 2020; Rosling, *et al.*, 2019; Harari, 2015). However, any strenuous disagreement with some of these very pundits, the author contends, demands a spirited conceptualist look back into the history of our development with a view to exploring the ways in which a discursively inadequate punditry of human equality continues to lock in pervasive inequality, and in light of the prosperous present, assuredly dismisses the perpetual ignorance emanating from certain of those so-called sacrosanct parts of our human past (*viz.,* Graeber & Wengrow, 2021).

From religion to race, to multiculturalism, this book's motivation is in no way indebted to consilience, in which is enshrined the largely scientific effort to reconcile the humanities and the hard sciences towards honest, sensory truth (Wilson, 1999; Beakbane, 2021). Neither is the author interested, outside of *social meaning*, to 'unlock the deepest mysteries of space and time…to understand the meaning of our lives [via string theory]' (Kaku, 2021, blurb). Regarded as 'one of the most brilliant, controversial and unprovable ideas in all of physics', string theory represents '…the thread of an idea that runs through physics for centuries, that at some fundamental level, all the different forces, particles, interactions and manifestations of reality are tied together as part of the same framework' (Siegel, 2017). What happens, thus, when consilience and/or string theory *cannot* be enough, when, for instance, as chapter one explores, there is no real reasonable hope of reconciling the creationist truth of a metaphysical creation myth with a systematic scientific theory confirmative of the process of evolution? It is true that certain theologians, archaeologists, and scientists remain invested in the idea that creationism is the metaphorical outworking of evolution (*e.g.*, Garner, 2009; Richards, 2011; Axe, 2016).Yet this is a collaboration that falls utterly apart when creationists refuse, for instance, to accept the sacrilege of evolution, *apes and all*, while evolutionists ridicule their creationist counterparts who believe that the earth is anywhere between 5,000 and 10,000 years old, hardly enough time for the processes of evolution to take hold (*cf. Ibid.*). The Kalam cosmological argument for the logical existence of a creator, *humanoid* god captures the inherent dilemma undergirding any harmony between the naturally *inharmonious* relationship shared by certain creationists and evolutionists: confidently identifying god as the natural cause of every *natural* effect,

more so a god morally motivated by an influential religion likely of humanity's making, the Kalam cosmological argument amounts to nothing more than an unproven conclusion itself couched in a self-assured, comforting, one-sided logic (*e.g.,* Craig, 2000; Siegel, 2021); as if to further say that many of us have become hyper-invested in saturating our lives with transcendental meaning seemingly based on an unproven, biased conclusion compatible enough, for some, with science, but really gathering its legitimacy through the *proven* processes of sociality. Have we perhaps thus created metaphysics in our own image and according to our own stubborn, self-centered spiritual, theological motivations (*cf.* Comte, 1988)?

Accordingly, this book was primarily written with serious students of philosophy, sociology, the humanities, and history in mind, be they advanced undergraduates, postgraduates, or else anyone with a penchant for philosophy and its abiding social underpinnings, interrogatives, and intellectual inspirations. In the philosophical tradition of Jean-Paul Sartre (2003) and the later Ludwig Wittgenstein (2009), as critically tempered by Auguste Comte (1988) and Emile Durkheim's pioneering sociological methodologies (2014), the author is of the view that human interaction – which underpins sociality – together with its subsequent linguistic formations and conceptual etymologies, is ultimately responsible for those meaningful, indeed *valuably* subjective truths and beliefs that we so take for granted. It is the concept of meaning that the author attempts both to unravel and interrogate against fleeting humanity's often solipsistic, metaphysical, mythological confidence in *its* various truths that, should we care to admit it, only became truths because human development itself became inexorably wedded to social interaction (*cf.* Durkheim, 1995).

Posing relentless questions, while offering detailed responses and descriptions meant to encourage intense reflection, the author is keen to interrogate the discursive, sentimental, and practical ways in which the inadequate past with its sometimes-irrational streams of thought, continues to impinge upon the *improving* present. The ground traveled throughout this book has oft been traversed. Religion, race, and multiculturalism have been written about *ad nauseum*, and from a variety of academic, discipline-specific perspectives (*e.g.,* Bowker, 2021; Partridge, 2018; Smith, 2009; Golash-Boza, 2017; Anievas, *et al.*, 2014; Ekelund, 2019;

Murdoch-Kitt & Emans, 2020). Nonetheless, this offering represents the unique attempt, from the vantage point of intensive interrogation, to systematically analyze three discrete yet interrelated social issues-cum-features that are aggregately label the *existential triptych*; individually or collectively, these constituents of religion, race, and multiculturalism remain ever relevant to any sincere bid to understand those inegalitarian aspects of society in which they prominently or furtively figure. The result, it is anticipated, is a body of work that convincingly, succinctly, but challengingly captures the historical development behind these topical issues, thereafter questioning the largely overlooked or ignored conceptual challenges and impasses still silently lurking within them; only to conclude that it is painfully possible – emphasis on *painfully* – to overcome these conceptual and destructively pragmatic cleavages through a rational, compassionate approach in the end untainted by cynicism – emphasis on *untainted* (*cf.* Andrews, 2021; Pinker, 2021). The approach employed throughout this work is indebted somewhat to the late anthropologist, author, and creative activist David Graeber. Graeber dared to reimagine and reinterpret the inequitable past in a bid to shatter the underlying notion, born of contingency, that our present social reality is precisely normatively unequal because our tried and true historiography itself has always been indebted to a western mindset primed to dismiss any development outside of its orbit as useless and thus inferior. Until his untimely death in 2020, and despite being roundly dismissed in certain intellectual and social circles as a contrarian anarchist, Graeber remained hopeful that true human equality and equity, away from their useless abstract moorings, could indeed be achieved, quite expressive in his entreaty that those of us convinced of rampant inequity and its historical precedents ought to stand up in "righteous" protest and live out "our truth" to its *enlightened* consequence (2018; 2021).

To this end, this book, which is the first volume of an anticipated three-volume series, is written in a deliberately challenging way; over the author's more than ten years of teaching at the tertiary level, it was discovered that serious students of philosophy, history, and sociology were likelier to develop a powerful sense of accomplishment only after having earnestly and uncomfortably wrestled with the complex philosophical ideas to which they were introduced. The challenge factor of this offering

unfolds along the author's own tried and tested pedagogic method: mindful of the effectiveness of writing creatively portrayed, the tendency throughout this work is to begin analyses either with fictive analogies primed to contextualize a specific train of thought or else with carefully worded questions appended to detailed enough historiographical accounts meant to arouse provocation, suspicion, or *worse*. The insights offered thus unfold along a counter-balancing effort: the descriptive and historiographic modes are reveled in as a way to compel readership and spur interest, only to transition to analyses of more modern justificatory intonations to which new, more relevant questions are affixed, ultimately allowing for the reader to consider the ideological continuities and discontinuities inherent in the subject at hand. The shift from history to the present, to the existential questions meant to uneasily fuse them, foregrounds the very questions that the curious among us have always pined over in abject, lonely, *honest* silence, but have simply been too afraid to ask in those public, rapidly *canceling* spaces of our genteel surroundings, whose predominating denizens appear to be reflexively prone to the swift condemnation of anything they consider too taboo or perverse.

The *Other* Triptych: A Brief Literature Review, Chapter Outline, and Instinctive Rationale

Religion

There are many publications too numerous to mention that explore Christianity according to the guiding principles of apologetics (*e.g.*, Cabal, 2007; Ferrer, 2019; Comfort, 2019). Michael J. Kruger's *Surviving Religion 101* (2021), for instance, serves as a rhetorical coping mechanism against the persuasive onslaught of secular intellectualism in the university setting. Kruger's primary reason for writing this book seems, in his own words, to hinge on averting the 'frequency with which college students head off to college and return (often in a short time) with a substantially different worldview than when they left [home]'(12). He blames this psychological transformation on the young Christian adult's lack of intellectual preparation to confidently and cogently respond to one-sided, if 'eminently reasoned' secular claims meant to shatter the integrity of Christianity (*Ibid*.). Yet like so many other published exercises in apologetics, Kruger's

ideas have left some ultimately dissatisfied given his tendency to argue from an impossible, inevitable *a priori* position; Kruger has already made up his mind that Christianity is the only true unassailable religion and any so-called evidence that he subsequently collates is meant, understandably, to fit, not contest this stance.

The late Ravi Zacharias was perhaps one of Christianity's best-known apologists until his cancer-related death in 2020 (*cf.* Wright, 2018; Hunter, 2014; Lewis, 2015). Zacharias was known, sometimes unflatteringly, for his circuitous reasoning in the defense of Christianity, consolidating logical argumentation and step-by-step analysis to present what many considered to be brilliantly rounded intellectual defenses of the faith. However, anyone not generally convinced with Christian apologetics has often been left with the impression that Zacharias was doing nothing more than committing to misleading, deflecting, if heartfelt arguments for the sake of fortifying Christianity against antitheism. One may argue that Zacharias' argumentation hinged on a bulwark enabled by subjective philosophical and theological language disguised as objectivity and confirmative of antitheism as providing '…every reason to be immoral and [further] bereft of any objective point of reference with which to condemn any choice' (2004, 32). 'Any antitheist who lives a moral life', Zacharias continues, ostensibly unaware of his own *inevitably* subjective elevation of a particular worldview and its accompanying ways of life, 'merely lives better than his or her philosophy warrants. All denunciation implies a moral doctrine of some kind, and the antitheist is forever engaged in undermining his own mines' (*Ibid.*).

Elsewhere, Zacharias appears to uncritically privilege certain parts of pre-Enlightenment western history during which the integrity of Christianity was never at stake, only to go on to impressionistically declare that the Enlightenment period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries represented man's 'humiliating turn from God', in turn confirming, arbitrarily and unconvincingly, the enlightenment as a false historical movement (*Ibid.*, 142). To cite another example, Zacharias (2002) professes that Christianity is ultimately unassailable on the already specious grounds that other comparative religions lack the properties necessary to guarantee man's personal relationship with the capital Christian *god*. Yet this is

ultimately a hollow, patently counter-intuitive assertion, as Zacharias makes no meaningful attempt, for instance, to systematically and objectively compare and contrast the universally splintered use of, and associated connotations with, the word "god" outside of the foundational thrust of Christianity (*e.g.*, Bowker, 2021); instead, he relies on shallow, selective ideas about this or that religion that he is able to philosophically manipulate to "prove" their lack of authentic godly authority. What, then, is the questioning soul to make of the following description of Zacharias's *Jesus Among Other Gods* (2002, blurb): 'In the name of "tolerance," our postmodern culture embraces everything from Eastern mysticism to New Age spirituality. But as Ravi Zacharias points out, such unquestioning acceptance of all things spiritual is absurd. All religions, plainly and simply, cannot be true'. One can generally expect from Christian apologists, then, eloquent, superficially logical argumentation for the capital god's existence based on limited, partial sources, from which nothing of significance outside of loyal religious investment can ever be gleaned. In essence, the apologist is "preaching to the choir."

The present author is by no means a religious apologist broadly understood, although no one more will fight unceasingly for anyone's right to practice whatever religion she chooses to follow. Yet this fight must be further qualified: With Bertrand Russell (1967) as this book's ultimate muse, if not in accordance with the British philosopher's full-on, rhetorically portrayed atheism, the position taken relative to the exploration of religion extends the view, borne in part of personal experience, that dogmatic religious beliefs are deleterious to human relations and become beckoning chains of control contemptuously applied by those who in this vein would attempt to forcefully and obnoxiously impose their beliefs and associated lifestyles on others. While Russell was generally dismissive of religion through his keen philosophical, mathematical gaze, the present author is very much interested in mapping, analyzing, and legitimizing the *social* relevance of religion beyond a generally dismissive scientism (viz., de Botton, 2012; Dawkins, 2011; Hitchens, 2007). As a tolerant agnostic thinker inclined to provocative stances meant to draw attention to suppressed controversial ideas deserving of consideration, the social import of religion, *any* religion, is never lost on the author in his effort to highlight and lay bare those

existential, theistic ideological tensions on which the function of *religious legitimacy* generally depends and thrives. Religion has been often described as the *Marxian* opiate of the masses, indeed amounting to a drug *necessarily* sanctioned only after centuries of socialization – keeping in mind that there remain many illegal drugs with their ineluctably addicted disciples and enthusiasts. As with the eventual approved use of marijuana in certain parts of the world, the practice of many, if not most religions originated from a place of putatively perceived illegitimacy (*cf*. Raines, 2002; Noss & Grangaard, 2017).

As they amassed wider support and patronage spurred by shifting mentalities, forbidden religions and their accompanying practices would eventually undergo a sort of social sanitization. Here was a historical process that, in the midst of inevitable human conflict, inhered a search for so-called transcendental truth, at the heart of which usually rested *first principles*, the proponents of which continue to attempt to locate "sound" metaphysical reasons and arguments for the nonmaterial creation of any- and everything. This is why some might find it suspicious at best that Zacharias, *et al*. would label every religion besides Christianity as erroneous; as if to say, the sum total of the world's *spiritual* progress rests exclusively on the laurels of Christianity, in the process rendering every other *socially legitimate* religio-cultural experience, save Judaism, altogether *illegitimate*. Thankfully, some would opine, this way of thinking together with its moralistic impositions is on the precipitous decline across the normatively monotheistic west (*cf*. Jacoby, 2005). Even so, one remains mindful that just because someone publicly eschews the espousal of religious bigotry in no way means that, as a Protestant atheist, he is still not being silently or clamorously guided by a cultural chauvinism through which he views his lifeways, in their totality, as "essentially" better than all other incoming *equivalents*. Regardless, the continued relevance of such dogmatic streams amounts to a stubborn, unyielding religious mindset, whose adherents are eager to deprive and delegitimize their religious opponents by essentializing the former's own truth, which, through the gaze of human social development, is just as *subjectively important* as those religious truths they consider to be specious.

Given Christianity's utilization by westerners as they proceeded to reshape the rest of the world in their image, the author aims to question-by-illustration whether we should be striving to understand religion's so-called metaphysical origins as either absolutely indebted to social earthly developments or else to the supernatural disruption of worldly, natural life, whereby religious thought was *literally* thrown down to benighted, inchoate human beings from the heavens. As demonstrated in chapter one, if we are satisfied to explain the origins of any religion according to exclusively supernatural tropes, then we run the risk of effacing the indispensable social foundations and functions of religious development and motivation; this might well leave us with nowhere firm to stand ideologically but on the general unverifiability of the metaphysical, itself powered, it will be argued, by the evolving human capacity to understand, explain, and then persuasively *represent* our existence and its nebulous first principles in epic, immortal, *metaphorical* terms (*cf*. Franz, 2001).

Where chapter one interrogates the likely ideational and social origins of religious creation myths, chapter two explores and questions those social and historical conditions that led to the creation, entrenchment, and subsequent propulsion of orthodox Christianity. The intention here is twofold: in the first place, the author is keen to juxtapose the neat social aspects of evolving fundamentalist-slash-conservative Christianity against those more troubling incompatible ideas that, should they be *earnestly* considered, would pose an existential challenge to Christianity's deistic unassailability (*cf.* Price, 2015). This effort involves the acknowledgment of human intervention in crafting and sustaining a religious movement that, despite its noticeable enough relegation in the European place by the eighteenth century, still remains the world's major religion, boasting at present over two billion followers; keen to illustrate Christianity's loosening hold on European affairs relative to this book's guiding thesis, it is not the author's intention to pore over those extensive Catholic-Protestant, Protestant-Protestant religious conflicts that unfolded over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (*viz.,* Friedman, 2021). The second intention, which continues into chapter three, is concerned with mapping the social circumstances and ideological movements that led, not so much to the collapse of Christianity, but to its relegation in western global affairs due to the emergence of science, technology, and economics

– due, in a word, to modernity. Here was a *triumvirate of truth* grounded in sensory reality and possessive of the abilities to transform *European* lives for the "better" in just about every possible, measurable way. Yet if anything, the relegation of Christianity in Europe, as further explored below relative to our second intention, in no way diminished that religion's global appeal, importance, outsize influence, and authority

This book's contribution to the existing literature builds on the works of HyeRan Kim-Cragg (2021) and Jonathan Haidt (2012), who, to varying degrees, attempt to encourage open dialogue between Christianity and the secular-cum-religiously diverse world in which many of its adherents (*i.e.*, Christians) grudgingly yet complicitly reside. In taking a more critically provocative approach, the author hopes to philosophically challenge the apologetic's civilizational flawlessness of Christianity both beneath the destructive-cum-creational forces of imperialism in the Caribbean and in more general, quotidian, contemporary contexts. Any ultimate overarching objective, then, extends to *othering* Christianity by demonstrating that it was/is just as prone to the so-called sin of revisionism usually reserved for lesser religions. It is certainly worth considering that the all-consuming nature of western global power meant that Christianity would escape its own constructed sin of revisionism because of its general compatibility with an emerging transformative scientific method, much of which Christianity's most stalwart defenders nonetheless stood in principled opposition to, to be fully explored in chapter three. In devoting the final chapter on religion to this paradoxical paradigm, the author is indebted to the groundbreaking, balanced works of Larry Witham's *Marketplace of the Gods* (2010) and *The Marketplace of Christianity* by Robert Ekelund Jr., *et al.* (2006). Away from the emotional pull of apologetics, these authors dispassionately demonstrate how evolving secular western economic positions were initially enabled by Christian sensibilities and vice versa.

The final two subsections of chapter three extend and critically contextualize the putatively privileged nature of Christianity at present throughout the western hemisphere, notably in the US and the Caribbean. Here the tensions that generally characterize fundamentalist, evangelical Christian views and positions are explored, both unto themselves and, later, relative to the construction of certain interrelated, biased

understandings of COVID-19 and syncretic religions like Obeah, Santeria, and Vodou. The effort is made to demonstrate the emotive nature of such understandings as they are projected as *objective* foundational truths by their proponents, this despite the fact, *inter alia*, that many religions and their corresponding outlooks developed under very similar conflicting social circumstances that marked Christianity's very origins and preliminary development (*cf.* Olmos & Paravisini-Gebert, 2003). By tapping into postcolonial theory, in which is ingrained the understanding that the varied psychological, ideological, and social effects of European civilizational influence remain globally pervasive even centuries after the fact of conventional imperialism, the aim is to draw warranted attention to the so-called fact undergirding why a syncretic religion like Vodou, for instance, continues to be viewed illegitimately for no other reason, it seems, than the widespread belief of its non-western, "evil" insignificance (e.g., Spivak, 1999; Said, 2014; Bhabha, 2004; Gilroy, 2007). The probative overarching question thus becomes, should there not be an equal place at the "inevitable social table" for all religions, or else none at all?

Race

Critical Race Theory [CRT] has become the cynosure for a substantial segment of westernity's contempt (*cf.* Ramkissoon & Engel, 2021; Wood & Gonzalez, 2021; Lesperance, 2020). Rooted in the predating civil rights legal precept that social institutions are undeniably tainted by the lingering and not-so-lingering effects of racism, oppression, and patriarchy, contemporary proponents of CRT maintain, to differing degrees of subtlety, that western society in all of its constitutive components and qualities continues to privilege whites at the expense of all other races (*viz.*, Crenshaw, *et al.*, 1996). As a result, many white westerners especially have not taken kindly to the inference that they are racist simply because the color of their skin affirms it, leading to an angry, loudening backlash against CRT. Yet certain academics, including the present author, believe that any such backlash typically originates from a quick-tempered, emotionally uncritical, uncomfortable place bereft of any real desire on the part of its detractors to at least consider the merits of CRT towards uncovering the often sly destructiveness of racism. Instead, offense is taken at the sometimes heavy-handed ways in which race and its social

considerations and consequences are forced on white adults and their "unsuspecting" children, not for the sake of progress, but what the aggrieved party perceives as punishment for *simply* being white (*e.g.*, Stone, 2021). Investigative journalist, Nikole Hannah-Jones and her *1619 Project* (2021) initiative both demonstrate and contextualize all too well the vast ideological schism that exists between CRT theorists keen, for instance, to uncover the historical, generational, and institutional roles of slavery and racism in the American place and their usually-white detractors who with all the ostensible muster of a dismissive ethnocentric smugness, inveigh against such a position, imperfect as it is, despite its rational, illuminating insights (*e.g.*, Harris, 2020).

Statisticians who attempt (much like Hannah-Jones) to make sense of the various disparities between whites and minorities, including black people, are effective enough in foregrounding a distinct determinism between the downplayed racial present and its racially-motivated past. In the so-called multicultural bastion that is Britain, for instance, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2021) released a report in October of 2020 that 'outlined a worrying picture of racial inequality' in that country in the key areas of employment, education, crime, living standards, and health and care. There is evidence with which to suggest that such disparities began in earnest immediately following World War Two in 1945, around which time Britain grudgingly opened its doors to its "darker" colonial subjects, only to slam these doors resoundingly shut in 1962 after native Britons began to complain about the blight that multiculturalism had wrought on their country (Martin, 2016, chapter fifteen). To use another relevant example of the undeniable presence of the negative perpetual effects of race-think in the western world, let us look to the United States. Despite minority populations accounting for much of that country's population growth in recent years (United States Census Bureau, 2021), 42 percent of Americans registered their conviction in 2021 that race relations had actually worsened in the preceding year; this view provides a loud demographic voice to those other key development areas including employment, healthcare, crime, etc., in which black Americans especially have systematically lagged since their official emancipation in 1865, despite the painful gains made by that group in the one hundred years that followed (Santhanam, 2021). Elsewhere, and despite this country's current multiethnic reality, France's

official colorblind policy in the face of a rapidly diversifying demographic appears to function on the irrational perception that everyone is equal in the eyes of French law, regardless of their ethnicity or race, even in the face of that nation's mounting racially motivated discriminations primed, it may be argued, by the same popular, stubbornly chauvinistic motives that guided colonialism in the first place (*cf. Peabody & Stovall, 2003; Plser*, 2020).

Regardless of these illuminating enough statistics as cogent starting points for any honest, subjective-slash-objective discussion about the roles played by race and racism throughout the western world, CRT has both been decried and described by many academics, intellectuals, politicians, and parents as tantamount to reverse racism odiously linked to wokeness. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the woke adjective, which originally means to be 'well-informed' or 'up-to-date', was expanded in 2017 to now refer to the condition of being 'alert to racial or social discrimination and injustice' (Steinmetz, 2017). This definition, likely conceived by those young, impassioned justice activists responsible for the formation of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2013, is said to have its ideological basis in the American civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s (Crenshaw, *et al.*, 1996). Wokeness now largely refers to a new, somewhat revolutionary rhetorical approach to confronting what many perceive to be the "white-enablement" of racism and other social blights and inequities. Boasting a substantial millennial and zoomer, or Generation Z membership, the "woke mob," as they have been derogatorily labeled by conservative ideologues especially, is keen to see quick condign justice served on *anyone* who at *any time* in his life demonstrated an explicit racist or otherwise inegalitarian intent (*cf.* Edgecliff-Johnson, 2021; Madlangbayan, 2021). This means that if someone especially of note utilized or even implied a divisive inegalitarian worldview many years ago, notably on social media, then that person can expect to be relentlessly hounded and exposed by the woke practitioner, only to eventually lose his job or to be deprived in some other meaningful, "satisfyingly" consequential way. Many have criticized the woke mentality as overly harsh and patently, willfully ignorant of its diverse social, multicultural milieu as its proponents attempt to mercilessly obliterate their opponents (*cf.* Rectenwald, 2020). Elsewhere, many woke practitioners have gone so far as to condemn the very wealthy, many of whom are white, convinced that by the latter's own action or *inaction*, it is

they who are the ultimate gatekeepers of perpetual human inequality (*cf.*
Colton, 2021; Flynn, *et al*., 2017). *Inter alia,* this sort of confident emotional
declaration has become a general response to what Robin Diangelo has
elsewhere described as the white racial frame (2021), through which,
arguably, even well-meaning, progressive white anti-racists continue to
betray the deeply internalized, cross-generational bias that whiteness in its
"indispensable" civilizational makeup is the only "important" avenue out
of societal disparity of any and every sort (111-112). It has been
convincingly shown elsewhere that whites, to use a compelling example in
this instance, are likelier to benefit, generally, from generational wealth
transfer than people of color (*viz*., Flynn, *et al*., 2017), but it becomes a very
slippery interpretive slope indeed when a white inheritor of relative wealth
is exclusively condemned against our recently introduced analytical racial
frame – indeed condemned on the joint criteria that both his racial and
financial inheritance *absolutely* make him a complicit, *systemic* racist. In
rationalizing in this way, many anti-racist pundits seem unwilling to invest
in the practical enough distinction between equality and fairness-slash-
equity-slash-justice. When we consider resource accessibility, we should all
not necessarily, outside of basic human rights and their accompanying
contextual needs as these vary from human to human, be striving for
equality, since equality suggests that every human being ought to have an
equal share of everything, even where some, according to his needs, would
need more or less of a particular resource than another. However, it is when
someone's access to resources that he clearly needs or is entitled to, is
blocked or infringed, that, in John Rawls' conception of equity, a systematic
breakdown of the 'division of labor between the basic structure and the
rules applying directly to individuals' has occurred (2005, 268–269); in
other words, not everyone can be wealthy, but the inevitably socially-
engineered structures in which we live ought – through their internal logic
regulated by reciprocity, duty, and incentivization – to functionally ensure
that everyone has the necessary access to what he needs, and should not
have to maliciously fight for, nor be maliciously denied access to a resource
whenever and wherever he most needs it. Any critical emphasis on
fairness-cum-justice, thus, anticipates that although not all of us can be
wealthy, black and white alike, many of us are often unfairly treated and
targeted by the law and other public, private, and corporatist institutions
and proxies because of the evolutionary, biased, judgmental nature of their

power (*e.g.*, Prieb, 2022). Important to note is that just because someone who happens to be white is wealthier than me does not *automatically* translate to the fact that he is *directly* responsible for *my* unfair treatment and thus an automatic racist, although he may or *may not* have benefited from greater access to resources and resource allocation in a "systemic breakdown" throughout which justice is often disingenuously *accorded* according to meritorious, racial, religious, and/or national affiliation. Such nuances of interrelated, indeed *relatable* understandings and concepts are precisely why a disciplinarily-extended CRT, responsibly utilized and deeply thoughtful is so vital to understanding and critically *predicting* the various ideological trajectories of our development.

While the author remains convinced that CRT responsibly utilized aids both in the initial location and subsequent critical understanding of the very real institutional and emotional effects of evolving racism and social inequality in general, one can appreciate why some would be somewhat dismayed by wokeness. It is one thing to hold anyone with a longstanding, discernably inegalitarian, hateful intent accountable, but sometimes quite another to go out of one's way to "dig up old, long forgotten dirt" on a person with the intention of destroying her in the name of equality; here, paradoxically, is a mentality that appears to revel in the idea that people *do not* change, which in turn prompts one to further question, not unreasonably, whether the woke activist is really in pursuit of universal justice or else in accumulating vengeful moments of pyrrhic victory to a more self-serving end. Consider here through the woke gaze that an ostensibly well-meaning apology for a past bigoted opinion, or *perceived* bigoted opinion, can *never* be an apology at all, but undeniable proof of an obdurate inegalitarian posture. Accordingly, further dismay abounds as to how someone can be quickly demonized and, for instance, branded a racist for no other reason than disagreeing with the hallowed tenets of antiracism, some of which are not arrived at critically but emotionally. For instance, there is the increasingly widespread woke belief that if someone is not an outspokenly trenchant antiracist activist – many of whom continue to hold on to their internalized racial biases, no less (Diangelo, 2021) – then that person's "polite" silence *automatically* signals his tacit investment in the inner workings of racism (*viz.*, Kendi, 2019). Elsewhere, those convinced that *all whites* are to blame for their suffering have proceeded, arbitrarily,

to verbally harass and browbeat the latter without any regard for their personal space and constitutional rights (*e.g.*, Feis, 2020). The woke practitioner is usually quick to take offence at anyone with the "unmitigated gall" to disagree with an otherwise enlightened talking point itself enabled in many cases by a blind faith inkling tethered to selective experiential convictions that racism in particular lies at the heart of *every* human conflict (*Ibid*; Roberts & Brown, 2021). While the author does not subscribe to the view that racism is the fundamental root psychological cause of all of our societal ills, he does believe that as a wedge issue, racism's subtextual quality often makes it difficult to confirm the sometimes *daily* systemic outworking of its deleterious effects; or, as Cornel West put it, '…race matters are an integral part – though not the sole part – of empire matters' (2017, xvii). We are not all white, after all, therefore deleterious racial issues, if historical trajectories are to be trusted, will not affect all of us *integrally*, hence the author's preceding position. It is quickly worth noting at this juncture that there exists a tacitly pro-white sentimentality that is quick to raise its chauvinistic head, especially in the face of couched, invisibly racially-motivated comparisons. Consider, for instance, the garish unfolding of such insidious comparisons between, on the one hand, "civilized, blue-eyed" Ukrainians who are commiserated with in very vocal parts of the white west as the former attempt to flee the bloody conflict unfolding between Russia and Ukraine on Ukrainian soil; on the other hand, however, envisage the severe mistreatment of many of those international students of color in Ukraine also desperate to flee the unfolding violence – picture them, against the harrowing images of their white fleeing counterparts – being angrily targeted by Ukrainian officials, being cruelly kicked off of outbound trains and left to brave the brutal elements for days at a time simply because, it would appear, they do not fit the Ukrainian phenotype (*e.g.*, Howden, 2022; Katju, 2022). This imagery prompts the reasonable "woke" inference that when it *really matters*, "other" lives are perhaps not as valuable as white lives for those invested in such implicitly biased comparisons.

Nonetheless, the woke mentality, uncritically posited, still runs the risk of eating itself into conceptual obsolescence; in one breath, it is commendably, if with frequent garishness, tethered to the principle that hateful divisive public articulations and behaviors should hasten draconian consequences.

Yet in almost no breath at all, such a mentality all too often reveals its proponents' tendency to over-obsess and perhaps over-interpret every detectable, so-called verbal-cum-gesticulatory slight that might not have necessarily been a slight to begin with, but, either; a slight *but* created and sustained in the minds of those doing the accusing (*cf.* Pagoulatos, 2021); or else, a reasonable, honest, vocalized disagreement against the unyielding "take-no-prisoners" approach employed by many woke practitioners. This often off-putting modus operandi has led to the unflattering charge even within the ranks of liberalism that woke progressives are '…glib…and too prone to confuse self-righteous social media chatter with the more nuanced realities of public opinion' (Stanage, 2021). Comportment of this nature points to the likelihood that many woke activists, like many of their detractors, seek comeuppance from a raw, emotional place, keen to paint a broad brushstroke of condemnation on any and every dissenting article of speech, in the process both destroying necessary debate and delegitimizing any empathetic outlook that might have come as result of any such debate.

The author only subscribes to the woke mentality to the extent that it is informed both by a rigorous, critical understanding of the history of human inequality and further motivated by those guiding principles that can be analytically harnessed by its proponents in their systematic demonstration that historical inequities continue to live on in transfiguration in the present, thereafter utilizing this demonstrable proof as a tool through which to articulate rational, practical solutions by which to combat these inequities (*e.g.*, Kay, 2018). This should lead to the sobering enough realization that although people of color, for instance, have come a long way since the debilitating days of chattel slavery, with yet a long way to go, every stubborn racist motivation at present is not necessarily synonymous with the often impulsively arrived-at idea-cum-ideal that *all whites* are to blame for racism (*cf.* Diangelo, 2018; 2021).

Accordingly, the espousals of black academics-cum-apologists like Candace Owens (2020), Voddie Bauchman, Jr. (2021) and Thomas Sowell (2009, 2019), among others (*e.g.*, Beck, 2020; Coulter, 2016; Levin, 2021), can be argued to be deeply unsatisfying and ultimately ineffective in identifying and explicating the very real racial issues that beset us. These apologists have to varying degrees dismissed the systemic presence of

racial discrimination by inveighing against so-called woke movements like Black Lives Matter, the Black Youth Project, the Advancement Project, etc., castigating their strains of supportive CRT as nonsensical, dishonest, and violence-prone. They have then gone on to stress that blacks are largely to blame for their own social problems and delinquencies, and should stop "blaming the white man" for their various disfranchisements (Owens, 2020). Conservative ideologues on race have similarly been known to rely on misleading, ultimately incongruous, manipulative statistical-causal realities, to the extent that they are still relevant, that African Americans in the south derive their touchy, violent, carefree ways from predominating white, poor, "slave-less" rednecks [Sowell, 2009, 1-51]); red herring logic (blacks are likelier than whites to discriminate against other blacks [Sowell, 2019]); falsifiable argumentation (the Democratic party was the party that sanctioned and continues to sanction black slavery [Owens, 2020]); and tropes that automatically reject liberal, "secular" notions of racial and social justice for a Christian alternative in keeping with the bigoted sensibilities of a "biblical age" that simply cannot be universally applied in this day and age (Bauchman, 2021). Through the principle of veritable racial justice for all, it becomes increasingly more difficult not to view Sowell and his ilk as more interested in compiling otherwise breathtaking statistical data-cum-emotionally satisfying arguments for their primarily disgruntled white base, for the sole purpose of proving their woke opponents wrong than they are about forwarding reasonable, compassionate solutions to the latter's, admittedly, at-times heavy-handed approach to racial and social justice. Jerry Large (1995) sums up Sowell in this way: 'Hard work and a positive attitude are good. But there is more to humanity than charts and numbers….Because Sowell never seems to recognize this, the good in his message is drowned by the bad.' Despite Sowell's voluminous scholarship, his cold, "mean" counter-liberal arguments are likely to strike the otherwise hard working, ambitious black soul affected by the bite of institutional racism as tone deaf, offensive, and disingenuous. How, for instance, would we readily square Sowell's statistical argument that black people are really the lynchpins for their own failures with the *statistical certainty*, for instance, that every two in three Canadians – who are predominantly white – remain convinced that racism does pose a systemic problem of some sort in their country (Bricker, 2020; Sowell, 2019)? By Sowell's reckoning, we should look beyond race – regardless of America's

own troubling statistical depictions which he tends to downplay in favor of clever statistical interpretations that bolster his own biases – towards the myriad of other factors that play into discrimination, in the process concealing or eliding the very real effects of racism.

The author, however, finds agreement, somewhat, with Sowell that a racially motivated victim mentality does currently exist: while Sowell is likely to explain away this extant mentality as a meaningful crutch for those who would see race in any encountered hardship or discrimination, his detractors, including the author, would argue that this way of seeing the world through *race tainted lenses* is itself a jaded symptom of systemic racial inequality and injustice; a symptom that we time and again dismiss when, in fact, the confirmation of racism's vast social, *invisible* reach may well rest in its critical assessment. The conservative intention of Sowell, *et al.*, it seems, is really to destroy wokeness and liberal positions on race and not so much to challenge the systemic pull of racial discrimination which they ultimately consider a risible fiction (*cf.* Sowell, 2009; Bauchman, 2021; Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020).

With an issue as controversial and divisive as race, it is important to confirm at the outset this book's intent insofar as analyzing race and racism are concerned. In the event that some readers decide to label the author tendentious because of what may on the face of it appear an ostensibly anti-white argumentation, the hope remains that the analytical method utilized will call any such view into question. The position relative to race and its social effects throughout this book thus may be phrased as follows: *If the non-corporeal entity of racism does currently exist then it must have a discernible interrogational historical origin. Yet as a nonmaterial entity that is verifiably enabled by the human tendency to divide, delimit, and discriminate against huge sections of itself, any resultant racial effect can be meaningfully located, identified, and deconstructed by highlighting these very human tendencies as they give way to behaviors and thinking that can be rigorously construed as belied with racialist, racist intent*. The refrain from providing a definition for racism remains deliberate until chapter four, where the historical conditions that would lead to debilitating racial considerations and diminutions are adequately analyzed.

In her book, *White Fragility* (2018), Robin Diangelo affirms the ubiquitous reach of racism in the US, laying its brunt at the feet of white America (*Ibid.*, v):

> *White people in North America live in a society that is deeply separate and unequal by race, and white people are the beneficiaries of that separation and inequality. As a result, we are insulated from racial stress, at the same time that we come to feel entitled to and deserving of our advantage.*

Like Tim Wise (2010; 2012), the late Ira Berlin (*e.g.,* 2015), and Judith Blau (*e.g.,* 2006), among other white thinkers who focus on race, Diangelo's ideas are indeed all the more compelling *because* of her whiteness. With the backlash, indeed *whitelash*, against wokeness and CRT as spirited as it has ever been, it takes a special kind of mettle for a white American academic to soberly confront both her society and her privileged racial place within that society, arriving at the conclusion that racism does continue to play an outsize, if tacitly nuanced role there. The ideas of Diangelo, *et al.*, feed into a black intellectual tradition of excellence (*e.g.,* Franklin, 2010; James, 1989; Hoetink, 1967) currently guided by scholars including Nell Irvin Painter (2011) and Michael Eric Dyson (2020), among others. Collectively, these writers have brought convincing, eloquent voice to the very real issue of race in America, together with its associated practices, cogently laying bare the institutional structures that are often silently enacted by race-think. Indeed, these thinkers locate *their* muse in the extensively catalogued incidents and histories across the length and breadth of American society that may be reasonably interpreted as racially-impelled. Race-think is utilized throughout this book's second section on race as a way to capture the implicit and not-so-implicit ways in which racial considerations are grounded in a psychology that functions on normalized impulses extending institutionally, collectively, and personally.

This book's concern with race extends beyond North America to include the Caribbean and Europe, notably England. The late Charles Mills' -now classic, *The Racial Contract* (1999), together with Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's *Racism Without Racists* (2018) are texts that temper the examinations throughout this book's second section, in light of these authors' ability to

theoretically situate race globally, while providing powerful empirical and theoretical evidence for its ideological outworking. The author's motivation falls somewhere between both writers; on the one hand, the attempt is made to historicize the ideological and practical beginnings of racialization by relying both on current writers and the philosophers of the middle modern period; the author's intention here is to act as a philosophical mediator between the intellectual periods in question with a view to challenging certain general assumptions on either side of the racial divide. On the other hand, however, by providing a fairly thorough conceptual groundwork for the evolution of race-think in the modern world, the reader is invited to test the historical and philosophical merits of the author's foundational argument via his autobiographical account in chapter five, which details his own "brushes" with racism both in the Cayman Islands, where he was raised, and in England, where he lived for four years. Close readings of selected feature headlines will then be analyzed in tandem with this autobiographical account in a bid to demonstrate the ways in which race, arguably at this point, centrally figured in these incidents. It is by no means the intention throughout this section to impose CRT on anyone, but to arrive at a general way of understanding the practically porous effects of race-think.

Multiculturalism

What better place, then, to explore the demonstrable caprices of race and religion than in the multicultural Cayman Islands? With some 135 nationalities represented there, the Cayman Islands of Grand Cayman, Cayman Brac, and Little Cayman – known aggregately as Cayman – represent a prosperous self-sustaining, "tax free" Caribbean British Dependency of 100.4 square miles, with a recently estimated population of 69,656. (The table below presents demographic percentages gathered from the last completed census, taken in 2010; the foregoing estimate represents a 25.6 percent increase on the total population per the 2010 census [Klein, 2022; 2021b].) Of the latter figure, it is likely that only about 22,000 residents represent native Caymanians, with the remainder comprising expatriates and new Caymanians who may or may not be related to native Caymanians in some way. Given that Cayman was not permanently settled until the early- to mid-eighteenth century, the native Caymanian is defined as

anyone with ancestral ties in the islands going back at least three generations on either side or both sides of his/her family (*cf.* Williams, 2015).

With a GDP per capita dramatically exceeding much of the rich western world – presently approaching $74,000 USD per annum – Cayman is a truly cosmopolitan, international destination caught irresistibly, *irreversibly* in the grip of globalization (World Bank, 2021). Globalization, crudely reasoned, stresses a local economy's substantive contribution to, and dependency on, an integrated global economy. Anthony Giddens (1990) more precisely defines globalization in its contemporary post-1945 reincarnation, 'as the intensification of world-wide social relationships which [economically and otherwise] link distant places in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away and vice versa'(64). Malcolm Waters (2001) appends Giddens' idea in his declarative that various technologies associated with telecommunications and travel especially have led to a shrinking world. Indeed, goods, products, and workers-cum-emigrants can easily and quickly be transported to virtually any location by plane. Additionally, people on one side of our planet can instantaneously contact people on the other side by telephone or over the internet at little to no cost. All of this signals a global shrinkage premised on an economic and technological network of interdependence. In other words, the economies of many nations across the globe – from the richest to the poorest and despite any Marxist/Marxian interpretation of globalization as an instrument both of western techno-economic exploitation and absolute social inequality – have become invested in a rapidly expanding global economy, where goods, services, and workers are, in many cases, able to cross borders with relative ease and little restriction (*viz.*, Anievas, *et al.*, 2010). So entrenched has the global economy become that 'national politics and economies can no longer stand alone', and John Beynon *et al.* (2000) have referred to this global phenomenon as the 'interdependency of separate economies (11).

With many of the islands' foreign-nationals hailing, notably, from Jamaica, the United Kingdom, the Philippines, the United States, and Canada, it is beyond doubt that Cayman is an attractive jurisdiction because of its globalized qualities. Such qualities include a sophisticated financial market

through which capital flows relatively freely; a fairly strong regulatory base from which free trade can flourish; loose exchange controls; and an advanced, fairly flexible foreign labor market that encourages cheap labor and continuously attracts experienced, high-quality service providers to the jurisdiction. In confirmation of these long-standing qualities of globalization, a Forbes survey (Greenfield, 2012) rated Cayman the world's friendliest country, while an HSBC report (Caribbean Journal Staff, 2012) released the same year ranked the tax-free jurisdiction the third best location 'for expatriates for quality of life and overall experience' (*Ibid*). In the words of one local financial expert, these rankings make "Cayman . . . an easy pick for top professionals looking to advance their careers"(Harris, 2014). Cayman is one of few Caribbean jurisdictions whose economies have proven, in large part, to be compatible with the tenets of neoliberalism with *its* emphases on less government intervention and freer, more privatized, liberalized trade. Nonetheless, the British Dependency continues to be plagued by a too-big, often less than-efficient civil service, the telling absence of economic diversification and vibrant competition, coupled with a seeming overdependence on its largest investor, together with a zero base tax regime which has made it especially vulnerable to the statist wrath of rich western nations seemingly intent on destroying "tax havens"(Williams, 2019).

It may be argued that the economic efficacy of globalization is, for better or worse, often situationally dependent on multiculturalism, a term implicative of the nature of coexistence among various national, ethnic, and cultural groups in a singular national jurisdiction. Consider thus at the outset that there exists the anecdotal view that a so-called benevolent multicultural reality inheres the ability to generate a modern global culture that can be described as the Pollyannaish, tolerant regard for diverse cultural identities and sentiments. Contrary to this perhaps overly optimistic support for extant coexistent difference, the author takes the view, in line with Thomas Sowell (2013) and Elizabeth Anderson (2013), that certain conventional, hyper-influential multicultural dogmas grounded in xenophobic, ethnocentric, racist, and/or cancel culture rhetoric often lead the charge in vicious polarizing among otherwise peacefully coexisting national-cultural groups, thereby calling in to question the likelihood of benevolent multiculturalism in the first place. On this

occasion, thus, our concerns lie with a revamped multicultural philosophy, or interculturality, as Ali Rattansi (2011) is keen to view it, the *authentic* proponents of which, endeavor to promote and *revel* in coexisting cultural differences. Yet this is a revelry that can only be effective if it is conducted without surreptitiously embarking on a resentment-building campaign instantaneously obsessed with ensuring cultural purity and preventing cross-cultural development (Sowell, 2013, 108). If interculturality-cum-benevolent multiculturalism is to stand a fighting chance at becoming a widespread reality outside of its idealistic, rhetorical moorings, its ideological devotees must be strategically situated to amass wide societal support as they proceed to confront and challenge the essentialism that accompanies those more jingoist strains of nationalism, most aptly revealed in the -*ness* suffix. From white*ness* to Christian-*ness*, to Caymanian*ness*, to American*ness*, our -ness suffix '…in any of its ideological permutations and frictions implicates that uncompromising, at times hateful, anxious sense of belonging and entitlement pulsating at the heart of a self-realizing [group member] eager to ask questions like, [who am I?], [Why am I the way I am?], [Why aren't you like *me*?], [Why will you *never* be like me?], etc.' (Williams, 2015, xxi). In chapter six, diverging ideas and practicalities of belonging, indigeneity, and *national-ness* in the context of multiculturalism are juxtaposed and philosophized.

Throughout this book's final section, what the author understands to be the less-than-ideal state of multiculturalism in Cayman is explored, despite the widespread view to the contrary that the British dependency is a bastion of benevolent multiculturalism (*cf*. Williams, 2019). Cayman was chosen as an apt area for study, not only because it is where the author is from, but also because as perhaps the most multicultural jurisdiction on earth, per capita, any relevant local interpretation can be understood as part of a wider global process, at the heart of which beat the forces and counterforces of globalization and multiculturalism as they currently exist.

Country of Citizenship	TOTAL		Caymanian		Non-Caymanian	
	# of TOTAL	% Population	# of	% Caymanian Population	# of Non-	% Caymanian Population
Cayman Islands	29,720	55.2	29,260	96.5	460	2.0
Jamaica	11,721	21.8	2,951	9.7	8,770	37.3
United Kingdom	5,076	9.4	2,620	8.6	2,456	10.4
USA	4,331	8.0	2,209	7.3	2,122	9.0
Canada	2,527	4.7	635	2.1	1,892	8.0
Philippines	2,418	4.5	156	0.5	2,262	9.6
Honduras	1,944	3.6	803	2.6	1,141	4.9
Rest of the world (includes the Caribbean, Asia, Africa, South America, Europe, South Pacific, Australia, New Zealand and the Middle East)	6,863	12.8	1,549	5	5,314	22.5

Table 1 *Number of Persons by citizen and status, 2010 (dual citizenships included)*

Courtesy ESO, Cayman Islands

Regardless, any resultant analyses are not meant to represent a rant against the polarizing, overpowering, one-sided economic, social, and political effects of globalization and multiculturalism. Instead, the author hopes to plant and germinate the ideational seed that because Cayman is very much a globalized jurisdiction, it is especially laid open to globalization and the panoramic, multicultural, xenophobic gamut of its effects. The issues explored throughout this final section are meant to provide an ideological roadmap on which to extensively map the development, intertwinement, and impulsion of multiculturalism and xenophobia broadly understood.

The realities of the bare, financially-hard Caymanian past and its lavish, prosperous present are very much at ideological odds, as they ought to be (Craton, 2003; Bodden, 2007; Williams, 2015, 2019). Nonetheless, the leitmotif that has remained throughout Cayman's fairly rapid development is best represented in the native Caymanian's tenacity to fight. Just as she had to fight to survive in the materially bare, economically hard past, today many of her progeny find themselves fighting not to become irrelevant in the land of their ancestors – the total workforce in Cayman is currently 56 percent non-Caymanian, after all – and all in the name of an apparently benevolent, government-initiated, financially beneficial multiculturalism, in which all sorts of bigotries seem not only commonplace but tacitly and confidently encouraged and pursued in certain social and ethnic circles (*e.g.*, Cayman News Service Staff, 2022a). What further complicates this fight at present is the diversification of the Caymanian "race" to now include other incoming ethnic and racial groups that have become just as invested in the "Caymanian" way of life as their native counterparts, who, by matter of course, remain ever suspicious of them.

A Very Brief Word About the Existential Triptych

This book's concluding analysis is based on the attempt to consolidate the social relevance of religion, race, and multiculturalism – our *existential triptych* – in three important ways. An initial synopsis of the motivations for writing this book is provided, utilizing relevant examples meant to further contextualize the dual discrete and interrelated nature of this triptych. Secondly, the attempt is made to humanize our triptych by exploring its coexisting, complimentary, and warring impulses in a single

human body, that of an informant whose very words confirm the social, ideological, emotional, and psychological dilemmas at work under the relentless pressures of modernity. The author's final intent represents a philosophical outlook that anticipates the shortcomings inherent in the overdependence on idealism on our path to equity and fairness. The concluding argument is made that an alternative ideological path to justice beyond an impractical, ultimately disingenuous self-/group-centered idealism must, firstly, be honestly conceived before it can be structurally navigated (*cf*. Weissman, 1987; *viz*., Eagleton, 2018).

PART ONE
RELIGION

A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIAL-CUM-MYTHICAL ORIGINS OF RELIGION

If god created man, why did man create so many gods?

Christopher Hitchens

The Gadfly's Annotated Creation Myth

Before the author's own "invented" creation-of-religion myth is presented, it would be worth giving somewhat uncommented outlet to the pertinent ideas of British poet and mythologist, the late Robert Graves, relative to the attempt throughout this chapter to analyze the *social currency* of creation myths as unassailable transcendental truths. According to Graves, thus, "[a Creation Myth]…has two main functions. The first is to answer the sort of awkward questions that children ask, such as 'Who made the world? How will it end? Who was the first man? Where do souls go after death?'…The second function of myth is to justify an existing social system and account for traditional rites and customs"(Aldington, 1971, v.).

Our myth is set in a *real*, primitive world, some 25,000 years ago. With the exception of homo sapiens, all other hominids have long become extinct. The ultimate Darwinian survivalists, this subspecies of the Homo genus developed the intellectual capacity for expressive language and organized social behavior around 20,000 years earlier, feats their predecessors were unable to meaningfully accomplish (*cf.* Böhme, *et al.*, 2007). The first Agricultural Revolution is still 13,000 years off, and the world's oldest organized religion, Hinduism, looms 22,000 years into the distant future. In short, there are yet no ancient texts that guide the comportment and ethical awareness of these relatively prototypic humans situated within this ancient span of time (Berger, *et al.*, 2018; 18-31).

Our story, or more precisely, our *myth*, begins with a band of relatively mobile hunter-gatherers that is a part of a larger ambulatory community nonetheless possessive of an elitist leadership (*cf. Graeber* & Wengrow, 2021). The entire community has just recently uprooted, settling in a new location after having depleted any edible flora and fauna where they once resided. The collective conscience among them is strong: their sense of social cohesion is derived in this instance from their shared occupation as *survivors*. They grunt, gesticulate, and draw to communicate and are aware of their place within both the herd and the herd mentality. John Locke's Social Contract (2020) with its emphasis on the enlightened reciprocity between the ostensibly well-meaning state and its largely compliant citizenry does not apply in their burgeoning social dynamic; neither does Jean Jacques Rousseau's rhetorical abstraction that before humankind became modern and rampantly unequal, everyone was in an enviably natural state of equality *a la* the Garden of Eden. If anything, Thomas Hobbes' theory of traditional existence, arguably, is more generally pertinent (*Ibid*.): although their togetherness is a social phenomenon, however inchoate, nature and instinct guide their actions. They have been known, for instance, to kill or exile the more vulnerable or rebellious among their midst for the sake of collective survival (Berger, *et al*., 2018, 28). Inchoate social beings everywhere in a state of anti-human, *anti-social* nature, they are not guided by codified laws, are not yet assured that any transgression against one of them by another will summon hasty and condign punishment from their secularizing, omnipotent state (*cf*. Graeber & Sahlins, 2017, 17-19). Although forfeiture for wrongdoing exists, it is arbitrary, erratic, and inconsistent; in the vein of Hobbes' *Leviathan*, natural living for some of them is often, but perhaps not always, 'nasty, brutish, and short' (Honderich, 2001, 54; *cf*. Graeber & Wengrow, 2021).

Instinctual in their habits and conditioned by repetition, these hirsute souls and their significant others live in tense yet natural fusion with nature. They are hyper-aware of nature, albeit their enduring awareness is perhaps peripheral, conceptually ancillary to their imperative to survive; as if to say, they are aware of the sky and the sun and the moon; they are mindful of the ground on which they walk, the caves in which they dwell, and the symbolic language which they inherited and continue to develop; their women know intimately of the travails and traumas that accompany un-

sterile, unhygienic childbirth, if not in those precise terms; they are sensitive to the seasons and, with unembellished self-consciousness, act and dress accordingly; if indeed it once was, the life-giving importance of water, by necessity, is no longer lost on them; their natural food comes as a result of foraging, grinding, and stalking; they know that death is inevitable, and while instinctual living may be ultimately indifferent to this inevitability, some of them fear the end of life as they know it, while others are perhaps curious about the eternal unknowns of death.

They know what it means to live a purpose-driven life, but principally, this is a purpose largely confined to the impulse to survive. Yet nature's mammoth contours inhere several incomprehensible truths that cannot yet be fully appreciated outside of their relatively rudimentary sensory awareness. At this point in their evolution, burgeoning metaphysical thought is likely a wordless index of their mental development. Nonetheless, in their awareness of nature, our hunter-gathers are just about on the cusp of cultivating the capacity to understand the so-called incomprehensibility of nature.

In the initial analysis, was it *social force* or *supernatural intervention* that was ultimately responsible for bequeathing rudimentary humanity the *eventual* capacity to perceive nature in extra-sensory, anthropomorphized terms? Put another way, was prototypic humanity's psychological capacity to process the so-called *unknowable* established as a result of human interaction-cum-organization or else because a supernatural creator force, sensing humanity's expanding and then exploding metaphysical curiosity, decided that the time had come to share the mysteries of its creation *with its creation* (*cf.* Campbell, 1988)?

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With these questions in mind, envision our hunter-gatherers as they are approaching the end of an especially hard, productive workday as they would have understood it. It is a three-mile walk back to their community and momentary abode. Twilight beckons, splintering the sky into alternate hues of diminishing light. There are still remnants of dying sunlight when they happen upon an unfamiliar sight: a tall figure blocks their path, sagely

silhouetted by the dying sun at *its* back. The contours of the figure suggest masculinity (our hunter-gatherers have already been conditioned to appreciate the so-called natural bodily superiority of maleness). Yet this presence does not strike them as natural at all; they see nature manifested every day, but "he" at once appears an inscrutable enigma in his utter unfamiliarity and the ostensible sophistication that his towering gait presupposes. The figure appears an obtrusive beast to be feared – or, at the very least, to be approached with suspicion and caution. As with all strange things encountered for the first time, the hunter-gatherers cannot avert their gaze; they are raptly transfixed.

Curiosity having gotten the better of him, the leader of the group slowly approaches the spectacle with a hesitant crouching care reminiscent of his habitual pursuit of a stronger, deadlier prey. Once mere inches from the figure, a moment of what may well be clarity surfaces and the leader grunts either in confusion or recognition. The rest of the group, as if on cue, approach the crate, quick-footed and apprehensive. Anxiety mutates into a fleeting moment of absolute lucidity, for from the figure's lips begin to flow recognizable communicative, grunting expressions. Animated by equally familiar hand gestures, his first grunts prove unmistakable…

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Save for a few twinkling stars, the sky has succumbed to darkness when our hunter-gathers arrive home. At the behest of he who had first encountered "the Creator," now voluntarily within their ranks, two burly men escort the enigmatic figure into one of the many surrounding caves, bringing him to an abrupt standstill mere feet beyond the cave's obscured entrance. By now, the community is abuzz with curiosity and unbridled excitement. Mothers carrying newborns amble towards the cave holding its patient, half-digested secret; older children run towards the cave, suspending their movement at the entrance as if forbidden from moving forward by a restricting fantastical force.

The leaders of the community, including the frontrunner who had first encountered the Creator, admonish the gawping onlookers in their collective gesticulatory way: "back to what you were doing, there is

nothing here for you to see now." Reluctantly, the community returns to its routine, but there remains an appreciable crackle in the air, enlivened by curiosity. The leaders hesitantly walk over to the waiting, patient figure, inviting him, by genuflective gesture, farther into the cave away from prying eyes. In time, men and mystery both are eaten by cavernous darkness.

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What makes us human, indeed precisely social, is our proclivity to associate with others. The saying *no man is an island* captures, among other things, our human tendency at an earlier time not only to coexist with others, but for those of us deemed, either through force or social consensus, more important than the rest, the right to *rule* over others. By the very appearance of his fey presence, together with the leaders' ability to summarily identify, label, and isolate Him from the others, the Creator Himself has become a likely site of "natural" mediation even before He is able to "communicate" his deeper revelations: only those in positions of accreting social power and influence, it seems, have the exclusive "right" to make sense of His profound verbal and symbolic gestures. The final decision rests with this powerful minority as to whether or not to reveal the Creator's imparted knowledge to the others, or indeed *how much* to reveal, before he vanishes forever. If they do decide to reveal His true intention, how will they present this to "the masses," while ensuring the continued security of *their* leadership?

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The transient villagers do not yet know it but their lives will be forever changed. The leaders have "discovered" nothing less than the boon of inchoate humankind: they have discovered religion, for at the heart of this mysterious figure laid the keys to unlocking the very mysteries of the universe. This community has been handed religion, or more precisely, a religious blueprint couched in their communicative ways. Their creator had *finally* seen fit to make Himself known outside of an omnipresent, predictable nature indifferent to the plight of humanity. The leaders would not sleep on the night of their hallowed discovery and would spend the

next several days listening to the Creator's copious instructions and impartments, determined to remember everything. As they finalized their *approved* viewpoints in the days following the Creator's re-ascendance, an unmistakable system of *official* beliefs would begin to take focus.

If they could put meaningful words to their Creator's instructions, it would perhaps read like this:

> *I am who I say I am…I am your creator. I have watched over you since the dawn of time. I created the animals that you hunt and eat, and the plants that you consume for sustenance; the water you drink from the river is my handiwork. Your ability to survive also comes from me; know that without my intervention you would not exist. As I am all-knowing, I know that you know me; you have always sensed me around you in nature, there but not there. In death you are closest to me; some among you are already aware that when death takes you, you again become one with me, non-existent but immortal, your reunion with your ancestors complete in its natural perfection.*

> *It is time that you labor to know me. I am boundless in my capacity; I have no beginning and no end. I am intimately acquainted with you, my creation, because you are the only ones made in my image. I have deposited in you the very fulfilment of my will: you are my legacy, and it is with you that I have entrusted the responsibility to spread and perpetuate my existence long after I leave you.*

> *You can only know me by worshipping me and chronicling your unseen experiences with me. In time, you will know me and the awesome extent of my spiritual, theistic manifestations. But you are never to take me for granted; I am jealous of my creation and I will be very angry if you turn your back on me after my unusual decision to show you my face. My anger is righteous; you must never turn your back on your Creator or else I will introduce pain and misery into your life the likes of which you have never before experienced.*

> *My fundamental instructions to you are as follows:*

> - *You are to recognize me as your Creator.*

- *You are to offer me, in sacrifice, your best kill every time the sky goes dark.*

- *You are to worship me, which means that you must acknowledge my existence through communal expression and meditation.*

- *As the leaders of your people, you must continuously remind them of the very thing of their Creator. Their awareness of me is your abiding responsibility. Likewise, you must punish those who refuse to acknowledge my existence. They can only know me through faith – premised on the absolute certainty of me without having seen me.*

- *I will not tolerate the arbitrary recognition of any other creator discovered by others elsewhere; this you must punish with death.*

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Five years later…

Our community has long since moved on from the temporary abode where we met them and where they in turn encountered their creator. Life in its mundane repetition has changed very little for them: they continue to hunt and forage for their sustenance; their women continue to give birth; nature remains faithful in its bountiful, if exhaustible, supply.

Yet a new purpose seems to drive this group of transients. Although their routine remains, there now seems a divine intentionality to their movements. A strong register of esoterism now courses through their being; they are not the people they were five years ago…not only are they aware of the Creator, but they now know *Him* with an intimacy that they could have never not thought possible. What seemed initially an odd, uncertain experience has become their sacred "shibboleth." Not only do they collectively acknowledge Him, but they know all too well by now that their cultivated relationship with Him must be mediated by their authority figures – they have been conditioned to accept that they are not yet worthy to approach the Creator entirely on their own. They are aware that the

Creator's awesome ways are derived from sanctioned interpretations that must be approved and disseminated by their leaders.

Nonetheless, our homo sapiens are all the more content because there is now no doubt that there is a power greater than them in firm control and orchestration of their reality. They acknowledge him in everything they do and express their gratefulness and deference through ritual and sacrifice. Two of them did not awaken from their slumber this morning, a result which the leaders confirmed was catalyzed by their "wrongdoings." Life remains nasty, brutish, and short, but no longer does it seem *so random an occurrence to the fervent among them*. Those who had especially feared death are no longer held hostage by the very thought of The Eternal Thief of Breath. They know that death is not the end, but, rather, the entrance to another existential plane. All the more to acknowledge and revere their creator, to be ever mindful of him.

There are few others among them, however, who do not believe in the Creator. Some of them, if they are bold enough to admit it, cannot be certain of the leaders' reasoning, but they hide their skepticism close to their hearts for fear of ostracization or worse. They cannot help but wonder if their leaders are being truthful. These leaders speak of a man who floated down from the heavens and proclaimed himself to be their creator. This is nothing less than divine intervention, the leaders continually reinforce in their symbolic way, a declaration which the Skeptics feel has been too quickly and uncritically embraced by the majority as unassailable fact. The Skeptics do not remember seeing a tall, perfect figure of a man on the day in question five years earlier. What they *do* remember was the leaders locking themselves away for vast periods of time leading up to *that* day, later to emerge "enlightened." On those rare occasions when the Skeptics attempt to raise this issue with some of those among them who also seem unsure about this new thing of religious revelation, they are quickly rebuffed, and, with flourishes of *uncertain certainty*, threatened with exposure if they do not repent. *The Skeptics are not so much concerned about facing the wrath of their Creator as they are about violating the will of their leaders, hence becoming eligible for the ultimate punishment* – after all, this *creator* seems only specific to their band; just yesterday, in fact, the Skeptics had questioned, through cave drawings, the members of another band they had arbitrarily encountered

about the Creator, only to be met with silent, glassy-eyed responses ostensibly mired in ignorance. For now, the Skeptics have no choice but to pretend… but they know better…or at least some of them *think* they do.

A Place for Religious Creation Myths?

The foregoing represents the author's attempt at mythmaking according to a spiritually appealing rationalism that nonetheless, it will be argued, inheres a *socially* irrational thread throughout: does someone who looks like us really live in the heavens, having decided to pay our ancient ancestors an actual visit before returning to the cosmos never to be physically seen again? But there are myths and then there are *myths*. Although multiple categories of myths abound, let us limit ourselves to two very important, perhaps ideologically synonymous mythologies. The first category extends to otherwise mundane uncertainties-cum-untruths that are deliberately and/or emotively created in the defense of some conspiracy theory or paranormal vision (Franz, 2017, chapter 1): like the [d]elusive bigfoot that roams the Serengeti – or the Rockies, *or your wooded neighborhood* – or a rocking chair that, under human observation, rocked all on its own one stormy night because it happened to be situated in a notoriously haunted house. Here are myths that defy our five collaborative senses that were "created" to function *only* within our state of nature: If one never manages to see Bigfoot clearly but hear him, then just how real is he or she (*cf.* Woods, 2021)? if a rocking chair moves on its own before a highly suggestible, psychologically-cum-ideologically-primed individual, but ceases its phantom behavior whenever a known skeptic in such matters is present, how can we be certain that the former's five natural senses have not collaborated to produce a reality confined to his own warped psychological condition and not the unassailable rules of natural law? In consideration of a more topical subject, how can we know if COVID-19 was really a government experiment gone irredeemably wrong? Is the virus being deliberately spread by 5G technology? Had there been a vaccine all along that had earlier been grudgingly denied us because governments across the world, in their bid to control population growth and preserve their authority, were keen to follow through with their *necessary* controlled genocide (*cf.* Drury, 2020)? Inversely, why should we even trust this vaccine because it is now available, given the "evil, pedophilic proclivities of a

global political cabal keen to annihilate many of us" (*cf.* Donegan, 2020; First Draft, 2021)?

Along the same vein, consider Donald Trump's tortured, schizoid logic on the eve of his momentous failure at re-election in November of 2020. Convinced of his victory in the early morning hours following election day, Trump would devolve into *mythical madness* over the next few days. As his lead dwindled to a loser's pace given his rival's amassing, unstoppable momentum in certain states due to tens of millions of mail-in ballots, the count of which had, by statute, begun late, Trump would begin to legally challenge the reversing election results in those very states in which he was once leading by calling for a stop to the counting of those ballots clearly not in his favor. Yet in the one outstanding state where he was winning, Georgia, he did not dare call for a halt to that tallying, convinced of the myth that the states in which he was losing came as a result of widespread voter fraud, when no such evidence existed. It was telling enough that when Trump *did* eventually lose Georgia, he would apply the same broad strokes of electoral fraud, implicating, without merit, his own party faithful in a massive and "disgraceful" cover up, even going so far as to infer that his own appointed FBI and DOJ leadership was complicit in what he considered to be systemic electoral fraud (*e.g.,* Wolf, 2021; Axelrod, 2021).

Here was a Trump-manufactured myth perpetually empowered by persuasive symbolic narratives created as a way to emotionally process the unthinkable. For Trump and his declamatory sympathizers and enablers, because it was unthinkable to even entertain the *more-than-likely* truth that the incumbent's lead had been reversed because more votes had eventually been cast for his opponent, a *legitimate*, emotional, "gas-lit" response meant to tap into the "righteous" nationalist resolve of their legion of suggestible supporters had to be created and sustained, with nary a factual gauge in sight. This myth became nothing less than extra-sensory succor for already hazy origins of consequential events and happenings convincingly explained emotively: Trump could not have lost the election legally because of his popularity, therefore it was stolen from him; the rocking chair *did* rock on its own, "and I haven't any natural, sensory idea why that would have happened, so there *must* be a paranormal explanation." And what of bigfoot? It must exist, this monstrous creature, because there have

been several indistinguishable sightings that would suggest a real, atypical being; where did it come from? Why is it so elusive? Such myths, simply put, rely, firstly, on some semblance of reality, unclearly derived or otherwise, and then on the emotional deconstruction of this reality, offering sincere (or, in Trump's case, *insincere*) extra-sensory explanations and emotions – in the sense that they cannot be proven – for aberrations from the norm. Without any real verifiable proof with which to justify these nebulous realities, any all-guiding proof is inherently undergirded by psychologically affirming emotional responses meant to corroborate foundational facts that were never facts to begin with, merely alluring, accumulating emotional energy. It is not being said that the aforementioned examples are mythical because they are impossible; instead, the ideas *associated* with them are mythical because they are substantively buttressed by emotional impulses deeply entrenched in the psychology of the superstitious, suspicious, and/or distrusting soul who has no real evidence to substantiate his claims. Here are impulses that often form the basis of *baseless* conspiracy theories. In other words, under the "right" circumstances, emotional postures can become divine truths onto themselves. Spirited belief in a potent, believable myth is tantamount to 'abandoning yourself to your feelings', especially when those feelings are corroborated by a truth bereft of relevant evidence, instead legitimized by repetitive, impassioned rhetoric (Snyder, 2017, 67).

It is the religion of emotion that binds all myths together regardless of their categorization or place in history, which would, from the vantage point of emotion, make psychological myths no different than the second mythical category that the remainder of this chapter will be devoted to, that of etiological mythology – that is, *obvious* myths that are rendered objective given their defensibly compelling causation (*viz.*, Sproul 1979; Graves 2017; Jung 1998). Regardless of the emotional tenor on which any effective myth is built, there is a uniquely ancient quality to etiological myths because here are myths that have the emotional trajectory of centuries of history and historical beliefs driving their irrefutability. In the context of the current American political climate, consider that country's etiological national myth, which is built on an almost irrational reverence for, and investment in, the infallibility of the founding fathers, many of whom were slave owners and altogether flawed in their inegalitarian attitudes, despite their

grand constitutional vision powered by "egalitarianism" (*e.g.,* Raphael, 2014). The emotional power of this myth looms everywhere across the modern day United States, no more profoundly revealed in the outsize anger and outrage that follows when someone attempts, in what would be deemed an "un-American" spirit, to catalogue the proven imperfections of the founding fathers (*cf. Ibid.;* Green, 2015).

To reiterate, etiology, as concept, is concerned with highlighting and subsequently elaborating on the evolving emotional development behind a long-held condition or belief. Consider the etiological creation-of-religion myth penned at the beginning of this chapter. Relying on the metaphysical concept of first principles – that is, *who* or *what* triggered the creation of any article of sensory reality – the author was aware that in his attempt at mythmaking, he had to initially consider etiological myths as tantamount to ancient symbolic narratives possessive of those emotional and social features necessary for the assurance of their longevity and seamless generational transfer. Put another way, any effective creation-slash-cosmological myth represents a powerful, transcendent, extended metaphor of just who created the heavens and the earth and everything therein (*cf.* Buell, 2020).

There are many creation myths across our globe that figure as extended metaphors. For instance, in the cosmology of the African Congo, the Ngombe creation myth metaphorically and anthropomorphically traces creator god Akongo's supernatural motivation behind both humankind's creation and its devolving quarrelsomeness, its corrupt fall from grace, if you will (Sproul, 1979, 47). From the order-from-chaos creation myths ranging from the matriarchal Pelasgian creation myth, thought to have been developed by the ancient ancestors of the Greeks, to the Amerindian Salishan/Sahaptin creation myth with its emphasis on the coyote, virtually every longstanding creation myth possesses similar, inevitable features across the length and breadth of human development, their metaphorical narratives widely understood as timeless, hallowed ciphers for this or that ancient religion, metaphysical position, and/or sense of civilizational progress (*cf.* Franz, 2001; Leeming, 2010).

In dualistic Jungian terms, creation myths are important because they represent humanity's first systematic attempts to explain the unexplainable, that is, life and its ultimate meaning and source of conception (*viz.,* Jung 1998, 49). Virtually all creation myths mirror the traits, attitudes, and sentimentalities of humanity: in what many scholars have deemed creative, culturally relative, relevant accounts of the *Big Bang*, it may be said that creation myths follow an imaginative process that, dependent on one's ontological outlook, may be perfectly or imperfectly superimposed on human development; which is to say that in the first order of things, humankind was naïve to the ways of nature, existing agnostically – they knew perhaps that nature existed, but it was futile to question its unknowable and not-terribly-important first principles at that time. In the second order of things, as humankind began to develop the mental capacity for understanding themselves outside of their instinctive selves, their surroundings would become imbued with an anthropomorphized awareness forged by metaphorical interpretations. The second order, in turn, would lead to the third order in which burgeoning supernatural accounts of creation, with time, would be subjected to systematic interpretive and canonical reshaping. Finally, in the fourth order, religious movements were established, structurally adhering to predating social hierarchies reflective of paternalistic motivational patterns. All said, creation myths are powerful not only because they compellingly give authoritative voice to the realities of our making, but because they are emotional entities pinioned on our psycho-social development, such myths are precisely social constructs, created by the eventual *social* imperative to understand the incomprehensible (*cf.* Sellers 2001, 1-34).

For Marie-Louise von Franz (2001, 1),

> *Creation myths are [of a somewhat] different class [than] other myths…for when they are told there is always a certain solemnity the gives them a central importance…Therefore, one may say that as far as the feeling and emotional mood which accompany them are concerned, creation myths are the deepest and most important of all the myths.*

> *Because the origin of nature and of human existence is a complete mystery to us, the unconscious has produced many models of this event. The same thing happens wherever the human mind touches the borders of the unknown.*

The psycho-social importance of creation myths is beyond doubt at this point, not because the truth they espouse conforms to scientific certitude – in which case, they would not be deemed important *at all* – but because of the unassailably true paradox on which they are built. In somewhat Jungian fashion, we could phrase this paradox like this: Although creation myths (consider this chapter's myth) are driven by hyper-subjectivism, the objective certainty that they are able to instill in contemporary religious and cultural adherents render them both inevitable to, and contingent on, the metaphysical imperative to project.

Projection in our context is a rather complex philosophical term which in its relevant usage attempts to capture the indispensable paradoxical relationship between the so-called object, say, a supernatural creator, and the subject, that is, anyone who plays an integral role in developing ideas of a creator god and elaborating a methodical belief system around such an object. Projection occurs, then, when the unscientific object, otherwise inert and non-existent, becomes imbued with awesome, real, and ostensibly legitimate life by the subject (*cf.* Franz, 2001, 110); as if to say that the subject by virtue of his/her inquisitive, emotional god-thoughts, will eventually project such thoughts onto an object of his/her own conceptualization. Thoughts and objects in this regard may well be considered synonymously in dismissive scientific terms, but on social, religious, emotional, and cultural grounds the two features hold no such synonymous link, but are instead, with the passage of time, viewed discretely. Put another way, although creation myths are distinct social constructs created by our ancestors' mental and emotional projection onto a supernatural object that owes its timeless, transcendent identity to such a projection, in time, this subject-object contingency became blurred and the original process behind their relationship was effectively elided. To invoke the all-important chicken-and-egg question, which came first, our supernatural creator or the amassing human ability to first describe this creator and then later render him eternal and therefore beyond our comprehension?

How can we answer the aforementioned question *objectively*, that is, outside of the extra-sensory supernatural object imbued with subjective life misleadingly veiled in objective terms? Barbara C. Sproul (1979) may well provide a useful conceptual frame through which to anticipate a satisfactory retort:

> [Creation] Myths…use…metaphors to describe…creation. Sometimes they conceive the primary duality of being and not-being in terms of an order-chaos opposition and envision god as a kind of great administrator. Often identified as good, this sort of god takes on chaos (evil) as a challenge, and, like any of us trying to get our house in shape, begins by establishing basic principles (18).

What does *describing* as a distinctly human trait connote in this instance? When we describe something, we must be aware that the thing we are attempting to describe is somehow known to us, for how else would we hope to describe it? With the deliberate act of describing in mind, early humankind must have been in some way aware of what creation meant, that is, *the development of existence*; becoming aware of their own place in the natural order of things, they would have, in the absence of a scientific mentality, eventually sought to provide *metaphorical* answers to their amassing metaphysical understanding of creation.

How, then, did our ancestors proceed to *describe* our creation if not through accreting, accessible, *metaphorical* understandings of our *creator*? Metaphors are powerful abstractions, and in and of themselves may radiate heroic, phenomenal features and impulses in their ability to liken unrelated features – for example, "a ravenous beast, the man proceeded to conquer his enemies." In this example, the man is able, if only through vivid description, to transcend the ordinary triteness of his human limitations, becoming more beastlike in his character and military prowess. This is why creation myths are so powerful and intoxicating in their anthropomorphic imageries: by abstracting, indeed *supernaturalizing* human ability, it is not difficult to see how, with time, our mental creation will outpace itself, becoming its own rule-maker, in accordance with the transcendent properties inherent in the metaphors being utilized. The uniquely human

ability to form abstractions is, through this gaze, the first principle of creationist mythmaking.

With the idea of abstraction in mind, contemplate, for instance, the creation myth of the Bushmen of South Africa. Their creator god, Kaang, is by default good but diametrically opposed to him in the Bushmen's cosmology is the evil deity Guana, 'god of the dead and wicked spirits…and the source of all trouble in the world' (*Ibid*., 31). Likewise, although Egyptian mythology is quite complex and not at all straightforward in its dualistic and multiplistic theistic features, consider that in the beginning, the good sun god Re fought with Apophis, 'the dragon of darkness and chaos' (*Ibid*., 87). This was a daily battle, expressed in the dualistic features of day and night and the multiplistic variations between darkness and light: once the sun set, the sun god found himself locked in a divine conflict, depicted by night, with the dragon. Inevitably defeating the dragon, Re would rise from the darkness, the underworld, a metaphorical representation of the rising sun (*Ibid.*, 86). Consider also the Judaic creation myth behind our own Christian faith. In the beginning there was El or Elohim, also known as Yahweh (As we see in the following chapter, El and Yahweh were likely discrete gods prior to the onset of Pentateuch culture). El created the heavens, the earth, and Adam and Eve in six days, resting on the seventh. Yet Eve would eventually disobey God's specific forbiddance not to eat from the tree of knowledge, her disobedience assured as a result of the successful temptation of the serpent, the representation of the devil and unchecked nature's powerful corrupting influence. Finally, ponder the creation-out-of-chaos myth behind Taoism. In the beginning there was nothing but chaos (is chaos really nothing?), and from chaos came yang (light) and yin (darkness). Accordingly, '[y]ang is the principle of brightness, activity, and strength…[while] [y]in is the principle of darkness, passivity and weakness' (*Ibid*., 199). Although often regarded as polar opposites in the western imagination, by their very duality, the creative impulses of yin and yang must constantly work together if reality, inclusive of nature and human progress, is to exist. Put another way, '[y]in and yang are…representatives of respective borders of the whole, related and dependent on each other. Through their interaction, all things come to be and can be understood' (*Ibid*).

The driving percept at this juncture crystallizes in the following train of thought: Archaeology has long since confirmed that humanity, inclusive of our ideas, traditions, rituals, etc., developed over hundreds of thousands of years across an immense and variegated cultural geography. The abiding pattern of our social development fundamentally rested on groups of people – hunter-gatherers, in the first instance – moving from place to place; the migratory patterns of our forebears yielded two interrelated, unassailable results: in the first place, migration meant renewed and manifold interactions not only with the group's new geography, but with other human groups hitherto alien to them. To the second interrelated result, as such interactions played out, cultures were created, coopted, revised, and/or deepened, traditions were forged, and rituals of every sort – religious and otherwise – were envisaged and hammered into nascent collective psyches. In an ancient world of human interaction, the interrelated forces of *interaction* and *formation* not only primed our general socio-psychological make-up, but more specifically, also made it possible, and indeed all the more contingent, for our ancestors to assuredly, *experientially*, confirm their place in their dualistic context through *their* development of epic-spiritual imagery based on socially-inspired metaphysical tropes. It is likely, then, that *the social* and its mounting existential psychological collectivities generated what many of us essentially understand today as *the spiritual*. More on this in the following subsection.

Given our human proclivity towards dualistic thought (*cf.* Lavazza & Robinson, 2016), our supernatural creators not only receive their awesome abilities from our metaphorical descriptions of them, but also from our psychological tendency to frame any divine conflict in epic dual terms spanning good to bad, the sublime to the absolutely profane. In many creation myths, what is good is always dependent on what is bad (somewhat conversely, in Chinese culture, darkness and light – yin and yang – naturally complement each other, but they are still predictably viewed in that culture somewhat dichotomously). In this epic, supernatural, intensely metaphorical battle between good and evil, the force deemed good is precisely good because, given our evolving emotional makeup, our creator *cannot* be bad – perhaps it is in his/her nature to allow untoward things to happen, but s/he cannot be bad because that would

presuppose that creation by its very enactment is bad. Bad experiences, or misfortune, is thus reserved for the mounting perverse side of nature. Misfortune is often associated with anything that brings us devastating pain or excruciating hardship – like premature death, debilitating illness, the absolute loss of material possessions, etc. Our creator is precisely good because *good*, however relative its interpretation and execution along the path of human-social evolution, is morally more desirable than bad, which itself is nonetheless still formidable and somewhat co-equivalent to good in its ubiquitous existential reach and influence. Any creation myth worth its weight in the ages is not complete without competing diametric opposition, because without struggle or conflict, humanity cannot progress and therefore cannot become experientially *better*. Without this dualistic struggle, the divine, mythical principles that Sproul highlights (see page 45) could not have lent themselves to the social cohesion that we so take for granted here in the now-secular west especially.

The Political Origins and Evolutionary Sustenance of Religious Fervor: A Rational View

Organized religion and/or pervasive religious conviction not only foundationally and ideologically depend on creation myths, but also come to accrue their legitimacy by political means. The political concept is used in this instance to capture the hierarchized relationships among members of any organized religion that confirm the power dynamic between the numerically minor "clergy" and the predominating "laity;" as the custodians of the faith, the former, by virtue both of its position and the instinctive obeisance of the latter to it, reserves the right to shape and corral what may be deemed the tenets of the faith. Not only are political relations and the seemingly natural outworking of religious hierarchizing inextricable, but any resultant religious fervor would not exist in its seemingly organic intensity if not for the enabling power dynamic between the clergy and the laity. As such, methodical understandings of the interceding role of rationalism in politically-motivated relationships may be confidently applied to what some have labeled the social construct of religion, and by extension, religious conviction.

The ostensibly unrelated ruminations of the late great British political philosopher and rationalist Michael Oakeshott (2011) rush immediately to mind here. Conceptually, rationalism demands that any meaningful thought or action is only as meaningful as the methods used to arrive at them, these methods being reason and knowledge. Would not rationalism thus eschew the subjective certainty of religion and religious thought, you might ask? Why insist on the eternally "second-hand" certainty of a supernatural creator that you cannot see or otherwise naturally sense? A supernatural creator that we cannot, in two words, *naturally rationalize*? The answers to these questions would depend on how we apply the word *reason*. Reason need not only apply to objective scientific streams of thought – there is, after all, a reason why theologians or defense attorneys, for that matter, employ *reason* in their defensive arsenal. As with politics, reason or logic, it will be argued, is also central to religion, its hierarchical organization, as well as its associated fervor.

What is logic, then? It is best captured in the human ability to assess a problem or, say, a conceptual impasse, thereafter working toward a comprehensive resolution through measured, systematic analytical thought to eventually be put into action (*e.g.,* Copi, *et al.,* 2019). For Oakeshott, any evolutionary process towards good politics ultimately revealed in good governance, was inevitable given humanity's amassing ability to reasonably, *logically*, situate itself within the matrix of the *common good*, a commendable idea nonetheless imperfectly spawned and driven by modernization and its amassing individualistic pull; the end result of this logical ability would express itself in social, transcendental terms by setting out to improve the lot of humans (or, in any event, *certain* humans) through enlightened, tolerant, progressivist ideas and trains of thought. Others have argued that politicking is not inherently virtuous but prone to selfish grabs of power, which in turn leads to tyranny – veiled or otherwise – oppression, and the like; Oakeshott would likely agree with this rationalization. Oakeshott would, however, diverge from his critics in his view that given humanity's capacity to reason and improve itself, any enlightened democratic political position, despite its stubbornly persistent imperfections, should be seen as the most recent rational improvement in governance – in *good governance* (2011, introduction).

Accumulated religious rationalism is no different than accumulated political rationalism. Using Christianity as an enduring example in this instance, this religion's currently progressive, relatively inclusive message is not precisely organic, but more so represents the manufactured product of more than two centuries worth of social development spanning the medievalist parochial to the cosmopolitan universal. As we see in the following chapter, the Judaic creation myth, together with its subsequent amassing Christian fervor was established in a relatively contained, insignificant quasi-sovereign space for the consumption of a particular group or groups clearly hierarchized. With the passage of time, however, in which cultural contact became more frequent and cosmopolitan, any antedated religious fervor initially narrowly spread, would, under the appeal of a burgeoning universalism, not only maintain its original fervor, but via an evolving political emotional rationalism, would also become all the more globally appealing to anyone now in a liberated, or indeed "subjugated," enough state to be coopted into a religiosity originally and culturally not his own. Thus, if the Judaic creation myth is Christianity's first principle, we would be hard-pressed to understand the immense global pull of contemporary Christian conviction not so much as sustained by ancient metaphysical interpretations, more than as an evolving *earthly*, *social matter* inhering its own amassing political, rational dynamic. The point here is that inchoate religious fervor might have initially been generated by its corresponding creation myth, but it was the resultant social orchestration along its various evolving rationalist modes of thought that would *come* to empower, legitimize, and objectify this myth, *rationally* transforming an otherwise *irrational* metaphysical understanding into an unassailable truth cloaked in constructed normality.

Creation myths are likely human inventions so invented as one of the initial means by which to satisfy the metaphysical curiosities of our hitherto unscientific minds. In keeping with the *Zeitgeist* under which these myths were, firstly, created and then sustained, it *was* precisely rational that our scientifically-challenged ancestors would have employed metaphorical rhetoric in developing their creator gods. From there, other eventual ancestral principles, beliefs, and values of more telluric origin would be incorporated into an evolving political dynamic initially likely to be based on esoteric oppression or some sort of hierarchical impulse, only for these

same inequitable features to undergo such profound transformation over centuries of human development that at present those of us inspired by dogmatic religious truth have not even stopped to consider that religion's foundations as comprised of naturally artificial constructs initially, *inevitably* primed and manipulated by earthly historical and human factors. The general absence of such a contingent consideration indicates that although rationalism and knowledge are quite entangled and can be used interchangeably, specific streams of metaphysical, religious justification would be best analyzed as rational rhetorical developments outside of objective, sensory-laden knowledge as it is scientifically understood today. A quick visit to the foundational age of religious motivation, mindful of all the evolutionary space between the oppressive then and the "liberated" now, would confirm that the formative politics of socio-religious spiritual fervor developed according to its own parochial, niche logic itself informed by an extant hierarchized division of thought and social rank. To invoke a well-known example, under the -now obsolete Zeitgeist of the Judaic Old Testament, it was permissible to kill entire ethnicities deemed ungodly. The inherent principles of Old Testament living not only indicated an autocratic patriarchal rooting, but also corresponded to hierarchical understandings and internalizations of humanity in stark binaristic terms spanning the chosen people and their oppressors and opponents. Those who today accept the Genesis creation myth as a literal series of events, are also likely to accept the unassailability of Old Testament living – typically described as living "under the law" – with its emphases on a rigorously impossible righteousness in no way informed by the modern tenets associated with human equality and liberty. This acceptance of the religious foundational past may appear as rational for the perpetuators of, say, Christianity, but if we accept this rationalism, in light of our divergent, cosmopolitan present sensibility on which Christianity itself largely functions, should we not also be open to the idea that any Old Testament rationalism was contingent on a past inegalitarian age and is in no way applicable to the present and therefore not *rationally* binding? Aware at this juncture that inherently politicized socialization is likely responsible for the institution and perpetuation of practical and spiritual religiosity, why is it that many of us continue to think, in line with this chapter's opening myth, that established religion ought not to be understood and legitimized according to historical contingent development, but against metaphysical truths masquerading

synchronously as universally accepted rational facts? Christianity is, after all, the world's religion, so why shouldn't its inherent facts throughout both its Judaist foundations and its modern inclusivist sensibility count as universally rational *all the time*?

Some will probably think that the author is "up to no good" with the last questions posed. In the first place, this chapter's myth appears to be supported by a ludicrously laudable premise – a figure from heaven descending to earth to instruct his creation in the ways of deistic deference, only to forever vanish. This is precisely why the author thought such a premise, for all of its illogical, irrational movements and developments, would prove effective to any genuine philosophy of being, because many continue to faithfully invest in a similar ideologized train of thought. Are any of the more established first-principle-creation-myths any different in the intent of their crafters than any recent attempt at mythmaking at the beginning of this chapter? Some would say no: the establishment of *any* and *every* creation myth within an inchoate ethnic-cum-cultural affiliation meant that humankind first had to develop the mental capacity for mythmaking before they would have been able to put a series of ideas and principles into a written, comprehensive, accessible narrative.

If words and ideas come as a result of humanity's mounting prescience, which, to reinvoke the chicken and egg question, *really* came first, the unknown or the amassing human ability to *develop* metaphysical thought by which to *explain* the unknown? Many of us profoundly touched by religion would likely posit that a hidden, extra-sensory reality predates us and mankind had to develop the ability either to pull the unknowable from the clouds or else be able to glean the mysteries of the unknown by way of divine intervention; the social context in which this chapter's myth is set infers the latter train of thought. Attempting to lay this social context bare beyond mythic inference, since the beginning of time, humans have always been aware of the presence of nature in relation to their own existence; early hominids would have, for better or worse, understood themselves in natural terms – they hunted for food, took shelter from the elements, knew of the harnessing powers of fire, understood the intimacies associated with procreation, etc. Nature was not so much known to them as it was silently, ubiquitously integral to their everyday existence. Thus, given that the

phenomenon of nature proceeded humankind, its silent, quotidian ubiquity would have eventually prompted curiosity in those who lived by its rules, but who would eventually develop the mental capacity to understand its so-called *obvious* extra-natural truths. It seems rational to say, then, that if a very real *state of the inexplicable* predated humankind, then the mysteries of the universe were always extant and simply needed to be discovered – better yet, to be *uncovered* by a developing, inquisitive human mind. Many believe this premise and would stake their lives on it, and this is why religiosity in its *logical* transcendence of time and space has managed to remain relevant for many in a modern materialistic world that is often seen as adhering to a post-religious, godless sensibility.

We are, it has been said, driven by a "god-shaped hole," an existential need to understand the mysteries of the divine and the origins of our own being (*cf.* Angell, 2002). Yet this understanding only becomes plausible after we have developed the capacity to reason and think logically. Rationalism, for better or worse, is what guides religious thinking, but more importantly, this brand of evolving rationalism radiates its own self-assured logic: *There must be something greater than us; creation could not have just randomly happened, after all; therefore, there must be a god*.

Notice, however, in line with our current variety of evolving rationalism, that for many of us there is no automatic, honest, earnest self-reflection concerned with the social, historical, and transformative development of religious conviction and fervor. Earlier in this section, it was suggested that creation myths, among other things, make it possible to disregard the social indices of our religious development. Put another way, creation myths have transcended their social boundaries precisely because of the metaphorical language that drives their meaning. Literature students know only too well the awesome creative power of the brilliantly crafted metaphor. Good creative writing with its bent on the extended metaphor is as powerful as it is timeless. Take, for instance, the Celtic epic poem Beowulf, which metaphorically chronicles the rise and complete moral and physical destruction of its formidable, flawed namesake. If this epic was not written later in human history by a poet well enough known, it would have made for a compelling ancient myth with immense cosmological potential (Heaney, 2001).

The rational connection between religious metaphor and religious authenticity is the *sine qua non* of human existence for some; yet this connection, as the author has contended, is necessarily social given that without the interactive dimension, humanity could never have hoped to *formulate* its position in the metaphysical scheme of things. The proposition-as-fact, therefore, *that there must be a god*, takes it for granted that god's existence rests firmly and confidently beyond the social dimension, when, *in fact*, the confidence undergirding this proposition has all along been inevitably shaped by the social and is thus inescapably subjected to it. In other words, the *social reality* against which creation myths were forged, as this chapter's myth attests, must have been fraught with existential uncertainty that accompanied a routine hunter-gatherer lifestyle; nonetheless, the mounting metaphysical curiosity of humankind would reach its logical conclusion only because of greater social contact and organization, not *in spite* of it.

Focusing on our ancient ancestors, there must have been a correlation between the mounting human capacity to organize themselves hierarchically and the responsibility of those in positions of leadership to rationalize any developing metaphysical belief system on the behalf of the rest of them. Everyone cannot be a leader, after all, and in time certain figures would accumulate influence and power over their respective communities. As inchoate hegemons, these leaders would have developed a persistent confidence enabled by their social position and the eventual psychological auras of authority their presence would generate in others. Momentarily ponder here the Pentateuch, that is, the first five books of the Hebraic Old Testament. It is widely agreeable that the founding fathers of Judaism including Moses and Abraham, exhibited a righteous, outsize influence over their at-times idolatrous and disobedient fellow Israelites. Yet beyond their divine connection, have we ever stopped to question how they became the religious and political leaders of Ancient Israel in the first place? There must have been a social process behind this ascendancy equivalent to an induction by enlightened autocracy. The point is that when Moses ascended Mount Sinai – in what is today Egypt, spoke with God, and descended with the ten commandments hewn into a stone tablet, his people had long trusted in his instinctive confidence not only in terms of his leadership, but extending, as well, to his self-assured, socially

authenticated personhood leading up to *that* moment in Jewish history (more on the controversial polytheistic-cum political origins of Judaism in the following chapter). In short, we have been more concerned at this point with the testable, sensorial social features that accurately characterize political ascendency and how other interrelated features like mass appeal, cult of personality, and the total abandonment to "beneficent" leaders made it easier for the ancient ethnic group in question to later internalize a bequeathed religiosity, only for this internalization to be eventually – *rationally* – coopted by more powerful external groups in the transcendent characterizations of universalism, eternality, and immutability.

It has been said that 'a [creation] myth is a religion in which no one any longer believes'(Fiebleman, 2019). In a sense, this is an accurate statement: in modernity rests the sheer bargaining power to neutralize creation myths created many epochs ago. Material convenience and longer life, for instance, have transformed many of us into our own little gods obsessed with *our* development, on which rests the arrogant assurance that our human progress comes as a result of ourselves and not any creator god so "invented" at a time when our ancestor's needed desperately to ideationally account for the mysteries of nature. Yet those who would see creation myths as thorough anachronisms are ultimately shortsighted in their tendency to overlook the "shaping graces" of religion. Every demonstrable phenomenon has its beginning: culture, economics, politics, and religion all began somewhere, that *somewhere* corresponding to a relatively primitive, benighted place. We do not thus, to use another enduring example, discount the so-called primitive origins of capitalism, but we study it to understand the legitimate, at times paradoxical development of global economics. Economics socially exists independently of any metaphysical argument offered by pioneering seventeenth century economist-slash-moralist Adam Smith and his invisible hand of supply and demand which presupposes inert concepts that come alive through the very thing of trade and our cultivated understandings and practices of it. As with the long-term manifestations of economics, consider that the long-term social effects – emphasis on social – of religion also do not *really* (?) depend on metaphysical proof. What religion, politics, and economics all have in common is their existential sense of social familiarity. What might legitimately be interpreted as metaphysical and intangible cannot

reasonably negate the social dimensions in which its interpretations can only be humanly understood. That many creation myths, notable among them the Genesis creation story, are not currently understood as myths by many religious adherents, but, paradoxically, as free floating *hard* facts, not only indicates but all the more confirms their social importance: with time, considering that time itself is an inevitable social process, such myths became discrete, *essential* entities relative to the inchoate social beliefs responsible for generating and shaping them.

The religious adherent who dismisses out of hand, or otherwise downplays the intellectual social origins of his or her religion wholly in favor of a fey metaphysical interpretation, has failed to come to grips with the inevitable social shaping effects inherent in religious development, its very shaping graces. No creation myth can be said to be immune from the social origin of its making, for without *social* origins everything that *socially* exists and *affects*, including religion, would not *actually* exist and affect. A possible follow-up question here could be, so what then of the social origins of humanity and nature generally understood? If creation myths originated from *somewhere*, then where did humanity in all of its unique sentience *really* come from? In the concluding paragraphs which follow, the attempt is made not so much to satisfactorily answer the foregoing questions, as to make a case for the irrefutable role of the social in our arrival at such questions in the first place.

Conclusion

It would be fit to conclude where we began, that is, with myth, notably, the author's myth, from which can be gleaned a cosmic separation between the social and the mystical. Throughout their natural social lives, our hunter-gatherers were aware of existence and their place within it, if not in those precise terms. The very thing of terminology, of which "cosmic separation" and "mystical" invariably figure, is, in the field of metaphysics, a concept of human invention, which is to say that we can only understand the metaphysical unknown through our conception of it; which is to further deduce that without human understanding first, everything that is known to us could not have otherwise been known.

Bringing the mystical to bear on our arguments, what, however, about our indefinable, *indefinite* sixth sense? People claim to come by knowledge or understanding by no other means than a dream or a vision, both unaware, or *unconvinced*, in any case, that these are reservoirs of social conditioning – how else would we even begin to make sense of the so-called sixth sense if not through learned concepts and percepts? In any case, the sixth sense may be interpreted as humanity's intuitive ability to sense the unknown and subsequently attempt to alter any negative outcome tied to it, if in accordance with a set bias or suggestibility often posing as objectivity (*e.g.,* Rhine, 2014).

In line with the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, we cannot explain our experiences and feelings outside of language and mental conceptualizations as these are informed by accepted, widespread signs and signifiers (*e.g.,* Penn, 1972). We cannot thus ever hope to explain religious myths and the dynamics of religion outside of those interpretive intellectual and linguistic features specific to socialization and psychological conditioning. Nonetheless, it is our human nature that allows us to frequently commit to metaphysical elucidations, because in our minds, social understandings concerning divinity are *inadequate*; instead, we posit that our extra-sensory spirit is constantly aware of our mind's god-shaped hole via an irrefutable cosmic connection. All of this begs the question of how we can prove such explanations outside of our indispensable mental awareness, which is inevitably social. The cosmic disconnection between our natural world and, say, a supernatural creator god may inhere a defensible, semantic rationalism, but it is a one-sided logic that privileges its *socially irrational* supernatural half over its *actual* social component which is everywhere relevant and firmly knowable.

Sociality is the weightier component of the equation towards understanding the continued investment behind abstract ideas and concepts that seem, illusively, to come impossibly alive outside of our sensory constellation. Nonetheless, no amount of methodical pushback against the veridical weight ascribed to abstraction will in any way diminish, for some, the timeless extra-sensory value used to adjectivize creation myths or their concomitant ideational religious relevance. Among other things, religion is important because we have throughout the course

and pace of our significant history made it such. Yet much like the social constructiveness of race and racism, creation myths do not suddenly cease to be of *social* importance because of our accreting experiential human proclivity to create and reinforce metaphorical accounts as the "rational" first orders of existence. Conceptions and practices of race and racism, as we shall see later in this book, do not and *cannot* shed their social relevance simply because those of us on the "right side" of history have decided, with all the muster of abstract argumentation and palpable ire, that they are no longer relevant, quick to cite the eradication of those historical structures like slavery, Jim Crow, or Apartheid that indeed made these concepts practical and relevant in the first place; a quick disciplinary examination will yield that the inherent ideology of such defunct structures have remained, generating racialist, racist legacies that are still with us today (e.g., Alexander, 2019; Fleming, 2017). Similarly, consider that creation myths and other such metaphysical philosophical understandings of creation do not cease to be of *social* importance because some of us are keen to apply a fine line of logic out of keeping with our own unavoidable, contingent human development. Have we thus missed the forest for the trees in our bid to render the social altogether irrelevant in this instance? Or should we perhaps *altogether* banish our metaphysical forest in our endeavor to understand the granular social significance of the trees that comprise it? In the very final analysis, how likely would you be as a typically *mindful* social creature to readily embrace the anti-social nature of your origins in the author's mythical posit, or any other variation thereof, that *religious thought did not develop inaugurally through social means, but was bequeathed us by our creator, who decided that it was time to break the natural rules of science and sociality to introduce himself to us, his singularly sentient creation*?

Western culture, not without controversy, is thought to have begun in the important Greek city states of Athens and Sparta, among others (*cf.* Hobson, 2004; James, 2016; Diop, 2012; Bernal, 2020). Before these polities would be conquered, first, by Phillip II of Macedonia and maintained by his more popular and aggressive son and successor, Alexander the Great, Greece, as understood as a smattering of city states, was an important hub of progressive thinking. The great ancient philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle flourished during, and contributed earnestly to, Hellenic culture before Greece was conquered in rapid succession, first by the Macedonians and then the Romans. Greek religious culture was especially vibrant, rich, and complex. Loosely established by oral tradition during the Bronze Age and subsequently sustained by centuries of written tradition, by 600 BC Greek religion was firmly entrenched across the region, replete with its own cosmogonic outlook – its Orphic creation stories and mythologies – compellingly narrativized by the poet Hesiod in his magnum opus, *The Theogony* (2012). Here was a cosmogony that confirmed the chaotic nothingness of the universe and the awesome gods and goddesses that would eventually emerge from the primordial void. The result of Greek cosmogony would be powerfully revealed in Olympian mythology based on greater and lesser gods and goddesses ranging from the good Zeus to his evil brother Hades, and making provisions for demigods the likes of Heracles and Orpheus (*e.g.*, Albert & Richard, 2021).

In conquering the Greek peninsular in 146 B.C., and thereafter much of the rest of the known world at the time, the Romans, save their unique military genius, did not simply replace Greek ways with their own, but embraced

progressive Greek culture with its emphasis on art, philosophy, and religion – the Romans, for instance, adopted Greek mythology in the forging of their own polytheistic religious outlook. Before Christianity was to leave its eternal mark on the Roman Empire and what would later become Europe, other philosophies of the later Hellenistic period (323-31 B.C.) fought, in their way, for religious supremacy. But these were not religio-philosophical movements that espoused eschatological ideologies and ontologies. Instead, a content life for the philosophers responsible for these competing natural ontologies meant a fulfilled, so-called happy existence conforming to the virtues and principles suitable for this world – there was no afterlife to prepare for, no great beyond that could be obtained only through "right living." Rather, these were philosophical movements whose ideologies and principles of existence were guided by monism, that is, the belief in the coexistent oneness between the natural and the so-called metaphysical. According to many of the monists of the day, the moment the brain died, for instance, the metaphysical mind-slash-consciousness died with it; or, when the body died, so too did the soul perish, if indeed the soul existed in the first place. One can see why philosophical monists were only concerned with the *here and now* (*cf.* Weir, 2012*)*.

There were four such philosophical movements established during the reign of Alexander the Great, and extending into the early era of Roman imperialism. Epicureanism, based on the mediated teachings of the philosopher Epicurus (341-270 BC), maintained that 'pleasure is the beginning and end of a blessed life'(Russell, 2005, 702). Stoicism, founded by the Phoenician Zeno (495-430 BC), on the other hand, maintained that '[lived] virtue [, which resides in the will,] is the sole good…and such things as health, happiness, and possessions are of no account'(*Ibid*., 243). Cynicism, established by Diogenes (412-320 BC) and influenced by Antisthenes (445-365 BC), held that '[t]he world is bad…[so] let us [in life] learn to be independent of it. [Only] contentment through resignation is secure'(*Ibid*., 223). Finally, there was Skepticism, proclaimed by Pyrrho (360-270 BC), whose adherents were keen to ask: 'Why trouble about the future? It is wholly uncertain. You may well enjoy the present…[for] what is to come is uncertain'(*Ibid.*, 224).

These religio-philosophical movements, notably Skepticism, fought for preeminence while Jesus Christ lived and the Roman Empire was in the process of successfully extending its imperious reach across eastern and western swathes of the known world. The Roman Empire derived its imperial *raison d'etre* from slavery and social inequities of ethnic and cultural proportions; the daily drudge under Roman rule thus helped to transform the thing of religion into a healing, coping balm for the "inferior" masses – especially those not natively Roman – of this far-flung, impersonal polity, who were at every turn downtrodden, dejected, enslaved, and altogether wretched (Joshel, 2010).

Such philosophical movements, for all of their enlightened positions and attitudes, could not offer what Christianity would from the beginning of the second century, that is, the assurance, based on belief and faith, that there were diametric degrees of life after death, and if one wished to reside in heaven for an eternity, as opposed to burn in hell for the same span of time, then she had to devote herself to the teachings and virtues of Jesus Christ, the son of the Christian god. Beyond this assurance was the inchoate Christian percept that faith, not *works*, would ensure a Godly life and *afterlife*. Monotheistic in nature, Christianity is based on the notable personhood of Jesus Christ and his divine intermediate position as the son in the Holy Trinity of the Father (God) and the Holy Ghost (the guiding spirit left by God after his son's resurrection and ascension into heaven).

Before, however, Christianity would become the official religion of the Holy Roman Empire in the fifth century shortly before that empire's collapse, it did have a powerful competitor in the predating Persian religion known as Zoroastrianism, based on the teachings of the ancient Iranian spiritual leader and teacher Zoroaster (Rose, 2014; Boyce, 1990).

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It is widely believed, if not definitively proven, that Zoroaster, also known as Zarathustra or Zartosht, lived some time in the second millennium BC well before the advent of Christianity's foundational religion, Judaism, later in that millennium (Boyce, 1990). That Zoroastrianism was a monotheistic religion established within geographical proximity of the

origins of what would become the world's foremost ancient monotheistic religion – Judaism – certainly provides a credible avenue of inquiry into the former's influence in the belief structure of the latter. Zoroaster's ideas and convictions would have stood out in stark contrast to the contemporary official Iranian religion of the day that was fundamentally polytheistic, further guided by a restrictive social class structure. Although, seemingly, he never chastised polytheistic beliefs in his writings known as the *Aveda* or the *Avesta*, Zoroaster believed in a single, singular supreme being known as *Ahura Mazda*. As with the impending supreme god of Judaism – Yahweh – Ahura Mazda was perceived as the consummate force of good and right in the context of dualism, which is to say, Zoroaster, in his view, understood that the forces of good and evil not only stood in diametric, *natural* opposition, but that the world and all therein was created by the supreme Ahura Mazda, whose good creation was prone to corruptibility by the degrading, lesser-yet-powerful spiritual forces of evil, anthropomorphized in *Angra Mainyu* (Rose, 2012, 19). Here was a cosmogony that seemed a predating synonym for the Genesis Creation Story-slash-Myth. In Zoroastrianism's cosmogony, not unlike its Judaic equivalent, evil possessed the ability to penetrate a hitherto innocent, if initially untested- humanity, thereby creating followers of *dregvant* – those tainted by the lies of the *Evil One* – sinners, in the biblical sense (*Ibid.*, 18). According to the sacred scriptures of Zoroastrianism, notably the Gathas, Ahura Mazda enmeshes eight personalities or qualities also known as the Beneficent Immortals that can be invoked when their particular presence or skillset is needed. Common with the founders of Christianity, Zoroaster preached degrees of immortality, the greatest of which was only achievable if Ahura Mazda was earnestly and sincerely worshipped in *this* life. Zoroaster's ideas surrounding mortality rested on the conviction that humans were ultimately free moral agents (*Ibid.*).

Because Zoroastrianism is a lesser religion, claiming a little under 200,000 adherents at present (Rose, 2012, 217), it is a far easier option to suggest its origins as unimportant and altogether insignificant relative to both Judaism and Christianity. However, it becomes increasingly more difficult to overlook Zoroastrianism's possible influence on Judaism given that the former was widespread during the reign of Persian leader Cyrus the Great, who was responsible for allowing Jewish repatriation to Jerusalem

following that group's extensive exile in Babylon to the mid-fifth century BCE (Dando-Collins, 2020). Given the geographical proximity of both religions, together with the fact that Persia had, as a polity, by then achieved significant hegemonic clout, the fundamental belief structure inherent in Zoroastrianism seemed to have influenced Judaism by the latter's final iteration.

To follow on from the preceding point, there is an important ideological parallel to consider at this juncture between both Zoroastrianism and Judaism: It has been argued that both religions emerged out of polytheistic traditions (*e.g.*, Rose, 20111; Mondriaan, 2013). In the Old Testament books of Judges and Kings, the ancient Israelites continued to express conflicting sentiments and acts of worship between gods, notably Baal and Yahweh. Throughout the Old Testament, Baal is considered a corrupting, *corruptible* idol god, while Yahweh is constantly praised as the only true covenanted god, not only of the Israelites but of all humanity; despite the mounting aniconism inherent in Judaism, Yahweh is depicted throughout the Old Testament in epic, metaphorical imagery (*e.g.*, Gen. 3:8; Ex. 31:18; Ps. 8:4).

There is historical evidence predating the Pentateuch which suggests that before the Israelites – an ethnic branch of the West Semitic Peoples – were firmly monotheistic, they were *everywhere* polytheistic, even monolatrous, by which is meant that before Judaism was established, the Israelites perhaps worshipped the patriarchal god known as El, or some variation thereof, but had no qualms affirming the legitimacy of related, at times worshipped, subordinate-yet-powerful deities the likes of Baal and Aserah (*cf.* Gaster, 1950).

In 1928, the Ugaritic Texts were discovered in the ancient city of Ras Shamra in present day Northern Syria. Carbon dating confirmed that these texts, a compilation of poetic and literary spiritual writings of a prototypical Canaanite quality, were extant by at least 1,200 BCE, some seven hundred years before the monotheistically driven Pentateuch emerged (Day, 1986). The term Ugaritic denotes a heterogeneous Bronze Age culture centered on ancient Palestine and the Levant, and indelibly influenced by the Canaanites who were likely the common ancestors of the Israelites, among other ethnic groups from the region (Haber, *et al.*, 2017).

Accordingly, the parallels between the Ugaritic corpus and the Pentateuch seem too *relatable* to be considered coincidentally. Marlene Mondriaan (2013), for instance, avers that although the language composing the Ugaritic likely 'belonged to the Canaanite family…the cuneiform alphabetic and consonant script is closer to biblical Hebrew [than any other extant regional script at that point in history]' (229). In other words, the language utilized in both corpuses were not only similar, but were likely related under the reasonable consideration that the Israelites were also even likelier to have been more so influenced by their existential Canaanite ancestors-cum-enemies than they would have cared to admit (*cf*. Joshua 10:40, 11:15). Even more telling is that the Ugaritic corpus seems to anticipate the theistic content of the Old Testament, but from the vantage point of mythological polytheism. For instance, in the Ugaritic pantheon of deities, El ruled as 'the divine patriarchal God', while below him was situated a host of lesser-yet-powerful deities, among them Baal, the so-called king of the warrior gods. Those who worshipped El, for instance, had no reservations worshipping Baal, many of whose traits, it has been argued elsewhere, would later be applied to the biblical Yahweh (Cross, 1962; Herrmann, 1999a & b). Additionally, El's consort, the powerful fertility goddess Aserah (Viegas, 2011), was regarded as the co-custodian of the heavens and is also thought, according to noted theologian J. Edward Wright, to have gone by the older Canaanite titles of Astarte and/or Istar (Viegas, 2011). In a pottery inscription predating the writing of the Pentateuch by some two hundred years, Asherah and Yahweh's divine spousal relationship is confirmed in their joint blessing, revealingly denominated 'from Yahweh and his Asherah' (Emerton, 1999); this suggests that somewhere between the Ugaritic mythological pantheon, the destruction of Canaan, and the onset of covenanted Yahwistic culture, the ancient Israelites were already in the process of conflating the characteristics of the preexisting Canaanite deities El and Baal into their emerging supreme god, Yahweh (*Ibid*.).

Additionally, Asherah is mentioned some forty times in the Old Testament books of Deuteronomy, Judges, First and Second Kings, First and Second Chronicles, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Micah (Hadley, 2000). Yet in light of predating Ugaritic evidence, the fleeting, seemingly insignificant instances of Aserah's biblical mention nonetheless implies her spousal relationship

with Yahweh, the one and only true god of the biblical Israelites, notably in the perhaps grudging acknowledgement that 'the Goddess Aserah was worshipped in Yahweh's temple in Jerusalem' (*cf.* 2 Kings 18:4, 21:7; Viegas, 2011); in this context, Aserah is biblically condemned both as an idol goddess and 'wooden cult symbol', summarily associated with polytheistic, so-called immoral Canaanite worship (Mondriaan, 235). Similarly, where El is seen as the supreme god in the predating Ugaritic texts, the biblical Yahweh and theistic El suffix seemed to have been fused to represent a singular, living, capital Judaist god; Elohim, El-Shaddai, etc., and Yahweh are seen as one and the same in the Old Testament, their titles utilized interchangeably and synonymously (Day, 1986) – somewhat equatable perhaps to Ahura Mazda's eight distinct personalities.

What accounts, then, for this plausible shift from polytheism to confident monotheism among the Israelites between the Ugaritic period and the onset of Pentateuchal culture? Moreover, how are we to further account for what may be argued as the ideological theistic overlaps between El and Yahweh and Yahweh and Baal? The answers are not clear-cut but are likely contingent. Some have argued that there are no parallels or overlaps between the Ugaritic and the Old Testament because the Canaanites were an altogether different people from the Israelites. These scholars go on further to aver that any overlaps and parallels are overblown by those scholars keen to undermine the veracity of the bible and the Old Testament in particular (*cf.* Matthews, 2012; Kitchen, 2006). Yet others have confirmed the assessment recently outlined, claiming that religions in the Mesopotamian region, the cradle of civilization, emerged from a somewhat general regional pool of traditional linguistic-cum-cultural knowledge created as a result of a diverse, ever dynamic ethno-social milieu. In turn, these traditions underwent fragmented "religious" and political change over time; in more historically-contingent terms, following both the Judaic exile to Babylon in 586 BCE, together with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem – then the official place of Israelite worship – the patriarchs of a once-polytheistic faith were so motivated and convicted to realign their faith in "righteous," "hallowed," monotheistic fashion. According to this controversial interpretation, the persecuted Israelites, like their captors, were formatively, indeed *normatively* polytheistic, and could not, under such terms and circumstances, consider themselves *the* chosen people.

However, the very power of a revisionist monotheism rested in the subsequently endorsed Deuteronomistic and Levitical legal codes that established and no less *buttressed* and exclusivized both Judaism and its inherently sacred fact that when the Israelites *did* inevitably achieve liberation from conquest, they could confidently proclaim that their deliverance came at the hand of the *one* true God with whom they had entered into a covenant, thereby setting them apart from their enemies. Therefore, any subsequent exile or scattering would have automatically induced ideas of a persecuted people, so persecuted because of their special, sometimes uneasy relationship with *the* exclusive creator god. It was, for instance, for the carefully cultivated politicized rationalism of monotheism that Jewish Guerilla Judas Maccabeus, fighting in the late first century BCE, well after the fact of the triumphant establishment of the Abrahamic legal code, would become a hero of the faith in his successful efforts to ward off an invasion by the Seleucids of Macedonia, in the process preserving and further normalizing Judaism from the so-called corrupting polytheistic effects of Hellenism especially (*viz.*, Bar-Kochva, 2002). Although it is likely that the religious origins of Western Semitic peoples overlapped and morphed either along monotheistic or polytheistic lines, the Judaic monotheistic tradition with its emphases on holiness and right living, would triumph in the end, lending itself to an earth-shattering religious movement steeped in the experiences of one Jesus Christ.

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As the great post-Aristotelian philosophers fought for preeminence both among themselves and the other polytheistic religious sensibilities of the age, Jesus Christ of Nazareth traveled throughout parts of the present-day Middle East, spreading his doctrinal teachings. Thought to be the direct son of the Judaist creator god, Jesus is also thought to have been born of the virgin Mary some time between 6 and 4 BC, when the Roman Empire was at its height (Gibbon, 2010).

Bitter contention nonetheless continues between those who remain convinced that the circumstances surrounding Jesus' virgin birth confirmed Old Testament prophecy, and those who have committed themselves to painstaking historical research beyond biblical sources, only

to affirm the rampant fallacious logic on which their hyper-invested theistic opponents continue to function (*cf.* Wells, 1987). To give a necessary aside here, briefly consider two circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth, these being the occurrence of a provincial census at the time, and the biblical prophetic reasons surrounding why Jesus *had* to be born in the Bethlehem that Matthew and Luke recognized in their writings, which loosely translated means the House of David, among other epithets (the House of Meat, the House of Bread, etc.). To the first circumstance, historical examination beyond the biblical gospels confirms that a provincial census was taken throughout the Roman protectorate of Judaea, occurring well after Herod's death, out of keeping with the biblical timeline presented; it was Herod who, according to the bible, played a central regnal role in promoting a census count for the purpose of locating and exterminating Jesus. Nonetheless, any such census did not occur until an estimated decade after Jesus was thought to have been born, thereby challenging Herod's role – he was dead by the onset of this census – in the biblical account of Jesus' birth, and perhaps confirming the biblical account as a gross overdramatization of actual events. To the second related circumstance, consider that by way of Roman decree, Jesus' earthly father, Joseph, was enjoined to return to his ancestral hometown in line with an Old Testament prophecy taken from Micah 5:2, that the messiah – Jesus – would be born in Bethlehem:– the remaining apostles were convinced well after his death, that Jesus was exclusively from Galilee; yet although it was Luke who was able to "trace" both Bethlehem and Joseph back to the Davidic line, one would be hard-pressed to believe that any -at the time current Roman decree for the expressed purpose of taxation would have stipulated that Joseph was to move back to the homeland of a remote, random ancestor dating back a millennium, especially if his more immediate ancestral lineage was found to have unfolded in Nazareth, located in Lower Galilee – certain scholars, problematically, now believe that Jesus was actually born in a smaller Galilean town named Bethlehem. In any event, what seems likelier for some is that to ensure the fulfilment of Micah's prophecy, Luke was keen, well after the fact of Jesus' death, to identify and no less legitimize Bethlehem as the City of David and thus Joseph's ancestral place of origin, seemingly unaware of both the temporal arbitrariness of his identification, and the inaccuracies surrounding his recall of important events that coincided with Christ's birth. These two

cursory examples may well leave one critically approaching Christianity for the first time with the impression that the bible, either in its entirety or in certain of its parts, should not perhaps be taken literally, notably where external evidence has been convincingly used to throw biblical literality into serious doubt (Dawkins, 2012; Wilson, 1984; Fox, 1992)]

It is also widely agreed that Jesus' teachings inspired a new way to see the capital god, unencumbered by, yet strangely dependent on, the Judaic strictures of the hyper-religious, Abrahamic-inspired Pharisees and Sadducees, and his message of compassion towards the indigent especially first encouraged, and then demanded, a philanthropic outlook. Yet within the final three years of his life, Jesus would ignite the wrath of the Roman Empire, his life and teachings set in diametrical opposition to the latter's polytheistic, decadent opulence. In time, Jesus became a target for execution both by religious Jewish authorities and the secular Roman state. Supposedly betrayed by one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Jesus was imprisoned, physically tortured, and nailed to a cross where he would meet his mortal end. He had made his peace with his end days before, for, as the fundamentalist Christian mentality goes, his death was to represent his gift to humanity; in effect, he had to bear the sins of the whole world by dying and remaining dead for three days, before physically and spiritually conquering death through his miraculous resurrection.

Yet Jesus' confirmation as the son of God in the event that he did exist, continues to be vigorously debated (*viz.*, Wells, 1987; *cf.* Ehrman, 1996, 2012; Doherty, 2005). Consider in the first place, the controversial long-standing theory that Christ's divine life on earth was not at all divine but inspired by the Greek pagan and spiritual itinerant teacher, Apollonius of Tyana, whose so-called miraculous life has been, unlike Christ's, confirmed primarily by secular, if admittedly vague sources. The contingent postulation may be forwarded that Christ's confirmed existence was legitimated, primarily, by suspect first-hand, *invested* religious accounts, which may not have been all that first-hand, after all (more on this in the following paragraphs). The theorizing continues that although both men lived some time in the first century AD, given the secular, un-*invested* grounding of Apollonius' existence, it would seem all the more likely that as   Christianity   gained   in   monotheistic   stature,   Apollonius'

"misconstrued," veridical-enough characteristics were transferred to Christ in a fit of devout revisionism after the fact. The further iconoclastic claim is made that Christianity was thus established in the religious tradition of Hellenism as it informed Gnosticism; more on the conflicted origins of Christianity in the paragraphs which follow. Although this theory has been debunked by modern scholars, in light of certain archaeological textual finds "confirming" that the so-called Gnostic Gospels were written well after the biblical Synoptic Gospels, one cannot help but wonder, as we now explore, whether the continued allied western/global investment in the unassailability of Christ continues to cloud intellectual judgements in this roiling area of scholarship (Moss 2019; Roberts & Spearman, 1993).

It would also, at the outset, be useful to introduce the bio-reproductive concept known as *facultative parthenogenesis* – or virgin birth. This phenomenon is common among lizards, rays, sharks, and certain endangered condor species, and occurs when a female egg produces cells that act precisely like spermatozoa, thereby removing the mating condition that usually must precede reproduction (Bittel, 2021). Save its far-removed, rhetorical confirmation in biblical scripture, facultative parthenogenesis has never been successfully observed in humans precisely because female eggs in our species *must* fuse with external male spermatozoa if reproduction is to occur – remain mindful of this observable biological phenomenon, for we shall return to its very implications for the existence of a paradoxically situated *divine man* that many have accepted Jesus Christ to have been while he lived on earth.

In tandem with the foregoing trains of thought, the argument against the divinity of Christ in part stems from the awareness that outside of the Synoptic Gospels there appears to be no exhaustive secular account of Jesus' epic, supernatural existence except for the somewhat indifferent accounts of Publius Cornelius Tacitus (Ash, 2018) and Flavius Josephus (Feldman & Hata, 1987; Whiston & Maier, 1999). Equally important to note is that Roman chroniclers Pliny the Younger (b. 65 AD) and Suetonius (b. 75 AD) did give fleeting accounts to the persecuted state of Christians by the early second century, a well-accepted fact outside of the raging debate of whether or not Christ lived (*cf*. McDowell & Morrow, 2010).

Accordingly, let us now consider the more extensive observations of Christ and the movement he was alleged to have established via the textual mainsprings of Tacitus and Josephus. Born in 56 AD and considered Rome's greatest historian, Tacitus *admitted* the following (Thayer, 2021):

> *Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular.*

It is true that Tacitus confirms the synoptic truth, some six years after the last Synoptic Gospel is purported to have been written, that Jesus Christ was executed on orders from Pontius Pilate, then the overseer for the Roman protectorate of Judaea. However, that he refers to the Christian movement as 'a most mischievous superstition', cannot, in its pithy affirmation, begin to capture the astounding life that Jesus lived per the Synoptic Gospels; as if to ultimately say, Christians were nothing more than cultists who had managed to convince themselves, without proof of fact, that *Christus* was not only their god but the *only* god. It is difficult to confer any deeper divine meaning on Tacitus' account of Jesus beyond the ideas that he lived and led a cultist charge ostensibly dependent on unconfirmed secondhand reports (*cf.* Isaac, 2004).

Jewish scholar and historian Flavius Josephus also mentions Jesus in his extra-biblical writings, published within the final five years of the first century. The feel of Josephus' writings is strikingly similar to those comprising the Pauline Epistles. Although the Apostle Paul claimed to have seen a resurrected Christ, certain modern scholars have argued that this sighting was either a delusion or else an attempt earnestly committed to by Paul as a way to further legitimize and sustain the besieged, perhaps diminishing Christian message. With the8 questionable Pauline sighting of Christ under current consideration, Paul, like Josephus, probably never knew Jesus except through secondhand accounts (*cf.* Wenham, 1995, 2011).

Born in 37 AD, an estimated seven years after Jesus was purported to have died, Josephus would have not been far removed from the indelible impressions that Jesus must have left in his wake as a divine being cloaked in human flesh. In fact, Josephus lived at a time of consequential political upheaval; between the contrails of Jesus' execution and the increasing violent conflict between the Jews and their Roman overlords to 73 AD, which once again resulted in the Jews being driven from their ancient homeland, one would be inclined to the belief that Josephus must have been hyper-aware of Jesus' visible, divine place in the otherwise secular history of Roman conquest. As a Pharisee, Josephus would have indeed been aware of the building anti-Jesus sentiment during the era of Jewish persecution, and thus, in keeping with his training as a historian, would have been among the best objective minds to corroborate the epic consequences of Jesus' existence in his magnum opus *Testimonium Flavone* (*The Testimony of Flavius Josephus*), published in 97 AD and contemporaneous with the Synoptic gospels. Allowing Josephus to "speak for himself" on the matter (Feldman & Hata, 1987):

> *About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who performed surprising deeds and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Messiah. And when, upon the accusation of the principal men among us, Pilate had condemned him to a cross, those who had first come to love him did not cease. He appeared to them spending a third day restored to life, for the prophets of God had foretold these things and a thousand other marvels about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared (430).*

Nowhere else outside the New Testament is the existence and resurrection of Jesus so neatly, positively, and succinctly corroborated. Yet this passage has been derided by some as a hoax, an interpolation written not by Josephus in the same century that Jesus lived, but by a Christian apologist some time in the early fourth century AD (*Ibid*.). Beyond this, critics have further contextualized the possibility of textual fraud by arguing that in light of Jesus's indelible impression, Josephus could not have written what he did because he spends too little time extolling the virtues of a man in too

much of a triumphalist, arbitrary Christian tone, well out of keeping with the sentiment typical of a Pharisee at that moment in history, a sentiment which runs rampant throughout the Gospels. (For instance, why would Josephus refer to Jesus as 'the Messiah' as a strict, conventional Judaist?) What therefore *could have* been deemed as objective proof from the likeliest (or *unlikeliest)* of sources became a viable muse for hostile skepticism (*Ibid*.).

The skeptics have quite a bit to be skeptical about. It is generally agreed that the New Testament, notably the four synoptic Gospels, were written between 60 and 110 AD and as such were increasingly themselves seen as secondhand accounts far removed from the reality of Jesus Christ while he lived (Carrier, 2014; Atwill, 2011). It seems reasonable to question why the disciples did not chronicle Jesus's existence either contemporaneously with their savior's life or immediately following his ascension. The natural Christian retort is that they were in fear of the Roman Empire for their very lives and thus were in hiding. Why not, then, write in hiding is the enduring skeptical pushback. If Jesus was as important and life-shattering as his disciples claimed, their imperative to objectively chronicle his life and teachings ought to have been more urgent, an idea that highlights Bart Ehrman's reasonable thesis (1996) that Jesus' religious importance was codified into official Catholicism in a bout of revisionist fury well after the fact of the humble, suspect origins of Christianity.

Regardless, contestations of the nature of Jesus's life, after the fact, commenced within a hundred years of his death, raging well into medievalism and beyond. The battle for the heart of official Christianity initially pitted the Gnostics against the proto-Catholics from the second century (Gnosticism is defined shortly). In its prototypic state, Catholicism had gained an edge on Gnosticism by at least 180 AD, evidenced in Bishop Irenaeus's popular refutation of Gnosticism as a heretical and blasphemous series of interpretations of Christian doctrine (Roberts, 2012); here was a refutation that would comfortably establish the orthodoxy of the Catholic tradition, no more powerfully enshrined in the Muratorian Council, convened in 200 AD, and which oversaw the first attempt to canonize the books of the New Testament (Tregelles, 2018).

Yet the ritualistic outworking of the Greek-inspired Gnosticism was similar to its Latinized Catholic counterpart. The centerpiece of Christian worship generally confirmed both a hierarchy of leadership – elders, priests, preachers, and apostles – and sacred, if transient places of worship, usually the homes of members. Beyond edifying the party faithful in private venues, Gnostic missionaries, being missionaries, traveled throughout the Roman Empire preaching their brand of Christianity in hopes of converting their audiences (Russell, 2005 2:2).

By the late second century, it was Catholicism that would, as it were, take the faith further, expanding and legitimizing by righteous decree its hierarchy of bishops, priests, and deacons as comprised of men sanctioned by the Orthodox Catholic Church, so that by the fourth century the prototypic Bishop of Rome had become the official face of Catholicism. For Josef Stiglmayr (1889),

> this threefold gradation owes its existence to Divine institution. These three grades correspond to the three grades of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The chief bishop was the Bishop of Roma, the head of the Church and Vicar of Christ, to whom, by reason of the Divine origin of the hierarchy, the three grades just mentioned are subordinated. Outside of this ecclesiastical hierarchy includes a descending minor hierarchy which consisted of titled men who were commissioned and empowered by the Church; such titles include the cardinals, nuncios, delegates, patriarchs, archbishops, vicars-general, deans, parish priests, and curates. There is still a third sense in which the expression hierarchy may be used; in this it includes the whole clergy and laity, inasmuch as they are all members of the Church (180).

In its Christian outworking, Gnosticism referred to an accreting tradition of Christian-mystical intellectual and theological positions and their various cults that would, by the mid- to -late second century, be deemed heretical by their Catholic opponents. From the Ebionites and the Arians who outrightly denied the divinity of Christ, to the morally extreme Donatists and the fatalistic Pelagians, the Gnostics maintained that all matter was inherently corrupt and human redemption was only possible through the attainment and application of esoteric, spiritual knowledge

known as *gnosis* (*cf.* Weor, 2012). To hear Elaine Pagels' succinct assessment, 'we could translate [gnosis] as "insight," for [it] involves an intuitive process of knowing oneself. And to know oneself, [the Gnostics] claimed, is to know human nature and human destiny' (*Ibid.*, 11). In 1945, fifty-two religious, gnostic texts were unearthed in Egyptian Coptic form in Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt; among what was a series of esoteric writings attributed to Christ, were gospels thought to have been transcribed from their original Greek form between 350-400 AD – more on this later (*Ibid.*, 9; Miguel, 2010a & 2010b). The books discovered at Nag Hammadi included the Gospel of Thomas, the *Apocryphon* of John, the Gospel of Philip, the gospel of the wife of Jesus, among others (Pagels, 2013, 7, 8). Notwithstanding that these "rejected" gospels forcefully implied that certain members among Jesus's disciples were Gnostics or had their *Gnostical moments*, the Gnostics believed that salvation rested in the attainment of transcendent spiritual knowledge. To reiterate, unlike the emerging Catholics, many Gnostics did not generally believe in the actual resurrection of Christ; instead, many of them remained convinced that Jesus was a flesh and blood man who had been infiltrated by a divine spiritual force sent from the capital, "ungendered," far removed god; this force would depart Jesus upon his death, confirming the Gnostic view that salvation stemmed from a spiritual awakening occurring *immanently* and not Jesus's bodily resurrection, which was not possible considering his ultimate mortality (*cf.* Baur, 1971).

In light of the foregoing, one can begin to appreciate the intention behind what some regard as a deliberate biblical lacuna: the gospel according to Philip was not included in the official New Testament, one suspects, because, *inter* alia, Philip implies that Jesus and St. Mary Magdalene were intimate, in turn generating great jealousy among the other disciples (Pagels, 2013, 7, 8). Now implicating the forbidden Gnostic Gospel of Mary Magdalene, discovered before the Nag Hammadi find, it was this gospel's namesake who first saw Christ after his death, a fact readily corroborated in the Synoptic accounts (*Ibid.*, 31-34). According to the Gnostic interpretation, however, Mary Magdalene did not see Jesus in the flesh, as purported in the Synoptic Gospels, but in a vision (*Ibid.*). This interpretation further corroborates the internal coherence of the Gnostic view that Jesus' resurrection could only meaningfully be understood symbolically, as it was

foolish to believe that the corporeal had the ability under any circumstance to reanimate after death (*cf.* Meyer, 1986). The shared information, if you will, between Mary's Gnostic account and the Synoptic Gospels, together with the epistles of Peter and Acts, lends itself to an alternative account with an emotionally powerful corroborating value: It is, for instance, a well-accepted biblical truth that Mary Magdalene went to Jesus's tomb on the third day, where, according to Luke, chapter 24 she was greeted by two men who informed her that Christ had risen and that she was to tell everyone (in Matthew's account, it was an angel that Mary met at the empty tomb). Yet if Mary's Gnostical recount represented nothing more than a "vision" or "delusion" rooted in her otherwise optimistic sorrow, then one can see why Peter notably would have argued with her declarations in this version, while jubilantly corroborating her words in the Synoptic accounts that Jesus had indeed physically risen from the dead. If the same post-resurrection discussion is implicated in both Mary's Gnostical account and the Synoptic Gospels, there is a persuasive alternate point to be made in the tradition of gnosis, that Jesus was "merely" mortal, possessive of the ability to understand and clearly impart esoteric spiritual truths (*cf.* Bauer, 1971).

We are further confronted with Gnosticism's underlying esoteric truth at once at odds with mainstream Christian dogma in the Gospel of Thomas. The Book of Thomas does not provide a narrative of Jesus' life and death, but is comprised of a number of his purported esoteric sayings, including: '[And] Jesus said, I am not your master. Because you have drunk, you have become drunk from the bubbling stream which I have measured out…He who will drink from my mouth will become as I am: I myself shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him'(Bruce, 1961). Here, the Gnostics would argue, was proof that the transferable spiritual spark for salvation could only occur after one had made a concerted spiritual effort to locate truth immanently, in the process rendering Jesus as a vital "spiritual guide" and perhaps nothing more (*cf.* Elwall, 2018).

There are well-regarded reasons why such Gnostic accounts are not represented in our official bible. The overriding justification for their biblical absence is that these texts, banned by the Church from the fourth century, were not to be trusted because they were written centuries after the fact of Jesus' death, and thus were not written by those among his

contemporaries (Pagels, 2013, introduction); yet this thinly veiled justification remains vitally ideological, seeking to compellingly confirm the theistic soundness of the Synoptic Gospels, the last of which are believed to have been written around 110 AD, also well after Christ's alleged death. Recent studies suggest that many of the Gnostic Gospels in original Greek form might have even been created contemporaneously with the Synoptic gospels, a controversial stance that would pose a serious enough existential challenge to orthodox Christianity if it were to one day be taken more seriously (*Ibid*.). Yet the curious among us cannot help but to "objectively" juxtapose the ideologies inherent in early Gnosticism and Catholicism, only to return to the ostensibly unassailable truth guided by an unchanging reality that human beings do not resurrect from the dead after having been interred for three days, unless they were never dead to begin with; what seemed likelier given the commonality of symbolic, mythological pronouncements, was the mounting investment to imbue a once extant figure with so-called epic characteristics tied to his life while he lived, resulting in his timelessness, in effect, his immortality. Some have often wondered in tense "Gnostical" solitude whether or not the Church's official canonization process from the twelfth century onwards was really a tacit acknowledgement that *no one* lives forever except through the posthumous recognition of an exceptional life lived. With these reasonable, if controversial thoughts in mind, do we tenaciously suspend disbelief when it comes to Christ's resurrection and divinity based on the so-called heretically foolproof nature of orthodox Christian theology, a nature, in the vein of the very social development of truth, itself a relative truth? Do we invest deistic unassailability in a -by now "third party" credibility of which we will never be able to corroborate outside of centuries of powerful, often heavy-handed religious investment? Does this "corroboration" therefore make it easier for many of us presently invested in mainstream Christianity to accept, in the tradition of that faith, that an orphic *demigod* by pre-dating Greek cosmological interpretive standards, rose from the dead in a far-removed, bygone era when such feats were perhaps "likelier"? Such feats indeed continue to figure as the 'founding gestures' of any important antedated traditional society, where, according to the entrenched investment of *hindsight belief*, it is not difficult to believe in a time when the rules of nature were not as *reliable*, precise, and unassailable as they now are, and anything was possible (*cf.* Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, 498). If we

did decide to update our answers to these questions in the affirmative, would the very Gnostic/Catholic-cum-Christian/heretic foundational traditional divide not then be inescapably turned on its ideological, motivational head, and ultimately shattered?

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Born in Algeria in 354, Aurelius Augustinus is widely regarded as one of the founding fathers of official Christianity. Augustinus, or St. Augustine is a good example of the cross-cultic influences between Gnosticism and Catholicism at a time when Catholicism was on the verge of becoming the official religion of the Roman Empire. Reared on an orthodox Catholic education, Augustine would in his late twenties find himself swaying towards the Gnostic sect known as Manichaeism mere years before Catholicism would become the official state religion in 380. In typical Gnostical form, the adherents of this popularly widespread heresy-turned-religion, formed in the second century and with roots in the Far and Middle East, argued against an omnipotent god by declaring in broader dualistic terms that human existence and salvation were essentially based on the primeval conflict between light and darkness. In this account, "good" was representative of the soul, while evil constituted all forms of matter essentially corrupt and corruptible (Tardieu, 2009).

Yet it was Neoplatonism to which Augustine would eventually turn on his journey back to so-called Christian orthodoxy. Neoplatonism was developed by Plotinus towards the mid-third century. Plotinus is considered to be the last great Greek philosopher, his espousals systematically grounded in ancient philosophy. Implicating the Gnostical underpinnings of official Christianity, Plotinus is credited with providing medieval Catholicism its structure, but not necessarily its belief system (Russell, 2005, 269-271). To understand Plotinus' influence on orthodox Christianity is to come to terms with how his ideas were largely influenced by Plato's enduring Theory of Forms. We so take Plato's theory for granted that we are often unaware of its guiding influence on those quotidian variants of our secular and religious understandings premised on the ideological schism between the real and the ideal. A product of Classical Greek culture, Plato enjoyed the kind of freedom of intellectual curiosity

that his succeeding Renaissance counterparts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries would fight to recreate. A quick definition of Plato's theory should quickly dispel much doubt as to why his and Plotinus' ideas concerning forms became of critical importance to the fulfilment and perpetuation of structural Catholicism during medievalism, which spanned the fifth to the fifteenth centuries (more on medievalism in the subsection that follows). Per Plato, any existent object or form, be it a rock or a piece of coal, engenders ageless, abstract, idealistic, *-ness* qualities; for example, the hardness of a rock (hardness being the rock's essential abstract quality) or the blackness or coarseness of coal (blackness and coarseness being the primary abstract qualities of a piece of coal), etc. Such essential qualities for Plato, a premature Gnostic perhaps, resided outside of the natural realm, in a purer metaphysical, abstract place; therefore, for Plato, both our knowledge and experience of how these essences were manifested to us were automatically tainted by our impure natural state. This manner of thinking is simply put, dualistic – or, put another way, representative of 'the division of something conceptually into two opposed or contrasted aspects' (Lexico, 2021).

Certain post-ancient strains of Neoplatonist conceptualizations, however, were more explicitly "orthodox" than those of Plato's, and were themselves developed largely to counter both Plato's "ungodly" dualistic interpretations and various second century Gnostical follow-up interpretations of Plato's ideas. Basilides was perhaps the most famous among these iconoclastic second century philosophers who needed desperately to be neutralized by an emerging Catholic orthodoxy. Considered a Christian Gnostic, Basilides' theology substantively formed the basis for many a heretical sect. In short, Basilides promoted the idea that the so-called perfect Judaist God could not have created such an imperfect world, which instead must have been created by an ignorant, imperfect being, an Archon, subordinate to the perfect god, who by virtue of his perfection necessarily resided outside of human, social reality (*cf.* Pearson, 2008, 1-29).

Religious Neoplatonism with its emphasis on a western-inspired monotheism, on the other hand, 'sought to locate the One, or God, in…the finite world and human experience.' This is evidenced in the now-famous

theological maxim that the absolute 'has its center everywhere but its circumference nowhere' (University of Warwick, 2012). Neoplatonism in its orthodox Christian sense, then, promotes the idea that perfection and purity are achievable in an otherwise imperfect reality only when one devotes his life to the principles and doctrines of Christ. Somewhat conceptually contrary to Plato, this means that although there is a perfect abstract realm hidden to our reality, we do not, in consonance with orthodox Christian thought, have to wait until death to live Christly perfection; because a *perfect* Christ lived in a Platonically imperfect world, overcoming its daily evils, he is the ultimate example in this life that perfection is potentially attainable in the "here and now." Given the successful Catholic imperative to sanitize and "Christianize" its religious ideas, 'Platonism is part of the vital structure of Christian theology, with which no other philosophy…can work without friction…there is an utter impossibility of excising Platonism from Christianity without tearing Christianity to [conceptual] pieces' (Russell, 2005, 270).

To briefly recap, nine years after his conversion to Manichaeism, St. Augustine became disenchanted with the movement on the following grounds: The Manicheans destroyed everything and built up nothing (they were iconoclastic); they were immoral, and their arguments against Catholicism were feeble and bereft of philosophical rigor. St. Augustine also found Manichaeism to be scientifically unfulfilling; when, for instance, he questioned the Manicheans concerning the movements of the stars, none of them could meaningfully answer him (O'Donnell, 2021).

 As alluded to four paragraphs ago, before re-embracing the faith, Augustine underwent a brief period of intellectual-cum-theological struggle. Characteristic of a tortured soul in search of the elusive, legitimate thing of divine truth, Augustine immersed himself in the works of Plato and Plotinus; inspired by the underlying rationalism of both writers, together with his own emphasis on interpreting the infinity of God in an otherwise finite world, Augustine went about strengthening his faith philosophically. Any profound collaboration between secular philosophy and righteous faith in Augustine's case seemed destined to result in a truly practical, merit-driven religious philosophy at once reflective of the growing convictions and rationalizations of orthodox Christianity. So

desperate was he to locate and experience truth, that Augustine would devote his life to celibacy, a condition "dualistically" opposed to debauched ostentatious worldly equivalents which seemed at that point in time to "irreverently" affirm the trappings of human success – Augustine had indeed been a willing participant in the latter bacchanal ways of life before both rediscovering and redefining his original faith. After discarding those parts of Neoplatonism that he did not like, notably those parts that seemed to pontificate good and evil outside of divine godly predestination, and fusing the remainder with orthodox Christianity based on the divinity of Christ and man's fall from grace, together with the importance of charity, Augustine returned triumphantly and confidently to his original faith, in time becoming Bishop St. Augustine of Hippo in 396 (Hippo, a city in what is today Algeria, was a religious hub for orthodox Christianity in the eastern part of the Roman empire also known as Byzantium).

St. Augustine is perhaps best known for repressing the heretical movement known as Donatism. Donatism arose in the early fourth century CE at a time when Christians were being persecuted by Roman emperor Diocletian. It was a movement based on the holiness and purity of the martyrs of the faith. According to one Christian scholar, 'Donatism was the error taught by Donatus, bishop of Casae Nigrae' – a Roman protectorate in what is now Algeria – '…that the effectiveness of the sacraments depend[ed] on the moral character of the minister' (Barrington, 2017). For instance, if a minister who was involved in a serious enough sin were to baptize a person, that baptism would be considered invalid for the Donatists. St. Augustine was of the intense conviction that the Donatists were unwilling to accept sinners into the Church, further arguing that just because a minister is a sinner does not render his ministry ineffectual. Given his arguments, criticism mounted that Augustine himself was lax with regard to the disciplining of open and unrepentant sin, a criticism that he vigorously defended himself against. What St. Augustine fundamentally disagreed with was Donatism's core belief that no amount of repentance by a bishop or priest could restore his ministry to a position of right-standing (*cf*. Engberg, 2017).

St. Augustine proved very effective in successfully challenging and arresting the popularity of many of the so-called heretical sects, among them Donatism, Arianism (a Christian sect that denied the divinity of Christ), and Pelagianism (which argues that all humans are good and were not tainted by the fall of Adam – St. Augustine was also accused of being a Pelagian). As such, St. Augustine is widely regarded as the First Doctor of the Church and, accordingly, was canonized in 1303 and immortalized as a saint, that is, as a person recognized posthumously by the Roman Catholic Church as a holy model for Christian living (Russell, 2005, 339).

To consolidate the general ideational trend of the preceding, the skeptics continue to miss the point that whether or not Jesus lived is of little importance to the proceeding religious and theological intentions and interpretations responsible for his immortality and divinity. In light of the anticipation of a savior in the Old Testament and the possibilities of interpreting Jesus as that savior, Christianity's longevity, in any of its ideological permutations, seemed assured by the third century, little more than two hundred years following the death of Christ. It is true that religious Jewish leaders did not consider Jesus the son of God, but inchoate Christians, many of them Jews, shared with the former an ethnic and cultural tradition, and it was not difficult for the latter, in light of Jesus' accumulating spiritual and prophetic significance, invented or otherwise, to invest in his Judaist-related deism.

Coupled with this mounting religious dynamic was the amassing, social, societal significance of Christianity throughout the western half of the Roman Empire until its violent and complete collapse in 476 AD. Almost 170 years before the western empire's collapse, Roman Emperor Constantine the Great would establish the Edict of Milan, a proclamation that forbade any further persecution of Christians throughout the Roman Empire. Purportedly, Constantine, by then a pagan monotheist, had witnessed a vision in the sky just before an important battle against rival emperor Maxentius in 312, eventually attributing this vision and later victory to the monotheistic certainty that there was only one true god, not Sol Invictus, of whom he had been a devout worshipper up to 312, but the god of orthodox Christianity. According to the account of the great Christian historian Eusebius, penned later in the fourth century, the vision

in question comprised a sun-draped cross with the corroborating caption *in hoc signo vinces – in this sign, thou shalt conquer* (Eusebius, 2016; *cf.* Nicholson, 2000). More important to note for our purposes is the likelihood that Constantine's eventual turn to Christianity was inspired by a number of influential apologists of the faith, including Lactantius, the Christian tutor of one of the emperor's sons, together with a number of Catholic bishops with whom Constantine would eventually surround himself as his curiosity in Christianity only increased following his victory against the "tyrannical" Maxentius (*cf.* Eusebius, 2016).

Twelve years before his death in 337, Constantine convened the first ecumenical council in the town of Nicaea in present day Turkey, at which the earnest effort was made to both regularize and regulate a doctrinal religion becoming the heartbeat of an originally polytheistic empire. At the Council, the heresy of Arianism – the Christian belief that the Holy Trinity was not co-equal – was confidently confronted and orthodox Christianity was further strengthened through the Nicaean Creed (contrary to popular opinion, the spirited canonization-cum-regulation of the Latin Vulgate did not occur at this council but at the Council of Rome in 382 [Marshall, 2021]). Although his two sons and successive emperors, Constans and Constantius II would assume a sympathetic stance towards Arianism, it was Constantine who laid the ideological groundwork for Emperor Theodosius I's brand of late fourth century deistic exclusivism that many Christians so take for granted today. Theodosius' "glorious triumph" over so-called paganism and heretical motivations generally perceived, would not only be enshrined in an all-seeing legal code, but would also come to stamp its authoritative mark on the specific notion of western civilization as supremely incorruptible in its religious energies.

 Orthodox Christianity, meager and embattled throughout the first century, would gain inspiring momentum and influence in little more than three hundred years. Christianity had managed to amass unparalleled social and religious hegemonic clout despite its vague enough, far-removed ideological beginnings that would be subsequently reinterpreted against the exclusive, impenetrable principles of fierce selectivity and unyielding indoctrination. The official fall of the western side of the Roman Empire in the late fifth century at the hands of the Germanic barbarian-turned-Roman

soldier Odoacer, and others, did not therefore render Catholicism, or Roman culture, for that matter, inert or irrelevant. In conquering the western half of the massive Roman Empire, the descending, multiethnic barbarians quickly embraced orthodox Catholicism over its heretical competitors, confirming the unquestionable hegemonic imprint of the former religion from its otherwise cultic beginnings. That the Roman Empire would be informally reconstituted as the Holy Roman Empire in 800 AD under its devoutly religious Frankish emperor Charlemagne (and with the blessing of the Pope, no less), proved, if nothing else, that Christianity and general western development had become inexorably wedded.

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The fall of the western sum of the Roman Empire set the intellectual and cultural foundations for the evolution of Europe as the Germanic barbarians claimed swathes of a once great empire, in the process stamping their own sovereign and ethnic impressions on an adopted culture they considered in many ways to be superior. A powerful index of Roman culture was religion, and a distinct tradition based on scholasticism would begin to emerge out of the inchoate European's whole-hearted embrace of Catholicism by the sixth century. Scholasticism was a philosophical medieval movement that would become dominant throughout western Christian civilization, its pervasive effects lasting into the seventeenth century. With the likes of Church Doctors Saints Gregory, Jerome, and Ambrose, among others, as their muse, the proponents of scholasticism approached their faith with philosophical dogmatism, relentlessly subjecting their scriptural analyses to an Aristotelian-/Platonic-inspired dialectic torn between the rigid opposites of godly, religious rights and earthly, secular wrongs (Rengers, 2000).

Although loosely interpreted, the Middle Ages is considered to span the period between the fall of the western half of the Roman Empire and the loss of its eastern capital of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. More narrowly, the Middle Ages is understood to have covered the period between the onset of the Great Schism of 1054 – at which time there emerged a struggle for legitimacy between the Western Roman Catholic

Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches – and the fall of Constantinople. From the fall of the western portion of the Roman Empire to roughly 1100 is often referred to as the Dark Ages, throughout long periods of which the region's denizens were beginning to acclimate themselves to the bureaucratic collapse of the Roman Empire and the triumph of Christian dogma. The Middle Ages, on the other hand, is often characterized by the development of discrete ethnic European kingdoms (France, England, Russia, etc.) nonetheless bound by religion, monarchy, mounting urbanization, trade (the latter becoming more widespread and relatively freer than ever before), and the concept of rule by divine right, which applied as much to the Church as to the various ruling, related monarchies of the age (*cf.* Figgis, 1914).

Although dogma proved a central guiding ideology in European social development throughout the Carolingian era of the eighth and ninth centuries, there were those so-called heretical theologians-cum-philosophers who coexisted in tension with their authorized dogmatic counterparts, yet were respected by the latter, if not openly. Born in 815, Irishman, theologian, and Neoplatonist thinker, John Scotus Eriugena, or John the Scot, was one such philosopher. According to the late Bertrand Russell, Scot possessed perhaps the finest and most original intellect of the Carolingian Dark Ages (2005, 374). His theological philosophy was grounded in rationalism, possessive of certain liberating qualities not readily tolerated in the later more dogmatic stages of the Middle Ages. As such, Scot was not made a saint upon his death and remains roundly condemned in Christian circles (Critchley, 2008, 98-99).

This did not mean, however, that Scot's ideas were not influential. On the contrary, his theological treatise, *On the Division of Nature* would be utilized by the likes of Bonaventure of the thirteenth century and nineteenth-century philosopher Georg Hegel, among others (Bunnell, 1990, 51). In what would be considered his magnum opus, *On the Division of Nature* (1976) represented Scot's attempt to position the Neoplatonist, capital god in a larger scheme of natural existence. Accordingly, Scot expressed god as the divine, perhaps ungendered manifestation of a timeless, indifferent being responsible for creation; this idea promoted the so-called heresy that Christ, viewed by Scot as the *word or logos,* was spoken into being by an

unknowable, incorruptible god. Scot further confirmed, in principle, this supreme creator God as so far removed from, and beyond humanity that, for all intents and purposes, he did not exist, and was thus 'the negation of all things', which, in the present tense, is to say that he does exist but, as a natural force, does not care about the social plight of humanity (*cf.* Moran 2003).

Scot sought to explain first principles in terms far removed from the instinctive dogmatic sensibility of his time. A committed gnostic, he regarded man's nature as trapped, dualistically, between spirit and animal, between the immaterial and the material. The materiality of humanity and the body naturally generated a sinful, imperfect state, which could be overcome when man's spiritual awareness connected, in a spark of pliant consciousness, with the supreme being, likely regarded as aloof nature by Scot. The dual character of man for Scot thus meant that our spiritual enlightenment, by way of faith, was obtainable through our desire to obtain immanent truth. Accordingly, Scot attempted to logically explain the relationship between the capital god, Christ, and an otherwise imperfect creation (*Ibid*.); writes Peter Morrell (1997), '[Scot's] ideas - derived largely from Neoplatonists like Plotinus - came close to pantheism, magic and, curiously, modern rationalism.'

 Despite his occasional widespread influence and relevance, Scot's thorough condemnation as a heretic by the Church stemmed from the discernible pantheistic nature of his theology, relayed along his trademark talking point that god and the universe were synonymous, in the process undermining the divinity of Christ, and making potentially discursive provisions for the possibilities of other culturally-specific divine manifestations emanating from an otherwise non-aligned god. Accordingly, his influential ideas were banned by the Church at the Council of Sens in 1225, some four hundred years after his death, and again by Papal decree in 1585 (Critchley, 2008, 98-99; Russell, 2005, 379). His *On the Division of Nature* remains a forbidden book for the Catholic Church. Regardless, Scot's theology demonstrated as never before, the creative, convicted, philosophical search for truth outside of the stifling, limited dogmatic principles of scholasticism. The temerity of his philosophical

quest would only once again find some semblance of legitimacy in the later stages of the Renaissance and beyond (Russell, 2005, 374).

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Feudalism was the primary economic engine throughout Christendom, its social structure lending itself to the establishment of a reciprocal, arrantly disparate hierarchical relationship between the privileged and the underprivileged by the turn of the eleventh century. Capitalism's predecessor, feudalism fundamentally depended on vassalage, a condition that required fealty on the vassals', or subject's part. Vassalage took three general top-down, principled, obligatory forms, indeed representative of the hierarchical reality of the age: as the supreme landowner, the king bequeathed sizeable tracts of land – manors – to lords, in return for the lord's fealty to his king, inclusive of his king's security; knights were in turn recruited by lords, on whose behalf they were required to fight; finally, peasants were obligated to show fealty to their lord by farming and/or caring for his entrusted manor. Peasants had free access to the land(s) of their labor and were required to surrender substantial portions of their produce to their lord in return for protection and general care. Through its various arms, the Catholic Church also owned substantial acquisitioned land – up to a third of Western Europe's land by some estimates – and, in the aggregate consolidation of its hegemonic power, was an ally of, and counterpart to lords and nobles. Feudalism was not only an economic system, then, but indeed defined civil society throughout medieval Europe and Byzantium; as such, it was also a political institution given the installation of certain laws by which to both coercively define and stipulate obligatory principles and practices. Practical feudalism thus extended to any article or fealty so held under an obligatory fee, and in the medieval context such a fee was usually services-driven, covering the vast expanse of the functional, unequal, exploitative relationship that existed between and among the upper and lower social classes. With later epochal shifts occurring between the working underprivileged and the privileged – sometimes in favor of the working underprivileged, if grudgingly – such was the general nature of feudalism until its earnest surrender to capitalism by the sixteenth century (Bloch 2014, introduction; *viz.,* Sunkara, 2018, chapter three).

In testament of feudalism's practical *social* meaning, pre-modern feudal societies throughout Christendom did not usually make explicit public provisions for radical ideas outside of conventional religious understandings; their societal structure was simultaneously basic and rigid: at the pinnacle were the church, the monarchy, and the landed gentry; below, the vassals and slaves. "The top" wielded absolute control and did not generally tolerate any idea that would work to threaten their privilege, tellingly built on the *status quo*. The pervasiveness of feudalism not only established a lifestyle rooted in transactionalism, but also once and for all stamped civil laws, rules, and regulations with patrimonial essence – every represented citizen had a social role to play in keeping with his/her ancestral lot, and laws were, accordingly, applied differently and unequally depending on one's social, ancestral status. This meant that although anyone could be found guilty of a crime, guilt was usually rendered more quickly and effectively on those considered socially inferior. The interpretive contravention of medieval European laws everywhere tempered by dogmatic, self-serving thought, meant swift, often deadly punishment in the socio-religious context of the increasing male-centeredness of this age; indeed, by the thirteenth century, inheritance customs among the influential European nobility especially no longer generally occurred through a combination of patrilineal and matrilineal lines, but according to the amassing inheritance rules associated with primogeniture, which privileged firstborn sons (*Ibid.*).

Life otherwise deemed secular throughout the Middle Ages nonetheless revealed a seamless religious and theological reflection. Social reciprocity between the upper and lower rungs of European society, outside of the necessity of human nourishment, was typically one-sided, in favor of the elites who were aristocratic, royal, inclined to religious dogmatism, or any combination of the three. Religious redemption, thus, laid not in forging a personal relationship with god through Christ – the Protestant Revolution was still more than 500 years off by the thirteenth century – but through the Catholic Church. Only ordained Church officials could grant indulgences – remission for sins – rendering religion, like feudalism, an entirely transactional affair sanctioned on exchange and/or penance. Since one could not reasonably hope to be forgiven but through the Church, coupled with its practice of momentary absolution for accumulated sin, the

Church would become Europe's moral compass, its authority assured by the entrenched classist esoterism that drove its very legitimacy. Sanctioned clerical interpretation of the scriptures according to so-called divine edict thus ensured the obeisance of the frightened, powerless, coerced masses and *could* also work as a "moral check" on the nobility and monarchy. 'The bishops were close enough to the kings that they would compose letters and make declaration and rules on behalf of the king':

> *Additionally, the local governors and lords appointed village and church priests who were then required to adhere to the wishes of the lords. Kings in the Middle Ages ruled based on divine right. This implied that the king was ordained by God to rule over his people. The monarch was in charge of both the Church and the Crown. The Catholic Church reinforced this system by declaring that the Pope an earthly representative of Christ and as such had authority over the monarchy in addition to the Church (Newman, 2012).*

Beyond its cocksure moral authority, the Church was in many respects equally as powerful and wealthy as its presiding monarchies. With a budget to match the wealth of kings, the Church was represented by high ranking officials, notably bishops and archbishops, who themselves usually came from privilege and were, as we have just seen, often sentimentally in tuned with their more secular upper-class counterparts. So too was their unwavering influence over large dioceses, or districts, assured. By contrasts, parish priests, who were delegated as parish managers, did not come from wealth, hailing instead from more humble beginnings. The practical, everyday brunt of religious responsibility, however, rested with the altogether lowly village priest 'who was responsible for caring and ministering to the sick and old…[in addition to teaching the] youth Latin as well as how to read the Bible' (*Ibid*.).

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The Crusades were a series of wars fought in Palestine between the Christians and Muslims over the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. The Catholic Church played an outsize role in urging a divided, schismatic Christendom to take back the Holy city of Jerusalem from the formidable Turkish Muslims. In testament of their mounting religious unanimity,

Church leaders and monarchies alike throughout Europe and Byzantium were convinced, despite the Great Schism, that they were being driven by manifest destiny when the Muslims, by then beginning to test the political authority of the Byzantine emperor, began to turn Christians back from their pilgrimages to the holy Palestinian city of Jerusalem, the ancient capital of the Jews (Lassner & Bonner, 2009).

Duty-bound to prevent the inevitable collapse of his empire, Emperor Alexios I Komnenos rallied the support of Pope Urban II and the wider European realm in wresting control of Jerusalem from the militarily sophisticated Seljuk Turks during the late eleventh century. The Pope, in his turn, rallied Christendom in transactional terms, proclaiming his willingness to remit the sins of those who would fight to liberate Jerusalem. In total, seven crusades were embarked upon, claiming more than a million lives on both sides. Although Europe was ultimately unsuccessful in its bid to take the holy city, some have argued that what the Europeans learned from the Muslims in terms of innovation and culture helped to catalyze the irresistible global rise of westernity (*cf.* Hobson, 2004).

While the Crusades raged in the East in the twelfth century, the birth of St. Francis around 1183 presaged the ongoing development of the softer, more humanitarian side of Christianity first seen in the asceticism of Saints Anthony and Paul of Thebes in the mid-third century. St. Francis was born in the Italian town of Assisi, into the wealthy Bernardone family, and by all outward appearances, seemed destined to live a life, as we have seen, based on the trappings of wealth in many ways deeply informed by conventional religion. In his youth, St. Francis lived a frivolous and carefree life in concert with his many likeminded friends. It was, however, the mendicant act of begging that would enliven profound religious change within St. Francis who had always possessed the proclivity to give to the poor, much to the chagrin and unrelenting mockery of his friends. It was the vast dichotomous cleavage between poverty and wealth, between privilege and wretchedness that compelled St. Francis to extensively ponder the plight of the poor and the importance of giving. Much to the remonstrations of his friends and the caustic rebuke of his father, he began to give away vast amounts of his personal wealth to the poor (*e.g.,* Bedoyere, 1999).

St. Francis' actions revealed the callous indifference of the upper echelons of European society who in many ways used religion to ensure their privilege at the expense of the impoverished masses. Keen to live out his newfound religious philosophy to its logical conclusion, St. Francis decided to live an austere life in service to god and the poor; his decision was confirmed shortly after a vision he had of Christ during a near-death experience. Cloistering himself in the wilderness for two years, St. Francis perfected his practical faith through prayer and introspection, relying on the kindness of strangers for sustenance; he was also known to preach to the animals with whom he shared his wilderness. His mendicancy invited mass support, laying the foundations for the Franciscan monastic order. Franciscan monks thus became known for their vow of poverty. According to Bertrand Russell (2005),

> *St. Francis wrote nothing, yet his was a philosophy of practice. His life profoundly demonstrates the contrast between living wantonly and well and living a pauper's, or mendicant's life in service to others. In many ways, he is [St. Thomas] Aquinas' moral superior, given that Aquinas did not take his vows to the extent that St. Francis did. It is for this reason that St. Francis stands out in the Catholic imagination as a man who truly, and without hypocrisy, practiced what he preached (435).*

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Considered the last great Church Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas' prolific life spanned 1225 to 1274, although mention should be quickly made that Aquinas' outsized influence is best considered in consonance with other great philosopher-theologians of the high Middle Ages including John Bonaventure, John Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham (*viz.*, Wulf, 2016). Active at a time when universities were emerging throughout western Europe, Aquinas, a graduate of the fledgling University of Naples, bucked the "irrationality" of dogmatic thinking by introducing reason and rationality to theories and practices of faith. Arming himself with Aristotle's works, which were witnessing renewed interest throughout the thirteenth century, Aquinas sought to reintroduce systematic philosophical thought into Christianity, in effect intellectualizing the faith. It was at the University of Naples that Aquinas would convert to the new mendicant

Dominican Order authorized by the Church in 1216. An apologist by nature, Aquinas attempted to provide Christianity a discursive bulwark against both a defensively and intellectually weak dogmatism and an amassing secular intellectual tradition on which the emergent universities were being established. Railing against Averroes' intensive exegetic that faith and reason were diametrically opposed, Aquinas set out to rationally prove through his prolific writings, the existence of God, arguing that faith and reason were more than compatible (Aquinas, *et al.,* 2010; Copleston, 1991).

Aquinas' novel intellectual approach to religious alacrity based on a systematic, rational defense ensured his far-reaching significance as a scholastic authority. He set out to prove the existence of god by invoking the commonsense of observation: because nature evolved and moved, it could not do so without a singular "Immovable Motor," that is, the capital Christian god. This in turn meant that any natural cause and effect phenomenon automatically and logically revealed the handiwork and guidance of God. It was also the fact of human mortality that irrefutably proved, for Aquinas, that the Immovable Motor therefore had to be immortal. Aquinas would consolidate this part of his philosophy through the affirmation that if humans possessed intelligence, this intelligence could have only been granted by an immortal God who knew everything, who was indeed both omniscient and omnipresent (*e.g.,* Gratry, 1892).

Aquinas further buttressed his rationalism with three, in his mind, unassailable laws that, if followed, would lead to a life of bliss both on earth and in the afterlife. Aquinas' first natural law corresponded with morality, implicating humankind's desire on his or her life's journey, and according to social rank, to always strive to do the "right," reasoned, godly thing. The second law, positive law, then, was nothing more than a reflection of natural law, but invested in the state; in other words, the religious state, for Aquinas, was always keen to follow what was deemed right and just both in relation to itself, its citizens, and god (?). Finally, in Aquinas's third eternal law was represented in god's perfect plan enacted through humankind's will to freedom, a will guided by his or her ultimate spiritual goal; put another way, everything we do is to be so done with God-as-ultimate-end in mind. In Aquinas's three laws rested the principle that all

human beings who followed Christ were not only inherently good, but inherently unequal as well, nonetheless called by god to live their lives in accordance with their ordained rank (*Ibid.*).

As powerfully reasonable as Aquinas' theodicy was, and indeed continues to be in modern Christian circles – despite being logically refuted by modern systematic scientific thought (*e.g.*, Dawkins, 2011, chapter three), his ideas strengthened the social and civilizing standing of the medieval Church, the monarchy, and the aristocracy through the trope of religious, spiritual, and social inequality. Aquinas did not question official tyrannical rule, and if anything, viewed it as naturally in keeping with God's divine will. Until medievalism's slow surrender to early modernity, Aquinas' theological influence would ensure the continuation of the masses' domination by the nobility and the Church without any meaningful legal or, for that matter, religiously-motivated recourse on the former's part.

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The Renaissance began in Italy in the early fourteenth century, its inherent ideals having coalesced towards the formation of nothing less than a cultural, artistic movement not quite eschewing the virtues of scholasticism, but nonetheless giddily promoting a liberating humanistic ethos. The Black Plague of the same century had finally been contained by 1351, but not before, it is widely believed, claiming an estimated fifty million European lives – upwards of sixty percent of the entire regional population, disrupting life and foregrounding a deep, festering rejection of the Catholic Church in favor of a more liberating, individualistic, secular style (*cf.* Benedictow, 2005, 2021; Herlihy, 1997; Izdebeski, *et al., 2022*). Yet the Renaissance in its amassing bold and unconventionally modern character seemed the rational consequence of a rodent-, flea-borne contagion in many ways justified by religious, medieval superstition, vividly corroborated by those religious adherents – the flagellants – who would mercilessly flog themselves during the harrowing pandemic, convinced that God had seen fit to visit devastating punishment upon a wicked, unrepentant humankind (*e.g.*, Fowler, 2021).

To briefly recap, before the advent of the Renaissance, or early modernity, the residents of Europe, Eurasia, Northern Africa, and the Middle East lived in a pre-modern, medieval state. It is safe to say that priggish socio-religious pronouncement during the Middle Ages in some way contributed to the rise of modest modernity, in which was ultimately enshrined positivist motivations consumed with expressive freedom, intellectual and creative artistic progress, intellectual development, and wealth accumulation. (To get a true opposing feeling for the motivations that drove medieval thinking, think about the Great Crusades between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, the grave existential challenges posed to the Catholic Church towards the sixteenth century by emerging humanists, the establishment of Islam in the seventh century, and various other mass-class disaffections that would develop against medieval, feudal, aristocratic regimes.)

As we have seen, next to monarchic rule, religion represented the most powerful state apparatus in the pre-modern age; for example, the Roman Empire that spanned most of Europe to the fifth century and the Middle East to the mid-fifteenth century, ruled according to a religio-autocratic edict; the Middle Eastern Abbasid Islamic Empire, or Caliphate, also ruled according to Islamic Sharia law throughout the medieval and early modern ages, as did the Egyptian Mamluks and the Ottoman Turks (*e.g.,* Mansfield & Pelham, 2013).

By the early sixteenth-century, well into the Renaissance, feudalism was almost no more throughout Europe, becoming rapidly displaced by merchant capitalism, also known as mercantilism (*e.g.*, Wallerstein, 2011). Contemporary globalization's prototype, Mercantilism's *sine qua non* involved amassing wealth for the European nation state in question and not necessarily individual actors, although it was the merchant and planter classes of these nations that would profit tenfold from their overseas investments. Mercantilism was also premised on hawkish and strict regulation of the nation's burgeoning imperial economy: substantial tariffs and duties were used as a way to discourage inter-nation trade, while huge quota obligations were demanded from overseas agricultural markets owned by the nation in question. Enslaved labor also essentially defined the political economy of mercantilism in what was becoming a global trade

network splintered into a monopolist, somewhat religious tone set by the nation-state. Mired in protectionism and "unfree and unfair" trade, mercantilism spelled the beginnings of economic modernity (*cf.* McCarraher, 2019).

To satisfactorily understand the global implications marking the somewhat untidy ideological shift from the pre-modern to the modern beyond the Renaissance, we should perhaps look to the Iberian Peninsula. Much of this region was under Moorish-Islamic rule for around eight hundred years, that is, from the seventh to the late fifteenth century. When the Spanish and Portuguese resolved, according to a religious medieval fervor, to reconquer their living space, the "progressive" need to explore, invent, and travel also became more urgent; in the climax of its resolution, here was a medieval mentality that provided its adherents nothing less than an enduring muse that reserved the right to dictate how *European* progress ought to specifically unfold. Technological, economic, and scientific activities were triggered following Iberian liberation, such activities, among other things, meant to ensure that never again would these "godly" sons of Europe fall under the rule of revanchist, "dark heathenistic foreigners." Indeed, old medieval religious habits continued to ravage the Iberian Peninsula in the new form of the Spanish Inquisition, which, from 1478 to 1834 subjected thousands of "heretical" Jews and Arabs throughout that region – not to mention across Spain and Portugal's new world colonies – to state and church sanctioned torture and slaughter (*cf.* Hobson, 2004, chapters seven and eight).

As the Inquisition raged throughout the sixteenth century, nautical and navigational technologies also developed apace, leading to the inadvertent Spanish discovery of great yields of gold and silver in the New World in the late fifteenth century, together with the Portuguese excursion into the Sub-Saharan region of Africa in the same timeframe. It was because of such technological developments that Christopher Columbus, still armed with a medievalist mindset, had been able to set out in 1492 to find a quicker trading route to the East by going *West*, instead finding himself in the region that would become known as the Americas. With the foregoing distinctly European development trajectories in mind, many scholars pinpoint the official beginning of mercantilism between 1519 and 1521

when Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan and his crew, equipped with the latest navigational and nautical technologies, were able to circumnavigate the earth (although Magellan died before the circumnavigation was complete), an accomplishment that indirectly led to the expansion of new economic markets and zones, and, for that matter, colonial systems of slavery and the oppression of non-Western peoples between Europe, Africa, the East, and the New World.

Beyond the Spanish Inquisition, the ideological overlaps between medievalism and modernity revealed themselves in the reality that the ruling European monarchs still relied on religious legitimacy and everything was done, purportedly, in the name of God, or to be more precise, in the "rule by divine right" despotic percept (*cf.* Figgis, 1914). This is not to say that the doctrine of monarchical absolutism was not meaningfully challenged throughout medievalism and into the modern age. For instance, On June 15, 1215, English king, John I was forced to surrender part of his despotism by granting, via the Magna Carta, voting rights and other concessions to rebellious members of the nobility and clergy (Daugherty, 1998). Similarly, the Sixth Earl of Leicester, Simon de Montfort, was able to temporarily strip power from the English king, Henry III in 1258, in addition to successfully coopting ordinary citizens into the Parliament of 1265 (Baker, 2019). These earlier developments in English jurisprudence perhaps helped to simultaneously hasten and neutralize intensified justifications for monarchical absolutism throughout the early seventeenth century under James I especially; in the end, the Glorious Revolution, fought between 1688 and 1689, and its concomitant bill of rights generated significant incursions into despotic monarchic rule (*e.g.,* Vallance, 2009). To use another example, the liberal orchestrators of the French Revolution between 1789 and 1799 did achieve great gains in secularizing politics and deposing the *ancien regime's* rule by regnal mandate some four centuries after medievalism was supposed to have come to an end. However, such gains were significantly rolled back by Napoléon Bonaparte's successful coup in 1799; Napoleon would rule France as a despot abiding by the principle of *divine* right until his ultimate defeat in 1815 (*e.g.,* Chandler, 1973). Somewhat similarly, if in principle, the late establishment of the modern secular German and Italian states in the late nineteenth century, together with the *resistible* fascist bent of these

nations, meant that "enlightened" despotism would not be meaningfully checked with legitimate, sustainable, representative, democratically-enabled governments until well into the twentieth century (*viz.*, Griffin, 2018).

Outside of the intransigent persistence of despotic rule and a global trade network increasingly built on exploitative tendencies, it was the artists and intellectuals of the High Renaissance (1490 to the 1520s) who would, in earnest, attempt to existentially reconnect with the classical period predating medievalism, eager to recreate a condition of intellectual and artistic fervor and freedom enjoyed by the likes of Plato and Aristotle. Beside the four trend setting artistic geniuses of the time in Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, Raffaello, and Donato, philosophers like Charles de Bovelles, Thomas More, Bernardino Telesio, among others, would present compelling ideas and interpretations of ancient classical texts and their corresponding philosophical movements without necessarily railing against medievalism – with the notable exception of Nicolaus Copernicus, who in the early sixteenth century argued against the dogmatic certainty that the earth stood at the center of the universe, in effect destroying the Ptolemaic cosmological tradition. If anything, a prevailing mood of the High Renaissance resonated with religious preoccupation from mathematical and aesthetic perspectives. For instance, Leonardo Da Vinci's famous fresco that depicted Jesus's last supper with his disciples, gave expression to an aesthetic symmetry not before so boldly and adroitly revealed in the human will to visually chronicle spiritual matters in graphic detail that would have likely once been suppressed by "holy" authority. Da Vinci's artistic depiction of the last supper captured the mood and tensions present at that event, bringing linearity and symmetry both to the last moments of Jesus' life and the expressionism of the disciples according to their predestined roles in his death. A grand debate would also arise as to the supposedly female figure sat to the right of Jesus at the last supper, that of Mary Magdalene. As we have seen, Mary Magdalene was a heavily contested biblical, perhaps Gnostic figure whom many scholars continue to think was married to Jesus, keen to interpret her presence in Da Vinci's depiction as a coded humanistic fisticuff against conventional religious dogma (*cf.* Cahill, 2013). So too did Michelangelo's vivid, at times controversial Sistine ceiling fresco, *The Last Judgment*, depict the spiritual

connection between God and denuded humankind, giving artistic voice to the aesthetics, tensions, and developing politics of the time (*cf.* Bauer, 2013).

With the invention of the Gutenberg Press in 1450, even the works and ideas of earlier otherwise obscure Italian Renaissance men and humanists Giovanni Boccaccio and poet laureate Francesco Petrarch spread rapidly throughout Europe. While such fourteenth century thinkers, like many of the High Renaissance philosophers, did not betray the atheistic tendencies of later Renaissance thinkers, they did bemoan the intellectual and artistic limits of medievalism, hopeful for a return of the indomitable, creative human spirit that typified Hellenism.

Eventually considered an iconoclastic movement by the Church, the Renaissance in its late sixteenth century dispensation would set the groundwork for the initial debate surrounding the accuracy, morality, and legitimacy of godly values and mores. Controversial European thinkers of the late sixteenth-, early seventeenth-century including English playwright Christopher Marlowe and his philosophical fellow countryman Francis Bacon, among others, would begin to question God in their works, laying bare their thirst for objective scientific knowledge and marking a vast ideological shift from the Renaissance in its formative stages. By the late sixteenth century, scientific exploration and artistic communication truly coexisted, if in unholy union (Bartlett, 2019).

At the political end of the Renaissance as it traveled through its high 200-year watermark was Italian diplomat Niccolò Machiavelli, a thinker whose conflicted ideas reflected the *Zeitgeist* of his time. Machiavelli was born in 1469 in the Republic of Florence; Italy, it should be noted, was not a unified country at this time, but constitutive of a number of autonomous city states. Given his practical, if extreme understanding of power and the means by which it was to be retained in an age progressing beyond its medieval roots, Machiavelli is understood best as the father of modern political theory. Machiavelli lived during an intense, tumultuous period marked by stubborn medieval mentalities and proclivities. France and Spain's dynastic claims over a fragmented Italian peninsula meant that both monarchies would attempt to gain control there at the expense of the other. War between the Spanish-allied Italians and France led to France's brief

occupation of the Kingdom of Naples in 1494. France was eventually driven from Naples in 1499 by an Italo-Spanish military force allied with the Pope, known as the League of Venice. Shortly thereafter, Machiavelli, a man with high-level political connections even outside of the exiled Florentine Medici political dynasty, was made Secretary of the Ten of War, a council with responsibility for Florence' diplomatic relations with the rest of Europe. As Secretary, he would hone his rhetorical and pragmatic talents as the Italian states continued to defend themselves against France to 1504 and beyond. Amassing recognition as a ranking diplomatic figure, Machiavelli was deployed on a number of missions throughout Europe by his patron, Piero Soderini, who had earlier been named *gonfalonier*, or ruler for life, over Florence by the -then deposed Medici. Machiavelli's amassing experience led him to develop a political theory obsessed with the harsh maintenance of political power at all and any cost (Lee, 2020, part three).

The notoriously unpopular Medici regime was fully restored in 1512, if at the downfall of Machiavelli's patron, whose political position relative to the Medici's temporary ouster inevitably marked him as a collaborator against the regime. Soderini was himself forced to flee following the reinstatement of the Medici, and Machiavelli, also suspected of conspiring against the dynasty was arrested the following year and tortured during his imprisonment. Machiavelli was eventually charged with conspiracy, a charge he would vigorously go on to deny. Ultimately pardoned, Machiavelli was forced into exile on his farm just outside of Florence. It was during this phase of his life that he became a prolific writer, vividly and cynically penning his political experiences (*Ibid.*).

Despite his far-reaching ideas, Machiavelli should never be considered as a systematic philosopher the likes of Plato or Aristotle. In light of his political shrewdness and demagogic proclivities, his writings are meandering, discursive, contradictory, and inconsistent treatises meant to highlight the *positives* of what we in the west especially would label unethical rule, and he never sought to reconcile his ideological incongruences and self-contradictions (examples of these are provided below). Machiavelli's ideological impasses nonetheless were well received in his day for the simple fact that he wrote based on conviction, that is, based on his political experiences, something that won him a fairly wide

base of ardent supporters who were dismissive of circular philosophical arguments that they considered to be disingenuously elitist and out of touch. Not so ironically perhaps, Machiavelli's imperfect writings, legitimized and personalized by experience and loss, would ensure his influence among the more talented philosophers who succeeded him, even if they did not necessarily agree with him. Writes Cary Nederman (2009), 'Machiavelli may have grazed at the fringes of philosophy, but the impact of his musings has been widespread and lasting'.

Machiavelli's most enduring, far-reaching treatise is entitled *The Prince*. Suggestive of its title, this political exposé examines the cause and effect dynamic of effective political leadership and control. Machiavelli's muse for writing this treatise was a Papal prince by the name of Cesare Borgia, to which Machiavelli served as a brief envoy in his active years as a diplomat. Machiavelli was impressed with Borgia, whose heightened, cunning sense of self-preservation led him to brutally dispatch-by-subterfuge his own general of whom he was deeply suspicious. Yet in what could only be understood as a bout of self-serving contradiction, Machiavelli would go on to revel in Borgia's untimely downfall and death, branding him 'a rebel against Christ' (Mansfield, 2021). Indeed, it was always Machiavelli's intention following his exile, to work his way, unsuccessfully, back into the Medici's good *graces. The Prince* was written for Giuliano de' Medici, the reinstated ruler of Florence whose rule was nonetheless short-lived given his death in 1517. Giuliano never read *The Prince*, which was not published until 1532, some five years after Machiavelli's own death. To understand Machiavelli's intentions in these examples is to see that as a Janus-faced, servile flatterer he was keen to connect with Giuliano's *Machiavellian* side as the means by which to regain the political power he himself once had (Lee, 2020).

 In *The Prince,* Machiavelli is especially keen to affirm the importance of the hereditary ruler's shrewd and cynical cognizance of the military force in his charge, and the necessity that this military force be comprised of soldiers who are likely to remain loyal to their leader. Here, Machiavelli is in the process of highlighting the importance of nationalism through the promotion of nativism; as if to say, a leader would be better served by those of his own ethnic bearing, as opposed to mercenaries or other external

auxiliary troops. Machiavelli again reveals his unresolved contradictory tendencies given the Medici's reliance on Spanish mercenaries to retake control of Florence, soundly routing Soderini's largely native army. Machiavelli's intentions become clearer at this stage, nonetheless; concerned only with the leader's self-preservation, he makes clear that effective leadership involves cruelty – 'it is better to be cruel than merciful'; stinginess – 'it is better to be stingy than generous'; and crass self-centeredness – 'it is better to break promises if keeping them would be against one's interests.' In his patented self-contradictory way, Machiavelli continued: 'Princes must avoid making themselves hated and despised; the goodwill of the people is a better defense than any fortress. Princes should undertake great projects to enhance their reputation. Princes should choose wise advisors and avoid flatterers' (Magendanz, 2011, 11-12).

Machiavelli remained convinced that the Medici had been deposed earlier because the political dynasty was not Machiavellian *enough*. In effect, these leaders had not made the timely ideological connection according to the virtue that the successful maintenance of their wealth and power depended on their deceptive will to consider their subjects as mere but necessary pawns. Couched within this so-called virtue were the intertwined ingredients of fortune and free will: not only did the hereditary leader have both ingredients in abundance, argued Machiavelli, but it was also in his best interest to give his subjects the impression, via his self-serving chicanery, that their own undying loyalty was actually evidence of their free will, when in truth they were being directed, manipulated, and conditioned to be loyal. However, by Machiavelli's reckoning, only a precious few leaders could adroitly apply such wily intentions to the times. Expanding our previous assessment of Machiavelli's political principles to now include the shrewd economic mentality on which mercantilism was erected, 'Machiavellianism [as practice] is suggestive of or characterized by expediency, deceit, and cunning; it speaks to one's cunning, scheming, and unscrupulous nature especially, no more so than in the advancement of one's political [or economic] career' (Dictionary.com). Machiavelli is thus credited, unflatteringly perhaps, with 'injecting [a heavy dose of] humanism into [the material and political processes that underwrote early modernity]' (*cf.* Nederman, 2009). In line with the ideological overlaps that typified the High Renaissance, however, one can certainly see in

Machiavelli an ideational continuity with the rule by divine right despotic percept.

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Yet sixteenth century Europe should not only be remembered for the rapid dispersal of the Renaissance and its accompanying values across the European mainland, together with the onset of a globalizing trade network which made manifest the money- and wanderlust of western Europeans; equally important to consider during this time is the *humanistic rebirth* of Christianity in the presence of the Protestant Reformation. In 1543, Copernicus' ground-shaking philosophical recognition of gravity and the general laws of motion would in short course be proven by Isaac Newton not quite 150 years later, but it was the Protestant Reformation that would forever alter the West's preexisting religious reality by presenting its denizens with two choices: Protestantism or Catholicism.

In the face of widespread clerical corruption in the Catholic Church, a distinct mistrust for the clergy – anti-clericalism – would begin to fester by the early sixteenth century. Certain religious groups like the "heretical" Waldensians began to argue, from as early as the twelfth century, that laymen could be more effective than priests (Visconti, 2003). A distinctly laic mentality, always present throughout medievalism, would begin to boldly verbalize that Roman Catholicism had become – or, always was – a corrupt machine prone more to ritualistic and self-aggrandizing bombast than sincerity and humility; as a result, extensive reforms were urgently needed if the Church was to rediscover the "right path."

The Reformation was dominated by the figure of Martin Luther (1483-1546), a German monk turned professor of philosophy who would go on to devote his life to defeating scholasticism while promoting humanism – as opposed to a Machiavelli-inspired humanism, shortly discussed. Convinced of the Church's "impudence," in 1517 an emboldened Luther published his 95 Theses in favor of Catholic reform which included:

> 1. Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when He said "repent," intended that the whole life of believers should be one of repentance. 2. This word "repent" cannot be understood to mean sacramental penance, that is, of the

confession and satisfaction that is administered under the ministry of priests. 3.However, it does not refer solely to inward repentance; no, there is no inward repentance that does not outwardly produce various mortifications of the flesh. 4.The penalty [of sin] continues as long as hatred of self— that is, true inward repentance—continues until our entrance into the kingdom of heaven. 5.The pope has neither the will nor the power to remit any penalties other than those he has imposed either by his own authority or by that of the canons. 6.The pope has no power to remit any guilt except by declaring and showing it to have been remitted by God; or, at most, he may grant remission in cases reserved to his judgment, for if his power in such cases were despised, the guilt would certainly remain. 7.God remits guilt to no one whom He does not, at the same time, humble in all things, bringing him into subjection to the authority of His representative, the priest (Luther, 2016).

Not surprisingly, Luther was summoned to the Diet of Worms four years later to defend his ideas regarding the Church. Refusing to recant his views on Catholicism, he was subsequently condemned as a heretic and *persona non grata*; he was not harmed or punished – although, according to his official accusers, he could be killed by anyone without consequence – for he had amassed too large a following to just be summarily dispatched. Indeed, Luther's ideas had won the hearts of many and Protestantism, generally speaking, became an ideal alternative to Catholicism for the simple fact, among other reasons, that it personalized man's path to God, not through a purportedly corrupt institution, but instead on cultivating a personal relationship with God through Jesus (*cf*. Metaxas, 2017).

It is not difficult to see why many would have been keen to follow Luther's teachings. In light of the dawning epiphany that true, life-altering salvation *never* depended on *humanly indulgences,* those wealthy believers outside of the sentimental remit of the Holy Roman Empire were also eager to rail against the so-called ordained compunction to financially support an otherwise suspect institution. Steven Kreis (2014) suggests that '…the wealthy decided to follow Luther [, among other things,] as a form of [financial] protest against the Catholic Church.' Yet despite Luther's scathing criticism against the Church, it was indeed the Church's canonical regard for the poor and otherwise downtrodden that in many ways set

official Christianity apart in the first place. Even amidst the rising, opulent institutional corruption of the Church, certain practicing Catholics of this or that mendicant order or mission had long committed their lives to helping and guiding the poor masses in spiritual matters of the faith, by, in effect, becoming one of them. Although Luther's development of the faith militated against prescribed religious stricture, his ideas in many ways pushed Christianity to its logical conclusion, where Catholicism's canonical position stressed that the wealthy, closer to God by Aquinas' implications, were duty-bound to help the unfortunate. this was not, of course, Luther's ultimate rallying point against Catholicism, figuring more as an important footnote to his criticisms. Rather, he was keen to foreground the corruption of wealth in the context of Catholicism against the genuine guiding virtues of the faith that were being overlooked for the purpose of the maintenance of power, greed, and the inequitable status quo.

Via the fury of Luther's thoughts, faith would replace the institutional certainty of a corrupting, corruptible Catholic Church. Voltaire, a contemporary of Luther, stressed, in the spirit of enlightenment, that the Holy Roman Empire 'was neither holy, nor Roman, nor truly an Empire' (Lamprecht, 2014, 2). For the wealthy, this nullified the imperative of having to pay homage to the Church as a way to "set up" treasures in heaven outside of the fatalistically assured principle of predestination prompted by another of Luther's contemporaries and fellow protestant, John Calvin (*e.g., Holder*, 2013). Yet for the poor, Lutheranism signaled the fulfilment of Matthew 25:40 in its philanthropic capacity: 'And the King shall answer and say onto them, verily I say onto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' Luther's attempts at *equalizing* the faith meant that the poor and common soul could now access God freely through faith and diligence and not a corrupt social institution, in that moment providing Waldensian thought some legitimacy. That Jesus Christ had become, for Luther, the only legitimate means towards cultivating a relationship with the Christian god, meant that the preexisting spell of the religio-political status quo in favor of the wealthy had been effectively challenged and somewhat broken. This further signaled that humankind's imperative to know the capital Christian god for themselves through prayer and faith was a deeply individualistic, *humanistic* action as it placed them at the center of their salvation.

Conclusion

Despite the Protestant Reformation, so-called godly authority and instruction were by the seventeenth century fast becoming distrusted modes of knowledge in certain growing social and intellectual quarters. More Europeans increasingly sought new ways of living well in the "here and now," giving birth to liberal humanism (although, to reiterate an earlier point, monarchic, despotic rule continued to thrive throughout parts of Europe well into the nineteenth century). Liberal humanism is based on the firmly unsentimental, scientific belief that an intellectually well-endowed humanity, *not God*, holds the answers and solutions to humankind's pressing concerns and challenges, while simultaneously searching for new and not-always-fair ways of filling the pockets of its adherents. This new European attitude indeed made it possible, for instance, for the trans-Atlantic slave trade to occur (*cf.* Pinker, 2018; Graeber & Wengrow, 2021).

Also known as the Age of Reason, the Age of Enlightenment began properly in the mid-seventeenth century, coinciding with the sovereign assurances that underscored the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia, and attaining its height in the Industrial, American, and French Revolutions of the late eighteenth century. Forwarded by philosophers like Immanuel Kant, Rene Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, etc., the Age of Enlightenment enshrined a profound intention: Grounded in Newtonian physics (gravity and the laws of motion), enlightenment philosophers would begin to search for objective, scientific truth in moral, political, aesthetic, economic, and even religious affairs. Where before, people were afraid to question God, living in "the here and now" stressed the importance of questioning God as an enduring cornerstone of humanism, signaling the rapid relegation of a hitherto unflappable religious knowledge throughout the European place.

Yet what was portrayed as enlightened, objective truth was quite often pseudo-scientific. For instance, French philosopher Voltaire and his American disciple Thomas Jefferson preached human liberty and equality but ultimately viewed blacks as inferior, animal-like people, despite any heartfelt proclamation to the contrary (Wiencek, 2013; Kendi, 2017).

Similarly, Kant, the founding father of modern moral theory, did not even honestly consider yellow, red, and black people in his moral, cosmopolitan rationalizations (more on Kant in this book's section on race). Far from objective, and far from striving to promote world peace and human equality, modernity initially instilled in Europeans an innate sense of superiority as they rhetorically and practically built on, in their minds, their own glorious past. According to the European intellectual modus of the eighteenth century, Western European institutions and ways of life were, by far, more developed and superior than non-western equivalents. Therefore, any sort of European conquest during this period was always justified on such self-laudatory grounds (*viz*., Sussman, 2014).

<p style="text-align:center">**</p>

To end our very brief history on an open-ended note which the author labors to satisfactorily resolve by the conclusion of this section, when we think about living in the modern age, inclusive of our general attitude towards Christianity relative to other faiths, we would do well to ponder the inequitable, intolerant bases of this age. More specifically, immediately consider that even despite its institutional relegation in Europe, Christianity would nonetheless – and by the very breadth of its profound historical presence and significance as these bled into global development – stamp its unarguably unassailable mark on non-western cultures, indeed the world, leading millions of non-westerners to label their own ancestral religions as erroneous. We turn to these considerations in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER THREE

APPLYING THE APPLICABLE: THE TRENCHANT, *TRUCULENT*, SYNCRETIC EFFECTS OF CHRISTIANITY, FROM SLAVERY TO COVID-19

Introduction

There are pertinent reasons why sociologists and philosophers continue to study religion, broadly and not so broadly defined. In the first place, religion is globally ubiquitous, socially infectious, and fundamentally contingent, found in every and any cultural permutation across our globe; primed by social circumstance, each and every religion comes with its own worldview and ways of doing, being, believing, thinking, worshipping, etc. Yet what makes religion so powerful is the ability of its founders, adherents, and perpetuators to catalyze and enliven these social ways, rendering them unassailably sacred. Religion in its liturgical practices, rituals, and beliefs has achieved timeless distinction from the mundane, setting it apart, for its practitioners, from the social. Yet as we have already seen in chapter one, despite the perceived hallowed ground on which it was envisaged, religion's sacred appeal can only be parsed through its social constructiveness (see chapter one). To dichotomize the foregoing train of thought, we are, on the one hand, presented with a "divine" perception that sacred truth lies well beyond our mundane experiences, while on the other side of the argument, such sacred elements have only become such through the relentless processes of social engineering, and are thus ultimately dependent on prolonged human interaction in which is enshrined an unmistakable power dynamic. From Vodouists, who believe that good lies within deistical possession, to hardline Christians who view right and wrong in strict black and white terms, any and every religion, through their aptly socialized adherents, breathes sacred life into what constitutes good, ethical conduct on the one hand, and bad, unethical behaviors on the other. Emile Durkheim (1995) put it this way: [religion is

best described] as 'a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community…all those who adhere to them'(129). In light of Durkheim's pertinent observation, Lisa O'Neill's (2020) expansive view of the intertwinement of morality and truth comes tellingly alive in her expression that '…truth is not monolithic – it is informed by our belief systems'.

With its unmistakable social nature-cum-character in mind, the ideational entity of religion generates its own moral authority which becomes a greater transcendent truth onto itself. Although relative and cultural in its origins, moral authority derives its sustenance and accreting potency from beliefs centered on intentions undergirding human action; which is to ask, why do humans do the things they do, and how should the *human* intentions underlying such actions be interpreted in the wider scheme of a driven, motivated, *fated* life? The Hindus refer to this moral condition as Dharma, that is, the cosmic principles that pre-ordain morality, whereby what is right and virtuous has *always* been right and virtuous (*cf.* Bhaskarananda, 2002).

On the so-called opposite end of the moral spectrum is the Wiccan faith. Although Wicca is viewed, with inaccurate bias, as nothing more than modern day witchcraft with a bent towards the injurious, the Wiccan Rede, the religion's moral code, is far more enlightened than its dismissive critics tend to think it in its proclamation, 'Do as ye will, harm none'. Holding true to the creed of personal responsibility, the Rede cautions its adherents on two distinct yet interrelated points: first, if any action committed harms no one and pleases the actioner, the actioner can, with peace of mind, continue her action without guilt; the second interrelated point extends not only to the eschewal of causing harm to others, but propounds the notion that the Wiccan adherent live her life firmly within the mentality that any sense of responsibility on her part should be directly tied to the deliberate prevention of harm to others – here are a lifestyle and worldview that, in their proclaimed selflessness, seem more theoretically akin to Christianity than conventional understandings of witchcraft (*cf.* McGregor, 2019).

Wicca and Hinduism have much more in common than they do not. Although both religions maintain beliefs rooted in the idea of a single supreme god, the membership of either faith has no issue with acknowledging other gods within their worldview. Similarly, both faiths uphold the unflappable belief in reincarnation: for a great number of Wiccans, the afterlife, known as the Summerland, is an ethereal place where disembodied souls temporarily reside before returning to other physical earthly bodies to continue living. Similarly, the Hindu atman, or soul, never dies, but upon the death of its current body, passes into another form that need not necessarily be human or even animate; reincarnation, according to Hinduism, is based on the percept that the "better" a lived life, the likelier the soul in question is to move on to a better existential space (*Ibid*.; Bhaskarananda, 2002).

Given their underlying intention to promote "good and just" living and thinking, is any one religion, then, any more accurate than the rest? How *accurate* is accurate when we take into consideration the reasonably presented ideas of the previous paragraphs that religious truths are ultimately derived from earthly social and cultural environmental conditions and developments? Does this mean that certain sacrosanct existential truths, together with their evolutionary social origins, are more accurate than all others because of the pervasiveness of their civilizational influence and output? Or else, because these truths are confidently "understood" – a deeply polarizing social concept in itself – to have emanated from the otherwise sensorially unknowable? Why is it, for instance, that certain Christians and Muslims are convinced that their monotheistic faiths are impregnable in their fundamental, foundational truths, when *many* of these truths seem compatible with the beliefs of so-called lesser "erroneous" religions? Take, for instance, the folk religion Santeria, which in Spanish means the *worship of the saints*. Santeria was formed via the process of syncretism during the "halcyon" days of slavery in Cuba. Combining Christian, European folkloric, and African religious elements, practitioners of Santeria, like their Catholic counterparts, believe in the intermediary power of the saints, who, 'having lived as virtuous human beings on earth, [are] closer to men than the divine force that [is] beyond human comprehension' (Olmos & Paravisini-Gebert, 2003, 26). Where both religions part ways, however, or precisely put, where

Catholicism and orthodox Christianity in general refuse to *acknowledge* the legitimacy of Santeria, lies in the Santeros' dualistic religious nature; adherents of the latter faith, in syncretic fashion, have created a mirror religion to Catholicism, whereby specialized Catholic saints became synonymous with African deistic counterparts that were transferred to the New World during the slavery era. For instance, the healing African deity, or Orisha Babalú Ayé, is synonymous with the Christian St. Lazarus based on their shared characteristic of overcoming death (Silva, 2021), while Changó, the Orisha of lightning and thunder corresponds to St. Barbara, who is invoked in thunderstorms and is 'the patron saint of artillerymen and miners' (*Ibid.*; The Editors of the Encyclopedia Britannica, 2021).

Hoping to arrive at a reasonable answer to our recently posed question (is any single religion more accurate than all the rest?), contemplate here that at the heart of every religion resides not merely random meaning but meaning as it is constructed, construed, and conditioned by cultural sensibilities. Cultures and cultural ways are strangely atavistic in the sense that certain ancestral traits like accentuation, traditional beliefs, mentalities etc., can be passed down through the generations, ensuring their relevance and continued accuracy in the present and for generations to come. Hinduism is thus precisely Indian for a reason, while Islam can never hope to completely extricate itself from its Saudi Arabian-slash-Arabic heritage; we may continue this catalogue indefinitely – Vodou is precisely Haitian; Candomblé, precisely Brazilian; Buddhism, precisely Chinese, etc.

Regardless of the external, largely imposed western understandings of the provincial nature of these religions, both their internal legitimacy and the degree of their possible inclusivity nonetheless depend on the relevance of their *globalized* appeal. Consider, for instance, an interested westerner who decides to convert to Buddhism because he read an illuminating piece online; or, the empathetic expatriate in Dubai whose emotions, in a fit of India syndrome (*cf.* Rustad, 2022), finally give in to the ubiquity of Islam around him, becoming a full-fledged Muslim. Such examples speak to religious conversion secured through the very thing of unrestricted global access, both in its literal and virtual forms. From cross-cultural interaction to the urgency in certain ethnic corners that xenocentrism become our golden path toward a genuinely considered cultural relativism, *any* religion

will continue to remain relevant and appealing yet uniquely tied to its place of origin.

Cultures are by far more interactive in this day and age than ever before, this in spite of the rise of spirited jingoism-cum-xenophobia in those rich countries in the first place responsible for triggering this interaction, if unwittingly, via colonialism. We have become far more integrated since the miserable days of World War II, and before that, the even more miserable centuries of European imperialism (miserable for most of the colonized, at least!), and it is through heightened social integration that so-called postmodern thinking has been promoted. Postmodernist discourse gleefully, if largely rhetorically, emphasizes the decentralization of grand western narratives the *likes* of Christianity and capitalism for, among other things, the embrace of those cultures and ethnic situations once earnestly viewed, derogatorily, as *Other* (Butler, 2002). Why is it, then, that Christianity has largely managed to defy postmodernist thinking, effortlessly, it seems, transcending its cultural and geographical origins to truly represent, in Marxian terms, the true opiate of the global masses? Although Christianity's foundational culture can be traced back to the Middle East as a cultic movement initially languishing under Roman Rule, this religion, as we have seen in the previous chapter, was fundamentally driven by westernity both before and during the European drive to conquer the rest of the world. In reshaping the world in its own image, westernity has, among other things, secured the potent global reach of Christianity not necessarily according to the same sort of globalized, diversified appeal recently touched on – although this is definitely a part of it – but along the lines of normalized, abstracted indoctrination: Europeans first forced the *Other* through conquest and enslavement to accept their religion as the only *true religion* before the *Other* would, in their ironic "liberated" state, perpetuate the unassailability of western religiosity. While Europe has largely secularized, demonstrably having progressed well beyond its religious roots, the *Other*, represented notably in the Caribbean and Latin America, have proven to be contemporary Christianity's most stalwart perpetuators and spirited defenders.

Attempting to answer our most provocative question – is any one religion better than the rest? – the subsection which follows traces the amassing

trenchant ideological effects of Christianity during the colonial era, specifically in the Caribbean. Analyses here will be centered on a philosophical, postcolonial reinterpretation of imperialism, through which to demonstrate the ways in which Christianity *can* be seen as legitimized and emboldened by an uncritical, ethnocentric revisionism, a charge usually grudgingly reserved for *Others*. The third and fourth subsections extend this philosophical trope into the present, foregrounding the intention to narrativize and philosophize the continued clout and entrenchment of Christian positions, hardline and otherwise, in the multiple contexts of COVID 19 and the 'diverse religious present' relative to the United States, the Cayman Islands and, to a lesser extent, the wider Caribbean.

Christianity and the Case of Chattel Slavery

Does one perhaps run the risk of committing the blasphemy of vagueness in consideration of the author's most recent generality that religions, even those that are diametrically, *doctrinally* opposed, are more alike than they are dissimilar? If religion *generally* breathes sacred life into what constitutes good, ethical conduct, then why are religions like Haitian Vodou and Cuban Santeria not widely regarded as bona fide religions but as practices indebted to ungodly creolization and demonic witchcraft? Before we turn our attention to the ideological dualism underscoring Christianity and religious creolization, or syncretism, consider the sentiment of Christian magnate and CEO of Regent University Pat Robertson shortly after a devastating earthquake claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Haitians in January of 2010. Before a televised audience, Robertson stated with confidence that Haiti was being punished because the nation's enslaved ancestors had seen fit to invoke their religion, Vodou, in the attempt to free themselves from their enslavement. In his own words, Robertson proclaimed that Haiti was 'cursed by one thing or another' because Haitians 'swore a pact with the devil' (James, 2010). Remain mindful of his words, we will revisit them at the conclusion of this subsection.

Keen to exonerate the creolization concept from the charge of charlatanry, the late Cuban cultural critic Antonio Benitez-Rojo (1998) proudly asserted

the plantation complex as the big bang of the Caribbean universe, indeed the site where African and European cultural elements interacted towards the explosive creation of new cultures and cultural sensibilities (55). Elsewhere, the author has referred to creolization in its traditional, substratist sense, as representative of a newly created culture complex across the colonial Caribbean that was neither African nor European, but a disparate, inevitable combination of both (Williams, 2015, 7, 8). The creole percept was extensively developed by the late Barbadian poet and intellectual Edward Brathwaite in his book (which was also his PhD thesis), *The Development of Creole Culture in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (2005). According to Brathwaite, the Creole Culture Complex represented the unequal synthesis of European and African cultures towards the creation of a new cultural sensibility at once liberating and subjugating. Creole here refers to anyone or thing originating from the colonial Americas, including the Caribbean, but with roots elsewhere, i.e., in the Old World regions of Africa, Europe, Asia, and/or the Middle East.

To understand the religious significance enshrined in creolization is to come to terms with the process that led to the repopulation of the Caribbean following the unintentional and *intentional* depopulation and/or genocide of the native Tainos and Kalinaga by rapacious European colonizers. Africans thereafter became, by force, the laborers of choice in the New World, notably in the Caribbean and Brazilian place, but, as the following paragraphs attest, their contribution to a creolization largely of their making was deemed infrahuman from the outset.

It was and remains a widely agreeable European notion that Sub-Saharan Africans were *tabula rasa* – empty blank slates without culture, without thoughts, without civilization – prior to Portuguese advent into that region in the mid-fifteenth century. Although people considered black by the enterprising Europeans were not initially pre-judged as slaves but as strange others with which to carry on trade, the burgeoning imperialism of the mid- to late-fifteenth century would forever alter that calculus (Jordan, 2012, chapter one; *cf.* Kendi, 2016, chapter two). As alluded to in the previous chapter, once Europe began expanding more vigorously overseas, trade had already been imperative, and the large scale trade in various commodities like cotton, sugar, tobacco, etc., could only work to the

Europeans' economic advantage if there was an inexhaustible, expendable, *cheap* source of labor. In this rapidly developing economically-contingent, pragmatic worldview, blackness would suddenly take on a new non-human dimension in the psyche of the Europeans; preexisting negative *color* connotations of blackness including dirty, benighted, sinful, etc., would, by the fifteenth century, be applied to sub-Saharan Africans with "sophisticated," broad western strokes towards the justification of their enslavement – it should hastily be noted here that prior to the onset of such connotations, white Slavic ethnicities and Muslims had been regularly enslaved throughout the course of those existential conflicts fought between Europeans and Muslims; yet chattel slavery as applied both to the indigenous Amerindians and sub-Saharan Africans at once appeared a different socio-economic "beast," mired not only in such connotations, but in the burgeoning concept of the day that would eventually legitimize these, that of race (*cf. Ibid*).

Rather than being immune from the symptomology of human bondage, religion, notably Christianity in the forms of Catholicism and Anglicanism especially, was quite complicit with it, reconfirming the existential links in this instance between religion and conquest. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, religious interpretations of race were compatible with the emerging anatomical science of the day which underscored that the degeneration of the black body came as a result of deleterious environmental factors that rendered such bodies poisonously bilious. Although it was by then largely agreed that every human being originated from a single biological source via the theory of monogenesis, even religious thinkers like Auguste Malfert often implied in the recalcitrant spirit of polygenesis that blacks came from an altogether different original source due to their mental, biological, and physical degeneration (Curran, 2011, 2).

Largely because of the taint of greed, slavery would become just in the eyes of those religious adherents-cum-colonial stakeholders that subscribed to state versions of Christianity, a form of revisionism in itself (further explained shortly). Together with its terminology and underlying promotion, enslavement became almost synonymous with morality and sound judgment; as if to say, *as the civilized sons of God, we are duty-bound to*

civilize these savages, and their civilizing must necessarily involve a dimension of bondage if they are to progress to a state of enlightenment. Here, religion served to justify a morality that was commonplace in the bible, thus comprising a convenient truth for many of those doing the conquering. Before accounting for a well-known justification for slavery in the Old Testament, consider the Apostle Paul's words in Ephesians 6: 5-7:

> *Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness in your heart, as onto Christ; nor with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.*

Given that nowhere in the New Testament does Jesus condemn slavery, together with Paul's expressive echoes of the Zeitgeist of the age, we may objectively, if only for the moment, deduce from the foregoing that bonded slavery – *debt slavery* – was a common feature of life throughout the Roman Empire and had not yet become morally repugnant, as it would towards the twentieth century in its chattel manifestation (*cf.* Davis, 1988). Although the debate continues, slavery in antiquity did not, like its modern institutional counterpart, automatically amount to a life sentence, often only occurring for a portion of one's life (*cf.* Finley, 2017; Graeber & Wengrow, 2021); this, however did not often occasion modern chattel slave owners and traders profound moments of pause – not counting the interval between 1503 and 1504 when the slave trade was briefly halted due to, one suspects, moral misgivings – because slavery in antiquity for modern slavers was by its very definition *synonymous* with chattel slavery despite their differences. This association worked to the Europeans' moral and pragmatic advantage and favor.

For the time being, and casting our momentary objectivity aside, was this a lapse in egalitarian, godly judgment on Paul's part perhaps? Not likely, given the official religious tenor of his delivery, together with the fact that he repeats the same homily almost verbatim in the third book of Colossians. We thus return full circle to the inescapable *objectivity* that slaves constituted a legitimate social grouping in Paul's time, and thus served a

"legitimate" social function; any extended westernizing mentality was simply discursively secured and subsequently transferred to the biblically-motivated modern slaver from the 1500s onward, sustained by a "righteous ardor" that would have likely been understated yet relevant in Paul's time.

However, as the Age of Enlightenment beckoned in Europe from the eighteenth century, religion and science, existential enemies by default, would nonetheless retain a measure of ideological unity in the bid of their otherwise incongruent adherents to complete Europe's "holy reach" across the globe in the form of empire building. Europe's reach was precisely righteous – a sentiment still professed in certain religious and ethnic circles – because of scientific corroboration of otherwise religious ideas precisely or imprecisely drawn (further explored just below). One can certainly see, then, why biblical ideas formed in, and compatible with, feudalism would, against all the "modern" odds, transcend their feudalistic black/white logic with the help of modern, if everywhere suspect, political power and science.

Amassing scientific curiosity couched in cultural bias and unabashed ethnocentrism, scientific rationalism would move on from its commendable Newtonian and Baconian roots to embrace very questionable hypotheses like, "are primitive non-Europeans capable of sentience?" "Are Sub-Saharan Africans biologically engineered for a slave culture?" "Are black people the missing link between humans and apes?" Etc. (*cf.* Curran, 2011). It was for this very reason, to use a relevant example, that Englishman Charles Rhodes, the so-called founder of the African nation of Rhodesia – present-day Zimbabwe – would by the mid-nineteenth century confirm, along with other European ethnocentric thinkers, that the predating sophistication of the country named in his honor could not have been the handiwork of savage Negroes, instead attributing any such sophistication to fair invaders from the north; this *racist truth* was successfully demolished by early-twentieth century archaeology which confirmed that the surviving relics and artefacts of Great Zimbabwe and its -then proximate, preceding, highly stratified state of Mapungubwe were stamped with an undeniable regional Bantu Shona style (*cf.* Blackman & Dall, 2021). According to the self-assured certainty that accompanied the bigotry of the age, Rhodes and his contemporaries

must have been aware of the earlier work of eighteenth century anatomical illustrator and Dutchman, Petrus Camper. Camper's juxtaposed illustration of racial and ethnically diverse human skulls and orangutan equivalents was meant to affirm 'the *near* parity of the human race' (Painter, 2011, 84). Yet given Camper's influential and widely disseminated chart of contrasted faces, he perhaps unwittingly gifted later enlightenment scientists and thinkers a devastatingly illustrative understanding that because black skulls, unlike white skulls, *critically* resembled those of monkeys, black people should *really* be generally understood in substandard terms (*Ibid*.).

Where the study of skulls of different races, among other so-called scientific methods, would offer the cocksure, unscientific conclusion of white superiority throughout the Age of Enlightenment, Christian apologists of the age would find themselves pursuing a similar revisionist tack – revisionist in the sense that both the scientist and religious adherent of the age were motivated to revise amassing objective notions and practices of *rhetorical* human equality in moral justification of the promotion of inegalitarian conquest and enslavement of *Other humans*. Certain Christian interpretations became scientific tools in, of, and around themselves, their conclusions forging a serendipitous fit between the "holy" triptych of European superiority, ingenuity, and positivism. Let us now turn our attention to perhaps the most pervasive and persuasive of these [re]interpretations effectively informed by the science of the day and backed by biblical injunction.

The Curse of Ham Hypothesis did not so much provide the official moral justification for slavery as it was used to justify the continuation of slavery at a time – the mid- to late- eighteenth century – when abolitionism's loudening decibel was beginning to echo across Europe and throughout its respective empires. Chattel slavery greased the wheels of the global economy by the turn of the nineteenth century, but the French Revolution, beginning in 1789, together with various protestant religious movements and the inchoate British abolitionist project commencing roughly in the same period, would begin to tarnish the ethnocentric shine on human bondage. The Curse of Ham Hypothesis is a firmly ideological and rhetorical product of the eighteenth century in its religio-scientific

revisionist reaction to the recently launched Industrial Revolution with its emphasis on wage labor and emerging workplace representation, a conclusion that, by implication at least, rendered the menial nature of slavery somewhat obsolete.

Taken from the ninth chapter of the book of Genesis, the crafters of this religious theory sought to root it in science by denominating it a hypothesis, that is, a proposition whose supporting facts either validated the theory or else rendered it false. The hypothesis was perhaps initially expressed in question form, that is, were black people preordained or predestined to be slaves? And if so, why? If proven, the already default socio-cultural inferiority of Sub-Saharan Africans would be infused with healthy doses of religious alacrity and none the sooner at that particular point in history where abolitionism loomed. It is highly improbable that the enablers of this theory ever considered it to be unprovable, in the effect nullifying Francis Bacon's -by then entrenched idea that only empiricism free from biased pre-suppositions and other conflict of interests could lead to the unearthing of a general, uncorrupted social truth.

The biblical story in question is well known: The great flood had just occurred. Only Noah and his family had managed to survive, Noah having been commanded by God to build an ark big enough to house two of every kind of animal and anyone else willing to heed the patriarch's prophetic warning. One day following the recession of the flood waters, Noah succumbs to the beckon of alcohol, and in a drunken stupor strips himself naked. It is Noah's youngest son Ham who scandalizes his father in his nakedness; it is worth quoting the episode at length (Genesis 9):

> Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard.[21] When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent.[22] Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside. [23] But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's naked body. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father naked.

²⁴ *When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him,* ²⁵ *he said,*

> *"Cursed be Canaan!*
> *The lowest of slaves*
> *will he be to his brothers."*
> ²⁶ *He also said,*
> *"Praise be to the LORD, the God of Shem!*
> *May Canaan be the slave of Shem.*
> ²⁷ *May God extend Japheth's[b] territory;*
> *may Japheth live in the tents of Shem,*
> *and may Canaan be the slave of Japheth."*

It is not Ham who is cursed for the so-called desecration of his father's nakedness, but rather his Canaanite descendants (despite their shared Semitic ethnicity, Canaanites were regarded as evil and cursed people by the biblical Israelites). In any case, this biblical account according to pro-slavery interpretations, justified action on the basis of the following fact: not only was slavery sanctioned throughout the bible, but, in modern furtherance of this sanction, because black people were black, their very melanin confirmative of their originally negative qualities and characteristics, meant that they were originally cursed by Noah and ultimately by god; this logic seems to comport with the aforementioned scriptural implication that the condition of slavery was a god-ordained curse. Thus whenever this "fact" was articulated, the hypothesis was convincingly and automatically answered, its generational perpetuation secured: because black people were cursed, it was appropriate, even moral, to enslave them. The pull of ethnocentric aplomb masquerading as religious fervor did not achieve simpatico with biological science because scientific methodology objectively confirmed theology, but, rather, because both disciplines, in their racially-motivated principles, mentalities, and practices, were flawed and biased, yet rendered unassailably objective, thereby creating a hidden crisis of historiography, that is, a systematically-cum-scientifically distorted way of writing and chronicling modern history. Even a cursory glance at anthropological geography would reveal that the ethnicities that comprised the ancient Canaanites were not Negroid, as they originated from the Levant regions of modern-day

Palestine, Israel, Lebanon and Syria (*e.g.,* Buck, 2019). More telling in this instance, was that the ancient Israelites considered the Canaanites – their relatives – existential enemies, a hardly exegetic understanding ignorantly embraced by modern European colonizers motivated by, if nothing else, avarice-by-enslavement.

Together with the wholesale revisionism that would catapult Christianity into officialdom by the fourth century (see page 82), such historical revisionism as explored in the preceding paragraph – unlike, for instance, Afrocentrism which is continuously castigated and condemned for its historical inaccuracies (*e.g.,* Diop, 2012; Bernal, 2020; Van Sertima, 2003; Hannah-Jones, 2021) – was never considered as such but as a foundational, chronological, objective rendering of history. Ponder further that current western ethnocentric views with ideational roots in the preceding scholarship of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are also precisely revisionist because not only was this predating scholarship built on dogged pseudo-scientific reinterpretations, but that many of us continue to uphold the fundamentally spurious scientific, biologist, and ideological thinking supportive of a "necessary" European imperialism despite its harmful untruths and hostile realities means that we remain complicit, after the fact, in the European colonial project in its orchestrators' bid both to establish and, with a self-satisfied certainty, perpetuate poisonous foundational opinions and practices masquerading today as unassailable facts. Indeed, one need look no further than the contingent present, at some of those who deem themselves hyper-conservative; secure in the superiority of their western developmental trajectory, they seem to revel in an age when systemic human inequality was the norm, condemning the current "cancel culture" mentality of their detractors who attempt to hold their feet to the fire in the name of egalitarianism (*viz.,* Nicolas, 2014).

We return aptly at this point to the assured, "objective" words of Pat Robertson that Haiti has fared the way it has because that nation's founding fathers made a pact with the devil. Precisely whose devil is Mr. Robertson implicating? Is it the devil of Vodou, for which there is precisely none? Or is it the anglicized, indeed now *globalized* concept of the devil inherent in Christianity at which he was hinting? When the adherent of one religion attempts to speak, negatively, on behalf of another religiosity, some of us

are forced to reckon not only with the privileged reach of the first religion, but as well with its outsize global role in creating and, through its far-flung ideological support networks, sustaining revisionist truth based on the original biases of its creators and purveyors.

To varying degrees of intensity, such was the ideological thrust of Christianity throughout the four hundred years or so of chattel slavery in the western hemisphere, and regardless of that religion's diminishing authority in Europe; for better or worse, Christianity stood as the moral beacon of a *legitimately* enacted global development network. Yet this development was ultimately contingent, although its crafters forcefully preached its very necessity to those who *needed* to be conquered and subsequently civilized via enslavement; this is why imperialism could not be seen as comprised of disruptive ventures from the standpoint of westernity, when western colonizers, in all disingenuousness, reserved the right to decimate the cultural lifestyles of others for, *inter alia*, the sake of civilizing them. This decimation, of which Christianity was an *enlightened* muse, was in due course codified into the progressive social theories of Robert Knox (1850) and Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1910), nineteenth and twentieth century thinkers, thoroughly convinced, respectively, of the cultural and racial superiority of whiteness. While such ideologues professed atheism, the Hamitic Hypothesis continued to beat at the heart of their idealistic theories with a steady *ironic* certainty. Of further irony is that such patently racist theorizing continues, arguably, to noiselessly provide the ideological foundation for the interrelationship among religion, economics, and development throughout the nativized populations of Latin America and the Caribbean, at a time when Europe has since moved away from its Christian roots for the embrace of a more secular dispensation. Philip McMichael's assessment comes to mind here: '[i]t is in some way sad that development's ends justify its means, however socially…ecologically, [ideologically,] and more importantly, religiously disruptive it may be' (2017, 2).

Christianity helped to provide an enduring socio-political vision for how *the* ideal society ought to look and function. Colonialism was a necessary pre-condition for the *Other* as the Europeans helped them to "catch up," a mindset that was played out to its ultimate conclusion after the close of

World War One, when the white, Europeanized section of the defeated Ottoman Empire, Turkey, was allowed to form its own independent polity, while the Islamized, non-western remainder of the empire was carved up into French and British mandates because their inhabitants were not yet ready to face the "challenges of modernity on their own." To quote McMichael yet again, '[d]evelopment theory stresses that rising consumption practices and privileges lead to positive social change' – yet in light of certain persistent streams of ethnocentric thought at present, benign or otherwise, the historical inequities have all but been conveniently and silently glossed over in the defense of so-called positive social change in the first place enabled by the colonially-motivated global development project (*Ibid.*, 4). This kind of mentality continues to be driven by European-bequeathed consumptive practices that made it possible in the first place for Pat Robertson to ignorantly remark that Haitian slaves made a deal with the devil.

In the attempt to further clarify and contextualize the foregoing mentality, it seemed unlikely that Haitian slaves under the leadership of Toussaint Louverture and Jean Jacques Dessalines, among others, would drive their French overlords out of Saint Dominque, proclaiming the independent republic of Haiti on the first day of 1804. Here, through a distilled western understanding, was an existential inversion that ought not to have happened, least of all during the heyday of the global development project where European ways were "clearly" superior.

Haitian Vodou had been earlier outlawed in St. Dominque, not because it was considered evil, *per se*, but because of its inherent qualities to bring slaves together in devastating revolt. It is by now the stuff of legend that two weeks before the Haitian Revolution broke out in 1791, a religious ceremony led by Vodou Oungan and runaway Jamaican-born slave Dutty Boukman, was so convened as a way to rationalize and envisage an enduring strategy for the revolt. It is widely believed that night in the heart of a forested region known as Bois Caiman, these slaves, in a moment of *righteous* anger, invoked their universal, compartmentalized god, Bondye, a distinct deistical by-product of their creolization. Boukman called on his fellow blacks to 'put away the image of the god of the white man' responsible for their merciless suffering, and instead draw closer to their

god who was ready to aid and abet them in holy revenge. As a way to
ensure secrecy, the legend recounts, the 'congregation' slaughtered a pig
and drank its blood, their creolized equivalent of Holy Communion (*cf.*
PBS, 2009). An important question beckons at this juncture: where was the
devil, as Pat Robertson would have understood him, in this religious
proceeding?

With nary a hint of irony, Pat Robertson's devil was made naturally
manifest *a la westernity*, not only in those "rebellious" Haitian slaves, but in
every anti-western feature they represented. Given their historical
specificity, Robertson's views are most meaningfully parsed in the context
of history, notably the history of neoclassical economics as its adherents
sought – with the ideological and linguistic supports of Christianity, no less
– to remake the world in Europe's image. The irresistible centerpiece and
perpetuity of westernity hinged on the economic practicality that a
prosperous life *is* a hyper-consumptive life – by today's rules, the more we
consume, the better off we are, regardless of *who* we are. In other words,
'economic markets work best when individual preferences are maximized
and resources are efficiently allocated' (McMichael, 2017, 2). Imperialism
commenced due to Europe's amassing obsession with resource allocation
via a mercantilist mindset motivated by the astonishing yield of slave labor.
In time, the obsession with resource allocation became a civilizing force
onto itself, infused and legitimized, it may be argued, with the potency of
a so-called culturally accurate religious muse, that of Christianity. The
undeniable global trust in European-inspired economic markets was only
possible for the earlier overlap of western religious, scientific, and political
beliefs. As we have seen in the previous chapter, religion played a
supporting role in establishing the central tenet of liberal western
philosophy, that of the inclination towards self-enrichment. Who was more
in tuned with this tenet than the practicing religious adherent-cum-slave
master?

The foregoing feeds into Pat Robertson's religious-cum-corporate position
on Haiti and its "bedeviled" origins. The fact that Haiti is today hardly a
prosperous country as prosperity is understood in consumptive western
terms, renders that Caribbean island nation as fair game for proffered
western justifications for the miserable condition of the majority of its

people. Much of Haiti's woes, to be sure, stem from its long litany of corrupt leaders; yet in light of that nation's current depressions, it is often too easy to forget that the orchestrators of globalized westernity could in no way countenance a fledgling nineteenth-century free black republic that undermined the virtues inherent in the western mindset, which included the default "virtue" that black people were inferior. A profound gestalt seems to have driven western thought during imperialism: although religion came under heavy scientific scrutiny from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, both religion and science continued to support each other in a bizarre, passionate *pas de deux*, their underlying motivations hinged on the entrenched percept of western superiority, a dynamic that automatically confirmed their unanimity despite their diametric opposition. It was for such motivations that Haiti was largely locked out of the global economy from its independence (Dubois, *et al.*, 2020); why the Catholic Church grudgingly left Haiti upon its independence; why France agreed to recognize Haiti in 1823 only if Haiti agreed to pay France war reparations, with France agreeing to give its former colony the first reparation loan, thereby creating a culture of dependency that continues to plague the island nation; why Germany and then America deepened this economic dependency, before America took it a step further by invading that country and occupying it for some nineteen years to 1934; and, finally, why Pat Robertson was able to confidently confirm, with much of westernity's tacit and vocal support at his back, that Haitians are in the state they are because their forefathers had made a *deal with the devil*.

The More Things Change: Assessing the Extreme C[hristian] in COVID-19

In December of 2019, distressing news would begin to emerge from the Chinese city of Wuhan in Hubei Province. A new coronavirus had been discovered in that city, a novel version that would prove not to be quite as deadly as both the first Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV), with an erstwhile mortality rate ranging from eleven to seventeenth percent, and the Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV), whose mortality rate approached thirty-three percent at its height in 2012 (WHO, 2022). Nonetheless, the second strain of SARS, denominated SARS-

CoV-2, or COVID-19 for short, was deadly enough and by far more infectious and globally transmissible than its viral forebears, with a global mortality rate of around 3.4 percent (*Ibid.*). Approaching the end of 2020's first quarter, the rest of the world remained hopeful that like SARS-CoV, which resulted in not quite eight hundred deaths worldwide between 2002 and 2004, COVID-19 would bloom and achieve limited global spread before summarily dying. This hope, however, did not materialize, and by late February the virus had spread across the globe, prompting governments to close their borders indefinitely. By the end of 2020, COVID-19 would have claimed over three million lives across the globe with little signs of slowing down (*Ibid.*).

As the COVID-19 pandemic grew, so too was there an uptick in xenophobic sentiments towards not only the Chinese but all other eastern and central Asian groups in the western world, expatriate, native, and naturalized alike. In Canada, for instance, ethnic Asians were singled out, criticized, and condemned for the "strange things" they were known for eating. It had quickly made the rounds that COVID-19, like its predecessors and the common cold, had originated in bats, a mammal thought, somewhat stereotypically, to be widely consumed in China (*e.g.*, Ungar, 2021). In Australia, to cite another example of the quotidian deployment of westernized racism against Asian ethnicities during the early stages of the pandemic, monthly complaints of racial discrimination to the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Asian-Australian Alliance increased exponentially. Racism in this case took the forms of verbal and physical abuse, and in a particularly lurid case, a student from Hong Kong was punched in the face for no other reason it seemed than s/he had decided to wear a mask in public – together with the fact that s/he likely represented the *very face* of COVID-19 for many white Australians especially (Amnesty International Australia, 2021). It became widespread thinking that it was at one of Wuhan's wet markets – where all sorts of live animals are sold, from mammoth roaches to bats, to raccoons – that this zoonotic strain of coronavirus had somehow managed to jump from bats to humans. Given the limited interaction between humans and live bats, it seemed likelier that this version of SARS had made its way to humans through another more domesticated species; or else, it was conspiratorially reasoned, an accident at a nearby infectious disease laboratory had led to the inadvertent public

release of a "souped-up" virus (*viz.,* Engber, 2021). What was also amplified in the din of blame was the wholesale stereotyping of Asiatic peoples who, by virtue of their secondary characteristics and perceived collective cultural sensibilities, were regarded as a destructive, degenerative existential monolith. In a frenetic bout of what could have been described as xenophobic assuredness of just how the virus was likely to spread, business signage emerged across Canada and throughout the west, notably in Italy, confirming proprietors' refusal to serve Asians (*e.g.,* Park, 2021; Toh, *et al.,* 2021); this disease, the distinct western thinking went, was *their* fault. Even the University of California, Berkeley, supposedly a bastion of liberal tolerance, was not immune to the xenophobic miasma. In February, the university published an Instagram infographic of fears associated with COVID-19, which had not yet ravaged the American place. According to the infographic, normal reactions to the impending nightmare of a COVID-19 pandemic on US soil included anxiety, hopelessness, social withdrawal, anger, and xenophobia. The last item on the list was met with swift, widespread backlash, perhaps hastened by UC's accompanying definition of xenophobia: 'fears about interacting with those who might be from Asia and guilt about these feelings' (Chiu, 2020). The backlash occurred not because UC Berkeley was wrong in its assessment, but because the university was thought to be lending its credibility to, and complicity in, the justification of xenophobia in a social climate spurred on largely by erroneous perceptions of the spread of the coronavirus. Some would later argue that in its assessments, UC was really no different in its xenophobic peddling than -then American president Donald Trump, who would openly use such quote-unquote xenophobic descriptions to describe COVID-19 like the *China Virus* or the *Kung-flu* (Lee, 2020a) – more on Trump later. In the initial analysis, would UC Berkeley have received the same level of backlash if it had included in its list 'religious intolerance-cum-conspiratorial thought' as a normal response to COVID-19?

Indeed, it seemed that UC Berkeley had neglected to include perhaps one of the most important "normal" reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic, that is, the extremist reaction inspired by, *inter alia*, an entrenched Christian religiosity situated well right of the political center. In the paragraphs that follow, the effort is made to demonstrate the exuding confidence, at the exclusion of everything else, portrayed by a hyper-conservative religious

movement and its associated secular fringe elements whose outspoken adherents are convinced that because COVID-19 did not emerge out of coincidence but foreordainment, they should take "matters into their own hands."

It would be remiss to not provide a brief explanation highlighting the ideological current that informs strains of rhetorical Christianity and secular conservative thought whose defenders are largely perceived as outliers. The underlying common denominator that synonymizes these otherwise discrete ideologies, one Christian, the other secular, is the direct or indirect investment in white nationalism or ethno-nationalism, the adherents of which hold fast to the somewhat coded sentiment that the greatness of the nation correlates to its guiding cultural whiteness, and token elements are only *gladly* accepted if they, in word and deed, assimilate into the tacitly enabled white ideal. In western countries, notably the United States, the invested correctness of national traditions and values are tied up both in Christianity and whiteness…tied up, in a concept, in WASP-ness and its nationalist ideological offshoots. Because these values and traditions have become for many nothing less than reflections of the pious perfection of their nation, it becomes virtually impossible for many white Christians-slash-Americans to confront the intertwined historicity of Christianity and whiteness for all of its normalized odious impulses masquerading as progress and truth; that 81 percent of white evangelical protestants supported Donald Trump in the lead up to his unsuccessful reelection bid in 2020 is, ideologically, telling enough (Newport, 2020); even more telling is the growing trend among white American Christians to identify with various conspiracy theories that give voice to strains of ancillary, hateful, exclusivist rhetoric (*e.g.,* Rogers, 2021).

Most know that chattel slavery, *inter alia*, was justified by Christianity in its whitened, Europeanized, imperialist thrust; yet what is not usually critically grappled with is how this ostensibly inert common-sense knowledge has been practically and sentimentally harnessed into a weaponized tool for white nationalism as its adherents now attempt to navigate their way through a diverse multicultural age, which many of them detest (*cf.* Lewis, 2020). That a substantial swathe of whiteness now believes itself to be on the verge of extinction within its own western orbit,

it is not difficult to see why many white Christians, their token offspring, and nationalist conspiracy theorists all continue to support ideas and practices that are deeply exclusionary; such ideas and practices comport comfortably with a past in which whiteness never felt itself threatened by virtue of its forceful will to power. In an age increasingly defined by legally codified notions that humanity is inherently equal across its wide racial, national, and ethnic spectrums, conservative extremism becomes for some a legitimate way to rail against the iconoclasm of "cheap, inferior difference," for the embrace of "essential absolute truths" fundamentally undergirded by Christianity and whiteness, which were, and for many of their contemporary promoters, *remain* mandatory civilizing tools (*viz.*, Lippard, *et al.*, 2020).

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The unlikeliest of sayings comes to mind here: *power corrupts*; not *power corrupts absolutely*; not even *absolute power corrupts*, but, simply, *power corrupts*. The saying, in any of its recently quoted permutations, is typically reserved for politics and political-speak, referring to the ostensibly degenerative attitudinal transformation of a recent ascendant to a platform of power.

The concept of power has been wrestled with since ancient times. Ancient philosophers offered important definitions with the intent to cut to the heart of the dynamic inherent in veridical power. Plato, for instance, offered that 'the measure of a man is what he does with power' (*cf.* Wanis, 2016); he further confirmed, with strong flourishes of contradiction given his rhetorical support for totalitarianism, the automatic, "unenlightened," counterproductive, "unvirtuous" tendencies of those who actively seek power via the words, 'only those who do not seek power are qualified to hold it' (*cf.* Lumen, 2021). Parmenides would later link power to the unchanging nature of things, only to be corrected by Heraclitus' invention of the dialectic trope in which was argued that everything changes including manufactured power (*Ibid.*). Aristotle at times tied veridical power to the democratically-enabled *rule by consent* percept, whereby a leader should always consider the well-being of those in his charge regardless of their social status (*cf.* Shaikh, 2019). The dogmatic scholastics

attached fatalistic logic to their understanding of power as divine and elitist in nature, in the process sanctioning undemocratic, despotic rule (see previous chapter). From Locke to Rousseau and Hegel, the middle modern philosophers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries earnestly grappled with power-as-concept, either applying rigorous theoretical ideas meant to rationalize, justify, or repudiate power in its -then often despotic form, or else offering idealized, sometimes utopic visions of just how power should be exercised. It was Max Weber (1978) who would give us an insightful understanding of dynamized social power in the early twentieth century, confirming the same as both an ideological and actual position in which a person, a group of people, a nation, etc., were able to control the will of others through *their* concerted will (53). Implicit in power in any of its definitional breakdowns is a social hierarchy usually pyramidal in its makeup, which is to say, those at the top are in the minority and wield most of the world's political and economic power, while the majority towards the bottom wield the least power, real transformative power being exerted onto them from above.

A brief return to chapter two should lead to the quick and certain conclusion that the Roman Catholic Church wielded a great deal of hegemonic power during Medievalism. Although still regarded as a powerful institution today, the epochal collapse of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century, followed by Luther's Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century and the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire in the early nineteenth century, signaled the waning power of an entity that once ruled on par with kings and tyrants. Today the Pope no longer wields the kind of power his medieval predecessors did, yet Roman Catholicism is still regarded as a bastion of moral authority by millions. Aside from the continued moral relevance of the Catholic Church, together with other Christian denominations, the formal, legally coercive power that official Christianity once held has evolved, or, some would say, has *devolved*, into a more informalized power catalyzed by the routine rhetoric of those who consider themselves morally and spiritually superior by virtue of the potent historicity of their religion. Yet what is considered as superior verbalizations from the vantage point of religious alacrity could also elsewhere be negatively construed as enabling biased speech patterns deemed extreme and conspiratorial, and merely masquerading as god-

given authority. To what extent, then, do such verbalizations confirm the absolute corruptibility of "godly power"? With this perhaps vexing question and its preamble in mind, let us continue to assess those general conservative-slash-Christian-slash-conspiratorial rhetorical, ideological postures as these were enacted during the 2020 lockdown period across both the United States and the Cayman Islands.

Ponder the attitude of the leader of the free western world and American president, Donald Trump, as the virus began its rapid reach across the globe. In April of 2020, Trump would muse out loud that both ultraviolet light and disinfectants like bleach and Lysol would likely arrest and reverse the coronavirus in the human body (Chiu, *et al.*, 2020). A month earlier, the President had invited Mike Lindell, owner of the famous pillow company, to the White House to talk, among other things, about the urgent necessity that Christians retake their country from the sin that was consuming it in the form of an unprecedented pandemic (Yarni, 2021). Before Lindell's White House episode, some time in March, the president was already touting the curative effects of the drug hydro-chloroquine on COVID-19, despite there being no evidence that this malarial drug was actually effective in arresting the raging virus. The president's economic advisor, Peter Navarro, and the nation's top infectious disease expert, Anthony Fauci, found themselves thereafter at loggerheads, with Dr Fauci challenging the effectiveness of hydro-chloroquine, and Dr Navarro, a trained social scientist, extolling the anecdotal effects of the drug, an effect that even during the approved rollout of various COVID-19 vaccines within the first quarter of 2021 had remained, and continues to remain unproven (McEvoy, 2021). The backlash against the Lindell and hydroxychloroquine sagas was immediate but was not to leave as indelible an impression as the president's later off-the-cuff remarks of a "wonderful" cure for COVID-19 tied to the ingestion of bleach and other disinfectants (*e.g.,* Cathey, 2020).

Where did the president, who has a large rural, populist Christian base, get this idea? And, more importantly, what gave him the unabashed courage to give voice to his controversial thoughts before his Coronavirus Task Force, the White House press corps, and indeed the nation? All indications were to point to a church of sorts out of Florida led by Mark Grenon.

Convinced that the ingestion of bleach was the cure, Grenon, the self-described "Archbishop of Genesis," penned a letter to President Trump in April, extolling the healing properties of chlorine dioxide, having himself earlier publicly praised the curative effects of hydro-chloroquine. In Grenon's own words, chlorine dioxide was a 'wonderful detox that can kill 99% of the pathogens in the body…[and] can rid the body of COVID-19.' Several hours following Grenon's tout, Trump would say what he did. Emboldened by Trump's public support, Grenon would go on to sell thousands of bottles of his 'Miracle Mineral Solution' which sickened many and killed some. By August of 2020, Grenon and three of his sons were being federally charged with 'conspiracy to defraud the US, conspiracy to violate the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, and criminal intent' (*cf.* Pilkington, 2020).

Confirming the hegemonic reach of Trump's unscientific and unfounded cure inspired by political and religious motives, calls into poison centers immediately spiked across the states of New York, Michigan, and Illinois after his press briefing. In New York City, for instance, mere hours after the president had spoken to the nation, some thirty New Yorkers had attempted to ingest Lysol or Bleach, prompting companies like Lysol and Clorox to quickly release public statements warning of the fatal dangers of ingesting disinfectants (*e.g.,* Folley, 2020). Trump would later refuse to take responsibility for his words, instead stating, with nary a hint of irony, that he was being sarcastic when he spoke about ingesting disinfectants (Cathey, 2020). By August, the President would begin to extol a new supplement extracted from the Nerium oleander plant. Although unproven in its efficacy against COVID-19, and quite toxic, the President would demonstrate little to no concern when pressing the Food and Drug Administration to summarily approve any resultant extract for medicinal use (Lee, 2020b).

Certain among the political leadership of the Cayman Islands seemed to echo Trump's more extreme Christian-inspired influences around the same time. The Cayman Islands government decided to pre-empt fate by the second week in March of 2020, imposing hard and soft curfew measures; this despite the fact that only one person – an elderly Italian cruise ship passenger with underlying heart disease – was known to be infected with

the virus and had subsequently died on-island while being given medical attention (Chow, 2020). Given the mounting global death toll, by then in the hundreds of thousands, together with the fact that the recently deceased Italian had come into contact with local medical personnel and possibly a handful of residents, the government decided it prudent to put the three islands into lockdown. The strategy seemed to work, given that by April's end, only 78 people had contracted the virus – in contrast, Jamaica alone had nearly 400 confirmed cases (Worldometers.info, 2020). By early July, the Cayman Islands had a total of 203 largely asymptomatic cases with no further deaths, and by August, the Pan American Health Organization would declare the Cayman Islands, then coming out of lockdown, COVID free (WHO, 2021).

Before the pandemic became truly *pandemic*, Anthony Eden, a representative of the Cayman Islands Parliament and member of the opposition decided to use his allotted time on the Floor to embark on a religious rant. He blamed humankind's woes on the decline of a Christian, godly lifestyle. Indeed, an unprecedented earthquake measuring 7.7 on the Richter scale had struck just a few miles off Grand Cayman on January 28, resulting, "miraculously," in no deaths and limited infrastructural damage (Cayman Compass Staff, 2020). Beyond that harrowing, "god-ordained" episode, the Cayman Islands government was preparing itself for the fallout that accompanied its decision to legally challenge a lesbian couple that had secured an unlikely victory in the local courts to wed in the Cayman Islands. The government would manage to overturn this landmark decision on appeal, only for the British-appointed governor, to the Parliament's chagrin, to force through a domestic partnership bill that had initially failed to secure the necessary parliamentary votes. With these issues in mind, Mr. Eden decried Cayman's mounting moral turpitude. He argued that back in the "good ole" days, Cayman had no such ungodly tribulations as the jurisdiction, financially ailing as it might have been, was unequivocally a godly, conservative one. The representative went yet a step further, confirming that Cayman was reaping the consequences of Sodom and Gomorrah largely because of same-sex activity, which he declared an abominable sin (Reid-Smith, 2020).

The -then Minister responsible for health, Dwayne Seymour also came under relentless media attack for his ostensibly disingenuous religious persona during the COVID-19 press briefings. Among other things, the Minister was accused of gross incompetence in his at-times incoherent, non-sequitur responses to questions, at one point offering his own opinion about the rate of the infection in Cayman clearly out of keeping with statistical facts. When he was singled out by a certain media house for his wife's blatant disregard for distancing protocols, recently codified into new legislation assented to by the Minister himself, he accused the reporter in question of gross stupidity before offering what he must have thought an enlightened response in the form of the biblical parable of the donkey that left many profoundly baffled (*Cayman News Service* Staff, 2020a). Yet according to the Minister, he would continue to preach brotherly love in these serious times, despite earlier calling for bloggers who criticized him to be summarily jailed (Ragoonath, 2020). Not one year earlier, the same Minister had referred to the gay community in Cayman in disparaging terms, commenting snidely on a local protest march put on by a local advocacy group as nothing more than a 'Gaypril' festivity, eliciting collective chuckles from a Parliament ostensibly united in its bigotry (*Cayman News Service* Staff, 2019).

The Minister responsible for education, Julianna O'Connor Connolly would also betray extreme religious comportment bordering, seemingly, on incongruity. Throughout the lockdown period, the government held near daily COVID-19 press briefings meant to keep the public informed both of its response and any new infections to date. The Minister of Education was invited to one of the earlier briefings to answer the public's questions regarding the continued closure of schools, both private and public, for the remainder of the school year. The Minister, for many, spoke unsatisfyingly for 20 minutes. Half of that time was devoted to impassioned prayer, through which she ultimately blamed the devil and his human henchmen for humankind's current plight. Her dogmatic behavior hastened blog responses the likes of: 'Pathetic fire and brimstone bullshit was all that was'; 'I wanted to hear proper information, not a load of religious claptrap'; 'I was just waiting for her to start speaking in tongues! It was a demented rant.'; 'I go to church on Sunday…[but] I do NOT / NOT need preaching during the week from [the Minister of

Education]'…'We have a national crisis so let's get down to solving the problem ASAP and leave… spirituality and religion [for] Sunday…'(*Cayman News Service* Staff, 2020b).

Beneath the pall of both Ministers' views, COVID-19 was nothing more than the natural manifestation of a supernatural, dualistic phenomenon in which good had been pitted against evil. For some in the Cayman Islands thus, the war against COVID-19 was best fought in metaphysical places. For one informant, COVID-19 came as a direct result of God's anger towards his errant people: 'He cannot allow us to continue as [we are] …[and] we must be punished…COVID-19 is our fault!' (Personal Interview 1, 2020). Beyond this belligerent emotional register, any extreme westernized religious theorizing behind the *real* reason behind the onset of COVID-19 would take on even more spectacular, conspiratorial overtones.

So convinced were they that their hypothesis was correct that certain conservative Christians with a bent towards conspiracy theories began to look for parallels between biblical injunction and the current unprecedented reality, which was really not that unprecedented, given the misnamed Spanish flu pandemic roughly a hundred years before and other pandemics leading back to the sixth century (*e.g.,* Baker, 2022). Passionate monologues were both vented and *invented* for anyone willing to hear that these were indeed end times *apropos* the book of Revelations. In this harrowing version of warring principalities in the supernatural realm, the devil was in the process of controlling all of humanity by controlling the influential few, including the likes of billionaire Bill Gates, whom it seemed had a financial stake in global domination (*e.g.,* Shen, 2021). Bill Gates, after-all, the conspiracy theory went, had been one of the so-called masterminds behind the Ebola outbreak in western Sub-Saharan Africa back in 2008, for no other reason, it was reasoned, that he had contributed millions of dollars in search of a cure (*e.g.,* Gilbert, 2020). Accordingly, the contrived fact of mass destruction became widely promulgated both in extremist circles and among those giddily willing to entertain extremist discourse: *the top influential one percent is keen to control and destroy us, and what better way to dispossess the masses than to inject us with a disease controlled by an equally suspicious vaccine powered by "evil" nanotechnology.*

Where the mark of the beast in *Revelationary* terms corresponded to the number 666, a mark imprinted on the forehead and identifying one's intentional eschewal of Christ, these Christians concluded that these were, after all, modern times and that both genetic and mind control via the mark of the beast could really only be actuated by nanoparticles injected into the body. From its inception as a viable concept in 1959, to its confirmation-by-experimentation in 1981 and beyond, nanotechnology 'represents the study and application of extremely small [particles and other chemicals] and can be used across all the other science fields, such as chemistry, biology, physics, materials science, and engineering' (National Nanotechnology Initiative, 2021). In the field of biology especially, nanotechnology has been used as a means by which to repair, replicate, and vaccinate targeted cellular locations within the body by introducing, intravenously or otherwise, programmable, minute chemicalized particles, also known as nanoparticles. In addition to the possibility of precipitating toxic side effects in humans, ethicists also worry that if nanotechnology is not properly regulated it could result in dangerous outcomes, including the construction and deployment of deadlier nuclear weapons, not to mention the proliferation of undetectable, weaponized listening devices, *inter alia* (*e.g.,* Ray, 2019; Kosal, 2016) The amassing properties of nanoparticles thus led many extremist thinkers to the unflappable belief that '…nanoparticles are part of a weapon system that will enable mass depopulation without resistance' (Admin, lovinglifetv.com, 2020).

Important to note at this juncture, and contrary to the extremist certainty, is the unlikelihood that those vaccines that use messenger DNA, or mRNA, contain nano-computers or robots that can readily be utilized to control the entire body at any time. The Pfizer and Moderna mRNA vaccines work by lipid nanotechnology, lipids amounting to an insoluble fatty component which protects the fragile genetically engineered fragment of the COVID virus that comprises a substantive ingredient of the vaccine. The vaccine itself works when the injected genetic fragment compels the body to produce a protein that in turn triggers the immune system to produce vital virus-fighting antibodies (*e.g.,* CDC, 2021). One can certainly see why such an explanatory breakdown by those who are invested in the use of nanotechnology might both get lost in translation and elicit a more conspiratorial response. A well-educated colleague of this book's author,

after having recently watched a science fiction film about mind control, confided in him that she was now unequivocally convinced that nanotechnology could, and indeed *was* being used in vaccines to shut down parts of the brain "prone to social resistance." It was in light of such an unfounded yet impassioned belief perhaps that the 5G conspiracy theory took stubborn hold in the preliminary days of the COVID-19 outbreak. Because 5G telecommunications technology is powered by nanoparticles that emit frequencies, once deployed, these frequencies, some believe, can 'excite the nanoparticles' already extant in the human body, leading to mind control or worse (Admin, lovinglifetv.com, 2020). The uncorroborated confirmation that 5G technology was being used to spread COVID-19 would lead to the fanatical immolation of cell phone towers across Europe during the early stages of the outbreak (*e.g.*, Heilweil, 2020).

To this conspiratorial way of thinking was appended the certainty that a COVID-19 vaccine had already existed long before the outbreak. According to a particularly extreme religious rhetorical strain, COVID-19 itself should not have been released for the simple fact that the anti-Christ had not yet stepped onto the world stage; the anti-Christ would be immediately recognized for his ability to forge, ostensibly, a meaningful peace agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians (Personal Interview 2, 2020). It was only upon the emergence of this figure that the devil would reveal his destructive plan for humanity, after which time, Christ would take his Church in the rapture or some semblance thereof. The proponents of this contingent theory warned that it was just a matter of time before world leaders would roll out the vaccine, but in the form of an implanted nanochip, effectively introducing the coercive "mark of the beast." For some reason, however, the thinking went, the virus was released prematurely, perhaps accidentally, which was why the *pre-existing* vaccine had to be hidden, a bizarre proposition onto itself. There was the related defensive posture taken by many reactionaries that when such a vaccine was officially rolled out, it would be tantamount to the mark of the beast and was to be avoided at all costs (*e.g.,* Laurie, 2021; *Reuters Fact Check*, 2021). This sort of thinking represented nothing new, given that certain religious and fringe groups have long refused to accept the efficacy of vaccines in general, continuing to rely on favorable scientific vaccine studies that have all been roundly condemned as flawed and biased (viz.,

Roe & Andrade, 2011; e.*g.,* Belluz, 2019; Personal Interviews 3 & 4, 2020). A brief return to this book's first chapter on the social efficacy of myths serves to alert us to the idea that the foregoing trains of thought are not myths because the truths they insist on are impossible, but instead because these espoused truths are enabled by nothing more than the *religion of emotion* couched in compelling, logical-enough explanations – *never* rigorous scientific corroboration – that make sense to the naturally suspicious.

Ménage à C: Creolized Religion, Christianity & COVID-19

Creolization seems a natural and logical enough existential outcome of centuries' worth of colonial socialization. It was Tunde Adeleke (2012) who would cogently inveigh against the trenchant certainty that the otherwise narrow Afrocentric view is shared by virtually every contemporary African-descended person across the globe, instead confirming the inevitable thing of historical transformation beneath the relentless forces of European imperialism and creolization. Where many academics and laic people of color are inclined to trace their heritage, culture, and ideological sameness back to Sub-Saharan African ancestral experiences, Adeleke convincingly argues that contemporary people of substantive African descent are not always likely to ideologically identify with the so-called African experience given the powerful transformative pressures under which their likely enslaved, displaced African ancestors were themselves forced to consider, reconsider, and subsequently buckle to in their relatively new socio-cultural setting.

The syncretized religion of Vodou is a well-known example of the driving complexities and ambiguities undergirding such pressures. Vodou is precisely creole because although African slaves brought their various deities and religiosities to the New World with them, Haitian Vodou's deistic structure is Catholic-inspired: their religious sensibilities deemed subversive threats to colonial law and order, only to be subsequently outlawed, African slaves in St. Domingue were faced with the near impossible task of remaining true to their ancestral religion while giving their masters the impression that they had embraced the "superior religion of the white man." Yet those slaves were able to effectively satisfy two opposing, otherwise incompatible socio-religious features: utilizing the

technique of syncretism, these slaves were able to continue to liturgically acknowledge their African deities through their deftly deceptive embrace of the manifested principles of Catholicism. In other words, where Catholicism is characterized by the veneration of the saints, slaves replaced, in code, these saints the likes of Saints Peter, Paul, Augustus, etc., with *their* deities, ascribing to the latter the coterminous intermediary powers of the former (see page 109); with the passage of centuries' worth of time, post-slavery Vodouists would demonstrate that they had no issue with identifying both with Christianity and the syncretized religion of their ancestors. In any event, when the master witnessed his ostensibly obedient, broken slaves worshipping Christ and invoking the intermediary powers of the holy saints, what he was really witnessing was an ersatz performance. The slaves in question were invoking, at least initially, not the capital god of the bible, but Bondye, the compartmentalized, disinterested creator god of the Vodou faith, whose secondary deities, or Lwas, bridged the divide between the living and the afterlife, often revealing themselves to the living via bodily possession and other fetishistic acts, later explained. When the slave called on, for instance, St. Peter or St. Mary, he was really invoking, respectively, his African Lwas known as Legba or Ezili given the similar characteristics shared between what would have been considered entirely disparate cultural religious figures; Legba, the gatekeeper between life and death, corresponds with St. Peter who figuratively holds the keys to the kingdom of heaven, while Ezili, the mother goddess of fertility, was compellingly likened to the chaste virgin Mary. Although this was indeed the nature of religious creolization across the Caribbean, per Adeleke, the slaves and their succeeding progeny would, with every passing generation, fall further and further away from their uncontaminated African, Afrocentric roots given the shaping conditions of their new geography and imposed culture. Here was a salutary development erected on historical transformation; salutary because although it was the slave master's intention to wipe the minds of his slaves clean of their Africanity, his slaves retooled his indoctrinated pressures in *their* image, creating novel, legitimate, and vibrant forms of religiosity that nonetheless were dependent on, and altered by, the forceful socializing process that often underwrites western domination. It is the widespread reach of this dependency and its hegemonic triggers that illuminate all too well

Adeleke's position on historical transformation (*cf.* Adeleke, 2009; Olmos & Paravisini-Gebert, 2003).

Pursuing the foregoing idea to its logical conclusion, many, if not *most*, contemporary black Americans, black West Indians included, continue to affirm and reaffirm that creolized Caribbean religions like Vodou, Obeah, and Santeria are patently demonic exercises in witchcraft – or, at the very least, are "very bad" ideological movements out of keeping with the doctrines of civility around which western societies were supposedly erected. When questioned about the validity of Afro-Caribbean religions, a group of student informants, for instance, were likely to offer confident expressions of condemnation rooted in, it would appear, an uninformed rhetorical certainty. Many of them were not at the outset aware of the historical backdrop on which these religions were forged and developed. While the majority of students questioned were aware that Vodou was developed in Haiti, none of them seemed to know about the antagonistic circumstances under which it developed. They all expressed a great degree of both shock and gratification when informed that Vodou provided slaves in St. Domingue the righteous indignation necessary to successfully overthrow their Catholic French masters by the close of 1803. Upon further discussion and interrogation, many of them went on to express what they considered to be the wickedness of the French against the just comeuppance of the slaves in that colony, whose brutal treatment has been widely chronicled and explicated (Group Interview 1, 2020; *e.g.,* Scott, 2020; James, 1963).

Similarly, virtually all student informants utilized in the fall of 2019 (Group Interviews 2, 3, and 4) were unaware of the existence of Santeria, registering any sort of certainty only when that religion was likened to as "Cuba's version of Vodou." To recap, Santeria – also known in full as Regla de Ocha-Ifa and Lukumí, that is, "rule of the Orishas" – was forged beneath the existentialism afforded by colonialism as it developed in Cuba. Not only did African slaves bring their own geographic-specific Orishas, or African-inspired deities, to bear on their creolization in the New World, but so too did the permissive folkloric interpretations of Catholicism by many Spanish colonists in Cuba combine with any official Catholic position towards a truly folk Cuban religion with an undeniable Afro-centered

consciousness. As with Vodouists, present day Santeros have inherited the awareness of the characteristic correspondences between Catholic Saints and Orishas (*cf.* Arce & Ferrer, 1999; Gonzalez-Wippler, 1992).

That any recognition of Santeria among utilized student respondents was stochastic, prompted by a stereotypic associative cue ("Cuba's Vodou"), the socio-historical circumstances of that religion were also not known at the outset. Yet any historically accurate relayed information about Santeria was generally not met with the same sense of gratification as with the "redemptive" case of Vodou; perhaps this was due to the interpretative schema on which Santeria's origins were subsequently explained; as if to say, that unlike Haitian Vodou, which helped to profoundly ensure the establishment of the New World's first black republic, Santeria's syncretic, creolized role was nowhere as epic and earth-shattering, any such interpretation instead serving merely to confirm the slave's "profane" combination of disparate Christian and African religiosities and ideologies. Many students found it unpalatable and utterly un-Christian that practitioners of Santeria, which literally translated means, "of the saints," would develop African pagan equivalents to "holy" Christian saints. There is no easy way to reconcile these opposing viewpoints given that any disagreement between Vodou's manifest destiny between 1791 and 1803, and Santeria's "ungodly" syncretism seem to cancel each other out in light of the similar developmental trajectory of both religions, together with the ostensibly willful disregard of those questioned that Vodou's ultimate "commendable" triumph was, ostensibly, a triumph over Christianity and its enabling culture. Here is an inter-ideological divorce, it remains to be argued, that is as much a legacy of colonialism and slavery as the syncretized religions recently considered.

Of the three Afro-Caribbean religions of focus, Obeah was the best known among those student informants who almost exclusively originated from the Anglophone Caribbean. Obeah has been described more as a system of creolized, hybridized beliefs than a religious movement liturgically practiced; in other words, Obeah has often been utilized by its believers in moments of desperation when conventional Christianity appears inadequate to affect an urgent, *divine* outcome. A fetishistic religio-ideological movement,

> [Obeah] incorporates two very distinct categories of practice. The first involves "the casting of spells for various purposes, both good and evil: protecting oneself, property, family, or loved ones; harming real or perceived enemies; and bringing fortune in love, employment, personal or business pursuits."

> The second incorporates African-derived healing practices based on the application of knowledge of herbal and animal medicinal properties. Obeah, thus conceived, is not a religion so much as a system of beliefs rooted in Creole notions of spirituality, which acknowledges the existence and power of the supernatural world and incorporates into its practices witchcraft, sorcery, magic, spells, and healing. In the contemporary West Indies, the term has come to signify any African-derived practice with religious elements (Olmos & Paravisini-Gebert, 2003,131).

To insinuate a brief aside, it is quite revealing that beyond the student informants questioned, most of the additional non-academic informants used seemed resigned to the coexistence of Obeah and Christianity both in Cayman and the wider British West Indies, where the former religious movement is still very much illegal, although seldom clamped down on (Davis, 2013).

Although the religious practice of fetishism had existed throughout sub-Saharan Africa for centuries before European advent by the mid-fifteenth century, the fetishism concept was systematically studied and philosophized in the European theological tradition, and later analyzed by the likes of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, among others (*viz.*, Matory, 2018). Eighteenth-century French anthropologist Charles de Brosses described fetishism as 'a forceful reduction of all power to the material realm, creating the fetish as a tangible object that can be addressed and manipulated through a variety of actions [including]…direct worship without figuration' (Green, 2022); which is to say that the object in question becomes the means to supernatural access without becoming a god or spirit onto itself. In religious, syncretic terms the fetish is any devoted object of social consciousness whose otherwise inert power is triggered by acknowledged value recognition (*Ibid.*). As will be seen, fetishes in Afro-Caribbean religions can range from invocations to natural elements, to

statuettes, bracelets, charms, actions-cum-rituals, etc. At the heart of religious fetishism is what Roger Green refers to as 'material presencing', relayed in the idea that any *consecrated particular*, be it words, statuettes, rituals, etc., can become a powerful soothsaying, curative, as well as probative medium bridging the natural and spiritual worlds (*Ibid*.).

Before we turn our attention to the social outworking of Obeah in our current rampant COVID-19 environment, consider that this ideo-religious movement was made manifest during the long seventeenth century under the distressing circumstances of slavery in the British West Indies, notably in Jamaica. The Obeah concept derives its western sensibility from the Ashanti word *Obayifo* or *Obeye*, '…meaning, respectively, wizard or witch, or the spiritual beings that inhabit witches' (Olmos & Paravisini-Gebert, 2003, 131). It would behoove any serious scholar or student of Obeah and other Afro-Caribbean religions to earnestly grapple with this etymological translation; any association with an African religiosity prone to "revenge and murder" in the New World would have automatically and, more tellingly, *obviously* been regarded as subversive by the planter class in the British West Indies, accompanied thus by the imperialist imperative to delegitimize, demonize, and depersonalize-by-legal-and-punitive-compulsion any "anti-social" ideological movement with a penchant for bringing slaves together in revolt; this despite any possible redemptive historiographic re-reading and reinterpretation of Obeah as a vital religious tool both for social cohesion and vital confraternal belonging – such re-renderings were, of course, altogether impossible during the days of slavery and were thus fundamentally irrelevant for white masters. Accordingly, Obeah was outlawed in the late seventeenth century for its subversive properties, expressed in the British lexicon as behaviors and actions running counter to any rational enlightened position lending its support to the irresistible advancement of western civilization – in other words, actions and behaviors associated with seditious witchcraft. Because Obeah was (and remains) a powerful bonding agent, it had to be *deactivated*, *demonized*, and summarily *destroyed* by ethnocentric indoctrination (*cf*. O'Neal, 2020). There is, thus, an existential connection between the British prerogative to publicly execute Obeahmen during, for instance, Jamaica's Tacky Slave Rebellion in 1760, as a way to force rebellious slaves into surrender, and the modern West Indian soul who remains convinced that

Obeah is evil to its core (*cf. Ibid.*; Hart, 2002): in the vein of Adeleke's historical transformation, this connection is decidedly emotive *a la* westernity, bringing all of the "redemptive" weight of a dominant civilization to bare on religious and moral notions of right and wrong.

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That any informant intimately familiar with Obeah doctrine agreed to answer the author's questions solely on the grounds of anonymity, is telling enough; 'Obeah is not a public thing', an informant expressed, 'but its power lies in the truth [that is revealed] [in]…my secret practice of it' (Anonymous Interview 1, 2020). The practice of Obeah is usually frowned upon in public spaces but is passionately pursued and cultivated privately, indeed a hark back to the days of slavery when slaves were legally compelled to follow their outlawed African religiosity in hushed code. Another informant made clear that because the average person in Cayman and the Caribbean is swayed by Christianity, they are unable to publicly embrace the so-called effective results of Obeah, although privately, they would perhaps intimate otherwise (Anonymous Interview 2, 2020). This view powerfully comports with a female informant who professed to be a Christian, but had no problem employing the "services" of the Obeahman to help repel women from her husband (Anonymous Interview 3, 2021). The underlying attitude of the informants so far utilized in this particular subsection extends otherwise abstract notions of divinity well into the domain of the pragmatic. With extensive esoteric knowledge of herbs and charms, and the divine as its guiding grace, *pragmatic* Obeah has been utilized by the folk – everyday, hardworking people – in their bid to dispatch anything from a broken heart to raging cancer (*cf.* O'Neal, 2020).

It is precisely for historical, traditionalist, and folkish national traits that Jamaicans, in general, tend to swear by what hard scientists would dismissively label the *placebo effect*. When, for instance, someone comes down with the flu, especially in the Jamaican countryside, it is not conventional medicine that they are likely to procure, but, instead traditional remedies, so-called nostrums with, arguably, no proven efficaciousness. Thus, where a German suffering a flu would unthinkingly take paracetamol or ibuprofen, the financially beleaguered, rural Jamaican

soul would likely first splash her face with rubbing alcohol or rum, inhale the vapors of hot sea water, or swallow Vicks. To expand our national quotient here, the Cuban soul would perhaps in the event of languishing the flu, place camphor in his clothes, an onion under his bed, or inhale the steam from hot water; the Haitian would consume the ginger root or honey and lime steeped in hot water. Yet these remedies as they have been nationally collated are, on the contrary, not necessarily specific to any Caribbean country, but would indeed likely be used *anywhere* in the Caribbean in some form or fashion, or combination thereof.

Such remedies seem to effortlessly segue into the practical, fetishistic aspects of Obeah, with its emphasis on the imbuement of an otherwise mundane object with potentially supernatural and/or curative properties in no way normally inherent in that object; the Obeah man might well prescribe the same remedies as outlined in the previous paragraph in keeping with his vast esoteric knowledge of herbs and other synthetic remedies and their various "efficacious" effects and results.

Implicating the fetishism of Obeah, and the ways in which it has been used to combat various maladies associated with COVID-19, consider the following recount:

> *Three young children were playing quite agreeably and innocently in a gated yard in the district of George Town, Grand Cayman. One of the children had managed to get her hands on an ampule of salt, inadvertently spilling some of it before the closed gate; the children continued playing nonetheless, oblivious to the spilled salt on which they stomped gleefully. On a whim, the household's grandmother decided to go and check on her grandchildren. She was an older woman of about 76 years and of almost exclusively Jamaican ancestry. Upon seeing the grains of salt scattered before the gate, the grandmother harshly, and with a sense of urgency, enjoined the children to move away from the gate. Naively, they asked her why they had to move away from where it was they were playing; her response came in the form of further chastisement and threats of laying the strap "against their backsides." Convincingly threatened, the children complied with their grandmother, whose face had by then turned a dull red, beaming not with anger, but worry and mounting dismay: ostensibly*

*conversant with the evil workings of Obeah, the grandmother was
convinced that a disgruntled, vindictive soul from outside the household had
seen fit to throw salt over the gate as a way to do harm to anyone resident
within the property (Anonymous Interview 3, 2021).*

The perceived fetishism in this true account is clear: in Obeah and other
Afro-Caribbean religions, salt has often been infused with so-called spells
and incantations meant both to do harm to perceived enemies or else keep
an evil presence at bay. As this episode took place during the lockdown
phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, the grandmother, by her own later
admission, could not in the moment of that unfolding event have been
swayed from her belief that those nefariously scattered grains of salt were
meant to "infect" her innocent grandchildren by someone with "bad eyes."

To what extent does the foregoing example adequately cast a dark,
irredeemable stain over the religiosity of Obeah? With its emphasis on
fetishism often by way of incantation or imbuement, are the practitioners
of Obeah altogether wicked, irrational, or an eccentric, garish combination
of both? While some of those reading this may be inclined to dismiss Obeah
as nothing more than the unassailable belief in "pretend sorcery," others
may be just as equally likely to caution the unbeliever via passionate
reaffirmations that, yes, Obeah is real, and the results yielded by its
practitioners, are unmistakable. Who, if anyone, is right?

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According to Romans 12:20:

> *21 (a) If your enemy is hungry, feed him;*
> *(b) if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.*
> *(c) in doing so, you will heap burning coals on his head.*

Many Christians use this passage of scripture, legally echoed in Proverbs
25: 21-22, as a way to confirm that there is such a thing as righteous, godly
anger; more importantly in our context, some have combined those verses
from Proverbs 25 – which conclude with being rewarded by God if you
treat your enemies well – with Romans 12:20 to convey the often lauded
truth, in their minds, that although vengeance belongs to God, "we must

do our part to bring forth that condign vengeance." Save for its contextual literality, it is difficult to really know what the writer had in mind when he penned the first clause of Proverbs 25:22 (for you will heap burning coals on his head), which depends both on the preceding instructions (if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink), and their proceeding reward (and the Lord will reward you). Some have surmised that heaping burning coals on one's head might have been an actual Egyptian expiation ritual meant to prevent future wrongdoing by inflicting an excruciating yet survivable head wound (Kio, 2000). Theologian Stephen Hre Kio (2000) suggests that these bible verses are not advocating for violence, per se, but are instead implying by cause and effect the enemy's expressed shame and guilt as a result of being treated well by his *Godly* opponents (*Ibid.*). Yet others have argued that these verses appropriately divine and subsequently justify condign punishment of the ungodly, whose actions are inevitably ungodly, notably *towards* the godly – in other words, it is only when the Christian shows his enemy love that this enemy will be justly, condignly punished (*Ibid.*).

Does one not stand guilty of the sin of fetishism if the ostensibly non-injurious, contextually banal gestures he pursues are meant to bring about a violent or untoward result on someone else? With the somewhat syllogistic nature of our recent biblical example in mind (Romans 12:20 – see just above), does the *legitimate* efficacious result of (c) not depend on the actionable, calculated nature of (a) and (b)? Are the actions of (a) and (b) thus nothing more than customary practices imbued with potentially prohibitive invocative motives? Or does the historical and social significance of the Christian faith serve to consecrate and sanitize an otherwise recriminatory mentality that seeks metaphysical advantage by rendering "well-deserved" harm on another?

Briefly consider the aforementioned questions in the context of a certain Christian church in the Cayman Islands of Brazilian origin – The Universal Church; [as an important aside, Brazil was the largest New World recipient of African slaves during the slavery era, and thus African religiosity, despite its public condemnation during colonialism was, and remains, woven into that society via the resistible forces of syncretism.] The Universal Church's membership consider themselves Protestants and

vigorously identify with the creed and tenets of the Christian faith. Yet to what extent should the church's membership be considered as fetishists, in keeping with Candomblé – *Brazil's Vodou* – when they commit to acts like praying over a rose before placing it under the bed of a beleaguered couple? Or, by placing cardboard constructed doorways in the nave, meant to represent life hurdles that must be walked through if one is to overcome his existential challenges? Or, by utilizing numbers as a way to sow a monetary seed as the ultimate means by which to vanquish a besetting problem or host of problems ("if you have three pressing problems, give $300 in faith and your problems will vanish")?

Many Christians from fundamentalist and mainline protestant denominations alike have decried the church in question – and for that matter, others like it that subscribe to New Thought Ideology – as a heretical religious movement (Duignan, 2022). They argue that the Universal Church is sacrilegious because its members' method of liturgical worship is erected on profanities that distort the purity of the faith as Christ and the medieval Church Doctors meant it. An erroneous mentality is ascribed to the Universal Church, clearly revealed in the dismissive Christian judgment of those who use their namesake "iconoclastically," sullying the symbols and message of the longstanding traditions of Christianity. As a result, "Obeah-like religions," if we may for the moment lump all Christian-influenced creolized religions together, together with their fetishist creeds, are usually forcefully, roundly, and "righteously" condemned in social circles in some way swayed by extreme Christian dogma. Thus, the very real historical processes that legitimized Obeah as a syncretized religion of "righteous" resistance against the "ungodly" dictates of colonialism are, accordingly, invalidated by certain strains of Christianity in favor of the idealistic conviction that Obeah is a religious movement emboldened by demonic, subversive properties. Virtually every religion, by matter of course, has a subversive element given that any metaphysical belief system in part derives its legitimacy from its "natural" opponents and competitors, who must be systematically engaged and ideologically defeated.

Pertinent existential questions spring to mind at this juncture. Was Obeah, like mainstream Christianity, historically conceived and processed on a

cause-and-effect schema? Which is to further ask, were both Christianity and Obeah *equally* established on, and subsequently legitimized by, a peripheral religious ideology that was generated, cultivated, and disseminated by a resonant existential conflict of some sort? Christianity's foundational conflict indeed developed around the Roman imperative to suppress burgeoning fringe Christian views anathema to mainstream Roman religious and social practices and principles. Similarly, Obeah's *modus operandi* was rooted in the natural human conflict that epitomized the enslaved experience; with its horrific, bloody imbalances of power based on hierarchical racial understandings and the legal enablement of such understandings, it is not difficult to see why Obeah, like Christianity, developed as a *just* metaphysical reaction to injustice. The so-called essential difference between Obeah and Christianity thus does not lie in the shaping elements of their natural, inevitable rise, but instead diachronically rests on the ability of traditional, "non-heretical" proto-Catholic Christianity to transcend its marginality to eventually become the official global religion.

The foregoing prompts further questions: Keen to endorse the "unassailable" originality of their convictions, to what extent do conventional Christians stand "guilty" of the same modalities of worship as their Obeah counterparts, that is, modalities inevitably shaped by earthly conflict and the human will to overcome these through the collective investiture in a mystical source "greater" than themselves, able to affect change on their behalf? In keeping with the processes of conflictive development that are inevitably responsible for our social progress (*cf.* Adler, 2010), has it perhaps become naturally expedient for many Christians, given their contingent, triumphant historical development, to sanitize the cause-and-effect trope of conventional Christian interpretive modes by reframing the faith through unassailable metaphysical lenses? All while confirming Obeah's conflictive developmental process as a wholly earthly, corruptible affair? This despite the social fact that both religions developed according to the same "essences" underwriting existential, *human* struggle? With the reasonable idea in mind that religious truth is determined by socialization and its ideological, ideational byproducts, now reconsider, through our -now critical, indeed *violable* lens of unassailability, the juxtaposition of the inherent sensibilities in Obeah-

like religions, recently explored, and, say, the Baptist adherent who says, "as a Baptist, I believe the bible, therefore I believe that homosexuality is wrong, and will use the condemnatory words of the bible in this regard to forever ensure that homosexuals are castigated – *but I love them*"; or, "as a Pentecostal, I received $30,000 in the mail because I followed the instructions of the lord to purchase a bottle of miracle water infused with the very being of Christ." In light of our earnest and honest enough reconsiderations, to what extent does it become more difficult to conceal the fact that our own religious biases, in light of their presence and relevance, do not so much lead to *perfect* metaphysical truths rendered accessible, as they are "merely" consecrated social products that exude the certainty they do because many of us, having been reared on them, would not even consider challenging them in the first place? In another question, because these products are such an integral part of who we are in our process towards confirming truth, is it more difficult, if not impossible, for us to "scientifically" detect and honestly intellectualize their grand, silent, *subjective* effects directing our unassailable western actions and thoughts against un-western, supposedly false counterparts?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the Caribbean place, it is by far easier to associate the likes of Obeah, Vodou, Santeria, and so-called fringe Christian movements with fetishism than conventional Christianity. In Santeria, religious leaders known as Padrinos or Madrinas connect with the spirit world through acts and rituals known as *obras* – if someone comes down with what she perceives to be COVID symptoms, then she is likely to visit her Padrino or Madrina who would either initiate a ceremony on her behalf, say, a ritualistic washing in a river, or else utter words meant to awaken the spirit world to act in her favor. Elsewhere, Vodou monasteries have been established for the very reason of COVID-19, in which the stricken are encouraged to check in to, to receive both spiritual and herbal guidance and/or healing. In these cases, there is a distinct logic that functions according to a powerful social response based on the cause-and-effect schema: one has to act if he is to overcome his misfortune; not only is his necessity to act an end result unto itself, but it is also necessary both to punctuate his belief that life, and in particular, nature is beyond his control, and to confirm that there are ethereal supernatural powers and/or forces that, under the right preparatory conditions, have deigned it fit to help him

overcome. These powers must be channeled, be it through consecrated objects, actions, and/or words; without this channeling, the tacitly prevalent mentality goes, we can never hope to improve both our momentary and long-term lot in life, especially in these desperate, fatal, anxious times spawned by COVID-19. In the final analysis, how is the socio-emotional logic of the Vodouist, Obeahman, and Santero essentially any different from that used by conventional Christians who utilize prayer, laying on of hands, sanctioned rituals and sacraments, *inter alia*, to overcome problems and crises not only specific to them, but indeed to humankind on the whole along its multiple ethnic and religious breakdowns and permutations?

Section Conclusion: A Place for All Religions or None?

Returning to the very first question posed at the beginning of this chapter, what is the abiding purpose of *any* religion? Adherence to religious norms, rules, and boundaries, for instance, helps to impose a sort of culturally digestible sense of order on an otherwise amorphous, seemingly random existence. The necessity of religion, it has also been argued, engenders vital social cohesion in the form of an unflappable communalism which, among other things, provides its membership a mutually agreed upon healing-cum-coping balm amid the inevitable existential features of hardship and sorrow. In a world where our dual fears of heartbreak and death threaten to disrupt our sanity and severely stunt cultivated, if frangible, perceptions of our own existential indispensability, religion provides calming certainty generated by invisible extra-sensory truth; in the face of metaphysical certainty, it is faith that becomes the *piece de resistance*, as it is tested and validated by those who, by their own estimation, continue to traverse the *right* side of history, its traditions, and the various developments and evolutions therein. In light of what should by now be a universal truism, but likely is not, if every religion continues to unfold along its legitimating history, should the inevitability of our condemnatory parsing of the history of *Religious Others* not be understood and confirmed both as relative and bigoted? The annotated answer to this question perhaps becomes more attainable should we decide to reasonably balance an embedded normalized intolerance for the development of certain so-called fringe religions against a tacit acceptance of a grand, mainstream, western-

impelled historical narrative; it is indeed the latter end of our recently adumbrated fulcrum that, in its pervasiveness, continues to adroitly elide any cultural feature not patently western, given westernity's synonymy with civilization and progress broadly and resolutely understood.

Throughout this section of the book, the attempt was made to demonstrate the historical, social, and syncretic effects of religion, notably Christianity, on humankind. We began with exposing and problematizing the mindset that espouses the religious myth-as-fact. It was further argued that despite its inescapably contingent social origins and grounding, any resultant cosmological account gathered its legitimacy from the vaunted anthropomorphic properties inherent in the metaphorical language that lends creation myths their epic, sacred *raison d'etre*. Where creation myths are most certainly *metaphysical exegeses* naturally rooted in burgeoning social truth and circumstance, many religious practitioners continue to pursue a line of divergent reasoning habituated by faith and further conditioned by an unflappable belief system that only longevity and favorable socio-historical development can guarantee; this despite faith's inherently diachronic contradiction, revealed in our routine realities in which we readily agree that our consciousness, generally understood, is *obviously* a matter of social development – at least *until* an extrasensory force decided that the time had come to reveal itself, interrupting the firm, sensory, scientific rules of social development and scientific certainty.

This and the preceding chapter examined in greater historical detail the consequences of western civilization's investment in the Judaic religious tradition that inspired Christianity, an investment that actuated Christianity's own irresistible development bound to eventually inscribe its trademark deistic objectivity beyond its own relatively narrow origins. In chapter two, a truncated history of Christianity and its formidable role in the westernization of both Europe and, later, the rest of the world was provided, leading to the confirmation at the beginning of this present chapter of the inevitable role of western religion in legitimizing the economically-driven *global development project*. Legitimacy presented itself dually here: first, as a necessary precursor towards civilizing and economizing the rest of the world; and, second, as a pervasive indoctrinating tool which conditioned the psychology of the Other to

readily embrace the ways of Christianity while relegating their original religiosities. The manifestations of this psychology are rendered informally visible, say, in the materialistic Caribbean individual – who may or may not be a Christian – who views his ancestral religions the likes of Vodou or Santeria as erroneous, while clinging to the concept, borne of centuries of proselytization-by-force and then decades of self-powered voluntary-acceptance-by-contingency, that the capital Christian god is monotheistically unassailable. This psychological condition, conceived by blends of faith, bigotry, and historical ignorance, takes for granted the unshakable truth ascribed to Christianity without any interest to understand the earthly, indeed indispensable social motivations that both established and drove this religion and the secular civilization it helped spawn.

In the second and third parts of the present chapter, the overarching attempt was made in the general context of the COVID-19 pandemic to juxtapose the ideological effects and symptoms of mainly fundamentalist, conservative Christianity against other Caribbean creole religious movements themselves substantively informed by the Christian faith in its various interpretations. What was forcefully relayed throughout these sections was the explicit association between power and authority among the Christian informants used. Here is an empowered sense of authority that does not necessarily extend to hierarchized social power, although this may well be a part of it, but is instead insidiously revealed in the charismatic Christian's ideological certainty that his truth, no matter how short-sighted and/or uninformed, is worth proclaiming given its impregnable ideological defense.

Yet by delineating charismatic Christian responses against those responses from equally charismatic and convicted adherents of other syncretic religious movements, a historically-determined *religious* hierarchy as it is enacted publicly and civically was duly reaffirmed: Christians, then, by virtue of their public legitimacy are likelier to publicly vaunt their views if only against the subconscious understanding that Christianity continues to be privileged by the ubiquity of western-ness, despite the beginnings of its loosening hold on European affairs from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries due to the irresistible emergence of modernity. Adherents of

Santeria, Vodou, and Obeah on the other hand, must exercise greater ideological circumspection in westernized public and discursive spaces. Historically, these syncretic religions were regarded as nothing more than witchcraft, a concept imposed by westernity in its bid both to achieve global legitimacy and render profane any competing civilizing force outside of its own cultivated certainty. Western-induced notions of legality and morality as these inform a modern ethos of both religious and secular leanings, continue to ensure that such religions remain sidelined, suspect, and illegitimate, even if this is no longer the verbalized, practical intent of many indigenous westerners now amenable to the freedom of religious expression and its inherent rights (*cf.* Hatab, 1999; Grenz, 1996).

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The foregoing chapters should not be viewed as an extended exercise in anti-religion – on the contrary, the author is mindful, at times appreciative, of the abiding importance and remit of religion and the visceral pull of its accompanying systems of belief on its social, *human* adherents. Yet as this chapter and the two chapters which preceded it were being written, the author began to view Socrates' mediated ideas concerning transcendental morality in a different light. Through the gaze of Plato, Socrates asserted that the genuine search for, and attainment of truth would automatically result in the sustained practice of, if you will, a pure morality (Rogers, 1925, 117-143; Jowett, 2015). Transcendental ethics-cum-morality, as concept, highlights the age-old philosophical debate torn between empiricism and transcendentalism; implicating morality, thus, is any so-called proof of right and wrong 'independent of human experience…or are they themselves human inventions' (*cf.* Hammond, 1892, 131-180)? If we agree with the former clause, then we would also likely agree that there are such things as transcendental moralities that would equally, *beneficially*, apply to all of us regardless of our cultural and national affiliation – consider here, not without some difficulty, *inalienable human rights*. However, if we agree with the idea that morality is a human invention primed by social circumstance, then some of us would perhaps find it difficult to argue that a pure, transcendental, *universal* morality ever existed or *will* ever exist, ultimately rendering morality inescapably relative. How, then, to advocate for a transcendental religious morality *trapped* in the social?

As the author explored the often exclusionary, biased moral sense that underscored Christianity as its imperialist devotees and their ideologically agreeable progeny proceeded to impose *their* truth on different *Others*, it became increasingly difficult not to see any otherwise genuine, if dogmatic, search for Christian truth as leading to a truly transcendental, universal moral condition. When the term *pure morality* is confronted in the context of religion, certain developing views on the matter may sometimes immediately veer towards a universal sense of good exempt from the moralizing of those quick to discriminate against others who might have a different religious view. Given the subjective nature of every religious belief system, it follows that any resultant truth enabled by a transcendental, if not necessarily a legally prescribed morality, should be considered multiplistically – in other words, in one's search for so-called religious truth, any and *every* emergent truth will differ according to the tenets of the religion in question. Although this postmodern percept may appear as ideologically impassable and morally unacceptable and unsatisfying for those who practice monotheistic religions, this does not, *Socratically-speaking*, have to be the case. If we accept Socrates' premise that the genuine attainment of truth will lead to a heightened moral sense just recently described, then we should also be willing to accept the follow-on premise that *any* and *every* religious truth will represent truth arrived at *subjectively*. Thus, any inclusive moral sense arising from various religious truths, barring those truths that would either discriminate against or in some way disfranchise or harm others, should enshrine its promotors' willingness to affirm the ideal that genuine tolerance for differentiated religious truth is key to attaining a pure, transcendental morality – not the exclusivist monotheistic will to ostracize, isolate, and no less *demoralize* those who do not believe as we do.

Besides Socrates, who else better to support the preceding position than the so-called iconoclastic, if profoundly insightful German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche? Writing in the late nineteenth century, Nietzsche seemed to lament the continued Hegelian-like idealistic promotion of Christianity and Judaism as necessary conceptual bridges between reason and progress (Nietzsche, 2018, 27-37). The intransigent reliance on the Christian capital god only served, for Nietzsche, to stultify and stifle humankind's progress, representing a sort of incongruent, anachronistic

rhetorical tradition that had no place in pressing earthly affairs. Allowing Nietzsche to momentarily speak for himself,

> *[p]erhaps the most solemn conceptions that have caused the most fighting and suffering, the conceptions of "God" and "sin," will one day seem to us of no more importance than a child's plaything or a child's pain seems to an old man;—and perhaps another plaything and another pain will then be necessary once more for "the old man"—always childish enough, an eternal child! (Ibid., 33).*

Nietzsche's percept here seems to implicate that the nature of the collective human will is always such that it needs an "extraterrestrial" concept with which to cope with an otherwise random, meaningless existence. This would further imply that when Nietzsche clamorously proclaimed, *Gott ist tot* (God is dead!), he was, according to the present author's own interpretation, offering, *inter* alia, a synchronic statement of fact across his own diachronic awareness of western religious development; as if to say, that if religion was once necessary, it was because of its determinative, contingent role in instilling a sense of morality on which modern secular law would be later crafted (*cf*. Nietzsche, 2020, 51-54). If not for religion and, ironically, the glistening horrors that its Christian orchestrators often perpetuated on the socially powerless masses throughout the dark halls of history, our moral maturity would not have progressed to its current secular, enlightened state. It is not lost on the author that the end of medievalism did not spell an end to the atrocities waged against "lesser" humans often in the names of god and creed; rather, from chattel slavery to the holocaust and every chronicled, sustained act of bigotry and cruelty in between and beyond, the instatement of a black/white moral code during Medievalism would be taken for granted by prejudiced modernist thinkers like John Locke (2016), Thomas Hobbes (2017), Immanuel Kant (*cf*. Yab, 2021), Thomas Jefferson (*cf*. Kendi, 2016), etc. Although that which they took for granted was not meant for the consideration of inferior others, the transcendental nature of their own otherwise chauvinistic, racist sensibilities meant that later philosophers more prone to secular, universal notions of justice did not have to necessarily alter preexisting theories, except to include every human in language readily interpretable in egalitarian terms.

Religious dogma had long since fulfilled its deontological duty before its relegation by secular modern law with its at-times insincere emphases on administering justice, fairness, and equality. The argument, contra Nietzsche, that Christianity ensures that people remain moral in a day and age where moral decline is in overdrive appears to be driven by a thin, perhaps disingenuous justification reflective of the anachronistic power of Christianity as an erstwhile state religion and the current anxieties surrounding its civilizational decline. One could argue that secular law and its sanctioned coercions and penalties now instill deeper fear and solemnity in humanity than the ten commandments as these are currently understood in the context of biblical reality. Has Christianity, thus, long since contributed to the progression of human civilization, and morality in particular, having now become, if not an outright anachronism, a dispensable social feature exclusively dependent on its steadfast adherents for its continued relevance?

Just how much credence, then, are we to give to the proposition that religion, notably Christianity, extends beyond the social and is more concerned with the certainty that there is a more consequentially significant existence after death? As we have seen in the author's earlier attempt at mythmaking in chapter one, humanity did not always have the capacity to reason according to a metaphysical logic indeed primed in the first place by our ancestor's growing appreciation for their accumulating social interactions. Here is proof that religion and the metaphysical realities it triggered were not always with us but were learned concepts conditioned and strengthened by repetitive rituals and the long, so-called invincible, sacrosanct traditions they would establish. If we are to take social development at sensory value, it is the longevity of the Christian tradition, together with the indelible mark it has left on human development that, to this day, ensures Christianity's monotheistic hermetic properties, despite Nietzsche's existential understandings which cynically situated the outdated role of religion in the rational and moral developments of the late nineteenth century. Yet whenever mention is made of Nietzsche, it is usually saturated with sarcasm: Nietzsche went mad, after all, because he was an unbeliever, or more destructive yet, because he was a *heartless atheist*. Should every unbeliever, then, expect to meet their end in the same wretched way as Nietzsche? Has every unbeliever so far met their end this

way? Does a believer in Christ, thus, expect to die a "kinder" death or not die at all? Although we know the answers to such coincidentally trivial, silly questions, some of us remain undeterred in our understanding that disbelief in earthly-inspired godly facts of faith is the real anomaly; it is this understanding, to return to the question posed at the beginning of this paragraph, that enables not only the perpetuation of certain religious beliefs, but that also guarantees the sacrosanct continuation of such beliefs relative both to an otherwise uncertain, if inevitably terminal terrestrial existence and its idealized, subjectivized afterlife.

First Person Coda

In closing, I would like to briefly recount an encounter I once had with a colleague of mine who is a steadfast, charismatic Christian. We initially spoke about the unassailability of Christianity in terms of its civilizational imprint. My colleague, of Irish and British descent, appeared eager to inform me that the very importance of Christianity rested in the revelatory enough facts that we were conversing in the English language and experiencing a lifestyle brought to the Caribbean by Europeans and compellingly taken up by people "like me." I could not but help to conclude from his words that African-descended people "like me" were certainly better off in the anglicized Caribbean and therefore ought not to rail against the superiority of the Christian faith, which was to be understood as superior as a matter of civilizational course. I wasn't having any of that, however, and proceeded to question him about the very real thing of historical contingency: Christianity, a mere cult in the early decades of the first century, would develop into a civilizational force in its own right. Did this eventuality justify the persecution and inferiority of the first Christians given that they did not have the access to the kind of power their successors would come to wield? What struck me was my colleague's utilization of an antiquated logic that continues to underpin white supremacist motives across the western world, even if this was in no way his intent; as if it were as simple a thing to forgive the atrocities associated with Christianity during colonialism because if not for colonialism, people of color would not be where they are today; as if to further adduce that because the mindscape on which "our" reality is built is not of *our* making, we ought to be eternally thankful to the orchestrators of our progress. This sort of logic

elides my indispensable African component, and in the process renders my African ancestors' historical development suspect and optional, existentially oppositional, and ultimately worthless. Obeah, for instance, then, cannot, according to this mindset, ever be viewed in redemptive terms, because although slaves were, from the vantage point of the sympathetic present, justified in their rebellion against the contradictory moral dictates of western civilization, their resistance is still widely, implicitly, understood as barbaric actions against an enlightened condition. This is why it has remained so effortless to continue to overlook or bypass the humanity of the slaves both by decrying, in Donald Trump's terms, the *shit-hole* nature of their progeny's modern nations, and justifying this festering logic via ambiguous affirmations that at once excuse and justify the carnage associated with Christianity (and a world order built on white supremacy, for that matter) in the contexts of colonialism and contemporary modernity; all of this despite the so-called tried and true human right now *transcendentalized* and universalized that everyone possesses the inalienable right to practice his or her religion or else be free from religion's social dictates.

My colleague and I were able to agree on one thing, however, even if our uneasy consonance stemmed from different underlying reasons and concerns: we both agreed that religion is a thing of the heart, its legitimacy having accrued from the emergence and sustenance of specific beliefs and mandates that tend to unfold emotively and authoritatively in tandem with their guiding cultural mores. Yet our agreement was made even more profound in our joint concession that the longevity of religion and its pervasive, infectious belief system *fundamentally* depends on deliberate human, social action and intent, without which, *no* religion can ever hope to leave its civilizational mark, regardless of its adherents' certainty that they are the exclusive custodians of godly, spiritual truth.

PART TWO
RACE

CHAPTER FOUR
WHAT'S SKIN COLOR "*GOTTA*" DO WITH
ANYTHING? A VERY BRIEF PRIMER-CUM-
ANALYSIS ON RACE AND RACISM

Introduction

Race is ultimately a social construct whose so-called biological manifestations and polymorphic properties are not readily agreed to. It is constantly affirmed in certain enlightened social quarters that race is really only skin deep and that any and all biological understandings associated with it are scientifically imprecise and out of keeping with humanity's genetic identicalness before geographical and environmental conditions introduced phenotypic variations over thousands of years (*e.g.*, Sweet, 2005). According to this mindset, the famous horror novelist Clive Barker (1998) put it especially well: 'Everybody is a book of blood; Wherever we're opened, we're red' (introduction).

Yet history has shown us that race was and is indeed *more than skin deep*; as we have seen in the previous chapter, the color of one's skin, in the burgeoning taxonomical tradition of eighteenth-century naturalist Carl Linnaeus, confirmed in the so-called enlightened European mindset, his or her intellectual, social, and civilizational qualities. It was not mere natural Darwinian coincidence that Sub-Saharan Africans became the slaves of choice for European imperialists; or, why the incoming Boers – a mélange of Dutch, German, and French settlers – eventually joined sentimental forces with the British in South Africa in the early twentieth century, creating a legal system that disenfranchised the predominating *black* Africans (Farwell, 2009); or even why the separate but equal clause in the Southern United States led to the infrastructural investiture of discriminatory black codes collectively known as Jim Crow (*e.g.*, Flynn, *et al.*, 2017). Such historical confirmations of racial inferiority were *unilateral*,

devastatingly imposed by the *white above* on people of color, who were by default considered *lesser-than* in a civilization into which they were, ironically, savagely co-opted.

What, then, led a certain sector of humanity to see it necessary to taxonomize itself as superior while delimiting other human sectors beneath it, instantly creating a racial hierarchy everywhere relative to "Caucasoid" whiteness? It would be safe to say that most of us have no issue with the fact that racism was nothing less than an enduring cornerstone of human global development. Yet some of us would rather not entertain the possibilities that history's *classificatory* schema continues to encroach on the present insomuch as race is concerned. The axiomatic reality behind this denial abounds: "the past is behind us and we are now all equal regardless of the color of our skin;" "there is only one human race;" "stop using race as a *crutch*;" "those who see the workings of race everywhere have a chip on their shoulders;" etc. Such maxims are simultaneously powerful and weak, at once dynamic and inert because within them are couched both ambiguities and hostilities masquerading as facts. The individual who is convinced that blacks only have themselves to blame for their manifold social disenfranchisements and "unflattering racial temperaments" (*cf.* Painter, 2011, 427) is unlikely to consider the other side of the equation, whose adherents are keen, indeed desperate, to highlight and very much challenge both the disturbing ubiquity and damnatory perpetuating histories of institutional, symbolic, polite, personal, and color-blind racisms. On the other hand, the person who blames every hardship on his race-cum-ethnicity, runs the inevitable risk of seeing the *negativity of race* everywhere, even where it "may not necessarily be" (remain mindful of the preceding quote). It may at this point prove effortless to accuse the author of painting a picture premised on a false equivalency, of trying to further diminish the already suppressed certitude that people of color continuously experience social, economic, political, and cultural disenfranchisements; this is not the intention, for as we shall see in the chapter which follows, the author has himself experienced the hard, cold fist of systemic racism and knows what it is like to be rendered invisible or unimportant because of race, widely and damagingly perceived. Yet given the ambiguities undergirding race-talk, notably racially motivated apathy, some could and therefore *would* point out, indeed intellectualize, that the

author did not *really* experience racism, that it was all in his *head*; or maybe *he* was applying race-think to an otherwise racially neutral situation. Consequently, when both sides, for better or worse, perceive themselves to be unassailably right in matters of race and its psycho-trenchant corollaries, there can be no room for negotiation and, in due course, no real earnest push towards rapprochement. The racial dialectic thus becomes angrier and hotter, more desperate and defensive, each side devolving into ever more acerbic and/or righteous resolve.

We begin our analysis by instantiating the three general perspectives of race per Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2018), before exploring from the critical viewpoint of corroborated history, both theoretical and practical ideas of racism open to interpretation and disagreement. The initiatory intention is to create an organic, *objective-enough* basis for the reader to judge the merits of race-think via the three racialist perspectives, some of which have been known, for all of their *organic objectivity*, to exhibit deceptive, disingenuous tendencies between their ideological discovery and their unmistakable outworking; it is not the author's intention to "stuff" unsubstantiated definitions of race and racism down anyone's throat, but to allow the reader the chance initially to either arrive at, or in a trice, confirm their own ideological position relative to race and racism prior to an expressed critical historiography, to which the remainder of the chapter is devoted. It was Bob Marley who sang, 'he who feels it knows', an aphorism which should bode equally as true for those who may not largely be negatively defined by widespread racial perceptions, but who may be able, under the right discursive conditions, to sympathize with the plight of those, it remains to be seen, disproportionately touched and damaged by the so-called *hiddenness* of race and its harrowing considerations and deployments.

In the attempt thereafter to present a critical account of the pervasiveness of race-think, we move from our adumbrated racial perspectives into an exploration of the ideological concept of *somatic norm imaging* and its accompanying tropes as developed by cultural anthropologist of the Caribbean, Harry Hoetink (1967). Here is a concept, it also remains to be seen, that isolates and highlights the ideological shift-cum-continuity within the white body from social and biological markers of superiority to a so-called Platonic truth to be seamlessly emulated by all *colored* others as

the *standard norm* if they ever hope to "make it" in a westernized world neither created, nor arguably, largely sustained with their interests and well-being in mind. From there, the moral and epistemological frames are assessed, frames through which to understand and appreciate the social manifestations of somatic norm imaging; such manifestations are thereafter foregrounded in the context of a globalizing racialism before and after World War Two, a war whose conclusion supposedly resulted in the earnest attempt throughout the West to eradicate racism. Upon reading this chapter, it is hoped that the reader will be appropriately primed for the following chapter which presents a case study of the author's own ostensibly racialist experiences, together with his mediated role in explicating the experiences, as portrayed in the headlines, of other people of color who might well have been treated according to the exudence of stereotypes prompted by intransigent racial perceptions.

Instantiating the Three Major Perspectives of Race

In many ways, race is an extra-terrestrial term not readily compatible with, or applicable to the full spectrum of human delimitation. It may be simple enough to visually distinguish between a black man and a white man, as phenotypically, they are obviously different. If, however, the extent of their difference is meaningfully discerned only through visual means, then our racial recognition is very shallow indeed, especially in this day and age of miscegenation, multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism. Visual racial recognition was more straightforward in a day and age when the color of one's skin codified, *it seemed*, his geographical, environmental origin, and his varying degrees of development. Accordingly, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries especially, whiteness rested at the pinnacle of the human hierarchy, followed by the yellows and browns – Asians and the Indians, with blacks and reds – Native Americans – competing for the "inferior" bottom of the hierarchy (*cf.* Mills, 2014, 26). Visual racial recognition thus served a practical social purpose for those – the colonizers – doing the racializing. Yet just how sensorially pervasive was race and its existential associations?

Was there an enduring existential connection between how a black man looked, the way he spoke, ate, felt, and sounded? Did the five natural

senses naturally and *reliably* unify in their joint declaration of blackness or whiteness? According to the positivism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, one was encouraged to always trust his natural senses, even if these senses were corrupted by the ambition of gluttony, indeed despoiled by the gourmandizing necessary to conquer the rest of the world; it was this sensory truth that devastatingly and indifferently underscored the justness of destructive conquest. When we speak, then, of the ingenuity of man, do we have both a historical moment and an ethnic-cum-racial-cum-gendered paradigm in mind? Do we immediately think about Sub-Saharan Negroidal Africans when the resourcefulness of man is raised, or do our thoughts invariably and subconsciously veer towards a middle-aged to older white man? Why is it that when the *global we* think about aspirational progress, westernized, developed countries usually come to mind? And even if some of us are willing from the outset to include the likes of South Korea and Japan in this pantheon, is this truth not vitiated somewhere in our subconscious certainty that these countries had to become legitimately *western* before they could even be deemed progressive successes?

These questions and many others are answered every day by everyone, *everywhere*, often subliminally. But what tempers the responses to such questions? Why is whiteness still associated with progress and modernity in the simulacrum of the *Global North*, while non-whiteness, predominant in the Global South, is largely perceived as developing and not able to withstand the onslaughts of the modern world without the sustained assistance of the developed? The point is that race amassed importance first as a visual reference inevitably tied to geographic and existential origin; black people were associated with Sub-Saharan Africa, brown people with the Middle East, Northern Africa, and India, yellow people with Asia, and red people with the Americas. All else followed from the visual and what interactions with the same "revealed" about the intelligence quotient of the races. What, however, complicates this argument is the possibility of its determinative inequitable inversion at present to the same effect: for example, are black people "still" considered inferior because of their African ancestral origination or because, simply, they are black? Are Hispanics, a very loose and ambiguous ethnic-slash-racial designation in and of itself, considered inferior because of their partial Native American ancestry, or because of the often-misguided perception that they *cannot*,

given their civilizational development, ever be viewed as white, even if many of them are? It is the author's view that visual representations of the races, both imposed and otherwise, have, in the long run, proven to be more powerful than any theatrically perceived social and/or intelligent condition of the particular racial group in question, statistical or otherwise. Indeed, in the vein of westernized sensory truth, because one is less likely to question what he sees as confirmation of what he was taught to be true, he will be even less likely to conclude on his own that what he is seeing may have come to be via a traditionally skewed, biased, and prejudicial view stamped all over a civilization developed with a particular phenotypical ideal always silently in mind. This is why race, let alone racism is so challenging to truly come to terms with, because those who are convinced that they have, if you will, conquered its vagaries, may not be thinking fully for themselves, instead subconsciously relying on tropes primed by a contemporized, understated, historicized bigotry.

Before any attempt is made to define race and its manifestations, it is important to note that because race is experientially and sensorially determined, thereafter accruing meaning among interacting humans, it is conceptually little more than a social reaction to bodily, polymorphic difference. Simply put, without human interaction, race and its associated understandings would not exist. More on this later. No wonder, then, that our general understanding of race today continues to be scientifically and genetically imprecise. As a *single* human race, we all have the same collection of genes that underwent some variation based on the evolution of our ancient ancestors in different parts of the world over millennia. Such variations were scientifically mis-identified as more than skin deep during the Age of Enlightenment, and were accordingly interpreted in bigoted, biased social code masquerading as hard scientific facts. Yet despite all of the scientific imprecision around race and understandings of it, the negative effects of race are almost god-like in their presence, that is, they are everywhere and nowhere, lending themselves to ambiguous, polarized understandings. For example, some people see race everywhere, while others view those people as race baiters or troublemakers with hefty chips on their shoulders. The ambiguities prevalent within race-think ensure not only the continued relevance of bigoted racial understandings, but of race

itself, which, given its historical development, *cannot* be fully understood uncritically.

There were several problems with the hard science that prevailed throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and which would, in aggregated retrospect, come to be known as scientific racism. As we have seen in chapter three, scientific inquiries and experimentations into race were not legitimized by rigorously tested hypotheses, but in a narcissistic fit of *a priori* aplomb, empiricism was to be trumped by theorizing itself marred by the most virulent kind of subjectivism. This is why eighteenth century German craniologist and anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach was able to confidently, *scientifically*, extend the Caucasian label based on imprecise geography, later affirming that white skulls, notably Georgian skulls, were by virtue of their contouring and angling, superior to, for instance, black skulls that, if anything, more resembled the skulls of apes; or why nineteenth French ethnologist Count Arthur de Gobineau (2013) believed in and propounded that Caucasians were superior to all other races, castigating blacks as stupid and sensual, and yellows as altogether mediocre. Here was the combination of sensorial interpretations and cultural biases together with so-called scientific reasoning, so combined to produce a pseudo-scientific modus masquerading as objectivity.

We have made significant strides in scientific advancement since the dark inegalitarian days of scientific racism, with the current consensus trending towards the now largely mainstream, if superficial, percept that race is less biologically-determined and more of a social construct; in light of this phrasing, an interesting, perhaps counterintuitive question seems relevant at this juncture: why can't race be *meaningfully* parsed through the frame of biology since our concerns with it still seem essentially to lie, firstly, with the corporeal, and then with the ways in which the corporeal may be said to reflect a group's racial abilities, capacities and temperaments (*cf.* Sussman, 2014)? What are we, for instance, to make of the "racial" pattern that blacks are likelier to develop diabetes or whites, skin cancer? Or that blacks are likelier to do poorly on standardized tests as opposed to whites and Asians who tend to do much better? Is there a link, then, between the corporeal, the intellectual, and the emotional? To use a contemporary

example, study after study have shown that African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanic-Americans are likelier to die from Coronavirus than their white counterparts. Certain Americans have downplayed the likelihood that systemic healthcare disparities on the basis of race is to blame for this, instead arguing that if *these people* took better care of themselves they would not be dying in such disproportionate numbers (*cf.* Velez, 2022). From there, the language towards notably African Americans becomes more demeaning to the point where the former are blamed for just about every misfortune that comes their way, either because they were bellicose with the police when stopped, or because of *their* tendency to find themselves in troublesome situations (*cf.* Dilulio, 1996). Here is an imposed, coded, subconscious, *racialist* link between the so-called black diseased body and its equally "pathological" mind. One could argue that this sort of logic is nothing more than a red herring meant both to maliciously delimit our common human genetic pool and steer attention away from social consequences that transcend default human, biological worth, but in this instance gathering their efficaciousness racially. How likely are we to equate and extrapolate white people who have diabetes as diseased both physically and mentally, or level racial innuendo against a black person who developed skin cancer? Many of us nonetheless continue to subconsciously adhere to such an obviously absurd relational logic when attempting to statistically justify the treatment of "miscreants" perceived in quiet yet telling racial terms (Graves & Goodman, 2021).

As human beings we are *all* predisposed to the same diseases and medical conditions, regardless of the color of our skin. Our immunity, or lack thereof, makes us human, which means that our biological makeup, although prone to environmental influences and deleterious habits over time, is internal and anatomical. For example, Nordic peoples tend to have lighter eyes and skin because of generational exposure to cold weather; the sickle cell trait, to quote another example, developed in the indigenous populations of western Africa as the body's way to combat the high incidence of malaria in that region. The fact that we may differ superficially cannot rationally override the scientific certainty, per Clive Barker, that that we are all the same on the inside and don frail anatomies that are exclusively human. While some of us may prove less prone to certain diseases and medical conditions than others, we are all susceptible to

sickness and therefore, inevitably, death. In biological terms, thus, all lives terminate at an equally mortal, morbid place (*cf.* Kendi, 2016).

Despite the pseudo-scientific *racing* of the likes of Thomas Jefferson (*e.g.*, *Ibid.*, part two) and Immanuel Kant (Yab, 2021), among others, bodies differentiated by pigmentation and geography continue to serve the same default human functional purposes. Rather, the will to delimit humanity on the basis of skin color and cultural-emotional output became, paradoxically, an objective hard and social science all onto itself, "rigorously" rendering certain bodies, first, superior, and then later, *more* normal in their functionality than others (more on the ascribed, abstracted normalness of the white body in the subsection which follows). According to Bonilla-Silva, this means that ideas of 'racial' difference are [constructivist] human creations 'rather than eternal, essential, [biological] categories' (Bonilla-Silva, 2018, 8). Constructivism, as concept, highlights the idea that our social reality outside of our biological nature is constructed in line with the institutional beliefs, values, mores, biases, and controls that come as a result of human interaction, in this case, of disparate human interaction. Although constructivism is so ubiquitous as not to be readily recognized, its essence, if we dare to label it such, is culturally relative and hyper-subjective; which is to say, what one culture might see as unassailable truth – God, propriety, tolerance – another might see as unassailably wrong and downright evil. Equally, racial considerations are best understood through constructivist lens prone to viewing racial truth subjectively often in accordance with one's social and cultural orientations. With the foundational idea in mind, then, that race is a social construct subject to the vicissitudes of emotive human interactions over time, let us briefly assess the three major perspectives of race.

The first general racial perspective is fairly young and is becoming more and more popular among certain groups of sociologists. This perspective promotes the idea that because race is socially constructed, it is not fundamental that we analyze it; in other words, race as a scientific category is not real, and '[those] who use the category are the ones who make it real' (*Ibid.*).

There are explicit problems with this way of thinking at the outset. The initial premise that humans are responsible for legitimizing race and racism is obvious enough; however, the second premise that those who linger and dwell on race provides justification for the first premise, and in so doing, both cancels its transcendental truth (humans are responsible for creating race) and presents passive subjective advice (forget about race and you will realize that it has no effective hold on you). It is one thing to accuse someone of "playing the race card," but quite another to willfully ignore the possible effects of race, attributing said effects to phantasmagorical, paranoidal factors. For example, let us posit that a person of color attests to being treated poorly in a public setting because of, in his estimation, the color of his skin; to what extent should we readily believe him? For the empathetic, he would be believed forthwith without even so much as a hint of doubt. However, let us hypothesize for a moment that this person of color was actually initially discriminated against because he entered a public space in an unruly manner, or because he threatened to hurt someone because they were looking at him "funny." Would we – *should we* – really be so quick to judge and convict another of racism even when all of the facts don't comfortably line up or are not convincingly visible? Do we not, as empathizers, run the risk of otherwise neutralizing the effects of racism when we invoke it whenever we feel we, or those like us, without evidence, have been wronged in some way?

With the same example in mind, what if, despite the person of color's behavior, the person accused of being racist towards him was *actually* being racist? In other words, the accused was in some way aware of what he was doing, while being also aware that the person of color's unruly behavior could be used as a smoke screen behind which to racially discriminate against him? It would be difficult to prove the latter example because unless one knew the personality of the accused it couldn't be said with certainty that he was indeed being racist. The first example is much easier to prove, that is, the ease to overlook potentially racist treatment, because strictly in line with visual representativeness, the person of color revealed an unmistakable anti-social character at the outset, automatically eclipsing any associated stereotypical racist treatment that may have been dealt him. Those who swear by this first perspective thus tend to go with what they can see and readily, if inaccurately, prove.

This perspective helps to form the basis for New Racism, also known as color-blind racism – also known as polite or genteel racism (*e.g.*, Burke, 2018; Wise, 2010). A profound ignorance powers color-blind racism, which is to say, there are those who truly believe that race and racism are far behind us, summarily destroyed by the legal interdiction and subsequent tabooing of overtly racist policies, language, and practices. Yet as argued elsewhere, more covert, current forms of symbolic racism, of which color-blind racism may play an enduring role, in many cases cause just as much harm as its more visible forebear because it represents a tacit nod at actual racially discriminative practices that may be counter-argued as the over-productive imagination of people who can't get over the past or, indeed, their current problems (Williams, 2019). As remains to be fully explored, those who subscribe to this racial perspective find it easier to overlook racially-motivated discriminatory actions, which in their selectively constructivist minds aren't really manifestations at all but figments of *those peoples'* imagination – that "those people" is in itself a possible segue into a color-blind trope either latently or perhaps even *unknowingly* racist in its ignorance, or else masking a righteous anger that might actually be motivated by racial understandings.

Far from the first, the second perspective glorifies racial constructivism by analyzing race through suspect statistical and stereotypical gazes. Thus, racial "differences" are highlighted via crime statistics (African Americans/blacks are more likely to go to prison and turn out to be "bums"), academic achievements (Indians/Chinese/yellows/Asians are more likely to succeed academically), etc. (Bonilla-Silva, 2018, 27). This is a very dangerous perspective because of the tendency on the part of its adherents to group and judge phenotypical familiars against often times negative preconceptions. To use an apt straw man example, consider the black man who enters an elevator with a white woman already inside, who then proceeds to clutch her purse all the more tightly; or, in line with our current pandemic, ponder the ignorant "external certainty" that "Chinese people" naturally carry the COVID-19 virus. The stereotypic variations abound: all blacks are dishonest; all Indians smell bad; all Native Americans are gambling drunks; etc.

It has been said that stereotypes exist in part because they are true (*e.g.*, Steele, 2011). In the Cayman Islands, Jamaicans, who are predominantly black, represent the largest expatriate population there, accounting for about an eighth of the total population, not even considering those (like the author) who are of mixed Jamaican and Caymanian heritage. The text entitled *Defining the Caymanian Identity* (2015) offers analytical insight into how Jamaicans are widely perceived in the wealthy, self-sufficient British Dependency, and the suspicion is that skin color and geographical origin inform stereotypes about Jamaicans in that jurisdiction: Elsewhere it has been hypothesized that those Africans who were transported as slaves to Jamaica were of Coromantee heritage; the Coromantee comprised a war-like, "rebellious" African ethnic-tribal group who, it has been proposed, continued their aggressive ways as slaves in the New World, notably in Jamaica (*cf.* Patterson, 2018; Hall, 2007). When it comes to so-called negative, non-biological group traits, atavism – the theory in this instance that certain ancestral behavioral traits tend to reoccur in later generations – very much continues to inhere a stubborn appeal (*e.g.*, Griffiths, *et al.,* 2015).

It is widely known that Jamaica is a struggling nation that suffers from outsize crime in a population of an estimated 2.5 million people. In January 2006, for instance, the Caribbean media dubbed Jamaica, and in particular its capital, Kingston, the murder capital of the world, after 2005 saw more than 1600 people killed—a tally of at least five murders a day. Four days into 2006, thirteen people had already been murdered, but this was hardly anything new for Jamaica, statistically speaking. Between 1995 and 1999, a total of 4,545 people, mostly Jamaicans, were murdered: 780 people were murdered in 1995, 925 in 1996, 1,038 in 1997, 953 in 1998, and 849 in 1999; in contrast, only five people were murdered in Cayman in the same period. Between 2000 and 2001, an astonishing 2,026 murders were committed in Jamaica, a total that '[exceeded] the total number of murders for the period 1960–1974 [, which came to] a total of 1,767 murders.' Trevor Munroe has compellingly associated Jamaica's alarming murder rate with a violently charged culture of dependence on charismatic yet suspect leaders and figureheads, together with political and economic interdependence as this plays out in conditions of rampant poverty. In economic terms, Jamaica has also struggled. By 2009, that country's public debt stood at 131.7 percent of a gross domestic product of $23.36 billion. In real-growth-rate terms, this

meant that Jamaica's economy had contracted by 4 percent that very year. This economic reality, together with a social milieu understood to be bedeviled with criminality and blackness, is likely to prompt a further Caymanian understanding of modern Jamaican existence: where economic opportunities are scarce, people tend to turn to a culture of crime, continuing this culture even when they are living abroad. This line of stereotypic logic seems to drive the tenacious belief of many Caymanians (and other expatriates living in Cayman) that too many Jamaicans will destroy the jurisdiction's prosperity and relatively crime-free, peaceful nature. Crime and poverty thus have become nothing less than terms of recognition when accounting for any and all expatriate Jamaicans as aggressive and the lynchpins for crime in the Cayman Islands. Yet according to certain crime statistics, it is younger Caymanian males who are likelier to commit higher level crimes than any other group (Williams, 2015, 115-116).

Should we readily, then, subscribe to certain stereotypes because they can be statistically manipulated and substantiated, thereafter exhibiting a *natural* indifference for those who are *obviously* social blights, when they are nothing of the sort? When 2020 presidential hopeful Michael Bloomberg (Simpson & Bruggeman, 2020) apologized for his stop and frisk policies towards black Americans during his tenure as mayor of New York, had it really dawned on him that his racial perspective – steeped in stereotypical understandings borne out by the selective use of statistics – was wrong and unjust? Or did he apologize – even in spite of, at the time, having recently justified his mayoral policy – because he was running for president and needed the vital black vote? As we shall see, this is a very complex and difficult perspective to defeat because of its possible basis – for all of its premeditated bigotry, no less – in facticity. In approaching this perspective critically, one need consider, for instance, the Trump Administration's ban on Muslims; was Trump justified? His base, notably his hardline immigration adviser Stephen Miller certainly thought so because as far as they were concerned or aware, Muslims, in their existential angst against the West and America especially, were likelier to become suicide bombers based on past "ethnic" sins (*cf.* Merica, 2017).

We began our analysis in this subsection with the third racial perspective which acknowledges race and *insists* that, like class and gender, race has a social reality precisely because it comes as the result of human interaction. Where the second and third perspectives utilize race-think to varying degrees of ignorance and stereotypical aplomb, the third perspective, it may be argued, both covers and anticipates these perspectives as somewhat disingenuous, despite the heartfelt positions of many of their enablers (Bonilla-Silva, 2018, 254).

If we accept that gender and social class are very real social phenomena, then it would be equally difficult for us to acknowledge that these real phenomena often generate negative social manifestations. Sexism, for instance, is an automatic offshoot of conventional, *socializing* gender-think. Unlike sex, which implicates the genitalia a person is born with, gender is in itself a social construction, so constructed around eventual norms and values that reserve the right to dictate what we now take for granted in our mainstream gendered roles: women thus are to act like women, that is, femininely, and men are to act like men in keeping with their so-called *expected* masculinity. Issues of masculinity and femininity are supported and no less enforced by socially prescribed gender rules. More importantly, sexism seems to represent not an exception when it comes to gender rules, but the norm. Such gender norms have become so internalized and normalized that men especially will hardly notice that they are being sexist because it is "normal" to assume women as the weaker, more incompetent, if *sexier*, sex.

Similarly, like race, one's *social class* is by and large a social construct that serves to reflect power relations, so reflected between the haves and the have-nots (*Ibid.*). Why do those who have, *have*, and why do those who do not have, *don't have*? In this book's first section, we explored the power dynamic inherent in the formation of religion, notably Christianity. There is an accompanying esoterism that marks religious belief, which is to say that as humanity developed socially, a privileged few, either through charisma or sheer will of force, would come to wield authority over the majority, thereby setting the ideological prescriptions and proscriptions both for godly existence and belief – the majority would simply be enjoined as to what and how to believe. Even simpler yet, the elites wrote the rules

underscoring right conduct as a way to both affirm and indefinitely sustain its leadership and ensure conformity, law, and order. Returning to the issue of race, it is beyond doubt that a person's ethnicity and race 'are given further meaning within the context of social class…' (*Ibid.*). This is why those who subscribe to the second racial perspective typically associate, for instance, whiteness with wealth and privilege, and blackness with poverty and crime; or, why those who profess to be color-blind seem not to understand, or *want to understand*, that color-blindness becomes conceptually clearer when its loaded inertia is reduced to its intertwined racial and social features as they silently encourage more covert, symbolic forms of racism. In the final analysis, according to Silva, '…after race…is created, it produces [very] real effects on the actors racialized… [and] normalized as "black" or "white"' (*Ibid.*, 8). It does not matter that race, as concept, can be interpreted as unstable or irrelevant; what matters is that regardless of how much positive change notions of race may undergo, race-think will always and forever possess a changing same quality stubbornly rooted in the sensibilities of its making. Race is *not* dead, neither should it be conveniently reduced to uncritical soundbites based on fast and easy stereotypes harnessed as a means by which to deny its very presence. As a matter of fact, denial and stereotyping form, respectively, the cornerstone beliefs for perspectives one and two, perspectives, it remains to be seen below, that are incomplete given the disjuncture which informs them: This is a disjuncture between the past and the present, between race-think as it was and race-think as it *becomes* subjected to more modern ideologies largely annoyed with race-talk, but whose adherents knowingly, unknowingly, or subconsciously perpetuate its negative by-product, that is, racism.

On our path to bequeathing racism a meaningful contextual definition, ethnicity, in the first place, 'may best be conceived as a set of ideas concerning a group's real or imagined cultural links with an ancestral past' (Bolland, 1998, 7); while social class may be understood to reflect 'social power relations and is a critical determinant of access to social resources, social mobility, social status and acceptance and social identity (*Ibid.*)'. When these terms and their conditioned European meanings and practicalities coalesced in the Caribbean theatre of the New World, the social concept of race – and by association, skin color – was made especially

practical. Often used interchangeably with ethnicity, race may therefore 'relate to large groups of people classed according to common phenotypic features including pigmentation, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, and/or cultural origin or background'(*Ibid*.).

Thus, *racism*, broadly envisaged, is made especially manifest in those actions or *inactions* driven by ideas and feelings indebted to what one might perceive to be the so-called lesser races; such perceptions are typically legitimized according to long standing stereotypes meant to maliciously or indifferently undermine or call into question, another's civilized state. The *inherent, unassailable truth* crouched in such views captures their adherents' presupposition that individuals of the same skin color/shade and/or ethnicity are sentimentally, developmentally, biologically, and socially the same – Put more intimately, the believers of such views have already made up their minds as to the reduced or limited human worth of certain people deemed racially-slash-ethnically different without caring to know them, rapidly increasing the chances of racial discrimination, be it institutional, personal, genteel, linguistic, or otherwise.

The Development of Caribbean Civilization and the Preeminence of Somatic Norm Imaging

Somatic Norm Imaging is an ethnocentric colonial paradigm compellingly exposed by Caribbeanist Harry Hoetink (1967). It would be useful to first offer a brief conceptual breakdown of Hoetink's term before any attempt is made to extend his thesis. Derived from the word *soma*, *somatic* relates to anything concerning the body or the "corporeal." *Norming* denotes the pervasive extent to which something (an ideology, a belief, a custom, etc.) has become normalized or naturalized not only to a way of life, but to ways of seeing oneself in relation to others and vice versa. According to Hoetink thus (xii.),

> [o]ne and the same person may be considered white in the Dominican
> Republic or Puerto Rico, and 'coloured' in Jamaica, Martinique, or Curacao;
> this difference must be explained in terms of socially determined somatic
> norms. The same person may be called a 'Negro' in Georgia; this must be

> *explained by the historical evolution of social structure…[notably during the heyday of colonialism and chattel slavery].*

Implicit in Hoetink's argument is the perception across the colonial New World that whiteness was associated with general notions of human superiority. One may further glean from Hoetink that even in those colonial jurisdictions where a person of color could "positively" pass for white, if and when that person did find themselves in a more racially hostile jurisdiction, meant that he or she could anticipate being thoroughly and odiously stripped of their earlier racial alignment, proof that they were never white *to begin with*. Such a tenuous hold on whiteness by those indelibly touched by at least a single drop of black blood draws attention to how the ideological and physiognomic parameters of whiteness were initially determined and normalized throughout the New World.

Implicating the bio-racial norm of the nineteenth century, Hoetink was keen to foreground the role of colonial socialization towards establishing racial boundaries traversing the racial spectrum, aptly expressed in the 'Norway-to-Nigeria continuum' (*cf.* Sweet, 2005, 59). Even the most casual student of colonial history would readily accept, if with an ironic sense, that whiteness as it existed free from ethnic bearing was widely regarded as socially unassailable during colonial times – first by those of its pioneers who comprised its fraternity, and then by the many non-white *Others* who were subjugated by the former. Yet to understand the so-called superior role of whiteness beyond colonialism, is to be aware of the reality that certain later incoming white ethnicities to the New World, notably the US, the likes of Eastern European ethnics, Italians, and Germans would not initially pass for *American white* for those established "Americans" who had earlier emigrated mainly from England, and by the onset of the nineteenth century had long considered themselves WASPs, that is, *real Americans*. With the passage of time, notably during the lead up to the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and beyond, American whiteness would indeed begin to embrace its multiple ethnic-ness as a way to counter the emergent black power movement. This meant that white groups once considered external to American whiteness would be wholeheartedly co-opted as white on the criterion of their European, Caucasoid origin – the race struggle, after all, demanded confraternity. If whiteness prevailed during

the heyday of colonialism, its subsequent expansion to include other -by then legitimate-if-already-historically-contingent incoming strains of whiteness only helped to secure the norms that whiteness and *only whiteness* could generally possess (*viz.*, Painter, 2011; Sweet, 2005).

On the inverse end of this racializing dynamic natural and endemic enough to colonialism, was the thorough psychological reorientation of those *Others* who could or could not hope to pass for white, but who, to varying degrees would prove indispensable in extending the ideological tropes of white superiority. This indoctrination would have readily been seen in the domestic slave who felt herself better than her wretched field counterparts because she worked in the master's house, a sign, in her mind, that she must have been closer to whiteness in its social dimensions at least. Consider as well, those free people of color who appeared to be mixed race in their appearance. In the French colony of St. Domingue, for instance, although the members of this social class were born free, they were hardly born equal to whites. Yet rather than collaborate with the slaves beneath them, the very fact that these slaves were socially situated *below* them indicated that the free people of color were in crucial ways invested and indebted to a world constructed in the image of whiteness. That many free people of color themselves owned slaves, pointed to their own complicity in what was likely perceived as normative racial disparity; a racial disparity that by virtue of their social and racial superiority over *their* slaves, they should not have *ever* been subjected to – but subjected they were because these free people of color were not considered equals by their white aunts, uncles, and cousins (*viz.*, Dubois, 2013).

Continuing to implicate Hoetink's thesis, ideas surrounding race have remained central to the Caribbean lifestyle as to be ubiquitous. From the author's own personal experience, whenever a fair-skinned person of color attempts to confirm that he is white, the Caribbean backlash is quite rapid and schizoid in its response; some are quick to retort, with a hint of ridicule, that the self-proclaimed white person is anything *but* white, while others, in a burst coloristic thinking, would affirmatively point to the person's "pretty hair" or "smooth features" in a region that is largely of Negroidal racial heritage. From Cuba to Guyana, then, it may be argued that whiteness is, with all the invisible ubiquity afforded by the legacies of

colonialism and contemporary prosperity, often regarded – subconsciously, tacitly, or otherwise, in superior, exclusivized terms. The legacy of colonialism is indeed synonymous with the legacy of racialism, made manifest in one of two ways: on the one hand, this legacy compels some of those who possess lighter skin to see themselves as better than their darker counterparts; on the other hand, however, many darker-skinned West Indians prove just as complicit as their "lighter" counterparts in promoting the superiority of whiteness either in negating terms (*you think you're white but you are not white*!) or affirming terms (*I don't want any black grandkids, I'd much prefer grandkids with "pretty hair" and light skin*). Outside of the earnest attempts to render colonial legacies obsolete, such is one of the general *silent* trends of racialism throughout the multiracial Caribbean (*cf.* Alleyne, 2001; Ashby, 2019; Degruy, 2005).

Yet beyond Hoetink's racial rationalizations, if in conjunction with them, the author is keen to demonstrate that the white body, from which emanated so-called superior human impulses, derived its imperious *raison d'etre* from its self-perceived normalness *masquerading as superiority*. With the perhaps odd preceding premise still in mind, let us consider and subsequently analyze a reworked interpretation of somatic norm imaging: somatic norm imaging may therefore now refer to the inherent *superior normalness* emanating from the white body, an idea initially, *forcefully* spread by Europeans to subconscious, repressive, generational effect (*cf.* Degruy, 2005).

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What does normalness mean, really? Is it normal to eat with a knife and a fork as opposed to eating with your hands? Is it normal to speak in any of the so-called universal languages, especially if you are keen to be widely and readily understood? What these two norms have in common is their intuitive consideration; they are considered normal because we were and are conditioned to believe as such, our beliefs in this regard silently yet surely hammered out from nothing more than invested inheritance. But let us briefly consider the second norm just raised, that of effective verbal communication. It was the insightful Caribbean psychiatrist Frantz Fanon (2008) who would, in the context of colonialism and its dictates in the

Caribbean, reaffirm twentieth century French poet Paul Valéry's declarative of 'language as the God gone astray in the flesh' (2). Valéry's percept is important at this juncture, as any rational unraveling of it will form the conceptual basis for any subsequent philosophical reinterpretation of Hoetink's theory offered by the author.

Everyday communication in our western world seems normal enough: if you cannot competently and/or effectively converse in, say, English (or French, or Spanish, etc.) then life will prove very challenging for you. However, constructed "essences" of abnormality hover around the normalness of language and our *normal* utilization of it. These so-called essences are contingent on, and relative to, our conditioned responses to the practicality that both verbality – in its less offensive sense – and vocabulary are necessary features of everyday life. For instance, although the English bequeathed the Anglophone Caribbean the English language, it is safe to say that it is not the queen's English that is practiced consistently and routinely throughout the region, but creoles, so-called bastardized language forms indebted to the English language but not wholly subjected to it. Some would posit that many West Indians speak, simply, a broken English created by their enslaved ancestors who did not yet have enough access to thorough westernized education, and who were in the habit of combining African, Spanish, and English linguistic elements and patterns in the defining spirit of creolization.

Some are convinced that broken English, like broken French (think Haitian creole), represents, among other things, what is abnormal about West Indian societies. There are well-educated West Indians who audibly wince when an official or high-ranking government official, for instance, takes to a public podium only to "butcher the queen's English." On the other very much related hand, however, many West Indians tend to demonstrate open antipathy towards those who look like them but who speak "properly." Consider the following recount, one of many, observed by the author, where a well-spoken teacher was conversing with a campus auxiliary employee, only for the latter to eventually throw up his hands in frustration before making the snide comment that there was nothing black about the former, given that she spoke "like a white man." What accounts, then, for why certain West Indians either ridicule their counterparts who do not

speak "properly," or else chastise those who speak "properly?" Perhaps the underlying understanding for both perspectives confirms the tacit acknowledgment that to speak properly is considered the norm, even though, to confirm the annoyance and ire of the adherents of the latter perspective, the norm throughout the British West Indies is to converse in broken English. Notice, then, that the effectively applied norm of speaking properly becomes an omnipotent god in the flesh, as it were, no less primed by social conditioning: "I speak better than you, therefore I am better than you – culturally, educationally, economically, etc.;" or, "I detest you because you think that you are better than me because of how you speak."

British West Indians inherited this hierarchical, dualistic way of thinking from the "normalizing" dictates of colonialism, a paradoxical concept that nonetheless reflects our current global reality. With time, those Africans who were forcefully transported to the Caribbean and elsewhere throughout the New World would come to embrace those norms associated with the European modus. To understand the transference of these European norms to the subjugated, consider that the psychological indoctrination of slaves was, beneath the sway of whiteness, profoundly reinforced by the whip and other forms of so-called condign punishment. In other words, Europeans in the New World were keen, via punishment and penalty, on explaining away, say, African religious norms, not as norms, but as abnormal social manifestations of an abnormal, retrograde people. That these colonizers held both a physical and psychological whip over their slaves meant that many, if not most, slaves would gradually come to legitimize *themselves* in relation to their new reality brutally informed by European norms. Therefore, the white male body from which this authority largely emanated, was not superior after all, but merely *normal*, given that European ways, by European standards, were more effective than African ways and thus normal for *Europeans*. According to this logic, Europeans could only be considered superior if those non-Europeans they encountered were, by all practical assessments, *abnormal*. Armed with this devastatingly normative logic, European colonizers were able to justify their enslavement of Africans while defending their subjugation in civilizing terms aptly captured in the idea of the importance of western norms towards, eventually, an optimally functioning, uniformed, *universal* sense of humanity. This is the psychological extent of

the paradoxical legacy left by the Europeans throughout the American place. Here is a legacy that was enabled by Lockean liberalism (Locke, 2010), in which was enshrined the percept that the natural rights of individual men revolved around a collectively subscribed-to natural law. Therefore, all compliant men beneath the intellectual shawl of inchoate liberalism were equal and normal in the eyes of the law – that is, all well-to-do, ambitious *white men.*

The implications of race-think here are so wide reaching and pervasive as to now appear normal in their invisibility and inevitability both. The standards that we take for granted, that silently guide our modern lives, are derived from western norms that once constituted strictures and impositions on the rest of the conquered non-European world. Norms are social features that help to ensure an orderly, civil society. Those who transgress both formal and informal norms are considered, to varying degrees of seriousness, deviants and thus abnormal: from the person who picks his nose in public to a seasoned thief, the contravention of societal norms are tantamount to social sins.

What are the ethical dimensions of these social sins? Who taught us, for instance, to believe that picking our noses in public is wrong? Why is crime, as the word is currently understood, considered a blight punishable by imprisonment or death? Every civilization had its own sets of norms prior to European imperialism, certain of which were universal enough and did not need to be re-learned, per se. For instance, transferable norms associated with crime, economics, social equality, and politics similar, if not superior to European counterparts flourished across Africa, the Americas, and Asia before the European development project became *truly* global from 1492 (*cf.* Graeber and Wengrow, 2021). While European medievalism, in a manner of speaking, bled its denizens ignorant to the ways of the outside world towards the fourteenth century, ancient African kingdoms the likes of Ghana and Mali had long been flourishing on enlightened jurisprudence associated with international trade, military prowess, professionalism, and formal education (*cf.* French, 2021, 17-22); where many would quickly and assuredly excuse away any internally-motivated Sub-Saharan African modernity by the eleventh century, arguing that the Muslims were by then largely responsible for any rapid development on

the "dark continent," they would have indeed missed the point that before the official creation of Islam in the seventh century, Sudanic and Sahelian regions had existed in economic and social sophistication for centuries; the very fact that it was the ninth century Muslims who were responsible for the onset of global trade and the utilization of modern currency – all to which Europe was initially a minor player – shows us that the modern phenomenon of global trade did not begin with the Europeans (*cf.* Hobson, 2004). Similarly, since 400 BCE Confucianism had provided enlightened laws and legal boundaries that rendered ancient China a bona fide developed civilization before Europe was even a concept (Gardner, 2014). Yet the eventual "enlightened" European will to subjugate would serve to introduce the rest of the world to *European* norms indispensably tied to the white conquering body. Norms that came to be considered strictly European would in time expand under the influential sway of the global development project, spanning western-style education, religion, economics, politics, and culture.

European norms were only universalized and "amiably" transferred to the rest of the world after it was deemed necessary by powerful enlightened Europeans – initially via various abolitionist movements that earnestly commenced in fits and starts from the eighteenth century – that the rest of the world was human enough to understand, embrace, and internalize these norms. In time, biased western norms would become universal norms, testament of the systemic, global success of the development project. From globalization with its emphases on technological, economic, and political progress, to French-derived human rights, we currently find ourselves in the era of universalism, said universalism manacled to so-called western-initiated progress and development.

The universal standards that are currently accepted by many as such, are still stubbornly viewed as exclusively white standards, notably – but not exclusively, it should be hastily added – within the ranks of various hyper-conservative movements throughout the west. Bemoaning the blights of multiculturalism, globalization, and open borders, extreme conservative ideologues are anxious to promote the white body and its associated, if at times suspect, globalist accomplishments in normalizing terms, such terms really meant to highlight the *superiority* of white norms. For white fascists

especially, *white* norms will *remain* superior, and thus normal, if they are reserved for whites only, a mindset that explicitly and arrogantly affirms that all of the west's social ills only began when the global north, supposedly in the spirit of righting the centuries of *racist wrongs* encoded into their own norming project, began to invite non-Europeans to its shores (*e.g.,* Wong, 2021). The likes of Stephen Miller and Nigel Farage seem dead set on reversing within their borders, European-derived norms with their emphasis on universalism and cosmopolitanism, instead clamoring, with nary a hint of irony, for a return to the past when America and Britain were for "real" Americans and Britons (*e.g.,* Southern Poverty Law Center, 2022; Tovey, 2021).

To summarize the author's own reworking of Hoetink's somatic norm image percept, there is a very real reason why race continues to matter despite those somewhat idealistic, unrealistic, and/or disingenuous positions that undergird the first perspective on race, that is, notions of race aren't real, and only those who "pull the race card" are the ones who force these fictitious notions onto reality. Although we would readily agree that in many ways history continues to live on in the present, the insidious nature of the beginnings of somatic norm imaging compels a historiographical reorientation through which to highlight the ideological paradigm that although racial views and impositions were plain and unambiguous enough during slavery, such views were nonetheless *everywhere* hidden in plain sight. That the slave knew that he was a slave, while the master would not have been in the habit of questioning, much less doubting his role as *master*, presents us with the historical reality that the master's supposed superiority, as with the slave's supposed inferiority, was plain enough to see. The racial interrelations during slavery were precisely hidden in plain sight because, with time, the non-white understanding of Europeans and their concomitant whiteness in norming terms was no less hastened, enforced, and instated by force of psychological will. In the fashion of the unwitting victims of Stockholm Syndrome, it would become increasingly more difficult to convince the slave and his succeeding free progeny that their African ancestral ways were normal and legitimate before European conquest. As a result, and unless we critically confront the impulses that underwrote any sense and practice tied to existential normality during colonialism, many of us will

continue to openly exhibit the understanding that before westernity was globally introduced, our African ancestors were everywhere in a state of darkness – a state, it has condescendingly been expressed, natural enough for our ancestors, but most abnormal for the Europeans who "discovered them." It is for the reason, thus, of an insidious exercise in racism so seamlessly, "naturally," and "normally" played out during imperialism, that many in the present continue to insist that race does not matter, perhaps unaware that they have consistently, in word and deed – or the lack thereof – fallen prey to the same ubiquitous, normalizing, *norming* exercise on which somatic norm imaging was built, instantiated, and sustained.

The Epistemology and Morality of Global Racism: A Brief Assessment

According to a very accessible source, epistemology, as concept, represents '[t]he branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge, its presuppositions and foundations, and its extent and validity (Dictionary.com, 2021; *viz.*, Audi, 2010).' Epistemology highlights how knowledge – information gained through experience and/or education, firstly, came to be, and secondly, how its legitimacy shaped both its sustenance and rise to facticity. Knowledge need not always be scientific or factual, however, but may derive its validity from beliefs and/or ideas that have survived in perpetuity. Accordingly, every piece of knowledge has an epistemological foundation, least of all racism.

To provide a simple enough analogy for epistemology, consider a two-story building. We may say that the epistemology of the ground floor is its foundation, while the epistemology of the second floor is the ground floor. Without the proven presence of the first floor, the second floor would not exist, and without the foundation, the first floor, indeed the entire structure in question, *could not* exist. Likewise, knowledge as we understand it has an indispensable foundation aptly represented in the accreting legitimacy of ideas, beliefs, and understandings over time. What, then, is the epistemological basis of racism? What streams of knowledge coalesced towards racism's supreme functionalism before yet other forms of knowledge would challenge this very supremacy?

According to certain sociologists, modern racism with its debilitating, disenfranchising features did not always exist or, at the very least, such features were not always socially explicit (*cf.* Heng, 2019; Allen, 2012). Although slavery existed over the course of the ancient era, it was not an institution epistemologically based on pigmentocratic understandings and ideas: the color of one's skin did not crassly determine his or her place in society; rather, it appears that ancient slavery flourished on the criteria of conquest, indebtedness, and various contingent perceptions of socio-cultural inferiority (*viz.*, Finley, 2017). The Israelites were enslaved and/or exiled by the Babylonians and Egyptians, not because they were *racially lighter* than the latter groups, but because of those groups' manifested will to power. In a world of enemies and competitors, ancient slaves simply constituted the "powerless losers," whose ethnicity broadly perceived would eventually lend itself to their *perceived* inferiority. Where, for instance, the Israelites would become natural slaves through Egyptian eyes, those Greek slaves that were ethnically similar to their masters were deemed slaves by matter of their *social* status. Although chattel slavery existed in Europe from as early as the sixth century (Walvin, 2018), it was the chattel slavery that commenced in the fifteenth century that would both unearth and no less globalize the modern vagaries of race. Antedated slavery thus was largely based on the forfeiture or the semi-forfeiture of one's freedom on the grounds of conquest, indebtedness or social-cum-generational standing (Hezser, 2006; Vlassopoulos, 2021).

When social standing and ethnicity and their conditioned European meanings and practicalities coalesced in the modern world, notably the Caribbean theatre of the New World by the late fifteenth century, the social concept of *race* – and by association, skin color – was made especially globally practical. Warnings have repeatedly been sounded by a number of social and cultural theorists that the racism concept was strictly a nineteenth-century creation and thus cannot epistemologically apply to the preceding centuries. On the contrary, the author has elsewhere argued that polarizing racial considerations, and thus racism, *did* exist prior to the nineteenth century, if not in those precise descriptions, and very much constituted European ideas duly acted upon towards the creation and sustenance of a very real imperial reality (Williams, 2019).

The enactment of discriminatory, racially-prescribed legislation throughout the Caribbean from the sixteenth- into the twentieth- century should alert us to the continuous legal fact of discrimination on racial grounds. Although the influential eighteenth-century thinker Immanuel Kant confirmed a single human race, he further forced the race concept into the burgeoning epistemological correctness of the day by extending a race consciousness which stressed that racial and biological disparities and inferiorities were based primarily, although not entirely, on skin color, ethnicity and phenotype; in other words, Kant]might have implied a belief in a single, *singular* human race, but, by his own admission, this race was not comprised of equal *sub-races* (*cf.* Mills, 2005, 25). Therefore, and despite the relatively different interfaces and interrelations of ethnicity, economics, and social class throughout historical New World societies especially, their common denominator often boiled down to race and ethnicity, precisely or imprecisely defined and/or perceived.

The Portuguese were the first modern Europeans to penetrate Africa south of the Sahara, namely West Africa. Before their incursion into sub-Saharan Africa towards the mid-fifteenth century, both the Portuguese and the Spanish had been long familiar with darker-skinned "Africans," namely the Maghrebine Berbers – also known as the Moors – who had immediately originated from Morocco and other parts of North Africa, and who wielded hegemonic and political control over much of the Iberian Peninsula for the better part of eight hundred years to 1492. It is true that between the birth of Islam in the seventh century and the commencement of the Great Crusades spanning the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, immense swathes of the European mainland were being fought over by Christians and Muslims. There must have been some sort of awareness between the two formidable factions of their superficial pigmentocratic "differences," allowing nonetheless for prejudicial reactions to eventually play out along cultural, ethnic, and then empirical lines; the conquering Muslim Ottoman Turks, to cite a revealing widespread perception among modern-day Turks, were, after all, just as "Caucasoidal" as their Christian enemies, even if whiteness as a racial category did not yet exist at that point in history (*cf.* Ergin, 2018; Allen, 2012).

Nonetheless, Portuguese advent into Africa below the Sahara brought the former face to face with a race of men never before encountered by Europeans. Initially, the relationship between the Portuguese and sub-Saharan Africans was not based on ethnic differences visually perceived, but instead inhered a mutual economic benefit. A similar logic of encounter applied to the English after they too found themselves in western Sub-Saharan Africa in the sixteenth century (Thornton, 2012). Like the Portuguese, the English were initially eager to trade with the "natives" in this region. According to Winthrop Jordan (1968), 'the early English descriptions of West Africa were written by adventurous traders, men who had no special interest in converting the natives to Christianity' (7). Thus, Africans, or Negroes, were not prejudged as slaves by Europeans initially, but were simply seen as another sort of men (*Ibid.*). Yet as the likes of Spain, England, France, and Portugal began expanding overseas from the late fifteenth century, sub-Saharan Africans and their inevitable connection to "blackness" would take on a new derogatory meaning (*Ibid.*).

Namely, then, the sub-Saharan's color, his dress – or, rather, the lack of it, and his manner accounted for the change in perception towards him in the context of global European expansion. Well before the color of one's skin took on a destructive derogatory connotation, by the late fifteenth century the concept of blackness was already loaded with ingrained values, especially for the English. These ingrained values including dirty, evil, cursed, sinful, etc., were then humanized, indeed anthropomorphized, and used to devastating effect against "black people" primarily as a way to seamlessly justify their intellectual inferiority, in addition to affirming the fact that their brutishness as beasts of burden meant that they *deserved* to be enslaved (*Ibid.*).

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Implicating the moral boundaries of racism as it informed chattel slavery, consider that morality was then, and indeed remains, a relative term. Our secularized moral sense has been legitimized by the wide-ranging practical, ideological philosophy demarcating good from evil, while calling for the need to strive to be "naturally" good. There is nothing natural about morality and its evolutionary path if we abide by Thomas Hobbes' Social

Contract (*cf.* Hampton, 1989). According to Hobbes, and later John Locke (*cf.* Simmons, 2016), before the emergence of modern societies, humankind was everywhere in a state of nature. A brief observation of a pride of lions or a herd of gazelle would yield the understanding that natural existence is instinctual and not in keeping with the rationalism that arises in a sustained sentient social condition. A lion will attack a deer purely out of instinct, its instinctiveness serving both to slake and necessitate its basic need. The lion may be guilty of premeditated malice as it plans to subdue its prey, but it cannot be found *socially*, morally guilty of the same because its actions are motivated by its natural, feral proclivities; as if to say, lions kill because in their state of nature it is instinctive and thus natural to kill.

So, too, according to Hobbes, were natural humans beyond the coercive punishment of the state because in *our* state of nature, the state, for all its marvelous array of legal codes and instruments, did not yet exist. Abiding by Hobbes rhetoric, like the lion, the human being as yet untouched by the saving graces of civilization, killed, maimed, and undermined out of instinct. In typical Hobbesian expression, life in this state was therefore destined to be 'nasty, brutish, and short', an altogether incompatible criterion with the mounting quality of human sentience (*cf.* Hampton, 1989).

As they evolved intellectually, humans would come to see their natural condition as unsatisfactory and counterproductive, out of keeping with the social potentialities of a self-correcting sentient species, instead using their natural state as the crafty means by which to escape what they were beginning to understand as condign accountability. Yet if humanity was really keen to eventually escape the caprices of its Hobbesian existence, then its members had to surrender their natural rights like murder and theft to a higher, for Hobbes, enlightened despotic power in which was vested official adjudicating and retributive powers relative to any and every arising conflict between humans – that is, the state. Acting on behalf of its enabling denizens, the state's power now extended to converting natural actions into legal breaches. Thus, where once murder among humans would have been deemed instinctual in a state of nature, under the auspices of the state, murder in its degrees and levels of premeditation, would be judged and punished accordingly. At the heart of any secular modern sense

of morality thus was situated a reciprocal relationship between the people and the state for the expressed purpose of prolonging the people's lives via the state's protection and mediated judgment.

Morality is best construed as a social construct premised on the impulse of rationality as it radiates reason and logic. As we developed socially, so too did we develop the intellectual capacity to move beyond narrow thinking concerned only with our own natural urgency to survive. Thinking that was directed inward was accordingly expanded to cover disinterested notions, that is, ideas 'not solely influenced by considerations of personal advantage' (Oxford Dictionary, 2021). As certain members of the human race began to think about the state of our species and the various inequities therein, rationalism would evolve out of its normally, *naturally* selfish motivations into, among other things, moral considerations possessive of a more, if you will, civilized selfishness; after all, it was considered moral to own African slaves if enslavement meant liberating them from their barbarous state, testament both to the relativeness of the moral concept and the codified legal certainty of this relativeness, itself mired in entrenched notions and practices of injustice (more on this below).

The great American and French revolutions, together with what some were beginning to consider the blight of chattel slavery, would prove philosophical flashpoints for an ever-widening, if imperfect rational-moral awareness in the works and ideas of philosophers like Jean Jacques Rousseau, Guillaume Thomas Francois Raynal, Voltaire, Denis Diderot, among others. Writing in the eighteenth century, and notwithstanding the fact that he ultimately regarded black people as stupid, Rousseau, for instance, extolled the virtues of modernity with its rational emphasis on individualism; he implicated that without residential freedom and good governance, societies would continue to be plagued by domination and oppression, superlatively manifested in the savage presence of both slavery and the enslaved (*viz.,* Boxill, 2001). Elsewhere, Rousseau's fellow Frenchman and contemporary, Diderot, considered in many circles as the founding father of modernity, would find himself temporarily imprisoned for his liberal stance on toleration and prejudice, graphically conveyed in his expression that 'man will never be free until the last king is strangled with the entrails of the last priest' (Hamowy, 2008, 125). Here was an

inchoate moral sense advocating for human equality and liberty via the destruction of, respectively, racist and classist privilege; although at times betraying the racist thinking of the age, such high caliber thinkers seemed keener yet to eschew the natural vices of human oppression for the inchoate virtues of inalienable human rights.

The aforementioned philosophers were reacting to a putative moral sense with its couched emphases in divinity, science, and oppression, and were therefore regarded by the elites and other status quo brokers as rabble rousers. Indeed, the morality undergirding human oppression was determined and enabled by realities and ideologies that revealed its so-called necessity. Africans and the white European masses, respectively, fit the necessities of racial and social oppression because of their social standing within the civilized order. Race and social standing thus played integral, outsized roles in the European moralization of inferiority. If anything, the rational-cum-moral impasse between an emerging liberalism and an antedated obscurantism revealed that morality was not unchanging, instead developing and unfolding according to the *zeitgeist*, indeed the overlapping, conflicting zeitgeists under which it developed. It was for overlapping zeitgeists fundamentally opposed but oddly complementary, that those Europeans who wished to, were able to comfortably continue to "kill two birds with one stone," as it were, enriching themselves on the backs of "inferior" Africans, well after the fact of chattel slavery, on the moral grounds that they were really introducing African natives to the vital civilizing forces of Western religion and education (*cf.* Taithe, 2009; Swartz, 2019).

Consider the following cosmopolitan rationale for racial inferiority/superiority by the father of modern moral theory, Immanuel Kant, writing in the eighteenth century: 'So fundamental is the difference between [the black and white] races of man…it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in colour…[there is thus]…a clear proof that [anything] a Negro says is stupid…' (Kant, 1960, 113); Kant's contemporary, Scottish philosopher David Hume, concurred in as many words: 'I am apt to suspect the negroes and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than

white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation' (*cf.* Klein, 2018). Implicating Kant's suspect cosmopolitanism, the present author has elsewhere expressed (Williams, 2019, 172):

> …*Kant…pushed for, in a most ethnocentric sense, a hope unabashed in its philosophical reach and quite applicable in its universality. Despite…palpable contempt for people not of European stock, the trajectory of [his] words reserves a timeless, transcendental character which can – in line with universalist [moral] notions of social justice compliments of John Rawls – be channeled in such a way as to eradicate any discriminatory motivations [this]…supremely middle-modern [philosopher] might have had in mind.*

Within Kant's cosmopolitan law was nestled the almost prophetic percept that human rights extended well beyond citizen rights. Citizens' rights were limited because they only applied to the citizenry of a particular country and not, say, a brief visitor to that country. Therefore, Kant is to be credited with introducing the powerful idea that regardless of where humankind lived, the same body of rights ought to equally apply to any- and everyone deemed human. Kant however did not mean for such ideas to be extended beyond the so-called white race, which by virtue of *its* progress and talents would end up as the only surviving race (*cf.* Mills, 2005, 169-193); although it is likely that Kant did not have this in mind, his ideas here seem at present to appropriately apply to the overarching ethnocentric understanding that all other races, if indeed they could, would have to *assimilate to whiteness* if their members wished to erase their racial taint throughout which innate barbarity bloomed and thrived.

We are only able to excise Kant's racism because of the timeless, transcendental compunction of his cosmopolitanism which may be interpreted universally and well outside of his racist, segregationist predilections. Yet in implicating Kant's racism we are led to his understanding, via the mediated words of Charles Mills, '…in which he was keen to demarcate and theorize a color-coded racial hierarchy of Europeans, Asians, Africans, and native Americans differentiated by their degree of innate talent' (101). Talent, or mental ability, for Kant, naturally guaranteed the moral purity of whites 'above all other creatures', followed

by the yellows, the blacks, and the reds. The Kantian view of skin color thus worked/works to socially, morally, and rationally define the relationship between skin color and the 'unchanging moral quality' of any and *every* race (*Ibid*). Such was the progressive moral justification for sustaining modern civilizations manacled on enslaved labor of some sort well into the twentieth century.

History is Dead, Get Over It! Shifting Ideologies of Race and Racism(?)

According to Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2018), 'subscribing to an ideology is like wearing a piece of clothing: when you wear it, you also wear a certain style, a certain fashion, a certain way of presenting yourself to the world' (77). Accordingly, ideological identification, among other things, is built on linguistic manners and rhetorical strategies, tools that provide tangibly identifiable outlets for ascertaining one's ideological position. Yet what are we to make of those collectively subscribed-to ideologies that, by all outward linguistic and rhetorical appearances, go through rapid, diametrical, epochal change only to end up, ostensibly, where they originally started? What, morally-speaking, rendered it necessary for these "ideological wearers" to first agree to change before opening up themselves to dramatic, drastic ideational change only to turn their backs on themselves, as it were? In terms of social interaction and the ideological norms and values brought to bear on it, the slavery era was a less complicated age than the succeeding periods. As we saw in the previous subsection, it was considered and widely accepted in genteel social circles that Africans and Native Americans were inferior, which voided the imperative to talk about these groups 'behind their backs' for fear that they would take offence. Where racism was concerned, the colonizers could not be construed in the least as ideological hypocrites; they approached slavery and their enslaved corporeal property in a 'straightforward manner' (*Ibid*., 66).

By the dawn of the twentieth century, New World blacks, in no way free from the institutional grab of racism, were still being viewed by the "orchestrators of western civilization" through derogatory lenses. This meant that western ideas about black people had changed little since the

Middle Passage through to Emancipation throughout the nineteenth century. If anything, European attitudes towards blacks especially had 'hardened' (Heuman, 2009, 119). We should perhaps look to the abolition of slavery as the basis for this hardening. In the British West Indian theater notably, abolition was followed by apprenticeship, a labor program meant to prepare former slaves for absolute freedom by, among other things, conditioning them to anticipate the various social and economic obligations and duties that accompanied freedom. According to the conventional wisdom of the age, former slaves, by virtue of being slaves all their lives, were in no way ready to conduct themselves as free agents as they were not by then aware that certain responsibilities and obligations accompanied freedom. The law thus was subsequently revised to allow for their apprenticeship which many historians agree was just another form of slavery meant to compel former slaves to continue to work – *like slaves* – for their former masters-turn-employers (*e.g.*, Besson, 2002; Bolland, 1997; Twaddle, 2013). Legal redress for the former slaves was virtually impossible as they were forbidden from leaving their employers, that is, their former master's property at any time without expressed permission. Furthermore, in the burgeoning age of global capitalism from the early- to mid-nineteenth century, any wage that these apprentices were to receive was only calculated, with callous ethnocentric indifference, after working in excess of a 45-hour week; expectant of remuneration, apprentices obediently submitted to a work week in excess of 45 hours only to be later told that their "earned" wage had already been deducted towards their lodging and provisional expenses. It is no wonder, then, that apprenticeship came crashing down in the British West Indies in 1838: apprenticeship did not look like freedom to its coerced membership, reminding them too much of slavery. Keen to put bondage behind them, the apprentices fled the plantation complex in droves, in large part precipitating apprenticeship's collapse (*e.g.*, Williams, 2013).

Former apprentices in the British West Indies continued to resist what they perceived to be their *continued* subjugation. As such, racial disturbances throughout the BWI were usually of a physical nature, as the former slaves remained without political voice, despite comprising the demographic majority. Yet by choosing to understand the black masses as combustible men and women acting out their innate barbarity and ungratefulness, the

upper planter class in the British West Indies failed to see that they themselves, by the very suppressive tactics they employed, were largely responsible for the "combustibility" of their former slaves (*Ibid*.).

Issues that encouraged rioting during the immediate post-emancipation period were essentially prompted by the continued apathetic hostility meted out to people of color by the lighter upper crust of West Indian society; the latter remained convinced that their diminishing economic footprint was attributable to the collapse of slavery in general which in turn led to the unfavorable revision – in their minds – of the sugar duties act in 1846, which removed preferential treatment of British West Indian sugar from overseas British markets in favor of freer and fairer global trade (Curtin, 1998, 157-164). Former slave masters did not even stop to consider that the revised sugars duties act underscored a necessary epochal shift in the protectionist atmosphere that defined the merchant capitalism of the slave age, instead choosing to scapegoat their former slaves for their cascading economic woes. The lack of empathy on the part of the wealthy would only ensure that blacks continued to be regarded as existential blights. Regardless, the hardship of the black masses and their combustibility went hand in hand, a combo directly applicable to their treatment by their "social superiors." Thus, the problem of low wages and dirty, unhygienic living conditions; declining economic output; the constant fear of re-enslavement; the desire for land; the fact that blacks did not have a political voice; and crippling taxation; here were problems generated by racial disparity and ethnocentric recalcitrance (*e.g.*, Heuman, 2006, 120).

Conservative English intellectuals like Thomas Carlyle and James Anthony Froude were, by the 1850s, rigorously detailing the inferiority of black men and women. For instance, Carlyle's essay entitled 'Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question' (1849) made clear in so many words that blacks were *tertium quid* – an intermediate sub-human species – and should have never been given freedom because that concept was of little utility to them given the extent of their savagery and thus the necessity that they continue to be controlled; to demonstrate the underlying extent to which nineteenth century Eurocentric biases and pejoratives spanned the political spectrum, even the influential liberal philosopher John Stuart Mill, who claimed to

detest slavery, nonetheless generally viewed non-Europeans as trapped in a perpetual state of nonage (*cf.* Varouxakis, 2017). James Anthony Froude (2011), whom the famed Charles Dickens would have readily agreed with (*cf.* Finnis, 2020), extended the general Europhilic rhetorical stance: his central thesis was that the Negro population in the West Indies was incapable of making progress, except under European laws, education, and authority. In justification of his argument, Froude pointed to the Haitian Revolution. Regardless of the fact that the blacks had driven the French out of that island, they did not have the wherewithal to progress, and thus they had no civilization beyond what the Europeans had earlier given them. Froude, it seems, was incapable of connecting Haiti's economic failure with the western resolve that the hemisphere's first black republic *remain* a pariah state; Haiti, as a result, was effectively locked out of the global economy and its copious dividends, despite surreptitiously trading, to its continued meager survival, with the US and Britain well into the 1860s (Geggus, 2014).

The arguments for the reintroduction of flogging for British West Indian blacks in 1854, entailed the construction of a more overtly violent and dehumanizing racist ideology in which black people were marked out not just by their passivity but also by their brutality and lack of civilization. This ideology amassed even more power in the wake of the Morant Bay rebellion in 1865, a rebellion sparked by the building anger among Afro-Jamaicans who were convinced that they were being sorely mistreated by their colonial government and former slave masters (*cf.* Paton, 2005). For the conservative leaning *Times* in London, the Morant Bay Rebellion demonstrated that it was 'impossible to eradicate the original savageness of the African blood' (Emsley, 2005, 91). Therefore, during this phase of Caribbean civilization, and well into the 1950s, violent repression became necessary – even moral – because it was considered that the black masses were well outside the boundaries of humanity – blacks weren't properly human, and their barbarity and savagery thus had to be driven out of them at all cost – prison sentences meant to rehabilitate them following the collapse of apprenticeship was, for those still invested in slavery in some form, nothing more than wishful thinking by idealistic penal reformers (Paton, 2005).

The changing-same sentiments towards blacks were no different throughout Latin America and the United States following the emancipation of slaves in these regions. In the 1890s, many of the records of Brazilian slavery, for instance, were destroyed in a fit of abolitionist enthusiasm, and the subject of slavery subsequently underwent sanitization with the help of suspect travelers' accounts and, later, a government policy bent on whitening Brazil by inviting Europeans to settle there. 'It has also been said that in Latin America there was the tendency to promote a gradual achievement of freedom, more so than in the British West Indies' (Davis, 1966, 224); yet if this was really so, why did slavery end *later* in much of Latin America than the British West Indies? In Brazil, for instance, slavery ended in 1888, while in Cuba, the same continued to 1886. In Argentina, slavery was abolished in 1815, yet the former slaves there were still held in oppression and could only hope to win their freedom if they fought in this or that independence war for their white beneficiaries. As a result, the Afro-Argentine population that once predominated became a gruesome casualty of genocide by war (*cf.* Alberto, 2022). Furthermore, although Simón Bolívar, liberator of Spanish America and founding father of Bolivia, assured Haitian president Alexandre Pétion in 1815 that he would free all slaves in Spanish America if Haiti gave military support, slavery would not be abolished in the Republic of Colombia, where Bolívar was president, until 1854 (Arana, 2014).

Similarly, when African-Americans received their absolute freedom in 1865, they thought that they were well on their way to becoming equal citizens when the federal government officially initiated the Radical Reconstruction of the American South in the form of the Freedmen's Bureau Bill and the expansion of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 (which was earlier vetoed by democrat President Andrew Johnson) 'declared that all persons (except Indians not taxed) born in the United States were now citizens without regard to race, color, and previous condition' (Lowery & Marszalek, 1992, 105). The Radical Republicans thereafter promised every former slave "four acres and a mule." The democrats, however, were dead set against the social and economic betterment of African Americans. President Johnson, the nation's first president to be impeached, felt more sympathy for his white brethren who had suffered because of the dissolution of slavery, and

set himself against any federal bill that aimed to secure the rights of African Americans at, perceivably, the former's expense. Although the Freedmen's Bureau helped to establish black training schools and colleges, the legislation ultimately failed to bring blacks and whites together in any meaningfully peaceful way and was eventually terminated in 1872 (*e.g.,* Kendi, 2016).

The Civil Rights Act of 1866 was ultimately ineffective in securing the newly won rights of African Americans. The Ku Klux Klan undermined the Act by waging an intimidation campaign against African Americans throughout the south. For instance, those African Americans who could vote were intimidated and physically abused at polling stations. Elsewhere, African Americans who were qualified for certain jobs were not even considered by white employers. In contravention of the Civil Rights Act, no codified federal penalties were imposed on those white Americans who undermined the civil liberties of their black counterparts. Additionally, African Americans had no real legal recourse by which to challenge their daily discrimination; the Civil Rights Act, crudely put, was nothing more than a cruel joke.   As such, in the racist, changing-same ideological fashion, Radical Reconstruction (1865-77) failed African Americans who were eventually barred *en masse* from voting because they couldn't read or because they didn't pay taxes or own land, or because their grandfather couldn't vote. By 1898, a unique Separate but Equal legal system, known as Jim Crow, was well entrenched in the South but sentimentally practiced in the North, as well (Flynn, *et al*., 2017).

Lest we think that this changing-same ideology regarding black people was merely a byproduct of the western hemisphere, we need only afford a cursory historical glance at the sovereign development of South Africa. The first Europeans to settle in what is presently known as South Africa were of substantively Dutch origin; subsequently, they worked to develop a subsistence way of life. Eventually labeled the Boers or Afrikaners, these white settlers saw the surrounding native Africans as inferior nuisances and had no compunction seizing their land. From 1652 to 1795 the Boers maintained their independence until the British captured the region in the latter year, declaring it a British colony. Consequently, many British planters and entrepreneurs settled in South Africa and stamped their

British style of enlightenment on the Boers who in turn came to detest British rule. The Boers were especially incensed with the British for absolutely abolishing slavery in 1838, and with their way of life in jeopardy they moved farther north, establishing their own states. On May 31, 1902, the Peace of Vereeniging was signed by the British and the Boers, bringing the Second Boer War to an end. This treaty implied that Britain would allow the Boers to govern themselves as long as the latter remained loyal to Britishness; the contingent clause in the peace treaty that covered the "necessary" inclusion of the voting franchise for black Africans was never earnestly considered by the signatories. On May 31, 1910, the dominion of the Union of South Africa was established, achieving republic status 51 years to the day on May 31, 1961 (*cf.* Meredith, 2008, part xv).

By 1910, the Union was united in its hatred for black Africans, thereafter developing discriminatory racial laws and policies continually aimed at "keeping the natives in their place." Indigenous Africans who represented 70 percent of the population, did not have the right to strike or hold skilled jobs; they could not vote; their movement was controlled, and they could not leisurely venture into white neighborhoods. They were also condemned to living in unsanitary, blighted townships. Racial discrimination became a legal institution in the Union of South Africa and by 1948, Afrikaners – white South Africans – sought to tighten their control on blacks through the official introduction of the apartheid system. Apartheid was necessary because many Afrikaners were appalled by the trend, flawed and inconsistent as it was, towards racial equality throughout the British Commonwealth. This necessity fed into the fact that most Afrikaans, many of whom were Christians with bigoted views no less backed by the official church of that country, saw themselves as the master race and thus had to protect their power and way of life. By 1978, apartheid was the order of the day throughout the Union; black Africans could not mingle with or marry whites; they had their own sub-standard communities and townships which they could not venture out of without state permission; and they had no political rights whatsoever. If nothing else, the preceding paragraphs demonstrate that even well after slavery had become a "global" transgression, western ideological tendencies towards blacks had changed little, if any (Gordon, 2017).

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Continuing along this subsection's thematic path, by the late nineteenth century, globalization had begun, as never before, and for better or worse, to bring certain nationalities together in the name of some sort of collective progress. During the 1880s, the developed world experienced an especially severe economic depression. This development drove many small white planters in the Caribbean to the brink of bankruptcy as they could no longer secure long-term loans, together with the fact that the regional economies were failing due to a systemic lack of demand for Caribbean sugar. Between 1880 and 1924, *every* Caribbean plantation economy had been experiencing severe depression. The sugar crop had failed to secure healthy global demand, a failure which in turn led to heightened poverty and rioting among the colored Caribbean masses. The modern Caribbean Diaspora locates its beginnings during this economically challenging time. Wealthier Caribbean traders and businesspeople were the first to take advantage of a newly introduced 'safety-valve emigration' policy that had been reluctantly introduced throughout the BWI. Eventually, this policy became known as voluntary emigration, and many well-to-do West Indians found themselves on steamships headed for Boston or New York. However, for West Indians of color, any voluntary emigration in the early years was only voluntary to a limited extent: with the declining demand of British West Indian sugar from the 1880s (in the face of the rising demand and supply of beet sugar that could be cultivated at less of a production – not to mention transportation – cost in mainland Europe), 'British West Indian contract labor was recruited all over the Western Hemisphere, especially in South and Central America (Benn, 2004, 14).

Encompassing the Great Depression, which escalated over the course of the early 1930s, the second phase of the Caribbean diaspora, like the first, occurred during lean economic times. In 1921, the international price of sugar plummeted further, a phenomenon that hastened West Indian emigration. In America, for instance, vicious anti-immigration sentiments thereafter became commonplace among established Americans who resented the massive influx of "other" nationalities and ethnicities (Italians, Greeks, Chinese, Haitians, Jamaicans, etc.). As such, in 1924, America's immigration policy was revised to reflect obvious discrimination against

Asians and dark-skinned people especially who had kinship ties in the US; the US National Origins Act of 1924 'promulgated a discriminatory national quota system for such incomers – limiting the number of immigrants from any country to an annual quota based on the number of nationals already in residence in the US in 1920' (*Ibid*.).

Venezuela, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic also followed America's lead, heavily restricting the incoming flow of darker West Indians who had previously been "welcomed." Haitians and Jamaicans were especially targeted in these countries, many of whom were forced to return home and join their impoverished, unemployed brethren (*Ibid*.). With the exception of the oil-related industries in the Netherland Antilles and Trinidad, and maritime-based occupations afforded by incoming American-cum-multinational fruit and shipping companies, there were virtually no long-term employment opportunities for the average West Indian at this time.

Between 1945 and 1962, and indeed beyond, contemporary globalization became an entrenched global institution, and with it came, supposedly, a new "globalized" way of thinking based on equality and opportunity. During this period, mass emigration from the Caribbean to a variety of European countries with colonies in the Caribbean spiked, commencing the Windrush generation in the context of British emigration (Matthews, 2020). The overwhelming influx of incoming West Indians, Pakistanis, and Indians into the UK set off a vicious wave of anti-globalizing racism based primarily on the British fear of groups of people hitherto regarded as unfamiliar, dirty, and inferior. As a result, in 1962 Britain virtually terminated its open-door policy to the residents of "darker" commonwealth countries' (incoming Australians, New Zealanders, Afrikaners, and Canadians were not affected by this policy) with the introduction of the hyper-discriminatory Commonwealth Immigration Act (*Ibid*.).

In the bid to provide the previous paragraph deeper context, After World War Two came to its bloody, holocaustic conclusion in 1945, a new ideology based on fairness and egalitarianism seemed on the cusp of being fully realized in the form of UNESCO's *Statement on Race*, first published in 1950, and which enshrined the ideal that there was only one, *equal* human race.

Yet any drive to human equality did not suddenly become fact; rather, the intensifying conditions of hardship and western-led tyranny on the ground throughout the so-called Third World resulted in subaltern nationalist movements – the Third World masses would begin, simply, to fight and agitate for their human rights per UNESCO's promising statement. Indeed, the financial hardship especially felt by people of color throughout the Caribbean together with the emergence of a new indigenous political elite keen to buck the dictates of British colonialism contributed to the birth of Caribbean nationalism. Furthermore, the publication of the damning findings of the Moyne Commission in 1944, sent to the British West Indies in 1938 to take stock of why the economically oppressed masses were rioting, worked to shatter, somewhat, preexisting norms concerning the blight of the black race throughout the BWI (*cf.* Williams, 2019, chapter three).

Yet despite the growth of a Caribbean nationalism based substantively on an emerging subaltern political voice, together with the intensified celebration of one's history and race following a war that, if anything, highlighted the despotism of colonial rule, the new Euro-American globalized ideology was anything but egalitarian for people of color both inside and outside the Caribbean. Before Britain reversed its generous immigration quota in 1962, vast numbers of West Indians flowed into that country secure in the knowledge that a better, fairer life awaited them. However, they came face to face not with endless job opportunities or benevolent Europeans who everywhere meant them well, but with the loud wall of racism. Many Britons, especially the English, took to the streets to protest the incoming black-cum-brown wave, and West Indians, among other incoming ethnic groups, were actively and passively discriminated against at every turn. What exacerbated this situation both within and without the Caribbean was indeed the very contradictory nature of this new egalitarian ideology, a contradiction of which its privileged signatories seemed to be blissfully unaware; because such an ideology was understood to be promoting egalitarianism and fairness, it should have been accompanied by a necessary provision automatically making allowances for local discussions about race and racial equality – a provision that was tellingly absent. In other words, race-talk progressively became taboo throughout Europe, without any prior, officially earnest acknowledgment

of Europe's abiding contribution to a racially uneven world. Black and brown people who thus engaged in race-talk were seen as troublemakers and further castigated and demonized as a result, hearkening back to the earlier ideological identification of Europeans as they sought to blame black and brown people for everything that was wrong with the societies in which the latter predominated (*cf.* Gilroy, 2006).

If anything, Europe's "fresh" new anti-racist ideology promoted a two-tiered socio-racial system – or more importantly, extended it in the developed world. Nestled on the first tier were European, American, and Caribbean whites, many of whom were unreflexively quick to consider themselves as progressives who had long moved away from the despotic ideologies associated with ethnocentrism and exploitation. Yet their actions, underhanded *inactions*, and thinking towards blacks, mulattos, and Indians revealed that many of them were still functioning within the parameters of an ideology at the very least friendly towards racial discrimination. The relevant question at this point seems to be, to what extent did this new ideology ultimately rest on an older entrenched racist ideology, if within a new "democratic" framework?

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The proposal is here made that an older racist ideology very much continued to empower an emerging globalist awareness, a dynamic borne of contradictory impulses, and which may be assessed through the idealistic theoretical frame of *Racial Democracy* as its adherents ineffectively, disingenuously, and/or unsuccessfully militated against the pre-existing *National Race* ideological frame (Bolland, 2014).

In theory, Racial Democracy does not celebrate the importance of race, but rather upholds the tenet that the legal, *de facto* equality of the races will likely result in the very erasure of race, thereby giving voice to an ideological position that provided the moral face for a new emerging global [non]racial awareness led primarily by the West. The potential dilemma within this ideological position, however, is that it can emit contrails of jingoism and racism, thus possessive of the latent abilities to provoke racial considerations rather than banishing them, much less in the name of a new,

as yet unproven racial ideological movement with the very weight of bigoted history against it. Indeed, the self-described progressive, antiracist westerner who secretly and not-so-secretly complains that his prosperous country has been overrun by new foreigners while chastising the latter's retaliatory race-talk may be said to be operating, not according to Racial Democracy theoretically understood, but instead within a masquerading conservative, exclusivist nationalist mindset.

We may here look to Cuba in our bid to map the inevitable failure of Racial Democracy from its inception as an exemplary and commendable idea to its cannibalistic tendency to eat its own principles in the wake of World War Two. Cuban, liberal nationalist, and white man Jose Marti was convinced that the elitist white and near-white Cuban upper crust had to stop seeing itself as better than the "colored" Cuban classes if Cuba was ever to achieve a meaningful independence from Spain. In 1893, Marti wrote, 'Man is more than white, more than mulatto, more than black. Cuban is more than white, more than mulatto, more than black' (Benn, 2004, 33). Yet although Fidel Castro was finally able to render racism illegal in Cuba shortly after he came to power in 1959, his vision of *Racial Democracy* has ultimately failed because 'there has been the tendency to soften the Afro-Cuban identity by presuming a mulatto or creole national cultural identity' (Hansing, 2005, 153; *cf. Berg, 2005*). Not only is it difficult to legislate against certain long standing matters of the heart, notably racism, but when a societal order is consumed with first negating and then supplanting-cum-softening blackness with "better" ethnic and cultural alternatives, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to pinpoint the efficacy of Racial Democracy and its accompanying tropes.

Although idealistic in its original focus, Racial Democracy is in many ways a paradoxical way to view both race and democracy: as a natural by-product of racial considerations, racism can only be reasonably understood as the foil of democracy and equality generally and jointly perceived; in other words, coexistent racism and democracy are polar opposites, automatically canceling out any earnest push to a well-honed *democratic* will inn a so-called democratic context nonetheless aswarm with underlying subversive forces. In a world driven by ethnic understandings themselves strengthened by ideas of racial and cultural superiority, Racial

Democracy will invariably bring perceived, *existential* racial disparities into focus. Such disparities, as we have seen throughout this primer, are nothing more than social constructions created on the back of stubborn, imposed racial perceptions about the majority of the world's population, which is non-European, non-white, and developing. Such understandings all the more enable and legitimize insidiously silent dog whistles that are utilized at present when negatively labeling brown and black people (*cf*. López, 2013). The *Racial Democracy* framework, despite its powerful ethos, has, in documented practice, only *helped* to enforce and harden pre-existent non-white/white stereotypes at the expense of non-whiteness.

This is why inherently contradictory "democratic" notions of race from the vantage point of the privileged race continue to define racial relations in parts of the developed world becoming *somewhat hostile* to globalization (*cf*. Stiglitz, 2003). On the one hand were traditional Europeans who were convinced that people of color were making things hard for everyone by continuing to see skin color and race. Instead of taking advantage of the opportunities that "sacrificial *whitedom*" had made for them, here they were hung up on race and screaming discrimination at every turn. It is the author's contention that this European rhetorical position was purely ideological and enabled, not by Racial Democracy, but within the National Race paradigm which actually fuses race and nationality into a seamlessly natural relationship primed by notions of patriotism and mentalities that promote identity politics (*cf*. Jardina, 2019).

It was the promotion of National Race that resulted in Adolf Hitler's Final Solution, but the rest of the west, ideologically, was in no better a place than pre-World War Two Germany, Japan, or Italy. Notwithstanding debilitating Jim Crow legislation throughout the American south, the United States had also been embroiled in its own eugenics program beginning in the early twentieth century and constitutive of the forceful sterilization of hundreds of Californian inmates and other undesirables deemed unworthy of procreation (Lombardo, 2011, 2022). Across the British and French empires, too, colonial subjects languished under virtual reigns of dictatorial terror justified as necessary tutelage towards the latter's modernization (Mansfield & Pelham, 2013). To quote another relevant example, the Mad Scramble for Africa from the 1880s, which

marked Europe's second wave of imperialism, also demonstrated the European *Darwinian* disregard for Africans as sovereign peoples with all the relevant rights thereto. Instead, the Europeans with an unnerving sense of "civilized calm" carved out their national spheres of influence across the African continent according to *their* terms, ratified at the Berlin Conference between 1884 and 1885. Therefore, European conquest of various African countries worked to silence the legitimacy of Africans, further extending the dichotomous, miserably one-sided culture clash: if you were African then you *could not* be European (*cf. Ibid*.). Perhaps white American doctors had a similar idea in mind, when in 1932, as Hitler was set to take the reins of power in Germany, these doctors conspired to withhold vital information from hundreds of their impoverished syphilitic African American patients, in effect signing the latter's death sentence (Jones, 1993). A distinctly *Western* ideal that explicitly and/or silently nodded at the unassailability of National Race had existed since the days of New World imperialism and colonization, but, in light of our recent arguments, would by the late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century take on a more urgent, latent potency when those who were the cynosure for western civilizational disdain were "allowed" to live in the west. Having never been honestly confronted and arrested in the essential spirit of UNESCO'S human rights declaration, this ethnocentric disdain was "allowed" to fester in silent clamor as many of the first Caribbean migrants to Britain would, over the ensuing decades, see their fragile human rights blanched away by an abusive British government, in unconstitutional, brash acts of executive sabotage that only came to revealing light in 2018 via the outed Windrush scandal (*e.g.,* Gentleman, 2021).

Conclusion

It is widely agreed that the post-World War Two era ushered in a new age of enlightened thinking, but as demonstrated in our most recent assessment, people of color still largely fell on the margins of such burgeoning liberal frames of thought. In light of the human atrocities that had been waged before and during World War Two, people of color were indeed considered by Europeans and Americans, but it turned out to be a secondary, somewhat indifferent consideration that made it possible for racial discrimination to continue and virtually impossible for people of

color to meaningfully speak out against this racism where and when it proved necessary to do so. Many ordinary working-class Europeans especially could not at the time see that the nature of this new ideology was substantively static when it came to people of color, because here was an antiracist ideology erected around old intransigent racial stereotypes. Not surprisingly, both Europeans and creolized whites were nonetheless keen to push this *antiracist* ideology because it at once represented change and progress, and if people of color could not see this, then, they were the problem, not the incongruous ideology these custodians of whiteness had decided to hypocritically don. This sort of rhetoric generally allowed many whites to *appear* to be racially benevolent while silently perpetuating a centuries-old system of racial oppression.

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After witnessing the glistening horrors of World War Two in France, influential Martinican psychiatrist Frantz Fanon (2008; 2005) would go on to aver that, if anything, the end of the second Great War had brought a renewed *imperial* dedication to the cause and support of racism and colonialism as opposed to their annihilation at all cost. It was while Fanon was at the University of Lyons studying psychiatry not five years after the war that he would come to appreciate the power of everyday tacit race-talk in rendering people of color invisible at best or worthless at worst. Yet did this absolute subversion of blackness really amount to the civilizational failure of the black race or else the 'modern collapse of reason and history into all things European'? (Lewis, 2005, 2). The ready and cocksure European response to this insidious question, based on centuries of "perfected practice," no less, indeed confirmed and reaffirmed in the European mind the necessity, practicality, and reality of the racial fringes. Fanon would come to realize that longstanding ideas and ideals surrounding race, privileged whites who had previously successfully globally promoted themselves, inclusive of their accomplishments, first as superiors and then, aggregately, as constitutive of the global norm to be pursued and attained.

After his doctoral studies, Fanon would serve as the head of the psychiatric department at a hospital in French-controlled Algeria. Algeria's colonial

situation confirmed for Fanon more than ever the chasm that existed between the first and third worlds. As the Algerian Liberation Front fought furiously for its country's liberation from France throughout the 1950s, Fanon found himself veering away from Francophilia towards Algeria's independence cause. His revised doctoral thesis, which was earlier published as *White Skin*, *Black Masks* had perhaps become of piercing significance for Fanon in the moment of his decision that he would do everything in his power to fight the dictates of colonialism with its rooting in racism. In this seminal work, Fanon systematically lays bare the dissociative effects of colonialism on the psyche of the colonized black man especially. During his time in Algeria, Fanon would write three follow-up books, notable among them, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1966), which was a searing indictment of colonialism and a call to arms against its tone-deaf dictates. Important to note is that while Fanon's ideological transformation was being completed, the west was also proclaiming, in its paradoxical way, the ills of colonialism, giving voice to the so-called imperative of global egalitarianism.

To what extent have we gotten over the more pressing racial issues of Fanon's day? We know that the likes of Jamaica and Trinidad were able to secure their independence from Britain in 1962, joining the swelling ranks of newly minted, sometimes struggling, independent nations throughout Asia and Africa that were once colonies. America and Canada have also made great strides in the project underscoring racial equality. Supposedly embracing the mantle of racial diversity and equality, Canada would, via its Multiculturalism Act of 1988, be officially designated a multicultural nation, its government keen to invite the brightest and best of the Third World to its chronically underpopulated "Great White Northern" shores. From the passage of legislation meant to desegregate the school system in 1954 to the civil rights and voting acts by, respectively, 1964 and 1965, people of color across the US were finally, arguably, given the legal recognition as citizens and the rights thereto. After almost three generations of systemic racial terror, South African Apartheid would also be banished in 1994, leading to the so-called racial liberation of the black majority, whose current standards of living remain well below their fellow white countrymen and women (Desai, 2002).

Many of us undistinguished by race would be quick to point out that people of color have come a long way since the miserable years following World War Two. The now independent peoples of the Third World have made commendable advances, at least according to various political, economic, legal, and social indicators. However, that many in the west have expressed their continued concerns with the path to racial equality, arguing, *inter alia*, that those who traverse this path do nothing more than demonize all whites, a pressing question indeed remains despite humanity's cogent awareness of historically-motivated racial matters: to what extent does the stubborn potency of race-think continue to lend itself either to the disenfranchisement or the disparagement of people of color *anywhere* in the world? Utilizing his own experiences in England and the Cayman Islands, and relying on prominent headlines and appropriate academic theories, the author considers this very question in the chapter which follows.

CHAPTER FIVE
RACIST OR NOT, HERE I COME: A PERSONAL CASE STUDY

I wish you would stop talking about race so much, sir…if not, where and when does it all end?

-Student

In your mind, you want to say to yourself, 'It happened because I'm Black,' and then you don't want to be that petty. You don't want to be that small. You don't want to really believe that people's thinking is really [on] that low of a scale…

-wrongly accused African American male

I grew up and presently reside in the Cayman Islands, a prosperous British Overseas Territory that needs no budgetary assistance from our *mother*, Britain. I am from Jamaica originally, but at a very young age left the country of my birth, ancestry, and ethnicity for the Cayman Islands (Williams, 2019).

My ethnicity and race, together with the full gamut of their representations and perceptions followed me and my family to the Cayman Islands. Native Caymanians, I should here note, are predominantly mixed between European and African ethnicities, with phenotypic features ranging from Negroid to Caucasoid and everywhere in between. The Caymanian admixture has largely resulted in a more "lightened," "whitened" phenotype. It is this phenotypic reality, discussed extensively elsewhere, that has led many native Caymanians to the view that they are in crucial ways, *different* from the rest of the Caribbean (*cf.* Williams, 2015).

For my doctoral studies, I interviewed two hundred such native Caymanians. I derive my overarching criterion for determining a native Caymanian from noted Caymanian public intellectual and historian J.A. Roy Bodden (2007), that is, as anyone who can trace his or her ancestry in Cayman going back at least three generations on either side or else both sides of the family. My intention was to get an idea of the degree to which these Caymanians viewed the significance of slavery throughout their ancestral history. Without fail, all of those interviewed, save ten, confidently responded that slavery was not an important social feature in the Cayman Islands between 1734 and 1835 – it was in the latter year that slavery-cum-apprenticeship was completely dismantled in the Cayman Islands (*Ibid*.). Those who assented to this view were aware of Bodden's arguments. In short, Bodden avers that slavery was not particularly of institutional importance in the Cayman Islands since slaves there barely outnumbered their masters anywhere between a "negligible" 8 to 6 percent between 1802 and 1835 (Bodden, 2007, 9-11; Williams, 2015, 20-25). This understanding, he arrived at comparatively; in other words, slavery should not be considered significant in the historical Cayman Islands because slave numbers there, unlike in Jamaica, were tied both to a diminished racial ratio and brutality quotient. In Jamaica, the severely mistreated slaves outnumbered their masters by situational ratios ranging anywhere from 10 to 1 to 100 to 1, while in Grand Cayman, slaves were treated comparatively better, with a general black-white ratio in favor – or *condemnation* – of a slight enslaved majority (*Ibid*.).

Bodden ties the foregoing idea to the fact, in his mind, that slavery was not a debilitating social handicap in the Cayman Islands, further confirming, without corroboration, that slaves and masters were likelier to have worked together in a spirit of collaboration given the material and financial hardships that defined historical Caymanian society (Bodden, 2007, 12-15). Yet without ever truly acknowledging that the chattel slavery concept is itself ingrained with default disenfranchisements that accompany such social features as rightless-ness, infra-humanity, etc., Bodden goes on to render his argument ultimately inert by choosing instead to define historical Cayman society as a pigmentocracy, a term popularized by the late American historian Frank Tannenbaum, among others (1992). A pigmentocracy, as its name attests, occurs when the color of one's skin

determines his or her place within that society. If historical Cayman society was hierarchized according to race and racial considerations during slavery, why would pigmentocratic understandings somehow override the significance of slavery itself in this context?

Bodden's understanding of slavery as it unfolded in the Cayman Islands thus appears at once counterintuitive; as if to say, slavery was not as important in the Cayman Islands when one's skin color, by Bodden's own chosen taxonomy, determined his social inferiority or superiority which would have been borne out by the very practice of slavery in that jurisdiction. Those native Caymanians that I interviewed agreed with Bodden perhaps because it was more expedient for them to do so in light of their current economic situation; put another way, *Cayman could not have been a true slave society considering both our mixed racial makeup, together with our present economic prowess; after all, we are not experiencing the political, civil, and economic hardships of a Jamaica or Guyana, proof that those countries are still dealing with the legacies of slavery* (*cf*. Williams, 2015).

This view is somewhat shortsighted in its general haste to affirm that the legacies of colonialism must always manifest themselves in overly visible, garish, nationally-incompetent terms especially. How are we to interpret the likes of Singapore or South Korea, now independent countries, that were once insignificant feudal societies under the tutelage of colonial powers before local autocrats, with western help, took the reins of power, but who were determined, through sound fiscal policies, to transform their erstwhile colonies into developed nations in their own right (*cf*. Yew, 2000; Kim & Vogel, 2013)? When faced with this argument, those Caymanians that I did interview slightly changed their reasoning to nonetheless reflect the same conclusion they had arrived at in the first place. Jamaica, many of them further argued, simply was not ready for independence in 1962, invoking the late Michael Craton's posit that just before Jamaican independence, many prominent white and near-white Caymanians were voicing their own racist fears towards British Jamaica, Cayman's apathetic overseer at the time, implying that Jamaica was too black and un-western to maintain independence (Craton, 2004, 321). From there, the interviewees went on to support the necessity of Cayman's continued voluntary

connection with Britain if the Dependency's inhabitants wished to remain prosperous – *unlike Jamaica*.

The aforementioned positions, arguments, and counter-arguments betray an ideology substantively motivated by race and its entrenched considerations and effects. The subconscious motivation behind this contrarian Caymanian way of thinking likely points to the indispensable role that race played throughout our ancestral history. Indeed, the current certainty that slavery did not matter in Cayman is critically, *essentially* at odds with the legacies of slavery that were tellingly visible throughout the first half of the twentieth century and well beyond (Williams, 2015, chapter four). In my attempt to highlight the treatment that I would receive in my adopted home throughout my upbringing there, native Caymanians did not need expatriates to introduce them to race and its associated understandings, practices, and disenfranchisements. Well before the advent of globalization and multiculturalism in the early 1970s, native Caymanians of all racial hues were well acquainted with the fact of racism, both in word and deed (*Ibid.*). Although F.R. Fyfe of the British-led Jamaica Secretariat would, on his official visit to Grand Cayman in 1886, state that Caymanians appeared altogether united in their goodwill towards each other, nothing could have been further from the truth, at least in racial terms (*Ibid.*). I have elsewhere provided evidence which confirms that although life was typically financially difficult for most Caymanians in the late nineteenth- into the early to mid-twentieth century, racist considerations continued to *color* the civil society of those islands (*Ibid.*). Miscegenation might have been commonplace, but this did not diminish the thrust of prejudicial ideas and confirmations erected around age-old racist, colonial stereotypes emanating from the institution of slavery *in situ*. There is *post-slavery* evidence of racially segregated Caymanian communities in favor of well-to-do white and near-white Caymanians; of entire districts being labeled as *nigger strongholds* relative to those more racially affluent communities and neighborhoods; of white-slash-near-white Caymanians throwing away their drinking glasses that Afro-Caymanians had imbibed from; of white Caymanian sailors not being able to sympathize or empathize with their black and mixed-race counterparts on the high seas who were often forbidden from eating with white sailors, and who were often referred to, with great variance, as 'stupid West Indian

niggers' by their white commanding officers and fellow sailors alike (*Ibid*.). The point is, when I was routinely being referred to by white and mixed-race native Caymanian kids as an "ole black Jamaican," "black ching-ching," or "burnt out frying pan," such references were nothing less than enduring, *learned* expressions stemming from a racist legacy with its rooting in slavery (*Ibid.*). When my mother was privately labeled a *nigger wench* simply because she deigned to sit in a front pew of our church normally reserved for a prominent white native family, this incident occurring in the mid-1980s, this utterance was not the work of corrupting foreigners, but of a primordial historical understanding presenting itself in situ and enlivened by ethnocentric, native, *racist* outrage.

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The racism apportioned to me and my family, did not in my mind, comprise systemic racism although such bigotry possessed the necessary properties and impulses that could have well coalesced into the inevitable enough beginnings of systemic racism. Those who stood guilty of racist antagonisms directed at me and my family did not in the moment of their offensive expressions actually or generally disenfranchise or deprive us of our nonetheless almost nonexistent civil rights as foreign-nationals under Cayman law as it then benightedly stood – Cayman would not receive a ratified bill of rights until November of 2012. Unlike those people of color who are, for instance, unfairly and overly profiled at airports, or denied access to a public space or funding for no other reason, seemingly, than the menace or antipathy the color of their skin might represent, the brand of racism that I experienced growing up in the Cayman Islands was more cultural, interpersonal, situational, and reactionary in nature; here were Caymanians, both young and old, who saw fit to verbally react to skin color based either on a perceived slight on my part, or, simply, on what they would have understood to be my negative racial difference, an understanding shaped by centuries of racialized legacy and social conditioning.

Nativized racism in Cayman, at least as I experienced it, was more linguistic and reflexive in its appearance than it was *necessarily* institutional. However, any meaningful application of Critical Race Theory

beyond an antedated nativized Caymanian racism to include Cayman's new multicultural reality would likely lead to the confirmation that institutional, systemic racism does exist in the jurisdiction at present. There is a wealth of evidence, both anecdotal and corroborating, with which to suggest widespread employment discrimination on racial-slash-ethnic grounds, readily representative in the expatriate or the native Caymanian business manager-cum-owner who might justify denying employment to a qualified Caymanian or Jamaican on the grounds of associated racist-cum-ethnic stereotypes. Such justifications-by-stereotype span sentiments that Caymanians are too lazy, to Jamaicans are too aggressive and "hard-headed," to Filipinos are too passive aggressive and standoffish (see table on page…). Sentiments of this nature are both further complicated and somewhat legitimized when placed against the prevalent enough anecdotal "fact" that certain younger, largely unqualified Caymanians especially deem certain jobs below them and would rather go unemployed until they find the "right" job; this particular sentiment has contributed to the slow-roasting stereotype of Caymanians as entitled, under-educated, and undeserving (Williams, 2015; Bodden, 2007).

Institutional racism-cum-ethnic prejudice across the private sector notwithstanding, there is also evidence of systemic discrimination, of which ingrained racial considerations may well play a part, throughout Cayman's largely black and brown civil service, which is comprised mostly of Caymanians, new and native alike (Klein, 2021c). Upper management positions, according to certain Caymanians, are too often given to "hyper-experienced" white expatriates who are, by a legal rule of thumb hazily outlined, expected to lead a succession plan concluding in a Caymanian successor (*e.g.,* Klein, 2021b). However, succession planning has, with garish frequency, proven a futile exercise, with expatriates continuing to indefinitely hold high management positions justified by the quick, rote defense that those Caymanians qualified for such positions are really not experienced *enough* (Williams, 2015). This issue becomes all the more vexing for many native Caymanians especially when the expatriate manager in question becomes eligible for Caymanian status, is granted the same, and is thereafter able to downplay any obvious systemic discrimination in which he centrally figured. There is emerging evidence with which to suggest that more qualified native Caymanian civil servants

are being placed in top brass positions; yet, in testament of the slow-roasting Caymanian stereotype expressed recently, the pushback remains that these token Caymanians are hardly qualified for such positions and that it will be just a matter of time before they inadvertently expose their gross incompetence (*cf. Cayman News Service* Staff, 2022b).

To the extent that racially motivated discrimination in Cayman can be defined as socially *institutional*, I would expect this description to readily reveal itself along intersecting lifeways (religious, social, corporate, cultural, etc.) that highlight the very social disparities inherent in multiculturalism (more on this in the final section). Social institutions are entities that occur because of human interactions, be they disparate, unbiased, or a combination of both, which in turn leads to established systems of beliefs built on hierarchical understandings, racial and *otherwise*. Regardless, beyond such disparities one would be hard pressed to define manifested racism-slash-ethnocentrism as straightforwardly, *systemically* institutional in nature in terms of schooling in Cayman. The visible self-segregation that occurs in Cayman on the basis of race and ethnicity is telling enough (Williams, 2019, chapter three), but no black child, for instance, will likely be barred entry from what many native Caymanians would consider a "white" private school solely on the basis of his or her skin color; expatriate children are not typically allowed to attend public schools in the Cayman Islands by way of a controversial statute perhaps inhering its own xenophobic sensibility (*cf.* Bodden, 2007), which means that racial considerations would not disproportionately affect expatriate or native children of color who must attend school and who are able – save having to attend another private school before they are able to get into their oversubscribed school of choice – to attend whichever private school they like; all of this, of course, notwithstanding the racial harassment that some of these children of color may well face once they *are* admitted to the private school of their choice. Implicating the likely existence of institutionalized racism in Cayman's private schools, an eight year old black student confided in me that a white fellow student of Irish descent once confronted him on the playfield before proceeding to inform him that he 'was allergic to black and brown people'; an adult observer would later confirm the account. In yet another private school, a black teacher recalled being called a "ching-ching" to her face by a twelve year old white student of British

descent who was in the habit of "regularly" using the same epithet to describe other black students. Other former students of this or that private school have gone on to recount not feeling welcomed by other white students and teachers alike, convinced that their treatment was based on a longstanding bias itself mired in certain racial stereotypes. While not exhaustive, such accounts begin to point us to two substantial social issues at play in some of Cayman's "finest" public schools; first, there is evidence of the very real ways in which certain students are regarded in the minds of other students with a clear-enough racist bent triggered by what could have only been years of social-cum-psychological conditioning; and, secondly, many students of color that attend or attended private school have somewhere along the line formed the traumatizing perception that their inequitable treatment in certain scholastic situations came as a result of the biased social narratives ostensibly encoded into their very pigment.

The foregoing train of thought, inspired both by Bodden's own views of the modern frontier society (2007), together with my anonymous conversations with a wide cross section of represented ethnic groups in Cayman, has led me to the general conclusion that certain members of *every broadly* represented ethnic and racial grouping in Cayman are likely in some way to express their prejudice through daily slights including, but not limited to, not returning a greeting to someone of a different race or ethnicity, mentally dismissing a stranger out of hand simply because of her accent, race, or ethnicity, or else exhibiting a calculated indifference to racial-slash-ethnic difference (Williams, 2019). The abiding dilemma here however is that it is difficult to prove racially-motivated intent in such slights and any subsequent unfolding conflict becomes further lodged in tacit, defensive annoyances supposedly free from racial and ethnic considerations, when in many cases, such considerations may well prove the stubborn driving force behind one's disparaging cognizance of some of those "not like him." This leads to my follow-up conclusion that racism in multicultural Cayman is itself situationally institutional – an outworking of the natural, dare I say prejudicial tendencies along the spectrum and institutions of humanity, at times intersecting and interacting with the forces of coexistence in such a way that invariably leads to the disenfranchisement and/or disparagement of certain ethnic and/or racial groups. What I like to call subtle race-think, together with its harrowing,

often not-so-subtle consequences and manifestations, is very much alive in Cayman.

Relative to the systemic pull of racism in Cayman, I should hasten to note that anecdotal references are frequently made by certain Caymanians of color with reference to either wealthy white Caymanians or white expatriates, who the former feel have done everything in their power to ensure the continuation and exclusiveness of their whiteness and wealth. This distinctly folk understanding places Cayman in the same category as its Caribbean neighbors. Folk understandings associated with racial considerations throughout the British West Indies were developed out of the enslaved-slash-colonial experience as it would have been substantively characterized by the reality that people of color comprised the demographic majority. By contrast, during the "colonial era" in the United States, slaves never outnumbered their white masters, although slave numbers were particularly concentrated throughout certain southern states and cities (Paquette & Smith, 2016). The fact that slaves outnumbered their masters in the Caribbean, even Cayman, made it likelier that many more of these people of color and their progeny would have eventually westernized, internalized and, in their liberation from colonialism, no less than perpetuate the ideals of their erstwhile masters as the now bona fide leaders of their society. In the American place, whiteness remained firmly in charge, further consolidating its hold on black Americans following their emancipation from 1863, a state of affairs that pointed to the likelihood of deepening systemic racism perpetuated by a power structure at times trying to extricate itself from its own racist ideas and understandings, but ultimately failing to do so given its default genuflection to bigoted perceptions masquerading as unassailable norms. In the Caribbean, on the other hand, people of color would seize the reins of power, in effect continuing the racialist legacies of colonialism now masquerading as "raceless" features of good governance and civility. Our tendencies in the Caribbean to, among other things, continue to demonize homosexuality, legally and morally discriminate against Afro-Caribbean religions, and demonstrate an underlying preference for western ways, articles, and products, are *colored* by our colonial traditions in which bigoted positions were, sometimes through the percept of Christian righteousness, justified and normalized.

Both Caribbean and American racial situations return to the same place, that of the inescapable measure of racial inequity in some form or fashion: in the American place, racial inequity continues largely to play out vertically and percipiently between whiteness and other racial groups (*cf.* Stanton, 2020), while in the West Indian context, as the -now "masters" of our own sovereignty, we nonetheless unwittingly continue to be guided by a colonial legacy in which race and its considerations continue to influence our thinking in some way (*cf.* Africa Son, 2018). Many West Indians, it has been argued elsewhere, continue to betray the racialist thinking of a bygone yet everywhere-interrelated era premised on the implicit will that western ways are superior, while eastern and/or southern equivalents are to be at all cost eschewed for their negative retrograde, anti-progressive properties; race and ethnicity are indelible, indispensably conceptual components of this wraithlike mindset (*cf.* Bizumic, 2018). As a point of clarification, I am not saying that progressive western ways are inherently bad; instead, I am trying to draw attention to the normalized way of thinking that automatically separates eastern and western ideals, to the point where just about everything associated with westernity, including the antedated, cruel practices of indoctrination linked to colonialism, becomes unassailable, incorruptible positive streams of subconscious truth both onto themselves and in relation to the whole that is global progress.

To substantiate my preceding train of thought relative to the ubiquity of race-think in the British West Indies, consider the Afro-Caribbean mother who too often encourages her black daughter to marry someone lighter so as to have "prettier" offspring; or yet, the educated British West Indian who castigates as backwards a fellow national who cannot properly speak the English language. What, as well, about those West Indians who continue to demonize Afro-Caribbean religiosities associated with Obeah, Santeria, and Vodou, arguing that these convictions are anything but religious, but are instead precisely demonic because of their sacrilegious divergence from a faith – Christianity – whose unassailable "deistic truth" is directly tied to its historical and global relevance and ubiquity? Despite the promotion of the universal egalitarian ideal, many of us continue to wittingly and unwittingly enact hierarchical understandings on ways and conditions considered anterior to progress.

In light of the predominance of people of color in the British West Indies, the leaders among which, arguably, are keen to improve the economic and political lot of their respective populations, any recurring generationally-perpetuated bigotry in this creolized space – save the visible enough fact that it is the region's minority white and near-white denizens who continue to hold the majority of its wealth (*e.g.,* Thompson, 2015) – may at times present itself institutionally, ideologically, and interpersonally, therefore existing systemically. West Indian racism with notable reference to Cayman is only meaningfully introduced thus through the understanding that people touched in some way by colonial legacies are likely to harbor and perhaps subsequently express their learned ethnic biases towards people different from them – regardless, ironically, of the prevalent miscegenation habits that can and indeed do typify the interactive realities on which multiculturalism is built (*e.g.,* Sloan, *et al.,* 2018).

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Notwithstanding my brushes with nativized racism growing up in the Cayman Islands, I would not truly appreciate the grand western thing of systemic racism until my time as a postgraduate student in the United Kingdom, where I lived for the better part of four years, first in the northern industrial city of Manchester, before relocating to the more tranquil, idyllic Midlands town of Coventry to pursue my doctoral studies. Admittedly, I was a bit apprehensive as I anticipated my move to the UK. I read up on the strained nature of race relations in that country that had resulted in a number of high profile racially motivated murders of black men in particular. Mindful of the especially brutal unprovoked racially motivated murder of Anthony Walker on the streets of Liverpool in July of 2005 (*e.g.,* Hattenstone, 2020), I declined a very generous scholarship from the University of Liverpool, deciding instead to complete my master's degree in postcolonial history at the University of Manchester, blissfully unaware of that city's stature both as a hub for systemic racism and extreme right-wing identity politics (*e.g.,* Pickard, 2015; Gouk, 2017).

My year in Manchester opened my eyes to the tone and texture of modern systemic racism. In what was a particularly garish episode teeming with racialist overtones, I clearly remember walking back to my residence from

a mid-morning class along Rusholme Street's popular eatery stretch known as the Curry Mile. I must have been fifteen minutes from home when I walked by a building with an open ground floor parking garage. It was there that three middle-aged white men with shaved heads stealthily appeared from the shadows of the garage. They stepped out in front of me, allowing me to walk ahead. Now behind me, they began to shout at me. Their screams were just that, without racial epithets or coherent verbal expressions of racial derogation. Thankfully, they did not physically accost me, and I returned safely to my residence.

That experience forever altered my otherwise uncritical, naïve view of race relations in England. From that moment on, I nervously saw race everywhere in my interactions with anyone white in that city. I recall successfully being able to rent a car online from a well-known agency a few days following my *alleged* brush with racism, only to be told when I went to collect my rental that there were not in fact any more cars. This happened to me twice, in quick succession. When I decided to rent a car for a third time at the same location, I was directed to yet another agency branch. It was there that I was finally given a car, but not before being, in my view, condescendingly informed that I was to return the vehicle on time and be certain to report any vehicular "abuse" that was clearly my fault.

The specter of race continued to haunt me during the remainder of my time in Manchester. I saw race everywhere: in the smirks of my professors whenever I attempted to explain or express a point – a particularly well-known, *perhaps* well-meaning professor went out of his way one day to assure me, unprompted, that the *race effect* my presence had generated would soon wear off. I also saw *race* in the "disingenuous" smiles of a flat mate who had moments before referred to me, unaware of my presence, as "my blackie flattie" in her native Chechen tongue.

These and countless other episodes and events would define the extent to which I would consider it safe to interact with white people in England. As I tussled with my new abrupt reality, I was also presciently aware that it was possible that I had developed that metaphorical racial chip, an awareness that had never registered with me while growing up in the Cayman Islands. It also did not help that my chip, if indeed I had one, was

being constantly reinforced and fortified by my mandatory academic readings, some of which promoted a critical race bent. The idea that I had become a *race card holder* bothered me, especially in light of the fact that I had been convinced up to my move to the UK, that racism was an easily skirted issue, and that anyone who did pull the race card was emotionally weak and intellectually green.

<div align="center">**</div>

I was happy to leave Manchester for the West Midlands, excited not only for the change in scenery, but hopeful as well that I would get that *race monkey* off my back in a part of the country known for its spirited multiculturalism. But this was not to be. I reserved a hotel room for three nights on my arrival into Coventry; my residence on the campus of the University of Warwick was not yet ready and I had to stay in a hotel as a matter of necessity. My first two nights at this hotel were otherwise uneventful. On the third night, however, I returned to my room around 2 am to find my belongings missing. Aware that my key card still worked but my belongings were nowhere to be seen, I called down to the front desk to see if they knew anything about my missing possessions which included a little suitcase with toiletries. I was informed that the hotel thought that I had checked out, summarily removing my belongings. When I pressed them further as to why it was that my key card still worked, there was no forthcoming response except to remind me that the hotel reserved the right to remove belongings from rooms considered unoccupied for long periods of time. Seething with anger, I asked them where my belongings were being stored, to which they replied that they had thrown them away. The following morning, as I walked circumspectly towards the city center to get something to eat, a group of white men in a car began, unprovoked, to spew racial epithets at me; I experienced a similar encounter in my final year at Warwick University, this time in the city of Leamington Spa and at nighttime with about a half of a mile of darkness yet to cover on foot before reaching my destination. Needless to say, I was quickly disabused of any sense of multicultural bliss in the Midlands almost as soon as I had arrived there.

It was during a particularly vexing episode that occurred not seven months following my hotel predicament, that I had almost managed to convince myself that it was better that I left the UK and pursue my doctoral studies elsewhere. I would bring all of those perceived racist slights to bear on this single episode, including being told to "stand up straight" by a patronizing, scowling, white female British immigration officer once on my return to the UK, to being indirectly accused by my flat manager, who was very apologetic after the fact of what I would describe as a nationalist rant, that I had gained my UK passport by chicanery.

Implicating the episode in question, I decided that I would rent a car for an upcoming bank holiday weekend. I was more than aware of the perils of driving on UK roads as a person of color, having had a run in with the police not two months before; backtracking for the moment to this penultimate driving incident, I would find myself talking to my mother while driving a rental car, an act which -by then was illegal in the UK. As a police car approached me, I dramatically threw the phone from my ear, to no avail. I was subsequently pursued, stopped, and enjoined to sit at the back of the police car. As I sat there, petrified that I might become yet another unfortunate "statistic of color," one of the two white officers proceeded to inform me that I had been stopped because of my unrepentance; I had continued to talk with the phone to my ear, they informed me, even after they had begun to pursue me. My first reaction was to call him a liar, but I maintained my composure. (Years after the fact, I would find myself drawing parallels between this experience and a case that emerged out of Paris, France, where a group of policemen viciously and without justification beat a black music producer for no other reason, it seemed, than the color of his skin. An attempt to cover up the affair ensued and would have been successful had it not been for corroborated independent eyewitness and synchronous video accounts of the incident [Willsher, 2020].) One of the policemen then asked for my driver's license, before getting on the radio to enquire whether there were any warrants out for my arrest. When none were forthcoming, the officer's bizarre reply to dispatch was "no warrants on this Christopher Williams…are you sure?" I could not in that moment help but wonder if I was indeed an ongoing victim of racially-motivated bias and gross misconduct, a fairly common accusation in the UK with its fair share of critics and proponents (*cf.* Dodd,

2020; Heren, 2020). They would eventually send me on my way with a £65 summons. What I also found especially telling in hindsight was that while they were discussing the specifics of my summons with me, one of the officers seemed to take offence that I was silently shaking my head too much in agreement with his instructions, at one point telling me to "calm down, mate;" whether or not it was his intent to escalate the conflict, I could not be sure, but my nagging suspicions remained.

Returning to the episode that would forever sour my outlook on race in the UK, I found myself at yet another car rental agency (you may have gleaned by now that I love to drive), where I was professionally greeted upon my arrival. I proceeded to hand the agent my driver's license and credit card. The agent was a young white man no older than thirty years. Donning a polite smile, he took my license and card to the back office where, I assumed, he would make copies. To my surprise he walked quickly back to the front with my license, asking me if I had an international driving permit. This struck me as odd as I had never been asked for this in the past when renting a car in the UK.

Although I did have an international permit, *sensing* that I was about to be discriminated against possibly because of my race, I decided to push back a little. I channeled my calmest demeanor and asked him why the driver's license was not enough. His response was uttered wryly: he had never before seen a Cayman Islands driver's license and, so, he had to be "certain." I recommended that he go online and do a quick yahoo search. He politely refused. Scarcely able to conceal my frustration at this point, I informed him that if he was so concerned that my license was fake, all he had to do was hold it up to the light and he would see an inimitable hologram depicting the coat of arms of the Cayman Islands. He also refused to do what, in my mind, well would have instantly exonerated me.

By now blind with seething anger, I handed him my international permit; the color seemed to drain from his face, perhaps because he had managed to convince himself that I would not have had this particular item in my possession. He scrutinized the document in disbelief it seemed before once again excusing himself to, I assumed, have a word with his superior. I was not particularly surprised as I overheard their hushed discussion perhaps

unbeknownst to them, notably the junior agent's expressed recommendation, underpinned by an unfounded quip meant unmistakably to discriminate: "I don't trust him…we shouldn't give him a car…"

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After successfully defending my doctoral thesis in 2010, I was ready to commence a new phase of my life in the Cayman Islands free from the ostensibly menacing ubiquity of race and those feelings of frustration and hopelessness its harrowing considerations raised in me, real or perceived. I was keen to get away from the UK, where, it seemed, I was too often negatively judged because of the color of my skin and little else. Yet old habits die hard, especially when they are habits that are committed both in the name of justice and the need to understand a vexing social phenomenon. Accordingly, although I had no intention *whatsoever* to remain in the UK, ever the masochist, I wanted to settle the race question for myself once and for all insofar as it related to the UK and the employability of people of color in academia there. At the time, less than a percent of professors in the UK were black, a statistic that has hardly changed through to the present day (Coughlan, 2021). The supporting research was usually couched in the same language of well-intentioned deprivation: *The UK has come a long way in race relations but still has a long way to go to completely dismantling the institutional pervasiveness of racism across British society* (*Ibid*.).

Eager to personalize this statistical reality or else problematize it, I applied to a university just before my final departure from the UK. I had come across an advertisement in search of a university social sciences lecturer. I was deliberate not to provide any racial details about myself at the outset, instead writing a friendly letter to the department chairman and employing a little subterfuge. In my letter, I made clear that I was a Briton living in Cayman but was now keen to return home. The response was quick and affable. After expressing how envious he was of me living in the Cayman Islands, he advised me to quickly submit my curricula vitae to his attention. I did, with the dates of completion of my doctoral degree slightly altered. Yet again, his response was almost instantaneous. He seemed especially

impressed that I had attended the Universities of Warwick and Manchester. I was encouraged to submit a full application as soon as possible as, on paper, "I *looked* right for the position."

We had been in correspondence for three days when I decided to email my somewhat completed application. I did not fill in the section on race and ethnicity. The following day, however, I was contacted and encouraged to complete and return the race section of the form. I deliberately did not respond for five days. The department chair did get in touch with me via email on the fifth day to inquire whether I was still interested in the position. I replied that, yes, I was still very much interested and that he could find my completed form attached. I never heard from him again, I wryly assumed, because I ticked the section under ethnicity specifying my race as Black Caribbean.

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I put my *darker* UK experiences behind me and embarked on what I would consider a successful career at the only publicly owned university in the Cayman Islands. I taught undergraduate history, philosophy, and sociology and found it especially rewarding as I watched some of my students mature into able academicians themselves. In a phrase, I had comfortably put race behind me, convinced that it was once and for all at my back and ever receding. Outside of the relevant lecture points, race or considerations of it no longer seemed to apply so directly to me and my livelihood, an ostensible fact for which I was grateful, even happy. It was in 2019, however, that I would come face to face with the reality that the thing of race was not so much nonexistent in my life as it was concealed, waiting for the opportune, inevitable moment to raise its head, ugly, indifferent, or otherwise.

I met another professor of sociology in the Spring of 2019, inviting him to my home shortly thereafter. What was supposed to have been a light, carefree get together over my famous jerked chicken quickly devolved into a heated debate about race. The topic had been broached, offhand, by my guest who is white and from Venezuela. It was he who proceeded to ask me what I generally thought about the systemization of racism. My

response was quick and cocksure, this despite my certainty that I was no longer being significantly affected by race: racism is everywhere, I offered with rote indifference, silently or clamorously reinforcing racial stereotypes revealed in anything from daily slights to manifestations more institutional in their reach. Upon my response, my colleague became noticeably uncomfortable and somewhat irritated. He informed me that his great grandmother was black, intent to prove the point that in Latin America everyone was ancestrally touched by blackness, therefore, racism simply *could not* exist in that region; and if it did exist, it existed because black people were keen on making it an issue. I was Intrigued, if baffled, by his premise, which struck me as slightly absurdist from the outset but well in keeping with mainstream race-thought in certain social and intellectual circles (*cf*. Sowell, 2009). With his consent, I would loan him three excellently researched books that shed precious light on the state of race and racism across Latin America (Twine, 1997; Graham, 1990; Telles, 2014).

I continued to press him on the thing of institutionalized, systematic racism, asking him if he really thought it a farce, in line with the first perspective on race discussed in this book's previous chapter (see pages 167-169). He responded in the affirmative, convinced that if humanity would just simply rid itself of racial categories, we would be more inclined to see each other beyond the color of our skin. When I pointed out that he had contradicted himself on the matter by way of his implication that we are socially disposed to see skin color because of our psychological dependency on stereotypical racial categories he was keen to see erased without resolution, his response was all the more telling: choosing, I assumed, not to address his fallacy, he instead wondered aloud with a kind of earnest yearning, what it would be like to live in a world where people were not at all identified according to their race.

Having agreed at our earlier get together that he would write a review for my first book (Williams, 2015), he contacted me a few weeks later to confirm that he had written the review and would be sending it to me shortly. I read the review, agreeing with much of what he had to say. However, towards the end of the appraisal, he pivoted away from the contents of my book, moving instead towards an *ad hominem* argument. Bringing up our heated discussion a few weeks earlier, he seemed to lament

the fact that *some people* just could not seem to get over race, a relic best reserved for history lessons and by no means relevant in today's day and age. I found this strange because his words had nothing to do with my book, but, seemingly, with his annoyance that people *like me* continued to see race everywhere, and was, in fact, forcing race on a society that had long since forgotten about it.

I contacted him to discuss these ideas. Sensing why I had called, he quickly preempted me to say that he had perused the books I had loaned him and had changed his mind *somewhat* that racism was irrelevant throughout Latin America. Yet he was determined not to leave it there, asking me what possible purpose it served to keep harping on race. If racism did exist, he opined, how would constantly shining an analytical light on it solve anything? It was then that it struck me quite forcefully that race, together with its concomitant issues and concepts was *anything* but dead in my life. I had indeed failed to realize that although I had managed to convince myself that race no longer affected me, in no way meant that I was not being *any-* and *everywhere* judged and defined according to the stereotypic of race – that is, a judgmental condition that occurs when the person supposedly convinced that racism is nothing more than an irrelevant relic, develops an abnormal, almost irrational preoccupation with those who likely experienced racism in some way, in the process both harnessing and stealthily deploying age-old racial stereotypes that, if nothing else, prove the persistent intransigence of consequential, reactionary race-think.

Consolidating Argument

In the attempt to cast my recently recounted experiences in a more generalized context, consider the following words uttered by a friend of mine, a white Cuban-American, just a few months before the publication of this book: *if white America is so racist, why did we vote for Obama* twice? It seems a reasonable question to ask, I suspect, albeit if with a presupposed response meant to exculpate general whiteness from any glaring systemic abuses perpetuated against people of color. Yet my friend's belief presupposes, in its smug certainty, another response, that is, *racism does not really exist in America, and if it does exist, it does so only in hallucinogenic fashion;*

those folks who scream racism are the ones who see racism everywhere, when, in fact, whites have gotten over race – many of us voted for Obama, after all.

This sort of narrative seems to drive those who would rather not consider race from the vantage point of their whiteness, echoing the words of a white mature student of mine who once admonished me to stop highlighting race in my Caribbean history class; as if to say, *shame on you for focusing on racism!* – blissfully unaware of the abiding fact that Caribbean history was built on slavery and its far-reaching legacies, notable among them, racism.

What is a likely precedent for this ideological position, whose purveyors seem annoyed with those who continue to see race and its subtle to explicit outworking throughout the length and breadth of society? In the previous chapter, we explored how racial understandings of black West Indians intensified throughout the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Nonetheless, and in a twinge of imperialist guilt perhaps, Britain would open its borders to its "swarthy" colonial subjects shortly following the conclusion of the Second Great War, ostensibly inviting them to partake in the bounty of that over- developed country. What these people of color experienced, on the contrary, was the cold hard hand of racism by the resentful British masses who detested dirty aliens in their midst; it was for this mounting British reality that a particular conservative politician felt it both safe and expedient in 1964 to run on the campaign slogan, 'If you want a nigger for a neighbor, vote labor'(Jeffries, 2014); it was for this reality that conservative politician Enoch Powell was able to comfortably give his Rivers of Blood speech in 1968, a racist diatribe calling, perhaps inciting, for immigrants of color "to be sent packing," as they did not belong in Britain (Schofield, 2013); or why iconic British guitarist Eric Clapton would in 1976, in a drunken stupor, give angry, honest voice to his soul: 'Get the foreigners out. Get the wogs out. Get the coons out. Keep Britain white … The black wogs and coons and Arabs and fucking Jamaicans don't belong here, we don't want them here' (Sykes, 2018). Yet in the midst of all of this obvious and cruelly intentional race-baiting, the brunt of which was brutishly felt by people of color in Britain, the former were cautioned against complaining about unfair racial treatment; indeed, they would become the official faces of Britain's racial dysfunction, not because they

were deliberately subversive, per se, but because their very alterity became synonymous with dirt, dysfunction, and dystopia.

The expressed views of my two Latin American friends that racism does not really exist outside of rabid imaginings, appear to be compatible with the post-World War Two ideological movement that sought to equalize the races by summarily erasing them, in the process hardening racial stereotypes along a trajectory typified by xenophobia and uninhibited, *unhinged* jingoism. My friends would, however, likely dismiss my arguments here by quickly drawing attention to the unassailable fact, for them, that they are Latin Americans who originated from a more enlightened history in which race and racialist considerations were really and unequivocally rendered, first, silent and then altogether invisible. Yet the silence and invisibility of an aural entity *everywhere* expressed, does not banish its existence outright; if anything, silence and invisibility *critically sensed* and *accessed* might well prove that the entity is ever present in its scope, even as deliberate and antagonistic efforts are being deployed to cynically ensure its "dumbness."

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As a tool of both nation-building and nationalism, Mestizaje-Creolite – mestizaje, or race mixture, for short – took hold of much of Latin America throughout the late early- to mid-twentieth century, at a time when the region's inhabitants were keen to define themselves as a unique group of people who had the best of both worlds, that is, Europe and Native America, and in certain national cases, Africa (*cf*. Telles, 2014, 36-80).

However, mestizaje practically and ideologically spanned (and, indeed, continues to span) the gap between not being European enough and being *too* Native American and thus backwards (*Ibid*.). The colonization of Latin America by the Spanish and Portuguese from the fifteenth century would ensure a civilization built on dichotomous impulses. In short, when Christopher Columbus first encountered the Native Americans of San Salvador and beyond, he would see in them what he was not, and vice versa. Thus, where Columbus was inclined to see himself and those of his ilk as civilized men, Native Americans were in quick course relegated in

the European mind to an inescapable position of inferiority. Throughout the colonizing process, everything progressive became associated with European-ness, and everything backwards, first with Native American culture and then incoming African equivalents.

To their credit, the creolized offspring of this lopsided acculturation process would begin to agitate for their independence from Spain and Portugal from as early as the seventeenth century (*e.g.*, Williamson, 2010). Nonetheless, the amassing nationalist imperative to be free from the European metropole in no way spelled a clean ideological break with the civilizing mission that had been bequeathed by *Europe*. Independence from the colonial overlord in the context of Latin America confirmed both the assured superiority of the European development model for the creolized elites and the need to apply this model, ironically, in the name of progress, across the length and breadth of this or that Latin American society.

It is no surprise, then, that native ways were abjured as backwards and counterintuitive to the modern project of nation-building. From the Dominican Republic to Mexico, the communal ownership of land, for instance, was viewed by the creole elites as profoundly out of step with the edicts of western economic development with its emphasis on private ownership; as a result, entire indigenous villages and their communal way of life were eventually displaced or suppressed in the name of progress (*cf.* Adams, 2006). Despite the inspirational, ultimately disingenuous words of liberal thinkers the likes of Riva Palacio of Mexico or Jaramillo Uribe of Columbia that the natives ought to meaningfully be coopted into the development project, the very sentiment of such understandings ultimately and systematically painted the natives as malefactors 'who did not have [too] much to offer culturally' (Telles, 2014, 42).

Any nationalist effort to privilege and, no less, preserve native culture was always overshadowed by the abiding nucleic principle of Mestijaze, that is, *Hispanidad – Latinidad* if we include the Lusophone country of Brazil. The superiority of Spanish-slash-Portuguese culture, and by extension European culture continues to loom lustrously throughout the Hispanidad label (*cf.* Maeztu, 2020). Historically speaking, Hispanidad was inspired by the process of creolization, presided over and initiated by, in the minds of

its interlocutors, incoming Spanish and other European imperialist groups. The concept was in use by the sixteenth century as a linguistic expression, but was existentially redefined, popularized, and immortalized by Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno in 1909 (*cf.* Torregroza, 2010). It was no coincidence, then, that the earlier promoters of the revised Hispanidad concept were white and/or privileged and politically powerful, very invested, it seemed, in their unique sense of cultural identity indebted to *their* variant of creolization. It was for Hispanidad, as it informed Mestijaze, that independent nations like Argentina and Cuba, among others, would invite Europeans in the early twentieth century to settle within their borders in a bid to westernize their populations (Thomas, 2010; Brown, 2011). In the case of Cuba, thus, it would matter little to none when Fidel Castro outlawed racism some three years after his successful revolution took fanatical hold of Cuba in 1959; a racial hierarchy borne of history had long been hardwired into that society's citizenry, the majority of whom were and remain white (Benson, 2016).

Yet my Latin American friends would perhaps take issue with my recent phrasings of Mestijaze, eager instead, I suspect, to offer a more palatable version of the same: *Latin American [white?] elites are credited with establishing an inclusive way of imagining the consummate, transcendent Latin American nation, rendering Latin American nationalism at once raceless and profoundly transnational*. Mindful that within the mestizo label rests ethnic and cultural difference, the orchestrators of modern Latin American societies took joy in the fact that Latin America was heterogeneous and multiracial in nature, a combination that would invariably and organically generate a "harmonious and homogenous" mentality (*e.g.,* Loewe, 2010).

The proponents of this nationalist framework are quick to place harmony over conflict, not in accordance with historical precedent, but according to the one-sided notion that race was rendered nonexistent because it would eventually lose its usefulness in the Latin American development project. In light of the fact that the development project was prominently, *unequally* premised on racial considerations and gradations, just when, then, did race become so useless and *ineffective*? The moment European ways became official markers of progress? Or, when Native American ways were decried as useless, despite the civilizing expectation that they ought to be coopted

into a project that vowed to celebrate their contribution to human civilization (Telles, 2014)?

Herein lies Mestijaze' chink: how possible was it, in the context of civilizational development, to achieve seamless racial harmony when the idealized and practical components of race were ideologically incongruent and would remain so, only to suddenly vanish in the name of racial harmony? The benevolent response to this question assumes that *race-think* was never really important to begin with, much less so in the nationalist desire to be free of, say, Spanish suzerainty. Promoters of Mestijaze were eager to erase the dictates of race relative to the noble action of subaltern resistance, but in their fanaticism lost complete sight of the ubiquitous shaping properties of race on their intensely unequal societies. Following this rather perverse line of logic through to its logical conclusion, *racism may have admittedly existed during slavery, but was eventually and triumphantly overcome during the continuously ongoing development project because the imperatives to integrate and evolve were stronger than the desire to continue to be impeded by race-think.* To counter the foregoing, Mestijaze's progress, I submit, depended less on the impediment of racism and more on the imposed, irrational percept that racial stereotypes no longer applied regardless of the fact that such stubborn matters of the heart were never officially brought into the national conversation and thus could not have been exorcised in any truly inclusive, negotiable way (*cf.* Fanon, 2008). In a single oxymoronic question, how can coexisting races achieve racial harmony over trenchant, endemic racial conflict when the very racial status quo inheres the ubiquitously two-fold subconscious position that European-ness or whiteness are aspiring standards – norms, if you will – while non-whiteness, in its civilizational entirety, is tantamount to a hurdle that must be overcome if western-style development is to successfully unfold?

Current right-wing Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro represents the extreme, contemporary, disingenuous embodiment of Mestijaze-think. Following the murder of Afro-Brazilian man Joao Freitas at a popular supermarket chain location in late 2020, the president would subsequently take to the G20 airwaves to confirm that his country's racial diversity was deep-rooted and unifying, categorically denying systemic racism

(TricksFast, 2020); numerous studies have convincingly identified the correlation between race, discrimination, and disenfranchisement towards the generation of the institutional effects of racism on Afro-Brazilians, who, as a minor demographic, are also likelier to be 'unemployed, killed, imprisoned, or shot dead by police' (Völker, 2020). It was especially telling, then, when Bolsonaro, who once referred to indigenous peoples of the Americas as "almost human"(Phillips, 2020a), said snidely of the supporters of Freitas on another occasion, 'they got their George Floyd' (Phillips, 2020b; Yeung, *et al.*, 2020); even more offensive in this instance, some would argue, were the subsequent assertions of the president's own pick to promote black culture in Brazil, the self-described 'rightwing black man' Sergio Camargo. A naturally divisive figure, Camargo was overheard referring to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement as comprised of 'scum', going even further to say that slavery was 'beneficial' (*Ibid.*); his expressions, together with his high-level political connections, confirm why it is impossible to move on from racial discrimination when one side attempts to impose its moral label on the other side that is deeply, systemically disadvantaged and disenfranchised.

Appearance and intent often do not go hand in hand, as demonstrated in our previous example: Mestijaze appears a very palatable, commendable movement *sentimentally*, but the deeper underlying intent of its orchestrators betrays their perhaps scripted indifferent ignorance in public, while hinting at their private abhorrence for, and annoyance with, *outspoken* people of color. This ilk of promoters of Mestijaze would find a comfortable ideological home in those western countries where a similar brand of weaponized racialized logic is being applied, a state of affairs that we now turn our attention to.

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In closing, we return to the absurdity that underlies the first perspective of race that racism is no longer relevant and only those who continue to see it in society somehow force it into existence. This perspective, as the words of my Latin American friends attest, views the historicity of race and racism uncritically and indifferently through the eyes of an idealistic rendering of modern society as having long moved beyond race. Yet my own

experiences in the UK present us with a challenge that is not easily resolved or reconcilable in its dichotomous portrayal. There are, for instance, those who would clamorously deny the existence of practical racism while betraying its very elements, not necessarily in flagrance, but along more subtle lines of intonation affirming their long-held racial biases. As we have seen, this subtlety has, in certain quarters been construed as genteel or polite racism, represented in the concerted effort to neutralize the very real effects of racism by way of the often disingenuous conclusion that "honest" assimilation into the *western mainstream* will render us all raceless and sublimely equal. Genteel racism derives a substantive measure of its institutional potency from the conjunctive mentality premised on the ideo-linguistic gesture that, "no, I am not racist, but…"; what comes after that *but*, both in word and deed, typically negates the preceding clause, in the process securing racism's perpetual, *hidden*, permeating quality. Consider, thus: I am not a racist, **but** he looks suspicious – although his identification and payment method seem to be well in order – so I will deny him the ability to rent a car; or, I am not a racist, **but** people of color tend not to be university professors, so I will pass on this qualified black man's application. I am aware that white people are often regarded suspiciously and are deprived of what should otherwise be a right; if, however, there is some truth to the idea that people of color are likelier to bear the weight of racial representation in every misdeed perpetrated by those who look like them, this in turn should alert us to the reasonable inference that discrimination in certain social contexts is also likelier to be premised on stereotypic race-think-as-practice than anything else (*cf*. Wise, 2010; Blum, 2015).

With the foregoing in mind, what of the teenaged son of award winning Black American jazz trumpeter Keyon Harrold, who was, without proof, accused by an unfamiliar Latina woman in the restaurant of a well-known New York hotel of stealing her iPhone? Becoming at times physically violent, the woman was further emboldened by the white hotel manager who, upon entering the melee seemed to readily take her side, encouraging the young man, who, along with his father was a guest at the hotel, to produce the phone in question. Needless to say, she had left her phone in the Uber she had taken to the hotel, of which she was not a guest at the time (*e.g.,* Fondren, 2021). To use another example closer to home, I remember

standing in a checkout line at a Texas Walmart when I witnessed a black couple and a white man arguing bitterly in front of me – apparently, the white man was offended that the couple had been using profanities in their personal conversation, words that, to this day, I do not remember hearing. Eventually a policeman made his way over, but he did not solicit any information from the couple, appearing instantly to take the white man at his profusely unprompted word. The policeman then proceeded to castigate the stunned couple, threatening them that if they did not *shut their mouths* – which were wryly shut at that point, they would get what was "coming to them;" the officer must have realized the arrant nakedness of what I could have only assumed to be his implicit racial bias because he then proceeded to sidle up to me, creating friendly small talk about an item that I had in my cart. For all of its witting or unwitting promoters and practitioners, the ideological premise underlying these examples, together with the preamble I provided, amounts to an ideational spectrum spanning the length of genteel racism, ranging from trite expressions of the negation of racism to practices highlighting racist behavior-cum-stereotypic postures masquerading in a myriad of hues, intentions, and subtleties.

Returning to my first example, that of Keyon Harold and his teenaged son, one only need take a cursory look at the comments section following any journalistic interpretation of this account to understand the ideological base on which polite colorblind racism is normalized and subsequently built: many of the commenters on the case chastised those for making this story all about race, some even going so far as to identify with the accused, Miya Ponsetto, to say that because she was Latina – Puerto Rican, to be precise – she could not be racist (Madani, 2021). Not only is this brand of chastisement uncritical and condescending in its cocksure assurance, but its defenders, according perhaps to their own "silent" internalized biased racial considerations, seem unaware that people of Hispanic descent can also be white, together with the likelihood that the woman's egregious behavior, *regardless* of the color of her skin, was likely emboldened by pervasive stereotypic notions of racial representation – beyond race-think, what else could have possibly convinced an otherwise sane, if narcissistic woman that a black teenager whom she had in that moment never before seen or interacted with, had somehow managed to steal her iPhone?

On the other hand, consider people like me who would dare to see race and its negative verbal and active extensions throughout huge swathes of western society primed *not* to see race. It is no coincidence that such societies tend to be western either in their ethnic makeup or civilizational thrust. In such societies, institutional racism is perceived as nothing more than aggregate exercises in mythmaking for those who can't seem to get their lives together. Ambiguity, apathy, and anger thus broker the divide between what should count as racist and what should not: there are those who exhibit uncertainty when it comes to racial discrimination, while others demonstrate an apathetic resolve when confronted with the reasonable enough manifestations of racism; and, finally, there are those who are convinced that the specter of race prevents them from enjoying those human rights deemed inalienable, erecting an angry, frustrated stance on which to confront their discriminators.

For all the evidence recently detailed, my Latin friends seem to fall into the category reserved for the racially apathetic. Their tendency to not see social motivations prompted by race illuminates their "heartfelt" indifference, even annoyance, towards those who would dare to bring an otherwise nonexistent institution into focus. Their actions may also be expressed in terms of polite racism, *tensely* played out in their *well-meaning* chastisement of people of color who always profess to see racial discrimination everywhere. Canadian Ph.D. student and woman of color, Karine Coen-Sanchez (2020) aptly contextualizes the deceptively genteel sentiments on which polite racism thrives: '[as people of color, we are]…told to minimize our [negative] experiences [with race], to avoid conflict, to see our stories as an exaggeration of reality…[i]f we got angry or frustrated at not being believed, we were admonished not to take it so personally'. Not only is polite racism not so *polite*, but its very linguistic, expressive register, to the contrary, lays bare the many conflicting considerations of race and racism. In a world that continues to develop for the better according to the principles of dialectics, or conflict, why would we not be automatically inclined to the truistic-enough realization that any discernible conflict is in itself real, regardless of the disingenuity of some of those involved in the implicated conflict, and can only be resolved after confronting, conflicting forces have "negotiated" a genuine transcendent outcome (Adorno, 2017)?

Accordingly, contemplate the white couple who called the police on a Filipino-America in San Francisco because the former wrote a BLM mural on an outside wall of his eighteen-year home. According to the ensuing report, the couple did not, in their estimation, call the police on the man because of his mural, but because they could not be certain that he lived in a house in what was considered an upstanding, upscale white neighborhood (Inquirer.Net, 2020). Polite racism shrouded, in this example, in a self-professed concern for the property of others inevitably draws critical attention the insidiousness of race-think: indeed, those inclined to racial politeness-cum-indifference would find it difficult to locate the outworking of negative racializing in this example, eventually screaming exasperatingly that there is no racism to be gleaned from a couple keen simply to protect their affluent neighborhood. If anything, ideologues of this ilk are likely to view the BLM movement as an ill-perceived exercise in radical subversion, with nary a sincere register on their part of *at least* the statistical verifiability of systemic racism in the American place (*cf. Wise*, 2010.). A lawyer and supporter of the BLM movement residing in the conservative town of Grosse Point, just outside of Detroit, Michigan, would come face to face with the deceptively subtle outworking of this anti-BLM ideology; he was ticketed by his strata for posting a BLM sign in his yard larger than seven square feet and containing a "political message" in contravention of village ordinance (Hall, 2020). Notice that I didn't reveal the man's race? Yet how many of those reading this automatically assumed his race, among other obvious "facts" about his disposition?

With the contents of both this and the previous chapter in mind, consider juxtaposing the ideological bent of polite racism against the implicated experiences of anyone, including me, who has in some way been touched by manifested racism. Firstly, however, there is the matter of perspectival interpretation to consider: one could make the case that those who refuse to see the outworking of racism have managed to expunge the social pervasiveness of racial discrimination from the potential vantage points of *their* race, their experiences, and/or their socio-economic standing. Similarly, the soul convinced that the color of her skin continues to disadvantage her would also likely view her discrimination through the prisms of race, experience, and/or socio-economic standing. Despite their

diametric opposition of thought, the structural similitude of these perspectival positions on racism is unmistakable; they both utilize racial, social, and economic knowledge to either summarily deny racism, underplay it, or else corroborate it. Here are perspectives that are "urged" on the opponent – racism deniers are eager to impose their subtle or clamorous understandings of the farce of racism by, in their view, debunking racism's *racelessness*; on the other hand, the recipient of racism, for all intents and purposes, also urges her lived, personal understandings of racism on those who would rather not hear or even consider her (*reconsider* here the words of Karine Coen-Sanchez two paragraphs ago). Yet in professing that racism does not exist, the racism denier is likely depending on his racial, social, and/or economic privilege, that privilege, biased as it *must* be, working by conjunctival logic to negate the very thing that it professes, uncritically, to be against; these two negatives, biased imposition and privileged indifference, have resulted in a positive outcome for racism deniers that racism no longer systemically exists. Away from the mathematical rule of thumb that two negatives make a positive, this rule cannot reasonably apply in those human contexts with their frightening and very real social imbalances and daily injustices perpetuated and enacted by pejorative racial stereotypes.

We have seen throughout this chapter and the last that racism did exist historically, in turn generating legacies that have continued to dog us at present. The racism denier might feel himself *situationally* right, but his assessments of race are devastatingly and systemically incomplete for his lack of empathy for the person who continues to be touched by the *historical certainty* of racism; if nothing else, consider here my recent personal account.

It is beyond doubt that history continues, in word or deed, in silence or clamor, to encroach upon the present insofar as race and its father, racism, are concerned (*cf*. Coates, 2015, 7). This is a deceptive encroachment that is not readily agreed to, much less regarded as tangible historical extensions of a phenomenon that, for some, died with slavery, apartheid, and Jim Crow, but for others are simultaneously everywhere and thus nowhere, woven into the very fabric of progressive society.

PART 3
MULTICULTURALISM

PROLOGUE TO CHAPTER SIX
MODERN CULTURE AND THE INDIVISIBILITY OF MULTICULTURALISM: A BRIEF PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHICAL SUMMARY

With history *anything but* behind us, just what is culture and how likely is it, generally, to manifest itself in the present? Some say that culture is best understood as the total way of life of a people bound by geography and history; others implicate culture as a way of thinking, feeling, and believing; yet others confirm culture in terms of the social legacy that an individual acquires from his or her national-ethnic group. Culture has also been described as an abstraction from behavior, a storehouse of pooled learning, etc. (Geertz, 2017, 4-5). Although illuminating, these definitions of culture may, in the long run, prove useless and self-defeating because as curt abstractions they simultaneously take us everywhere and nowhere at all. In the end, thus, many of us are still not as clear as we otherwise could be on the living, practical, breathing, evolving creature that is culture. Culture is at once a naturally and socially evolving entity, readily implicated both in the patterned decisions by earliest humans in close proximity to eventually memorialize and collectivize their way(s) of life and in the ways that such social efforts would only become more relevant and sacred with the passage of time. The rich awareness of culture's contingent evolutionary properties should serve as a spirited rational response to any xenophobic position within the walls of multiculturalism that discrete national cultures are somehow more effective if they are hermitically sealed off from the so-called diluting properties of other incoming cultures. Had humanity followed this prescriptive, great, hitherto unknown civilizations including African Kush (Hine, *et al.*, 2011, 8-12) and the Roman Empire, among many others, would not have emerged to the extent that they did (*cf.* Hearn, 2006).

Let us attempt to arrive at a practical enough understanding of culture and its interaction with other cultures through the probing eyes of the late great cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz. Per Geertz (2017), culture becomes all the more meaningful and comprehensible when we come to grips with its formalization borne both of the symbolic and the subjective. A well-known analogy seems appropriate. Envision a spider spinning its webs: These webs are significant and important for the spider precisely because they exist as manifestations of what is normal for, and familiar to it. In other words, spiders *naturally* spin webs. In a similar way, consider practical, perceptive human beings as coterminous with web-spinning, instinctive spiders, spinning our own significant existential webs as a matter of natural, *social* course; webs premised on the normal, the familiar; on tradition, on ritual, and on language (think accent, dialect, and lexicon); on manner and disposition, etc.

These human webs comprise the ubiquitous, throbbing thing we call culture. To appreciate, in a multicultural context, those deleteriously narrow ethnic understandings of culture, is to come to grips with the practical enough truth that those cultural webs of which we just spoke tend to be internally parsed as symbolic-cum-subjective national versions of unassailable truth powerfully undergirded by emotive features including jingoism, cultural chauvinism, xenophobia, etc. Yet the "holy" mystique shrouding these negative features may well lead us to the understanding that so-called cultural truths are perhaps *merely* masquerading as unassailable social proof for the natural sacredness of national, ethnic lifeways. All said, quotidian, parochial culture and its rational insider truths are more about subjective feelings of symbolic national belonging and the *legitimate* actions and reactions such feelings are likely to evoke, stimulate, or elicit.

These subjective feelings associated with national truth have indeed been harnessed in multicultural settings both to explain and act on powerful feelings that for some of us indicate the imminent death of our authentic sense of cultural belonging due, in unsavory words, to "those stinking *others*." To go the route of the cultural pessimist, here are understandings premised on notions that what is culturally normal, familiar, and truthful

is under relentless attack from iconoclastic, corrupting, *bastardized* outside forces and sources. More on this in the paragraphs that follow.

As a social entity, culture ebbs and flows, clamors and clashes around concepts and conceptions associated with inevitables. Where used, inevitables implicate those *inevitable* features associated with, or representative of, a way of life, for example, accent, cuisine, music, and the like. As manifestations of culture, such inevitables prove effective in hindsight, foresight, and present-sight as nation-building tools that no less aid in shaping notions of ancestral legitimacy and more contemporized practices of solidarity and belonging. In its most basic philosophical conception, inevitables capture those societal-cum-emotional features that not only informed an actual ancestral cultural way of life, but that, by virtue of their widespread social stamp over time, connect the past and the present – not in a crass, deterministic way, per se, but as survivable cultural traits themselves having undergone evolution both with the passage of time and according to any heightened interaction with inevitables from other incoming or receiving cultures.

There are "logical" enough reasons why multiculturalism as it is currently understood and practiced is so problematic and open to ideological cleavages of just about every sort. In the first instance, consider those foundational, formative inevitables associated with today's Caymanian lifestyle which is in many ways diametrically opposed to a past sensibility with its emphases on widespread hardship, material dearth, and a resultant conservative mindset. Prosperity is the obverse of hardship, and the argument may be made that when incoming globalization manages to dethrone financial hardship, any lifeway indelibly linked to an impoverished, ancestral way of life is likely to be banished – or, at the very least, greatly diminished, some would say, for the better of the implicated nation and its indigenes. Our recently outlined argument begs a rather controversial question that is extensively analyzed in the chapter which follows: Given their ability to raise standards of living, should the *inevitable* globalizing cultural features of prosperity, multiculturalism, economic liberalism, and democracy be considered either as counterproductive or else complementary to native cultural development?

Any reasonable answer to the aforementioned question may well give way to an emotional jostling space in which many prosperous nationals-cum-natives might have no choice but to admit that the brunt of their xenophobic discomfort is likely due to a misconception on their part; a patriotic misconception, as we shall see in the following paragraph, laid bare at the traditional end of inevitables which is *practically* cut off from its present end given the vast beneficial interchange and exchange of modern ideas and lifestyles prompted by multiculturalism (*cf.* Taylor, *et al.*, 1994). In our attempt to unravel the preceding premise, inevitables may be expressed in two distinctly quotidian, rhetorical ways, that is, either culturally or else in terms of heritage. For the sake of clarity, heritage can be understood as culture's ideological foundation, falling on the traditional end of inevitables just touched on. Put another way, culture is the superstructure, the very building, while heritage is culture's substructure, revealed in those traditional, foundational elements on which culture is built; without heritage, thus, national, regional cultures would not be possible. How, then, would we identify heritage in everyday, understandable, *inevitable* terms? Whenever any anterior product, lifeway, article, or concept evokes a nostalgic sense of tradition and history, heritage is not too far off. In this way, heritage is simultaneously a verb and a noun. In its verb form, heritage, for instance, comes conceptually, patriotically alive in the historical Cayman context through those traditional practices associated with ancestral culture, for example, performing kitchen music or the quadrille dance, cat boating, turtling, caboose cooking, silver thatch tapestry, etc. In heritage's noun form, thus, consider those Caymanian ancestors who rendered such traditions *immortally* Caymanian including Aunt Julia, Daniel Jervis, Tenson Ebanks, Elsa Cummings, Margaret Powell, among many others (Williams, 2019). Combine these verbs and their *noun enablers* and heritage becomes palpable, heightening our very nativist senses, especially in those contemporary moments of 'multicultural danger' (Benjamin, 1940, 389).

In conceptually separating heritage and culture, consider foregrounding the notion that heritage refers to any cultural article that is specific to our ancestors' way of life but not necessarily to *our modern way of life*. Thus, whenever an otherwise modern-thinking Caymanian angrily vents *his national truth* that foreigners have diluted his culture, implicating his angst

as righteously cultural, he has, to resurrect the xenophobic misconception touched on in the previous paragraph, essentially confused heritage, which is historically stationary and relevant only through mediation and memorialization, with progressive Caymanian culture which is always evolving in line with the shaping, practical, *livable* forces of multiculturalism and globalization. As the saying goes, get rid of any and all foreign influences that make Cayman the current success story it is and we run the *inevitable* traditionalist-motivated risk of beheading the goose that continuously lays its golden eggs. In the final analysis, modern global culture is inherently evolutionary, which is to say that because every culture progresses and borrows from other cultures, our present cultural ways are necessarily and *practically* far removed from the culture – think heritage – of our more cloistered ancestors; there is nothing unnatural about this as many contemporary Caymanians seem to think.

Understandings of routinized culture implicate subjective feelings of national belonging and the actions, reactions, and abstractions such feelings both stimulate and elicit. Such feelings have also been harnessed to both explain and act on powerful emotions that indicate for many the imminent death of ethnic legitimacy and exclusive belonging. Yet one could be inclined to concur that such feelings, as they unfold in a decidedly multicultural context, figure more as distinctly incongruent reactions created by our new cultural inevitables premised on materialism and multiculturalism, features once external to Cayman's economically ailing ancestral culture. Indeed, we are led to believe, and subsequently, to *never forget*, that our modern society and its inherent culture are primarily driven and legitimated by democratic impulses underwriting equality and justice; regardless, such impulses were neither truly realized nor meaningfully executed in Cayman's historical context (*e g.,* Craton, 2004), which in turn prompts musings as to the extent of the existential disconnect that occurs between active culture and memorialized heritage, and the ways in which we are likely to conflate these towards xenophobic swagger. The Cayman Islands government, by its own admission, has been relentless in its efforts to ensure that every legal resident within its shores is treated fairly and equitably, regardless of ethnicity and/or nationality (Williams, 2015, chapter seven). Nevertheless, what amounts to governmental lip service to a rhetorically motivated democratization of culture *cannot* be enough – the

government in question, for instance, will openly attest to its strong regulatory oversight of the economy in the name of egalitarianism only for those regulations, arguably, to be flagrantly undermined by xenophobic or pro-expatriate-cum-anti-native motivations (*Ibid.*; see first section of previous chapter). These democratic impulses of which the government speaks, thus, cannot be taken as a given when we stop to consider the subjective interests that may well trump them and, in turn, hinder our path to meaningful structural, systematic equality; just because the majority votes, in the spirit of democracy, for a leader, practice, or idea, does not mean that equally important minority positions will automatically be considered and acted upon for the sake of equality. Instead, democratic impulses and intentions must be afforded the opportunity to develop in a truly trans-human, structurally organic way, away from an entrenched, indifferent, arbitrary us/them mentality that appears to be codified into everyday life. Put another way, although equity is a human virtue, if it is to be unequivocally effective when it really matters, its conceptual practicality as we initially understand it in the form of ideas, must transcend the daily whims and biases encoded into human behavior. Just as our Caymanian accent is central to our culture, so too should the democratic will, in light of its relevance within modern global culture, become central to the multicultural mosaic as it thrives in a legal setting enabled not by human bias but systematic, earnestly and fairly applied checks and balances enshrined in those inevitable social structures in which we live and interact with others. More on this in our conclusionary chapter. If it is to be effective, let alone compellingly viable, any resultant enlightened multicultural mentality ought to work both ways, flowing freely, justly, and multi-directionally between natives and expatriates. Posing, however, a necessary problematic question at this point, to what extent does the success of any such cultivated mentality depend on an extant idealism couched in indifference and disingenuousness?

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In the preceding subsection, the attempt was made to provide a very brief summary of the general developmental ideological trends within multiculturalism. Thereafter, an ostensible solution to rampant xenophobia-related inequities on all sides of the coexistent racial and ethnic

spectrum was implied, the current idealistic thrust of which is refuted in this book's final chapter. The following penultimate chapter thus extensively interrogates the developmental and ideological trends recently touched on in the context of globalization in the prosperous British dependency of the Cayman Islands, arguably the most multicultural jurisdiction, per capita, in the world.

MODERN CULTURE AND THE INDIVISIBILITY OF MULTICULTURALISM: THE GLOBAL CASE OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

Introduction

With only one international bank in 1953, by 1972 Cayman had indeed made the dramatic transition from 'the islands that time forgot' (Maloney, 1950) to a recognized offshore financial center and burgeoning tourist destination. By the 1970s, off-shore financiers were keen to invest in Cayman's economy due in large part to the absence of direct taxation, an absence countenanced by Britain at the time in *its* feverish effort to financially deregulate its own financial sector (Williams, 2019, introduction). Tourism also exponentially increased during the 1970s, in many ways becoming more important to Cayman's local economy than offshore finance, given the vaunted mandate of the Ministry of Tourism to recruit as many Caymanians as possible to promote its official cultural message aptly denominated Cayman Kind. Before the COVID pandemic hit in early 2020, tourist arrival records were being shattered month after month, with tourism itself accounting for roughly 30 percent of GDP and 75 percent of foreign currency earnings (ESO, 2010). Although monthly tourism statistics before 1995 are nonexistent, it is nonetheless worth, in the initial analysis, briefly assessing the reasons behind the substantial increase in tourist numbers and the ways in which this hinted at developing issues around the contestation of national and ethnic identities in what was rapidly becoming a so-called multicultural haven. 1972 marked the initial success of an unprecedented dividend yielded by the external promotion of tourism in Cayman; it was in this year that the number of tourists to the islands uncharacteristically rose by 25.8 percent from the previous year. Such an increase amounted to 30,600 tourists who arrived by air, compared to the 24,400 who flew to the islands the previous year (Department of

Tourism, 1998, 104). Indeed, the government's awareness of the potential windfall of tourism was earlier enshrined in the newly revised constitution of 1965, 'which placed the direction of [tourism] development under the purview of the Executive Council' (Craton, 2004, 346). Nine years later in 1974, a Tourism Law was passed and the Department of Tourism was created, replacing the Tourist Board, which had been established in 1966.

Any significant rise in tourist numbers to the islands in 1972 also seemed the result of an intense collaboration between the private and public sectors forged in the previous decade. The first private association dedicated to the promotion and development of Cayman's brand of tourism was the Hotel Association, established in 1964. The Hotel Association was very small, consisting of only twelve hotels, the largest and oldest one, the Galleon Beach Hotel, able to accommodate only 84 guests (Craton, 2004, 347-348). Since its inception, the Hotel Association had the government's support to promote a brand of tourism that focused on swimming, scuba diving, and sunbathing, or, as Michael Craton put it, 'the middle and "high end" segments of the tourist market' (*Ibid*.).

In 1966, the Hotel Association 'persuaded the government to set up a Tourist Board'. Voluntarily chaired by Hotel Association member and expatriate Eric Bergstrom, the transitory Tourist Board was very much invested in local advertising, having received its funding from local businesses, from supermarkets to convenience stores to scuba diving companies (*Ibid*., 348). When Warren Connolly was appointed Member responsible for Tourism in 1969, he tasked himself with the continued development of Cayman's tourist product. Realizing the need 'for government subsidies for advertisement and promotion', Connolly was able to secure a relatively small budget from the government, which in turn led to the establishment of Cayman's first overseas tourism office in Miami. Four more such offices would be established by the 1980s, in New York, Toronto, Houston, and London. When the government's Executive Council decided to take firmer control of the islands' existing tourist venture in 1972, a brand of tourism based on sea, sun, and sand was long being vigorously promoted overseas, resulting in an unprecedented increase in the number of tourist air arrivals by the end of that year (*Ibid*.). Between 1973 and 1976 alone, tourist air arrivals jumped from 45,800 to 64,900,

marking an 87.2 percent increase (Department of Tourism, 1998, 104). Marketing efforts by the Department of Tourism had begun in earnest. Thus in 1976 when Connolly was replaced with the Minister responsible for Tourism James Bodden, who himself sought to build upon the numerical and conceptual successes of the islands' tourism venture, '[t]ourism and all other forms of development were interconnected', writes Craton, 'and [James Bodden] was a tireless advocate of the right marriage between public and private sectors' (Craton, 2004, 349).

Yet what Craton did not perhaps see was the great extent to which tourism and national identity were becoming inexorably interlinked. In many ways tourism is 'an integral component in the process of national identity formation', primarily because tourist, by virtue of being *tourists*, will temporarily experience in some way the life ways of the "natives" (Bhandari, 2014, 5). It is equally likely 'that national identity and tourism intersect [and] overlap… ' given that those tourists who are *potential* Caymanians or long-term residents may find themselves settling in Cayman because they have fallen in love, *inter alia*, with that country's culture and general way of life. This is why many tourist come to Cayman and return not as tourists but employees and employers alike, eventually becoming eligible for citizenship; and this is why Cayman's immigration system is somewhat keen perhaps to facilitate this transition because the government understands, to the chagrin of many native Caymanians, that more legal foreign-nationals in the islands means greater economic growth, not to mention much needed revenue for the government in the form of work permit fees (*cf.* Mondaq, 2022; Ragoonath, 2022).

It was necessary to map the intensification of tourism in Cayman because this phenomenon, away from the magnetic pull of Cayman on wealthy foreign investors, was initially responsible for the wave of incoming full-time expatriates throughout the 1970s and 80s. In other words, as Cayman, largely via tourist perception, became renowned for its peaceful and prosperous life ways, many foreign-nationals, felt, for various reasons, compelled to *permanently* experience these ways. From the foregoing, it may be inferred that Cayman tourism tends to promote, foreground, and reaffirm the heritage and culture of that dependency's people, and by extension their values and the ethnic groundwork of their alleged oneness.

However, to problematize this reasonable inference, it seems in our hyper-globalized case that tourism and expatriation have achieved the opposite effect by first blurring and then altering native Caymanianness (see introduction, under *Multiculturalism*).

<p style="text-align:center">**</p>

It is beyond doubt that economic progress has also played an epochal role in blurring and altering native Caymanian identity and life ways; economic development is largely responsible for the dramatic rise in Caymanians' standard of living. As more capital is generated, government expenditures are likely to grow larger and more elaborate, public and private sector salaries are poised for increase and, accordingly, new and more expensive tastes develop. Cayman's economy and Caymanians have been completely transformed by globalization, where globalization enshrines prosperity and progress.

The derivable benefits of globalization have not only been made manifest in Cayman's expanding economy – growing, for instance, by a healthy 3.2 percent in the 2019 financial year before the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown severely depressed economic productivity in 2020, with an estimated 1.4 percent growth recovery rate in the first half of 2021 (Cayman Islands Chamber of Commerce, 2022; Cayman Islands Government, 2020) – but also corresponds to 'a complex array of contemporary social changes' that are fundamentally undergirded by a raised standard of living (Ray, 2007, 15). In this sense, B. Kumaravadivelu would argue (2008, 15-19), xenophobic notions keen on lambasting the importance of foreignness seem destined to be at odds with the very *beneficial* social changes that have made it possible for large numbers of foreign-nationals to enter a globalized jurisdiction with *their* cultural sensibilities intact regardless of how enamored they are of island living. Accordingly, let us consider the shaping logic behind this Caymanian/foreigner attitudinal dynamic.

Paul Hopper (2007) has argued that the cultural logic borne specifically of globalization is not essentially concerned with any national past and its enduring traditions and culture. It is this lack of concern that necessarily expresses the transition from traditional-mindedness to consumer-

mindedness. When the author uses consumer-mindedness, he is mindful of the left-leaning Frankfurt School's conception of consumerism, which requires a definitive explanation: '…Consumption [serves] the interests of manufacturers seeking greater profits, and citizens [become] the passive victims of advertisement. Processes of standardization, [are] accompanied by the development of a materialistic culture, in which commodities [come] to lack authenticity and instead merely [meet] "false" needs' (Lodziak, 2002, 11). Implicating consumer-*mindedness*, consumerism refers to the consumer's willing, indeed obsessive, need to participate in the purchase of various desirable goods and services either for personal comfort or as markers of prosperity. Such needs, it may be argued, are "traditionally false" from the outset when considered in the context of cultural materialism. When Raymond Williams (2005, 35-40) invoked the culture of materialism, he was referring to the interplay between conflicting ways of thinking and doing that, in our context, results from the irresistible forces of consumerism within a national space with its own preconceived ideas and conditions of culture. In other words, the often wanton desire to purchase material things is premised on a logic which emphasizes "living the good life," a position at odds with a traditionalist posture that, among other things, is quick to give tortured outlet to feelings and emotions obsessed with the loss of the glorious, unassuming Caymanian past.

'No one travels as much as we do', a younger Caymanian once confided. 'Why do we [Caymanians] travel so much?' the question was in turn asked? 'Because we have too much money and time on our hands!' was her reply (Personal Interview 8, 2007, 12). As a Caymanian himself, the author can confirm that before the onset of our current pandemic, many Caymanians were likely to go to Florida, notably Miami, on the weekend – *any* weekend, in fact – for the primary purpose of shopping. 'Things are cheaper there', another informant confided, 'and, so, if you need new clothes or certain equipment, Miami is the best place [to travel to]' (*Ibid.*, 4). The author was almost tempted to ask this informant whether the money used to purchase a round trip ticket to Miami – costing anywhere from USD $300 to $400 (up to KYD $325 or more) for a weekend trip – could not have been more meaningfully invested in Cayman's retail market; but, it was suspected that she would have responded by stressing that clothing and other items are

cheaper and more varied in Miami, and the price of a round trip ticket is more than worth gaining access to these vast retail markets.

Percival "Will" Jackson begins to map the very history behind this newfangled *Caymanian* philosophy premised on prosperity (Cayman Net News, 2001):

> *As we enter this new century, we already see modern and more classic technologies in high gear and dominating society. Everything surrounding life's sustenance has to do with electrical power in one way or another. For example, the old wood-burning caboose by which process the food was cooked and even the woodstoves have now been totally obliterated by electric and gas ranges even in the very poorest of families. Just turn a knob or flip a switch and cooking is in progress.*

> *Refrigerators and freezers are no longer luxuries, but standard equipment in every home. Washing machines find a special spot in every residence; and so do televisions, usually two to three sets at a time. Motor-cars have replaced the horses in yards where once two or three horses grazed awaiting the use of family members for travelling. They have disappeared and in their places are two to three or even four family cars.*

> *This is only a brief look at the type of high living that the new century offers against that which the early 20th century even promised.*

> *Nevertheless, the years did change things beyond comprehension for the Islanders.*

Mr. Jackson's assessment of the many conveniences that accompany a prosperous Caymanian way of life clearly delineates Cayman's meager material and financial past from its opulent present. Where the average annual income was roughly US $7,000 in the 1960s, the dependency's GDP per capita as of 2020 amounted to a little under $69,000 KYD, or around $83,000 USD. Instantiating the Frankfurt School's conception of consumerism recently highlighted, Mr. Jackson's expressions help to introduce the practicality of just how modern amenities have become standard to a Caymanian way of life known globally for its high standard of living.

"Caymanian way of life" in today's terms is not what it was in yesteryear's terms. Firstly, the Caymanian demonym has so expanded to include naturalized foreign-nationals; indeed, "our Caymanian" way of life owes the brunt of its prosperity to incoming capital and incomers. Excessive motorcars per household, together with washing machines, dryers, and central air conditioning are not standard to a native Caymanian way of life but are indices of prosperity ultimately bequeathed to our society by an influential external western socio-economic ideology. The twentieth-century promise, to paraphrase Mr. Jackson, is premised on the normative western conception that material articles act not only as indicators of wealth but become standardized to a way of life indebted to the very forces of a *western*-impelled globalization.

The expressions of our two recent informants readily find their interpretation within the boundaries of a cultural logic pinioned on materialism. These informants have demonstrated a consciousness guided by a socio-economic ideology centered on experience and meaning: where Caymanianness asks the automatic question, "what does it mean to be Caymanian?", these informants' responses are based on their "prosperity experiences" and the ways in which these experiences give meaning to their Caymanian selves outside of the obvious ambit of history and tradition (*cf.* Olssen, 2006). Yet a similar ideological principle also applies to naturalized Caymanians, many of whom came to Cayman for a "piece of the pie." However, what complicates this principle in the latter's case is the likelihood of their diehard allegiance to their original national cultural orientations. Whereas native Caymanians have, *in situ*, developed attitudes revolving around prosperity and entitlement premised on *their* legitimacy as Caymanians, new Caymanians have either developed that attitude elsewhere or else after they moved to Cayman for a piece of the prosperity pie. Arguably thus, the ideological principle which undergirds their sense of Caymanianness may be viewed as illegitimate by certain native Caymanians who feel that *their* nativist sense of entitlement is irrevocably and inevitably tied to the land of their birth and/or ancestry.

Recognizing that Caymanians undifferentiated by native and naturalized states are at present keen to enjoy a prosperous lifestyle that comes as a result of globalization, this despite the rampant, COVID-indebted inflation

that continues to now buffet the Dependency, we should anticipate the inevitable ideological junctures at which a shared economic motivation diverges. On the surface, we begin to appreciate that the modern emphasis on living prosperously and perhaps wantonly will likely be at odds with a more conservative viewpoint dedicated, ostensibly, to upholding the modest past. Yet *below* the surface thrives a most complex, contradictory bulwark that, first, encourages us to question the extent to which some native Caymanians can reasonably continue to profess to be fierce preservers of a past sensibility as active participants in globalization themselves; and, second, draws attention to the necessity to keep native Caymanian traditions alive, while encouraging the creation of new Caymanian traditions indebted to globalization. In the social and cultural realities afforded by rhetoric and rhetorizing, these positions are indeed inherently contradictory, a contradiction bound no less to manifest itself within the parameters of another of globalization's driving forces, that of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism represents the cultural-cum-ideological stance taken by many nationals working in foreign countries, their view of 'assimilation or acculturation [to the host culture] as a violation of the integrity or dignity of the individual, whose cultural habits should be recognized fully as an integral element of the person's identity' (Gagnon & Iacovino, 2005, 26). Given, then, the rhetorical postures that delineate the diverging ideological positions between culturally conservative-cum-xenophobic Caymanians, on the one hand, and Caymanians more modern and liberal in their thinking, on the other, the assessments that immediately follow seek to question the extent to which this essential conflict continues to influence stereotypes generated by a decidedly practical, modern Caymanian way of life.

More concerned at this stage with discrete ideological positions among Caymanians, new Caymanians-slash-permanent residents who are married to native Caymanians, or who are genetically-related to native Caymanians in some way, are not analyzed. In 2008, those foreign-nationals that had earned the right to be Caymanian through naturalization 'without documented family ties to the islands' included some 1,136 people, a figure that has likely exponentially increased more than a decade on, even if specific data is not currently available (Williams, 2015). Our current concerns thus lie with how these new Caymanians view their

Caymanianness in relationship to the impositions of foreignness on them by native Caymanians.

War of words: Rhetoric, Stereotyping and "Caymanian" Culture

As we have seen in this chapter's prologue, culture is a rather unwieldy term that requires considerable unpacking in any national context if its emotional effects on a culturally differentiated society are to be truly appreciated. The historicized effects of this differentiation are especially illumined when the indigene, or native in question attempts to rhetorize her culture without attempting to define culture first. One native Caymanian, for instance, describes the "culture" of her people in terms of their possession of "distinctive characteristics:" for example, 'Caymanians don't like to make a fuss or show off'; 'they love their cars with a passion'; 'they stay away from public conflict'; '…they have a strong connection to nature and God'; 'they have a sense of humour'; [and] they are talkative and friendly' (Anonymous, 2010). Given her positive national stereotypes, she might have very well been one of the two thousand Caymanians who contributed to the national list of beliefs, completed in 1998, and which include: 'We Believe: In God and traditional Christian values; That all people have a responsibility to contribute to the good of the community; In the importance of a strong family unit', etc. (Craton, 2004, 417). It is safe to say that such beliefs and characteristics, independently or together, can be quite universal in their appeal and therefore may not be specific to a homegrown Caymanianness. This, however, does not mean that such characteristics cannot amass singular importance in the patriotic imagination.

At what point was this Caymanian able to arrive at these ostensibly pervasive Caymanian cultural characteristics? More to the point, how much of a role does bias play in the crafting and subsequent generalization of these characteristics? When, for instance, she states clearly and certainly that Caymanians do not like to make a fuss or show off, this has consistently been countered by the intimations of sixty new Caymanians, who were given open-ended questionnaires to fill out (2009). All of them had been living in Cayman for at least ten years, with no familial

connection to native Caymanians, either genetically or through marriage. Thirty of them were originally from Jamaica, the remaining thirty a mixture of Americans, Britons and Hondurans. As Jamaicans have consistently represented the largest expatriate group in Cayman, by 2019 representing just under a tenth of a population approaching 65,000, it was necessary that the new Caymanians among them be somewhat representative of this predomination. By 2010, Americans, Britons and Hondurans had represented, respectively, 3, 2 and 4 percent of Cayman's population (ESO, 2022).

Yet despite any ethnic differences among these respondents, 84 percent of them were inclined towards the option that 'native Caymanians are an entitled and proud set of people who only think of themselves', a response which, to be sure, would fundamentally impugn the official perhaps heartfelt national belief which sanctions '[t]hat the respect for Caymanian and non-Caymanian is important for social harmony' (Craton, 2004, 417). So too is the cultural certainty of the indigenous Caymanian's warmth and friendliness offset by the distinct "outsider" understanding that Caymanians are selectively xenophobic and even racist. Seventy-four percent of those new Caymanians questioned agreed that many native Caymanians either do not like foreigners or are racist. New Caymanian businessman Trevor Davies (2000) provides a prevalent – if harsh – understanding regarding the native Caymanians' profession of friendliness and the foreign-nationals' scoff at it:

> When will you [native Caymanians] stop trotting out the pat answer, "we are the most friendly people in the world", in response to any criticism of Cayman's attitude to foreign residents? Furthermore, to suggest expats came to Cayman because of its people is laughable. They came for various reasons, but none came because of that. And no, Caymanians are not particularly friendly. Ask any expatriate in confidence, not in public, and see what they say. They smile for…[the Cayman] dollar...

The foregoing statistics and their potentially attendant point(s) of view cast a grey pall on reflexive understandings which emphasize the positive traits of indigenous Caymanians. On the other hand, however, one may perhaps

be left with the unflattering, if grossly uncritical impression, that new Caymanians are only in Cayman solely for financial reasons.

One can see thus why certain native Caymanians regard expatriates as leeches, a regard that may well indict those native Caymanians who refuse to accept the cultural values that undergird materialism *only* when these values are exercised by those they consider to be outsiders. Beyond this, the vague, spatial, or geo-cultural identification outlined by the very first Caymanian informant earlier in this chapter (see page 250), encourages rhetorical mayhem in a society with a "hallowed," conservative, xenophobic lobby. Tim Edensor (2002, 38) put it especially well in his confirmation that '[w]hilst familiar spatial characteristic features provide anchors for spatial identity, they should not be imagined as testifying to a static landscape'. By detailing positive Caymanian characteristics that may wittingly or unwittingly be regarded in exclusive terms, indigenous Caymanians have opened themselves up to challenge by *other* Caymanians. Many indigenous Caymanians have come to view themselves as 'a daily plebiscite', if you will, an electorate in which cultural preservation is necessary (*Ibid*.). Yet with the various incoming cultural influences and corresponding lines of rhetoric intent on justifying the *human* presence of foreignness, this indigenous electorate can no longer legitimately profess to be the sole custodian of Caymanianness; neither can it exclusively profess to uphold the sacrosanct 'networks of beliefs and desires' essentially underwriting Caymanianness (*Ibid*.). Describing cultural Caymanian characteristics is one thing; defining these very same characteristics in the couched xenophobic binary of US and THEM is quite often, *synonymously* the *same* thing. Where the "us" in question refers to *certain* Caymanians, such seemingly benign, feel-good, self-possessed definitions as expressed above, invite pessimistic reveling in multicultural differences and the subsequent need either to justify or defend these differences. The result is a war of words based essentially on cultural bias, stereotyping, and weaponized rhetoric.

Where culture can be simplistically defined as the *entire* way of life based on the common experiences, behaviors, and beliefs of a group of people, such a definition cannot be unitary given the not-so-bizarre monolatry which seems to drive multicultural Caymanian rhetoric: as we shall see

throughout this chapter, many Caymanians differentiated by nationality and ethnicity might in some way recognize the other cultures around them, and are even likely to be influenced by them in some way; yet the consistent adherence to their own native sensibilities, in light of the importance of a *potentially* equalizing global cultural awareness, has brought more division than unity. The intention of the following subsections, then, is to both problematize and challenge the commonality of otherwise quotidian cultural Caymanian characteristics when present-day Caymanians are themselves hardly monolithic.

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On December 10, 2014, an incendiary exchange occurred between the second elected member for Bodden Town and his chief officer. Minister Osbourne Bodden and Chief Officer Jennifer Ahearn's tense confrontation not only starkly exposed a perennial national wound, but confirmed the culture war that has been part and parcel of Cayman's multicultural society since the advent of globalization in the late 1960s.

The argument in question hinged on the cabinet minister's angry reaction to his chief officer's determination, initially via a somewhat curt email response, that government calls he had made on his mobile phone would not be reimbursed, as no clear proof was provided that these calls were indeed related to government business. The two later confronted each other in the Minister's office, at which point the Minister launched an 'expletive-packed tirade' against his chief officer; 20 to 30 staffers could not but help to overhear the melee. The Minister brought it to his stunned chief officer's attention that 'I can make your life a living hell', before angrily informing her that '[y]ou aren't even Caymanian, you are like a piece of fucking driftwood', a not-so-couched xenophobic reference to Ms. Ahearn's new Caymanian status. Many Caymanians of all national persuasions immediately called for the Minister's resignation, although he was quick to apologize to his chief officer for his embarrassing and unprofessional outburst. Nonetheless, the damage had already been done and not two weeks following the incident, popularly known as "Ozziegate," the Minister was unceremoniously reshuffled into a new ministerial post by a nervous premier (Staff, Cayman News Service, 2014; 2015).

The minister's unfortunate choice of words transcends anecdote and rests firmly in the xenophobic tendencies shared by many native Caymanians. One need only to do a quick newspaper comment search on the internet to get a feel for how new Caymanians and expatriates are often seen as one of the same by those who consider themselves to be native sons and daughters. The chagrin of these sons and daughters is no more forcefully revealed in the area of employment, where many of them feel that they are being overlooked for the indistinguishable "foreigner." Correctly citing in 2014 that around 1900 Caymanians were unemployed, one commenter claiming to be a native Caymanian expressed the all-too familiar quip: 'Cayman has failed its people and [has] "made" [these islands] the people of elsewhere' (Staff, Cayman News Service, 2014). Another self-professed native Caymanian concurred in so many words: 'There are a lot of white collar Caymanians looking for work, but cannot get past the front door…[because] these [white collar] roles are held by expats [expatriates]' (*Ibid*.) 'Discrimination is ALIVE and well here', another native Caymanian offered; 'because it is true that native Caymanians are the ones being mistreated and unfairly paid' (Personal Interview 10, 2013). The latter Caymanian's conviction affords an initial peak into the vast expanse of the nativist justification for xenophobic articles of speech.

In the attempt to delimit, or classify, the ideologies that currently underwrite the Caymanian cultural vernacular, let us initially consider the following nativist Caymanian opinion with regard to the foreign-national (Berry, 2007a):

> *Give our people a chance and let them proceed themselves. If they mess up, it is their country. Every other country is already messed up. Why come here and try to destroy ours by being dictators?*

> *I am against expatriates coming to the country on a [work] contract for whatever time frame is given to them and being given another contract. They should not be given another contract to remain in this country regardless of how good they prove themselves to be.*

> *Then we will not end up in this mess that we are in today. There are many*
> *more places in the world, so go elsewhere.*

A decidedly xenophobic intent drives this entreaty. This Caymanian has expressed his fear of foreignness on two grounds: first, on the grounds of employment, he hints at expatriates' unfair advantage, succinctly expressed by another native Caymanian elsewhere: 'when they [foreigners] come here, they are usually more qualified…or preferred…than native Caymanians so they are [likelier] to get that job' (Personal Interview 9, 2009). Together with the putative local understanding that the lax work attitude among native Caymanians typically discourages their employment (*e.g.,* Cayman Net News, 2001; 2009), the native Caymanian extensively quoted just above has begun to demonstrate an enduring connection between his strong dislike for foreign-nationals and the idea that Caymanians are being unfairly treated with regard to employment that should rightfully be reserved for them, regardless of any qualificatory lack on their part. Second, the same Caymanian seems eager to link the idea of true Caymanianness outside of today's globalizing, multicultural situation, in the bid to authenticate the native Caymanian label in historical terms. However, this authentication seems not so much dependent on the unassuming social nature of Cayman in the decades leading up to the 1970s, but more so on the idea that "our country" has a historical basis that is the making of native Caymanians *only*. Caymanians of this rhetorical persuasion have assured themselves of a partial myth: indigenous Caymanians rightfully belong in Cayman because of their historical ancestral links to the Dependency, and any subsequent social mess is strictly the fault of the foreigner-cum-new Caymanian.

Yet what really makes a native, *indigenous* Caymanian nowadays? Is there such a thing when it is considered that Cayman represents, in J.A. Roy Bodden's words, 'a totally imported society', meaning that prior to 1734 Cayman could boast no long-established, native population (Bodden, 2017, 171)? As we continue to critically appraise xenophobic Caymanian sentiment in the multicultural present, past chairman of the Immigration Board of the Cayman Islands, David Ritch, believes that the term native – or *established* – Caymanian is indeed already "cloudy" because of the prevalence of multiculturalism and intermixing in Cayman society through

marriage especially. However, he is quick to establish that there is such a thing as an indigenous Caymanian based on the following criterion: An indigenous Caymanian must have at least one parent born in the Cayman Islands, which would mean that that particular 'person [has a] family history [rooted in the Cayman Islands] of at least three generations' (Markoff, 2006a). Bodden hesitantly shares Mr. Ritch's nativist view: 'Well, there are [fundamental] differences [between the indigenous Caymanian and the new Caymanian]…[and] I would consider anyone who has been here for three generations—three generations and more – [a native Caymanian]' (Personal Interview 9, 2008, 12). Bodden goes on to provide deeper insight into the idea of the historicity of indigenous Caymanianness in the midst of a newer, more modern dispensation:

> *Now, those of us [that is, our Caymanian ancestors] who came before, long ago from the formative years, early settlement periods, would by virtue of the fact of those years have certain established privileges that the more recent comers wouldn't have… So, I make the distinction…by saying (that) if you were here three generations or longer, then I have to consider you a Caymanian, in the same way that I am a Caymanian. But, now, that is not the legal definition, and, of course I was [criticized] when I launched my book for talking about established rather than indigenous Caymanians, I mean, [some Caymanians] wanted to take my hide off, or to separate me from my bones, you know, because they say, no, we ARE true Caymanians. And so, I put it to you that the distinction as it exists, or as it purports to exist, is not a legal one but, uh, probably a sociological or anthropological one, or even if we could say for our purposes, a historical one, but nevertheless it bears levy, it bears levy…(Ibid.).*

"True" Caymanians, it may be said, regard themselves as such by virtue of their ancestry, a virtue often accompanied with righteous indignation that can amount to a xenophobic exclusivist stance. Any such stance – even in the seemingly most insignificant of circumstances – speaks to the vigorous support for a Caymanian identity steeped in history, a fact that, for its supporters, should *legitimate*, *privilege*, and *vindicate* true Caymanians in the diluting multicultural present. Briefly focusing on the legitimacy end of this attitudinal tripartite, consider the expressions of native Caymanian Naomi Oyog. Incensed by a letter to the editor that questioned her status as an

indigenous Caymanian, Mrs. Oyog's response locates the brunt of its wrath in the intertwined notions of history and ancestry, although she does acknowledge her marriage to a foreign national: 'I wish to make it abundantly clear that I am very much a Caymanian by birth, born in Little Cayman, to Caymanian parents, both were Boddens, my ancestors from *many* generations back were residents of Little Cayman. My last name is obviously my married name, and I am close to the members of that family also' (*Cayman Net News,* 2008). Mrs. Oyog's view of her national self is at once nationalist: her reactive allegiance to her ancestry illuminates her perceived legitimacy as a native Caymanian (*e.g.*, Greenfield, 1992). Indeed, this "rightful" allegiance allows Mrs. Oyog to maintain her own traditional sense of Caymanianness which has been shaped by historical circumstance. Apart from being married to an American, this shaping signifies her belonging to an exclusive long-established Caymanian fraternity, a signification which has a nationalistic undertone, and which can, in the right circumstances, give rise to explicit nationalist expressions. We consider one of these "right circumstances" below.

Before we look at the remaining attitudes of vindication and privilege as these relate to xenophobic and nationalist pronouncements, it is important to provide a statistical overview of the major foreign-national groups represented in Cayman between 1995 and 2006. It was during this eleven-year span that a distinct native Caymanian reactionary logic reached its screaming crescendo. Jamaican expatriates had consistently formed the highest incoming nationality between 1995 and 2005: by 1995, 8,601 Jamaican expatriates worked in the Cayman Islands, this figure increasing by about 50 percent by 2005, when 12,032 Jamaican expatriates were reported to be living in the Cayman Islands. However, this figure decreased to 10,828 the following year as a result of the introduction of mandatory visas for Jamaicans who wished to live or visit Cayman, together with the further fine-tuning of the earlier implemented rollover policy. The implicated policy stipulated that nonessential expatriate workers had to leave the islands after seven years, and had to be out of the islands for at least one year before they could reapply for employment. Other substantial foreign nationals by 2006 included Filipinos, at 2,353; Canadians at 1,949; citizens of the United Kingdom at 1,822; citizens of the United States of America at 1,487; and Hondurans at 1,358 (ESO, 2022).

By 2006, then, 20,907 non-Caymanians resided in the Cayman Islands against 32,265 Caymanians who were not statistically divided into new Caymanians or established Caymanians, although Mr. Ritch estimated that same year that only 15,000 native Caymanians were believed to be in existence (Markoff, 2006a). In spite of any established Caymanian attempt to dichotomize Caymanians, between 1999 and 2006, the legal Caymanian population inclusive of new and established Caymanians had increased astonishingly; 5,071 legal Caymanians were born in this time span alone (ESO, 2022). We cannot be precisely certain of the statistical breakdown of the remaining 11,142 Caymanians, although it is likely that some foreign-nationals married into Caymanian families would have by then become eligible for Caymanian status, together with others who would have also been granted Caymanian status on the criterion of long-term residency. However, we can be certain that in 2003, 2,850 foreign-nationals were quickly granted Caymanian status, an act which, as we shall see, likely generates and informs xenophobic ideas about new Caymanians as veritable foreigners (Cayman Islands Government, 2022).

It was the ruling United Democratic Party (UDP) that awarded these status grants, stressing that their compulsion to do so was directly attributable to the fact that Cayman's government was coming under increasing pressure from the United Kingdom with regard to human rights infringements. Many expatriates, the UDP argued, were eligible for the award of Caymanian status and that they had not received their grant amounted to gross discrimination. According to the law at the time, foreign-nationals residing in Cayman for more than seven years were automatically eligible for Caymanian status. However, many native Caymanians, along with the Bar Association of the Cayman Islands and the Cayman Islands Chamber of Commerce, sought to overturn the grants, arguing that such a move was illegal as it was politically motivated (Bodden, 2007, 200). Established Caymanian Joseph Yates captured the angst of the time in his letter to the editor of *Cayman Net News* (2004):

> *I am calling upon all Caymanians: let's all rally together and bring the islands to a complete halt. The workforce should not go to work, instead we MUST go out and protest until the UDP steps down and changes what has been done. But there is one big problem we have here: our workforce*

probably contains half who are on the UDP side, who are the recipients of the now famous "Drive Thru Caymanian Status". Even so, don't let that stop us. I am willing to make my stance whatever it takes. Will other brave Caymanians follow?

We are in this position because we are too passive and proud, and have become too material minded and are so afraid to lose our high lifestyle and material possessions, Caymanians, wake up stand up forget about our foolish pride as our children's future is at stake here.

Personally, I don't hate any of the UDP members. I just do not agree with what they have done, especially being against the will of the majority of the Caymanian people. All of a sudden Human Rights has been granted in the name of Cayman Status, WHY did it take 14 months before the 2004 general elections for this to happen?

I am not against any nationality and am not blaming the Jamaicans or any other nationality for any of this because some of these people deserve Caymanian Status, but let's be prudent with it. This is a serious national issue that could turn against us in the long run.

Any legal attempt to overturn the UDP's exorbitant status grants was ultimately unsuccessful, as there were no preexisting legal loopholes at the time with which to repeal the action. Nonetheless, in July 2005, an amendment was added to the Immigration Law of 2005, limiting status grants to only four per calendar year and restraining 'Cabinet from making a grant except where it is recommended by the Immigration Board and validated by the Legislative Assembly' (Higginson, 2005). It came as no surprise that the UDP government was voted out of office in the 2005 general elections; many native Caymanians did not like the idea that so many "outsiders" had become legal Caymanians in so quick a course. The entreaty in the extensive quote above becomes even more compelling thus for the implied exclusivity that underwrites the Caymanian label: 'let us join together *all* Caymanians' reveals in the minds of certain native Caymanians the default illegitimacy of many new Caymanians.

As the functions of vindication and privilege are assessed relative to Caymanian nationalism-cum-xenophobia, Dawn Nothwehr's words (2008,

3) are worth quoting: '[h]uman beings are "hard-wired" to distinguish differences, and thus, there is a perennial need for people to give the differences distinguished among fellow humans significance, to interpret their meaning, and then, to act accordingly.' Mrs. Oyog had earlier shown that the basis of this social "hardwiring," which anticipates and subsequently explains the real Caymanian's sense of difference, rests on the belief in the ancestral legitimacy of the Caymanian past. Accordingly, it is not difficult to locate those Caymanians who feel that they are quickly becoming a minority in their own society, and who are likely to attach a decidedly xenophobic justification to the pervasive idea that foreign-nationals, some of them disguised as Caymanians, are receiving those unnamed privileges and benefits that ought to be reserved solely for natives. Herein lies these Caymanians' sense of privilege, the idea that such benefits ought to be reserved only for native Caymanians.

To cite a substantiating example of the foregoing, when St. Vincent-born Nicosia Lawson won the 2008 Miss Cayman title, one Caymanian professing to be native was quick to reveal her disgust that an expatriate without Caymanian heritage and ancestry could win such a title: 'The girl who won [Miss Cayman] is not Caymanian by birth, but she has her [status] papers', the respondent begins, '[and] I don't think it is fair because the true Caymanians who were up there couldn't win because [of this]…[this] really boils my blood' (Edwards, 2008). This expression is distinctly nationalist and xenophobic: the foreign-national masquerading as a Caymanian has become anathema for this Caymanian who is keen to invoke her own indigeneity, if by implication. This xenophobic perception of Ms. Lawson does not even entertain the legal basis on which her status as a Caymanian can be justified. As certain indigenous Caymanians continually seek to invoke an US/THEM differentiation, the likes of Ms. Lawson did not have the right to be conferred the title of Miss Cayman, as this right can emanate only from an ancestral-historical *Caymanian* condition. Instead, her legal designation as a new Caymanian has allowed her to circumvent this indispensable criterion for "true" Caymanianness. Ms. Lawson has effectively "stolen" what should have been any worthy, native Caymanian woman's dream and birthright, and thus she cannot legitimately be seen as Miss Cayman. Regardless of being raised in Cayman, Miss Lawson's perceived status as a foreigner feeds into the xenophobic Caymanian's

sense of vindication, where this sensibility attempts to justify, by argumentation and/or evidence, the various threats associated with large numbers of foreign-nationals in Cayman.

The concept of the new Caymanian, or the more derogatory "Paper Caymanian" was created and sustained by indigenous Caymanians who feel that they have become both a numerical and cultural minority in their own country. Patricia Estwick (2006) outlines the real Caymanian's angst and misery at the perceived loss of a traditional Caymanian way of life due to incoming foreign-nationals who are able to "easily" assume the role of *faux* Caymanians: 'AM I XENOPHOBIC…Because I am pro-Caymanian… Because I realize that I am a minority in my own country; [and] [b]ecause my culture is not embraced by the majority of new Caymanians[?]' Ms. Estwick continues to provide a pervasive native Caymanian understanding of the new Caymanian: 'About commitment by the new Caymanians, I agree they should be committed, however, residency and land ownership alone do not prove commitment and entitle one to be part of our community; our process must include impact on infrastructure and social harmony. Ask the new Caymanians what their answer is when a new acquaintance asks them "where are you from?"'

Throughout Ms. Estwick's classification of new Caymanians throbs the justification that it is unlikely that the latter will be able to contribute to any authentic Caymanianness because their lineages – and indeed their financial intentions and motivations – are not rooted in Cayman. A likely function of this discourse is to mobilize like-minded fellow Caymanians against the glut of incoming foreign-nationals for the purpose of preserving an already vague Caymanian way – vague in light of the pervasive effects of globalization, materialism, and multiculturalism on not-so-native-anymore Caymanians (*cf.* Degler, 1998, 3-20). By "othering" the new Caymanian, Ms. Estwick is keen both to demonstrate her perceived God-given right as a native Caymanian and justify the ground on which she builds her xenophobic argument. 'It is a serious concern as we now stand and look around in our little country', begins Lorenzo Berry (*Cayman Net News*, 2007a), 'which is being taken away by foreigners – expats who know nothing about how this country came to be; [just] [a]sk our older Caymanians and the seafarers'. In *his* nationalistic othering, Mr. Berry

further justifies the parasitic nature of foreign-nationals by juxtaposing them with his perception of the indispensable role of native Caymanians in transforming a materially austere past into an economically robust present: '…when Caymanians [were] [struggling] to build this country amidst mosquitoes and maiden plum and ticks, where were the expats? Nowhere to be found. As it now stands, they are taking…over. I say go back to where you really come from'. Mr. Berry's words confidently imply that the expatriates in question came to Cayman only after real Caymanians had tirelessly labored towards their islands' economic prosperity. However, is this really the case? Did native Caymanians make Cayman what it is currently, or was it the massive inflow of overseas investment and incoming workers? Although many would be inclined to agree with the latter viewpoint, by juxtaposing the idea of the true Caymanian with the expatriate-turned-new Caymanian, Caymanians like Ms. Estwick and Mr. Berry are very much in the process of justifying and confirming the native Caymanians' legitimacy in Cayman. This legitimacy ultimately determines the native's privilege in his geographical and cultural homeland in which he is convinced that he and his kind are becoming a minority. In their nationalist zeal, such Caymanians have established what Julia Kristeva has called a nationality code predicated on notions of lineage and history (Kristeva, 1993). These notions, in our context, amount to xenophobic reflections of the indigenous Caymanian's sense of belonging to, and rootedness in his Caymanian experience. This distinctly exclusivist scheme thus becomes indispensable for certain Caymanians keen to distinguish the true Caymanian from the synonymously regarded expatriate and new Caymanian.

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Yet there is a more accommodating native Caymanian outlook that is perhaps not as immediately noticeable as its nationalistic counterpart. 'As we move forward into greater globalization', begins James Bodden III (2010), 'we have no other choice but to accept diversity as an intricate and important facet of the business world. Ethnocentrism is no longer a tool of business'. The ethnocentric view that one's ethnic and/or cultural group is superior to all others is intimately related to what prolific twentieth century political scientist William Sumner (2012) calls folkways; in our context,

folkways refer to traditional Caymanian ways of doing, thinking, and being, which have become so idealized that they are regarded as superior to any incoming ways by virtue of their historical specificity and perhaps little else. In this sense, ethnocentrism and the foregoing nationalist-xenophobic lines of thought both hold that Caymanianness is inevitably more legitimate than an incoming foreignness in search of permanence.

As an indigenous Caymanian, Mr. Bodden challenges any ostensibly entrenched line of Caymanian thought by supplanting *Caymanian* with *the individual*: 'As…individual[s] we should always be willing to understand. Each person is different, with differing likes and behaviors' (2010). Mr. Bodden's pronouncements are indeed being driven by a logic that can positively accompany globalization, and that is guided by notions of benevolent individualism. In the context of a global capitalism admittedly fashioned on the rules and regulations of the west, such pronouncements nonetheless assume a more essential, legalist undertone implicating Susan George's (2003, 15-33) conception of the globalization of human rights. George simply posits that given the rich-poor disparities caused by globalization, greater effort should be made to treat the incoming "losers" – the blue collar and menial workers – just as the prosperous winners – the incoming investors and stockbrokers (*Ibid*.). Implicit in Mr. Bodden's expression, then, is that globalization is indeed necessary if Caymanians are to be ensured of their prosperity, and therefore those who consider themselves native Caymanians especially should respect these vital incoming purveyors and accept them, on an individual basis, for who they are; this fundamentally speaks to the imperative that Caymanians should try, at the very least, to tolerate incoming cultural sensibilities and positions that may prove different than their own.

In the minds of Mr. Bodden and those of his persuasion, it seems likely that there is an enduring connection between the respectable treatment of "outsiders" and a vibrant economy. 'In the end', begins the editor of the now defunct *Cay Net News* Newspaper (Seales, 2006), another Caymanian with a decidedly modern philosophy based on inclusion, 'this country must recognize the need to grow and that means accepting the fact that those not born here will contribute and make their lives in this country. And we need to make that as attractive as possible if we are to keep the

highly skilled and diverse work force we need to maintain our economic success'. John Ebanks (2006) illuminates the foregoing position: '[We should ensure] that there is a process in place where neither Caymanians, [new Caymanians], visitors, nor residents feel ostracized. It's about being able to create employment opportunities for our own, while providing a non-hostile, crime-free climate for present and future citizens, visitors, and local and foreign investors'. Although Mr. Ebanks' expression is noticeably balanced and inclusionary, his entreaties are ultimately being guided by economic considerations; at this juncture, one gets the impression that had Cayman's economy not been prosperous, the exclusive/inclusive Caymanian-driven dichotomy would not be as intense as it presently is.

Certain forward-thinking Caymanians are usually also mindful of the relative importance of their unassuming ancestral past to any present economic condition. Consider the words of the leader of the -then opposition UDP party in 2006, McKeeva Bush, that partly echo Mr. Berry's understanding (see pages 258-259), if without a bristling xenophobic edge: 'Cayman was built by the sweat and blood of our people', Mr. Bush begins, 'but we couldn't have done it without the help of outsiders' (Markoff, 2006b). Mr. Bush, unlike Mr. Berry or Ms. Estwick, considers the ways in which foreign-nationals substantively contributed to Cayman's economic boom. Nonetheless, he is careful to preempt this contribution by pointing to the "indispensable" economic groundwork established by native Caymanians in the first place, thereby confirming his position as a modern-thinking Caymanian with traditionalist tendencies. This Caymanian way of thinking is highly realistic in that, while it is premised on a somewhat idealistic understanding of the past, it is also careful to incorporate the present prosperous reality into its professions of human-national equality.

It would be useful at this juncture to consider how native Caymanians split between xenophobic inclination and multicultural accommodationism are likely to interpret certain modern features of their society differently, specifically with regard to the ways in which economic globalization has ushered in an unprecedented era of crime. Although the Economic and Statistics Office of the Cayman Islands (ESO) does not provide any breakdown statistics on crime, there is evidence, according to the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service (RCIPS, 2021), with which to support an

increase over the years in petty crimes like burglary and more serious offences like murder and rape. It is true that with the advent of globalization, crime in Cayman has been on the precipitous rise – at least until the COVID-19 pandemic reached the shores of Cayman in the first quarter of 2020. In the first five months of 2020, for instance, 1588 criminal offences were committed. This represented an 11.9 percent decrease in criminal activity from the same period the previous year, likely attributable to the introduction and tenacious enforcement of lockdown protocols due to COVID-19 from March of 2020. Substantial criminal offences throughout the implicated period included sexual crimes, bodily violence, drugs and firearm crimes, public disorders, and crimes of an acquisitive nature. How, in the initial analysis, would Caymanians either conservative or liberal in their cultural viewpoint interpret this otherwise unspecific statistical picture?

A Caymanian with a decidedly xenophobic outlook would perhaps respond to the foregoing in this way: 'If you want to get rid of crime, round up all the foreigners that don't have jobs and send them back where they came from. Idle time makes troublesome neighbors. If you are not working you have a lot of time to be mischievous!' (Cayman Net News, 2004). On the surface of it, this declarative makes common sense: if foreign-nationals aren't working, then it is reasonable to think that they are more likely to commit crime and so should be made to return to their respective original jurisdictions. However, that there have been no published statistics illuminating the extent to which foreign-nationals have contributed to crime in Cayman, this Caymanian, despite employing an infectiously rational one-sided logic, is in the act of supposition prompted by the so-called chaotic present in which the foreign-national is accorded the brunt of the blame. Furthermore, this respondent does not stop to consider that in 2004 unemployment was higher among Caymanians at around 10 percent; roughly, one in ten Caymanians was unemployed at this time; by the close of 2020, the unemployment rate among registered Caymanians stood at 8.3 percent, while expatriate unemployment around the same time was 5.2 percent (Klein, 2021a). When we stop to consider the words of our most recent Caymanian informant, some of us would perhaps be left with the extrapolated impression that because native Caymanians have become so underrepresented in the mind of this informant, even Caymanian

unemployment rates should be viewed suspiciously because of the preponderance of new Caymanians – leading to the bigoted, penetratingly uncritical conclusion that any rampant criminality is *the* foreigners' fault, regardless of their Caymanian status.

Continuing to play devil's advocate, Cayman society was relatively crime-free before the advent of globalization, so it stands to reason that foreign-nationals *must* be behind any hyper-criminality. Yet what is not as immediately appreciated in a truly honest, well-meaning way is the extent to which globalization can drive even native Caymanians to criminality, Caymanians who may, for instance, find themselves on the outside of Cayman's prosperity story for a variety of reasons. Thus globalization becomes less about an expatriate-driven criminality and more about generalized intensified disparities of wealth that are evident among even native Caymanians. For the Caymanian recently quoted, the foreign-national becomes the obligatory target in a discourse representative of a response to Cayman's burgeoning crime problem. In this sense, although this respondent's declarative ought to be expanded to include those Caymanians who are contributing to the crime problem, such an inclusion would necessarily, *essentially*, defeat his confident, somewhat glib xenophobic bravado. The psychological nub of this Caymanian's subliminal disparagement of the foreign-national becomes more significant at this point: by casting them as "them," he has, in effect, elevated himself and his fellow native Caymanians outside of the ambit of criminality, while revealing a persistent xenophobic contempt for everything foreign. It is not difficult to attach the xenophobic attitude of the likes of Ms. Estwick and Mr. Berry to the expressions of this respondent, in the process laying bare the ideological basis for *any* spirited Caymanian call for the repatriation of foreign-nationals.

In contrast, the likes of Nasaria Suckoo, while realistically acknowledging the crime problem, would not be working within the ideological parameters of her conservative counterparts who often subscribe to irrational-slash-one-sided justifications for the wide-scale repatriation of expatriates. Like Mr. Bush and Mr. Ebanks, Ms. Suckoo (2007) is aware of the fact that Cayman's present reality has largely been determined by a

foreign influence. Let us consider her expressions with special reference to Jamaicans:

> *I am Caymanian and I have seen the increase in crime, felt discrimination and have often been angered by how outsiders view us. Cayman and Jamaica are too close, in history and proximity, to waste time pointing fingers. How about thinking up ways we can all solve our problems, and yes that includes the many crimes and atrocities perpetrated by our own people.*

Ms. Suckoo readily acknowledges an increase in crime in Cayman. She is also attempting to validate the wider concerns of her conservative counterparts in her stress that, like them, she too has experienced righteous anger generated by condescending foreign-nationals. However, her views are not one-sided, neither are they essentially driven by xenophobic considerations. Instead, Ms. Suckoo demonstrates an equanimity of thought which can be unraveled in historical and realistic terms: in the historical sense, her recognition of Cayman's historical and political ties to Jamaica becomes an enduring symbol in Cayman's evolution from three little known islands to one of the world's largest offshore financial centers; ostensibly without duplicitous intent, Ms. Suckoo is acknowledging Jamaica's indispensable position in the history of a currently prosperous Cayman. In a realistic sense, Ms. Suckoo, like Mr. Ebanks and Mr. Bush, is eager to present a full picture of Cayman's present condition, although she goes a step further by openly stating that Caymanians are also very much a part of the crime problem. The underlying idea is that, yes, Cayman is prosperous, and, yes, prosperity does come with a price; however, foreign-nationals *cannot* be the sole cause of Cayman's crime woes and so should not be unfairly singled out for outsized discrimination. The imperative that foreign-nationals not be singled out inexorably returns to the idea of their ultimate importance to a prosperous Caymanian way of life: the reality created by globalization makes this imperative possible in the first place given that globalization and its various local success stories are substantively built on the back of incomers. More importantly, however, certain Caymanians who adopt an accommodationist posture do not solely rely on idealistic notions of the past and their xenophobic offshoots, but are

nonetheless quick to acknowledge the links between the past and the present in their quest to live in the prosperous *here and now*.

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Together with those native Caymanians more liberal in their outlook, new Caymanians are also fighting back against a biting nativism, further evidence that the latter regard themselves as bona fide, productive, law-abiding Caymanians. The defensive retorts prompted by this kind of outlook is superlatively foregrounded in the leadership of the *Cayman Compass* by 2013. Once called the *Caymanian Compass*, in June 2013 the ailing newspaper was bought by Pinnacle Media Corporation, a long-standing communications group in Cayman owned by power couple Vikki and David Legge. Americans by origin, the Legge's were granted Caymanian status in the 1990s. Accordingly, the change in the paper's ownership also marked a shift in its ideological underpinnings to reflect a viewpoint immersed, for some, in snooty liberalism sanctioned by the island's largest investor. Proponents of liberalism, in general, are champions of societies that thrive on free and fair trade, heightened economic competition facilitated by the reduction of national barriers, tariffs, and hawkish government oversight. Additionally, liberals tend to advocate a well-honed sense of human equality that aims to protect the rights of incomers from the perfunctory xenophobic posturing of many, if not most, indigenes.

On September 17, 2014, Vikki Legge (2014), the *Cayman Compass'* -then new editor-in-chief, published an editorial entitled 'In search of a united Cayman'. The editorial came as an indirect response, concurring with a recommended report prepared by the international accounting firm Ernst and Young regarding the government's need to downsize and privatize various aspects of its portfolio, including healthcare, telecommunications, and waste management, etc. Despite the liberalist recommendations, the government, perhaps at the behest of that chunk of its electorate that comprises its indeed too-big civil service, proved resistant to the recommendations of the report. Yet it was the premier's remarks toward the *Compass* itself that brought the government's resistance to the Ernst and Young report and the *Compass'* countenance of it into stark contrast. During a news briefing, Premier Alden McLaughlin, speaking directly to the

Compass, remarked, 'please don't come to my country and tell the people of this country that it's better to do it this way because that's how they did it where you come from' (Duncan, 2014). The premier's cynical remarks immediately conjured up images that, depending on one's position, stood either as an affirmation of spirited patriotism or the poisonous manifestations of a vengeful anti-foreign mentality. That the premier's simmering tirade was meant for Caymanians – the Legges – irrevocably and unapologetically drew attention to the US/THEM divide that drives Caymanianness at present. It is not entirely unlikely that in the premier's mind, the Legge's criticism of him and his government's policies placed them squarely in the crosshairs of "Caymanian contempt' regardless of their Caymanian status. However, this cannot be the complete picture given the likelihood that native Caymanians who happened to disagree with the premier here would likely not have been referred to as outsiders by him. On the obverse, although the Legge's arguably anti-government stance is branded foreign in this instance, even likelier is that it is their actual foreignness that is being, firstly, implicitly justified, and then used against them; as if to imply, the Legge's are originally Americans, an originality that can never be eclipsed by their *Caymanian* naturalization. This fact therefore carries with it an enduring eternality and can work toward diminishing and delegitimizing any criticism the *Compass* may have especially reserved for the PPM government. It is worth quoting the editorial at length (Legge, 2014):

> *Consider for a moment what that means: It is a preemptive renunciation of all advice (regardless of its sagacity) coming from any foreigner (regardless of his or her education or expertise), with the sole basis for that rejection being that the person is "not Caymanian."*

> *Where would we be now, if 50 years ago the government had been so antagonistic toward Guyanese-born attorney Bill Walker when he arrived with his wealth of knowledge, amassed in England and Canada, which he (in concert with Caymanians) then used to help draft local laws that sparked what we now call the "Cayman miracle"?*

> *Mr. Walker shattered the archetypical patterns of human subsistence that had previously held sway in Cayman — that is, the men go off to sea and the women stay behind.*

Ironically, the Premier would acknowledge, some two months after this editorial was published, that the immigration system 'was working well', in light of the fact that according to certain statistics, some 5,600 people had been granted Caymanian status or permanent residency between 2008 and 2014 (Duncan, 2014). Nonetheless, his initial contribution to the intra-Caymanian discursive row two months before is at once reflective of a native Caymanian sensibility which clamors for entitlement in its original jurisdiction, together with the new Caymanian imperative to justify its presence in Cayman. This justification hinges on the enduring fact that foreign input is necessary to Cayman's continued economic prosperity. In an age where everything, it seems, boils down to economics, this seems a powerful enough justification that, through its human enablers, reserves the definite right to overcome any other ideological cleavages prompted by coexisting nationalities.

The editorial in question also defended the new Caymanian's indispensable role in Cayman by firstly foregrounding the importance of foreign-nationals at an earlier time. Walkers is at present considered to be a true Caymanian law firm, but many native Caymanians would perhaps be surprised to know that the original "Caymanian" Walker was a foreign-national, as was Sir Vassel Johnson, the *Jamaican-cum-Indian* who created the legal framework responsible for Cayman's prosperity. The connection in these instances could not be any more revealing: some great Caymanians were once foreigners, but on the contrary, their foreignness was never used against them, but worked towards cementing their *Caymanian* credit.

The *Compass'* editorial reflects the views of many new Caymanians. Amy, an accountant originally from Tampa, Florida who gained Caymanian status in 1999 stressed that 'I know that I am a paper Caymanian and that's really OK [with] me…I love this place (Cayman) and I am more than pulling my [economic] weight'. When prompted further on what she thinks makes her a Caymanian, Amy (2012, 3) stated, 'I have [Caymanian] status; got it fair and square because I met the eligibility requirements and because

I have been contributing to the economy for quite some time'. Hyacinth, originally a Jamaican and a former high school teacher who has been living in Cayman since the 1970s, still could not understand why '[native] Caymanians are the way they are…they act as if they alone made Cayman the economic success story that it is, without realizing the importance of foreigners' (2013, 5). 'I have never seen myself as a Caymanian although I have status', remarked another new younger Caymanian with Honduran roots. '…I have been living here since the 1980s; it's all I know…I wouldn't fit in anywhere else…they [native Caymanians] don't accept me, but I accept my status and my contribution to this economy' (Personal Interview 11, 2013, 6). The sense of Caymanianness that pervades these accounts is at once driven by the brunt of their speakers' contributions to Cayman's economy coupled with their legal status as Caymanians.

Responding to Minister Bodden's tirade against his chief officer (see page 257), a commenter professing to be a new Caymanian makes the implicit link between the new Caymanian's national worth and the potential indispensability of his economic contribution (Staff, Cayman News Service, 2014): 'As a Team Driftwood member, I want to also state that [Minister] Bodden has lost my few hundred dollars a month at Lorna's Texaco, his liquor store and Grapetree Cafe'. This Caymanian has in effect asserted his Caymanianness by threatening to deprive a supposedly xenophobic native Caymanian of *her* financial contribution. 'I don't like how I am treated by [native] Caymanians', begins yet another Caymanian who received Caymanian status in 2005 (Personal Interview 12, 2013, 5). 'I have contributed to the good standing of this society and I am still seen as an outsider. It doesn't matter what I do… [I am tainted] by my Jamaican roots'. 'It's so frustrating jumping through hoops…to even play in the first place', begins a frustrated new Caymanian musician (Personal Interview 13, 2013, 4):

> I don't think that some Caymanians realize how hard it is to be an expat
> musician here. I just want to play because I am a musician and musicians
> form bands to play with other creative minds and if you're lucky to meet the
> right combination of people, you can perform to other people who may enjoy
> listening! Wouldn't it be awesome if we could all play together, encourage

each other and create music in an artistic way - it's shouldn't be a competition - it should be [about] art, where we grow together in synergy.

Although a Caymanian, it is interesting to note how this originally English woman invokes, if by provocation, her sense of difference by initially labeling herself an expatriate and not a Caymanian. This *non-economic invocation*, it could be persuasively, if *contrarily* argued, in turn automatically *others* the antagonistic bogey man that is the native Caymanian, but with the added, perhaps disingenuous counter-effect of tacitly *encouraging* solidarity among the other coexisting nationalities in Cayman. Is this perhaps a tit-for-tat reaction, a coded, defensive rhetorical posture meant as an end unto itself?

Although the preceding informant appears to be pleading for unity, her pleas could be understood to be implying a far-reaching segregation undergirded by stereotypic postures that must, together with native Caymanian animosity, also be addressed before we can ever hope to overcome our ideological cleavages as Caymanians. A useful starting point to our present analysis rests in the epic Caymanian figure and billionaire, Kenneth Dart, owner of Dart Container, makers of enhanced Styrofoam products. Elsewhere, the Dart name is at once synonymous with national strife. Some time in the 1990s, Dart gave up his American citizenship and moved to Belize. Aware of his intention to avoid paying taxes, the Clinton administration responded to Dart's move by imposing even stricter federal tax regulations. Such regulations were meant to target American businessmen who stood to gain either from sanitizing their perhaps ill-gotten gains outside of the US, or else placing their profits beyond the reach of the International Revenue Service. Apart from Styrofoam products, Dart became well-known for his lucrative, if suspicious, hedge funds and for financing debt-ridden countries like Belize, Greece, Brazil, and Argentina. In 2001, Dart sued the defaulted Argentinian government for its failure to repay the finances that he had previously invested in the -then flailing Argentinian economy. As of late 2014, The Argentinian government still owed Dart $385 million (Williams, 2015, 155*)*.

Yet Dart, who now has Caymanian status, and who seems a specter in that he is not easy to get to or see, has done more to grow Cayman's economy

than any other businessman. His economic contributions would therefore indicate his investment in Cayman, and, accordingly, for those Caymanians recently quoted, he should be seen as a Caymanian. The *Cayman Compass* has written as much. Citing the great extent to which Dart's various hotel, roads, and business- projects have created jobs and strengthened the economy, the *Cayman Compass'* editorial support (2004) for the Caymanian mogul is clear:

> *Without the [various] deal[s] — without the [West Bay] road closure — there would be no Kimpton [hotel] project, and no new jobs or economic opportunities — ends that are well worth the means. If Cayman wishes to continue to experience real economic progress, fancifully filed lawsuits should never be allowed to forestall developments of considerable consequence.*

Despite Dart's contributions to securing the growth of an economy that depends on expatriates in some form or another, many native Caymanians have argued that his help has come at a cost. In 2011, the government and Dart, as part of the infamous ForCayman Alliance, negotiated a land transfer that would simultaneously give Dart various concessions while removing a historical piece of crown land from the public domain. The - then government under Premier McKeevah Bush, agreed to give Dart about 200 feet of a public road along the Seven Mile Beach stretch and the adjoining beach and landside properties in return for duty waivers and other concessions on incoming goods, together with Dart's commitment to deal with Cayman's growing trash problem. 'He's taking everything', remarked an especially angry Caymanian who identified himself as a native (Personal Interview 14, 2014, 4), 'and pretty soon, we will be living in Dart Land!' Another native Caymanian proved just as blunt: 'Dart is the main orchestrator of segregation in Cayman. He comes here, uses his financial weight to buy us out, kills our heritage [and culture] in the process, and [encourages] segregation that…[benefits] well-to-do expats (2009b)'.

The words of native Caymanian Brent Mclean (2007) captures the mood of the foregoing respondents: 'Time [in Cayman]…used to be hard but we have made it a wonderful place for our children to grow up and if we

continue to allow people to come from outside and dictate to us, and segregate us in our homeland, then very soon we will have nothing proud to leave behind for our future generations'. Apart from implying the presence of xenophobic foreboding upon a sort of Caymanian nationalist sentiment, Mr. McLean's expressions constitute a system of knowledge shaped and created on Cayman soil, and covering an array of abstract understandings specifying national values, beliefs, and experiences. Such expressions, when grouped, establish a decidedly reflexive perception of the native Caymanian's distinctive characteristics. These characteristics are then infused with a historical-traditionalist symbolism in line with Mr. McLean's implication that any authentic sense of Caymanianness has its basis in a history forged solely by the native Caymanian people. Thus, by highlighting a very possible link between understandings of authentic Caymanianness and the inherent differences between Caymanian and foreign-national, between Caymanian and *Caymanian*, Mr. McLean's affirmation that Caymanians have become segregated, or isolated, by "others" in their own land should be placed within a specific cultural understanding from which xenophobic undertones emanate. Mr. McLean is lamenting the dilution of a traditional Caymanian way of life, and the frustrated tenor of his articulation comes as an unmistakable byproduct of the popular impression that real Caymanians are becoming outnumbered in their own jurisdiction. Were we to follow this frustration through to its logical conclusion, we would likely stumble upon a discourse dedicated to the necessity of exclusion, a discourse indeed triggered by globalization and, more precisely, multiculturalism. Herein lies the rationale for a brand of nativist rhetoric created *because* of the prosperous present, but stubbornly redesigned to uphold "the way things were and still should be." Mr. McLean's words, it may be further argued, are well out of keeping with the tone of their modern creating space which is forcefully premised on values and ideals spanning "the way things are and *ought* to be." According to the latter criterion, Dart and other new Caymanians unquestionably belong in and indeed *to* Cayman. Yet although, in accordance with the previous argument, expatriation and multiculturalism *ought* to be, they are not pristine creatures that are above and beyond creating national strife.

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The impasse is great at this point and ostensibly insurmountable; Caymanians are desperately torn. Some of us believe that the new Caymanian should be embraced, in large part because of their economic and financial contribution to Cayman. Others of us believe that native Caymanians are an endangered species that should be shielded from the iconoclastic, annihilating tendencies of new Caymanians; after all, the argument goes, the latter will ruin true Caymanian culture because, given their expatriation, they can *never* be true Caymanians in the first place. Roy Bodden has referred to this ever-growing chasm as '…a toxic rivalry [that] has spawned an unhealthy duality which, with no prospects for a rapprochement, leaves the Cayman Islands, as a society, at risk of failing' (Whittaker, 2015). While the author does not agree that our society is at risk of literally failing, given the sheer economic clout that globalization wields regardless of this or that culture war, Bodden presents us with a useful black and white binary, or dichotomy, that we all tend to agree with. Nonetheless, beyond this US/THEM dynamic, there are certain greying areas that we tend to overlook. In our globalized, multicultural, politically-correct, binaristic world, genteel responses usually boil down to, "I agree that new citizens should be embraced and disagree with natives who cannot seem to jettison their irrational xenophobia." While in its reactionary impulse, new Caymanian rhetoric tends to be more positive in its long-term objectives, it becomes necessary to scrutinize the possible grey area in which this positive message is *practiced* as opposed to compellingly, if vacantly *expressed*. Although the new Caymanians dealt with in this chapter tend to belabor unity, are they themselves united regardless of their ethnic and racial orientation? And although they clamor to be recognized and embraced by native Caymanians as bona-fide Caymanians themselves, are they still likely to stereotype against natives and voluntarily segregate themselves from the tacit dread of nativism? In other words, were native Caymanians right all along about the iconoclastic motives of new Caymanians and expatriates in general?"

A possible preliminary response to these conflicted questions may be found in the decidedly liberal-cum-new Caymanian understanding that certain native Caymanians love to complain that they are jobless, when they either are not qualified for the job in question or else they do not want certain jobs deemed below them. 'When will Caymanians realize that they are not

entitled to a job just because they were born here', a new Caymanian offered, seemingly unaware of the irony of her words: in a reality where many new Caymanians want to be embraced by native Caymanians, new Caymanians of this rhetorical persuasion, perhaps by force of habit or circumstance, seem to harbor a grudge that they are keen to morally legitimate; as if to say *those native Caymanians started it, so all is fair in love and war*. 'They don't want certain jobs'; 'They have themselves to blame'; 'Whenever they get a job, many of them go for one day and don't go back because they don't like the nature of the work they were hired to do' (Questionnaire, 2009a). Such expressions hardly need any qualifying context when we consider the prevalence of the "Caymanian" imperative to odiously differentiate.

The *Compass* idea that 'Caymanians aren't hiring Caymanians' helps to continue the schism between Caymanians differentiated by ethnicity. The editorial continues (2015): 'we have approximately 20,000 work permits in place and an estimated 2,000 so-called unemployed Caymanians. What is the disconnect? Why would any sane employer prefer foreign workers to qualified, motivated Caymanians?' Perhaps because many of the employers in question are themselves likelier to invest in hiring the so perceived "hyper" productive foreign-national who can be synonymous with the new Caymanian. There is no statistical breakdown of the number of Caymanian employers differentiated by nationality or origin, for why would there be when *all* Caymanians are supposed to be equal under the law? Yet this is precisely the point, given that the legal equality of Caymanians may be, depending on the type of Caymanian in question, pervasively unequal in the arena of public opinion and corporate hiring practices even. Where stereotypes abound, conflict becomes the *sine qua non* of coexisting ethnicities that share the same nationality.

Those who think as the previous new Caymanian respondents do were given precious fodder when a recent local job drive created to give unemployed, unqualified Caymanians a chance at employment only summoned the interest of six Caymanians. Native Caymanian Twyla Vargas had this response for the low turnout (*Ibid.*):

> *There is obviously many reasons why expatriates are being hired over Caymanians and other Caribbean Countries [sic]. We ourselves have allowed that to happen because (1) We never look out for each other like they do, and yes we could work on our attitude much better instead of displaying anger at the reception desk. However, we must remember too that the foreigner will go to extreme lengths, and they do whatever they can to prove they are right for the job. If we then cannot be competitive, then be prepared to [lose] it. Some may not agree to hear these comments, but that is the way I see it.*

The foregoing quote, together with the ideational trend which preceded it, all have one thing in common; they are driven by stark underlying *black/white* stereotypes which, in their uncritical, anecdotal strength, have become widely accepted and profoundly entrenched. Discrimination cannot but seem inevitable, then, especially among those native Caymanians who are more than qualified yet still find themselves miserably unemployed.

The *Compass'* editorial team makes abundantly clear that harmony and unity are necessary goals towards 'bringing greater prosperity to these islands and its inhabitants…be they Caymanian or otherwise' (*Ibid.*). We return to the dictum that everything all boils down to economics. The new Caymanians recently assessed have consistently maintained that their economic output necessarily renders them productive, legitimate citizens of Cayman society. This sense of solidarity correlates to Frederik Barth's integrative economic inter-ethnicity (1969). Simplified, new Caymanians differentiated by ethnicity tend to hold economic views that promote unity and integration. Yet the extent to which these new Caymanians actually integrate, or attempt to integrate, is open to challenge. Posed another way, how many new Caymanians have really taken this bonding economic message to heart in their dedication to achieve a united society so currently plagued by social and cultural disunity?

In the initial analysis, segregation is very much an issue in Cayman. In a questionnaire distributed to just under 200 new Caymanian adults, an overwhelming 93 percent of informants questioned confessed to segregating themselves ethnically. None of these Caymanians at the time

of their questioning had any native Caymanian connections. Fifty of the respondents identified themselves as Americans, 40 as Canadians, 80 as Jamaicans, 15 as Filipinos, and the remaining 40 as Britons. Over 90 percent of the Americans, Canadians, Filipinos, and Britons questioned confirmed that they were more comfortable with members from either their own race or ethnic group. In contrast, 38 percent of Jamaicans questioned felt the same way, suggesting that Jamaican-Caymanians may be more open to interacting with other races, and less concerned about their culture becoming diluted because of such interactions. Seventy-four percent of Americans expressed misgivings with allowing their kids to interact with other Caribbean kids for fear that the latter's cultural awareness would rub off on them; there is the distinct American-Caymanian fear that interaction will result in their kids not speaking proper English or dressing in an "inappropriate style." The majority of Britons and Canadians questioned held similar views, at 78 percent and 82 percent, respectively. For the Filipinos and Jamaicans questioned, this was a non-issue, a result that perhaps points to the idea that cultural groups from developing countries are not too concerned about the diminishment of their practiced culture in general (Questionnaire, 2009b).

The majority of Jamaicans and Filipinos – well over 90 percent in each group – questioned also felt that white people were in general responsible for endemic segregation in Cayman. When interviewed further, a Filipino-Caymanian had this to say: 'They think that they are better than everyone else, especially white Americans'. According to a Jamaican-Caymanian, 'they [white, new Caymanians in general] regard their cultures as superior and treat everybody else with disdain'. Such views seem compatible with the statistical reality that largely white ethnic groups in Cayman are likelier to segregate themselves. Inversely, developed ethnicities have expressed similar sorts of impressions about Jamaicans especially. 'Jamaicans and Filipinos have a strong sense of identity precisely because they stick to themselves', a Canadian-Caymanian expressed, instantaneously giving voice to the 87 percent of concurring Canadian-Caymanians utilized. According to a Scottish-Caymanian, 'they [Jamaicans] congregate amongst themselves, something that keeps their culture and unique language alive'; eighty percent of her fellow-Britons agreed with her. 'Ethnicities in Cayman tend to segregate naturally', offered one American-Caymanian

who seemed to be utilizing the term ethnicity to refer only to non-white groups. His offering reflected 76 percent of his fellow American-Caymanians. While some of the preceding Caymanian views hint at the hushed presence of racism and ethnocentrism in Cayman, they more so explicitly draw our attention to the likelihood that new Caymanians undifferentiated by race and ethnicity, may express solidarity in their economic worth, but otherwise exhibit ethnocentric tendencies when it comes to coexisting with their fellow-Caymanians (*Ibid.*).

Speaking with a group of Canadian, Jamaican, American, and Caymanian students, the author was increasingly more inclined to the view that segregation in Cayman is often generated by nationality, race, and the ethnocentric undercurrents they transmit. A Canadian-Caymanian student proved blunt in his assessments: 'It's probably true that many Canadians in Cayman, regardless of having [Caymanian] status or not, segregate themselves from islanders especially. I know many Canadian parents who don't want their kids hanging out with [native] Caymanian or Jamaican kids because they are afraid that they will speak and act like them'. When questioned why Canadians would act in this way, the student had this to offer: 'I don't know…I guess they want to maintain their culture'. 'Americans are usually the same way', another student interjected. 'I hate to say it, but we [Americans] tend to think ourselves better than everyone else, and like-minded people tend to congregate' (Williams, 2021).

Conclusion

It is an enduring truism that ethnic familiars tend to gravitate towards each other wherever they reside because of their obvious social similarities and cultural affiliation-cum-orientations. With this truism in mind, the author set out to glean deeper insight into just why certain stereotypical understandings are imposed on certain ethnic groups by other coexisting ethnic groups. One such understanding foregrounds, for instance, the perception into why only mainly Jamaicans, Indians, and Filipinos shop at a certain local supermarket on Friday nights, while their phenotypically lighter counterparts tend to shop at higher end, more expensive supermarkets at the same time. 'I won't shop at that Foster's [supermarket] on Fridays because it is always full of Jamaicans', a white Cuban-

Caymanian once confided (Personal Interview 15, 2014, 5). '[That] Foster's supermarket is always so full…it's like a ghetto in there'; the American-Caymanian who nonchalantly expressed this observation has managed to insinuate derogatory race-talk into ostensibly race-less rhetoric given the racial connotations usually associated with the ghetto lifestyle. There is no doubt that segregation in Cayman largely owes it sustenance to ethnic and national stereotypes.

Further, any class discussions facilitated by the author foregrounded the significance of stereotypes in Cayman. Although often derogatory in their depiction of others, those who stereotype in a so-called ideal multicultural society may not be acutely aware that the ideal concept critically considered 'assumes strict compliance and works out the principles that characterize a well-ordered society under favorable circumstances' (Eriksen, 1994, 23). In other words, multiculturalism's enduring, *ideal* principle of "separate but equal" has, as this chapter can attest, worked to encourage stereotyping and ethnic segregation.

The effects of stereotyping in our context are usually three-fold. First, stereotypes '…help the individual to create order in an otherwise excruciatingly complex social universe' (*Ibid*., 30). Stereotypes become commonplace when one strives to understand the ethnically unfamiliar humans around him. Secondly, 'stereotypes can justify privileges and differences in access to a society's resources' (*Ibid*.). In more carefully parsed words, negative stereotyping may serve as a coping mechanism for the disenfranchised who desperately wish to alleviate their feelings of powerlessness. The defensive responses of those who are in some way disenfranchised are, in our context, often manifested as palliative lines of rhetoric meant as effective counters against the economically privileged classes and ethnicities that often apply negative stereotyping to lesser groups to both justify and protect their privilege. Such "soothing" lines of subaltern defense are especially prevalent among Jamaicans, native Caymanians, and other "developing" people who label European and American expatriates in derogatory terms because of the perception that they, the former, are unfairly privileged, perhaps due to their skin color and/or national origin. This native/expatriate dynamic becomes an especially hard pill to swallow for certain native Caymanians who perceive

themselves as damned at the intersection of ethnicity and economics. Many native Caymanians bound more by an ethnic affiliation than, say, skin color, reason that their disadvantage and discrimination come as a result of their potential employers' preference for "better" outsiders. A recent employment report may well bear this out, in which the ten top successful companies in Cayman were found to be in the habit of employing more foreign-nationals than Caymanians, when, ostensibly, qualified Caymanians abounded. The local chain of the Ritz-Carlton topped the list, employing some 488 foreign-nationals, and employing a further 300 residents and locals with the right to work (Cayman News Service, 2015). With the findings of this report in mind, it becomes easier for native Caymanians to implicate certain *preferred* outsiders as the cause of their disadvantage; these outsiders are in turn stereotyped as indifferent, haughty, and, ultimately, undeserving.

The third and second effects are interrelated in that both utilize stereotyping as a way to mark the ideological boundaries of one's national-cum-ethnic group. The third effect of stereotyping as utilized by specific national groups extends the second by continuing to delimit discrete identities through notions of exclusivity and inclusivity. In a world of multicultural tension, the subjective national "I" is often defined against the expatriate "YOU" and vice versa. Such classifications in our case, tend, as a rule, not to go to any great lengths to meaningfully incorporate the naturalized YOU into the national I or vice versa. The logic behind this evident lack of effort is driven by ethnocentric resolve and is usually prevalent among prosperous nationalities that tend to exhibit a brand of narcissism seemingly based on self-preservation masquerading as legitimate justifications for why exclusion is necessary. One only need look, in the very final analysis, at the United States to appreciate the prevalence of the I/YOU effect. For instance, let us consider the rise of the embittered birther movement, with its hyper-entitled white American citizens/members. When African-American Barack Obama's presidential status seemed a certainty, a group of mainly white Republican Americans, perhaps dismayed by the prospect of a black president, did everything in their power to deny the YOU Obama the highest elected seat in the land. Suddenly there was talk of Obama not being born in America; about him not being American in any way given his Muslim-sounding name, or

because of his Muslim Kenyan father; and, later, because of his socialist, anti-American executive and political proclivities. As the table below shows, many native Caymanians exhibit a similar view of those Caymanians who are not naturally regarded as Caymanians, but more importantly, whose Caymanianness comes at, in their minds, the native's expense.

Jamaicans	Typically aggressive, clannish, mostly uncivilized
Americans	Entitled, selfish, think they know it all
Canadians	Cliquish, uncaring, hypocritical
Filipinos	Stick to themselves, spiteful, uncivilized
Britons	Arrogant, condescending, paternalistic
Indians	Standoffish, often arrogant

Table 2 *Native Caymanian perceptions/stereotypes about other major ethnicities in Cayman*

Source: Based on distributed questionnaire entitled 'Why AREN'T they Caymanians?'

CONCLUSION
RELIGION, RACE, AND MULTICULTURALISM: TOWARDS HUMANIZING THE ESSENTIAL TRIPTYCH

The true image of the future is the failure of the present

-Terry Eagleton

As we near the end of this book, let us re-ponder the reasons why it was written in the first place. Many of us have been indelibly touched by religion, race, and multiculturalism – *our* existential triptych – in very real and dramatic ways. Regardless, these have not, in their discrete state, been easy themes to confront critically much less jointly; beyond their individual positive traits, this existential triptych is fraught with underlying conflicts and deprivations that many of us would rather not consider, notably those of us who are not usually on the receiving end of such struggles. Perhaps it is for the fraught nature of race that American senator, Republican, and Black American Tim Scott seemed overly eager to want to confirm that America is not a racist society, and neither does it suffer from systemic racism (Din, *et al.,* 2021). Similarly, a critical re-rendering of religion is likely to lead to a sober revisit of those monotheistic mainstream religions like Christianity and Islam that claim absolute truth, in the process often condemning all other religions to a purgatory of errors. American Republican Rick Santorum must have been functioning within this ideational paradigm when he proclaimed that there was *absolutely nothing* on the American continent when the first religious Europeans landed there; coxswained by their monotheistic religion, together with their finely honed experiential, *ethnocentric* sense of progress, these inchoate creoles would create an "awesome" civilization from the savage nothingness that greeted them in the American place; a civilization in which, no less, was inbuilt democratic and godly principles, as if to crassly say in so many words, 'the white man brought progress to the benighted New World, *so please get over yourselves and assimilate – it is better for you if you do* (*cf.* Moya-Smith, 2021).

Notice how we began with race before veering towards religion, but somewhere in between ended up touching on culture in its current rhetorically dichotomous condition? Similarly, this book, it is hoped, has given voice to the untidy, conflicting, overlapping, subjective-prone environments in which our triptych resides and thrives. In other words, if the social environments recently explored were automobiles, then race, religion, and multiculturalism, among other features, would figure in aggregate as their indispensable fuel, powering the very ways in which we see and interpret ourselves, those like us, or those we consider, for better or worse, to be our diametric opposites.

An interesting, if ultimately useless quote comes to mind here: 'the most constructive way to deal with conflict is to avoid it' (Goodreads, 2022). For the slick sycophant, this quote makes good practical sense, and this is precisely why it is superficial and uncritical. Conflicts run deeper than the surface, after all, and it is the voluminous matter roiling beneath – the prejudice, disdain, insecurity, stereotyping, etc. – that reflects onto that surface, prompting many to avoid the complicated mass that lies beneath. This is perhaps what the author's Venezuelan friend had in mind in chapter five, when he implored the author to stop seeing race everywhere; as if to say, see the surface of race for what it is, a superficial manifestation, but there is really no need to confront what is whirling beneath its ferocious, warring surface. This logic appears illogical, especially at a moment when a *necessary* critical awareness seemed too heavy and ungainly to invest in.

Consider another *conflict quote* by Stephen Covey (Quotepictures.com, 2017): 'to solve our most difficult problems we must radically change our thinking'. If we were to apply this quote to a conflict motivated by religion, say, between Pat Robertson and a Vodouist, what would be the difficult problem worth solving? For Pat Robertson, the surmounting problem would involve convincing the Vodouist to see the demonic origins of his religiosity, while forcing him to admit that his erroneous religion is the true cause of his existential hardships and failures. On the other hand, the Vodouist's major problem to overcome would rest on his efforts to persuade Pat Robertson that Vodou is not demonic, but like any other religion constitutes a way of life grounded in a specific, legitimate cultural experience. Which party, then, would need to radicalize his thinking in

hopes of ushering in true change, however that change is meant to look and by whose rules from which it is meant to be fashioned? The rules of the Christian firmly set in his monotheistic, globally permissible ways? Or the rules of the Vodouist already caught up in a losing battle with his proselytizing "Godly" opponent?

Before a willing informant is introduced, contextualized, and analyzed, one who embodies, to varying degrees of conflict, this book's existential triptych, let us attempt to unravel one more quote, this time in the context of multiculturalism and its engendered conflicts: 'Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to deal with it' (Reagan, 2004). With our previous chapter in mind, do we dare take this quotation at its implicit word that any prosperous jurisdiction is peacefully multicultural because every represented ethnicity therein has found fool proof methods with which to deal with the direct and indirect slights and untoward stereotypes that are thrown at them for no other reason than their ethnicity and/or nationality? Would it be fair to say that because angry, grudgeful ethnic unfamiliars are not killing each other in the streets or in their sleep, we have achieved peace, whereby peace in its rhetorical declaration becomes merely a coping mechanism in the midst of realities impelled by xenophobia? We should never stake our improved lot on this and the other quotes recently touched on: If progress is a driving force of overall human contentment then one would think that more of us would feel a sense of obligation, in the ideal spirit of Rousseau's natural law, to ensure that not only are we living as peaceably as possible with our fellow aspiring humans, but that we are also willing to effectuate the change necessary to ensure that peace. As our dialectical history has shown us to date, however, this is easier said than done.

At the risk of painting too much of our human history in an overly romantic light, some of our human ancestors lived, in a way, more peaceably and agreeably well before the advent of modernity and globalization. Before self-gain and consumption stamped their indelible impressions on many represented cultures across our planet, people lived closer to each other in a sort of spiritual symbiosis. To be fair, medieval life, to use an enduring example, was difficult for the masses, often at the expense of the aristocracy, the clergy, and the monarchy; yet as vassals the denizens of the

mass class found that they had to work together in a truly organic way, far removed from the kind of competitiveness that guarantees debilitating social tiering and treacherous displays and grabs of power. During medievalism, subaltern survival depended largely on obeisance and spirited collectivity; after all, there were no massive wage windfalls to anticipate, no pooling of monetary resources that would one day inevitably lead huge segments of mass collectives out of ponderous poverty. Elsewhere, Sub-Saharan Africans and Amerindians thrived in the pre-modern era on notions emblazoned by a weighty sense of collectivity; land was publicly owned and interests were largely carried out for the sake of the collective until the Europeans came along (*cf.* Adams, 2006).

In the context of modernity and globalization, the collective has not so much been shattered for the sake of individualism, as it has become divvied up into ethnic, religious, cultural, and racial silos shaped by the conflicting, competing impulses which both ignited and drove modernity. Beyond rugged individualism, these ideological silos work as collective individualisms, if we may call them that, by drawing, ironically, on related historical realities, truths, and practices that once ensured authentic collectivity. For instance, where ethnicities once bandied together out of sheer survival, certain ethnicities today seem eager to confirm their sense of historical "purity" on an odious exclusivism – this is perhaps the inevitable price to pay for the widespread reality of disingenuous ethnic coexistence enabled by an intense inequality of thought and practice. To cite another, if more complex example, although the Christian masses huddled together during the long medieval haul of history as if for safety from the ruling regime of the hour, official Christianity had always inhered the facility to transcend its admirable subaltern collectivity only to be used as a tool, simultaneously, of conquest, re-indoctrination, and suppression; true to its elitist influence, religion has too often been used to divide and conquer beneath the clout of modernity. Especially implicating the uneven trajectory of human development, many reflexive contemporary personal creeds revolving around religion, race, and culture are too often *unreflexively* able to transcend their humble enough collective origins *because* of modernity which, since its inception, has always inhered a self-serving intent. The issues raised throughout this book thus are relevant and interrelated because of modernity, not *in spite* of it. Modernity as we have

attempted to demonstrate it, can be driven by impulses tellingly enabled by selfish exclusivist collectivities; how can this state of affairs not end with disastrous consequences for many of those who are not on history's winning side, or for those who for some debilitating reason or the other are not *equipped* to play by the vitally exclusive rules of modernity? Indeed, we are not all "winners," and quite often, though not always, modern renderings and re-renderings of history will continue to play an outsize deterministic role in our success, our failure, how we are perceived by others, and how we ourselves perceive others.

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Our informant is a thirty-year-old Afro-Hispanic male from Nicaragua; he wishes to remain anonymous. Nicaragua is a poor Mesoamerican country mired in political instability due in large part to that nation's leftist Ortega government, which is prone to violence as a repressive tactic, further exhibiting a palpable indifference towards its people's foundering economic plight (*e.g.,* Psaledakis & Emmott, 2022). For as long as he could remember, the informant always wanted to leave Nicaragua for a jurisdiction where life was not so difficult, where day in and day out one did not obsess over whether there would be any or enough food on the table. If nothing else, life in Nicaragua had taught him to lay low, scrounging and stealing where he could, but never at the expense of catching the state's attention or ire. As a result of this hardscrabble existence, he came to regard Nicaraguan politics with the worst kind of apathy; his jaded disposition further bloomed amid the seeming commonplace societal awareness that presupposes the complete worthlessness of the lowly citizenry. In the beginning he was excited about the prospect of a leftist government; it was, after all, the spirited socialism of the Sandinistas that had managed to unseat the brutal conservative Somoza regime in 1979 (*cf.* Francois, 2019); but it seems all too often that conservative and revolutionary politics in Nicaragua both return to the same counterproductive autocratic place.

About eight years ago, he was encouraged to apply for a position in a church in the Cayman Islands. He was not very confident that he would even be considered for the position; his English was non-existent, and

despite possessing a bachelor's degree in the appropriate field, he was aware of his social awkwardness, convinced that he would not fare well in a prosperous, sophisticated jurisdiction. Yet what he lacked in confidence, he more than made up for in his unstinting faith in the capital Christian god. Following his virtual job interview, he prayed daily without fail, hopeful that his persistence would pay off. Against all the odds, he was offered the position. Conditioned to believe that he had been offered the job because of his unyielding faith, he resolved within himself that he would remain a firmly committed Christian once he moved to the Cayman Islands. He further promised, by his own words, to 'shun the very appearance of ungodliness' in both its brazen and ostensible signs and symptoms.

Eight years on, the informant is a different man by his own estimation. When questioned about what he thought made him so different over a considerable span of time, his response was very telling, if not entirely surprising. His standard of living, for one, had drastically improved since his earlier days in Cayman. He had also managed to procure other fairly lucrative secondary jobs, which amply augmented his yearly income. Within three years of settling in Cayman he was able to buy a brand-new car and take out a mortgage on a new house; he was also able to get married during what he considered to be the most exciting and momentous time of his life to date. A veritable consumer, he seemed eager, in this instance, to measure the success of his lifestyle in monetary and material terms, confirming the global appeal of consumerism.

Having fallen in love with his new *lifeways*, the informant further apprized that his next step would be to apply for Caymanian citizenship; even if he did not get it, by his own admission, he would *never* return to Nicaragua. Having sensed the imminence of xenocentricity on his part, the author proceeded to ask the informant if he still considered himself Nicaraguan. Was he still eager to identify with the culture and heritage of his homeland? He replied in the affirmative, if not entirely convincingly. Do you still eat traditional Nicaraguan foods, the follow up question was posed. Of course, he replied, but not often given the variety of 'wonderful food' he was able to regularly consume in, arguably, the cuisine capital of the Caribbean (*e.g.,* BirnBaum, 2019). What about your linguistic and social conduct, the author

further pressed. Are your speech patterns the same? Do you greet and/or talk to people according to your Nicaraguan disposition? He again replied in the affirmative, adding that although he could now speak English somewhat fluently, his mannerisms had not essentially changed since moving to Cayman.

The most controversial question was saved for the penultimate segment of the interview: do some people still make you feel like you are an outsider in any way? All the time, he responded. He recounted how he had gotten into an argument with one of his main employers, a native Caymanian, who one day after an otherwise heated conversation, "duly notified" him that he was a foreigner and would *always be a foreigner*. According to him, the employer then 'theoretically' threatened him with deportation if she found that he was working outside of the terms of his work permit. That threat so frightened him that he temporarily ceased any unregistered illegal part-time work he had previously taken up.

Illegal employment aside, my informant says that his faith is as strong as it has ever been. To hear him tell it, he is still a firm, strong Christian. When asked if he had become more tolerant of other religions since moving to Cayman, his reply was predictable enough: he indicated that he still viewed any religion other than Christianity as erroneous. He then proceeded to confidently aver, in almost rote-like fashion, that Cayman was a Christian nation, advocating for religious assimilation: 'people shouldn't come to this Christian country and expect to impose their idolatrous religions on others'. Asked if he was aware of the Cayman Islands Bill of Rights, he replied he was not. He was further informed that under the Bill of Rights, everyone had the right to practice his religion, or else, be free from religious motivations in any way; only when a religious belief or practice threatened the wellbeing of any citizen could the state step in and curtail religious freedoms. His retort was most defiant in his declaration that every other practicing religious adherent was by default 'sinful because they did not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ'.

We ended our conversation on a racial note. The author was especially curious to know if he had at all been negatively affected by race and its often deceptively unverifiable effects since living in Cayman. Earlier in our

conversation he had revealed that he had been more than familiar with racism in Nicaragua, of which he was frequently on the receiving end. He disclosed being treated with suspicion for no other reason, in his mind, than the color of his skin. He recalled being derogatorily mistaken for anything from a deliveryman to a criminal, labels uttered by those who saw 'black people as nothing, as nobodies', and who were further convinced in their moment of utterance that the black person in question simply "did not belong" in that particular social space. Was he experiencing the same sort of racism in Cayman? While, by his own intimation, he was not nearly as often regarded suspiciously because of his skin color, he could not say that he had never experienced what he perceived to be racism in his adopted homeland. He recalled being treated with casual indifference in his work setting, whereby a white colleague had lovingly been 'taken under the wing' of a white member of his church's upper management; all of this while he was never so much as even greeted regularly by the same member. If racism existed in Cayman, he further quipped, it existed subtly, almost as a snub. As he alleged all of this, openly expressing his aggrievement, he seemed, in the final analysis, blissfully unaware of what he had earlier relayed to the author: he had married a white woman five years earlier because he 'preferred white women'; he voiced that he did not consider black women to be 'feminine enough'. By his own assertion, his two young children 'were very pretty because of his wife', and he seemed to breathe a literal sigh of relief that they would never have to go through what he did as a black man.

<p style="text-align:center">**</p>

Our informant embodies the best and worst impulses of modernity that we have attempted to explore throughout this book. According to the western consumptive standard of success, he has "made it;" he is making more money now than he ever had before and is experiencing a standard of life that would have not otherwise been known to him in his native Nicaragua. The extent of his success in this regard is materialistic and spiritually superficial – underscored by an economic motivation that is universal enough without the original dictates of religion and race to necessarily embolden or legitimize such an accomplishment. However, this is not to say that projected notions and practices of race and religion meant to

disenfranchise do not often stand in the way of one's financial success. As we have seen, officially hidden racial and religious perspectives and the damning stereotypes they often generate can lead to delimiting, disenfranchising institutionalized realities or incongruous ideological positions dead set on explaining away related pernicious racial and religious effects that loom everywhere and thus *nowhere*. Because race-think and religious dogmatism exist as incorporeal entities, the very nature of their modern existence, through their human enablers, guarantee that their presence can only be tellingly revealed through *effects*. Thus, any resultant negative effect is likely to be revealed when notions and motivations meant to altogether banish the existence and relevance of racism or religious chauvinism become weaponized, not in accordance with an explicitly cruel ideological position, *per se*, but in deference to a mentality keen to see inequities vanquished by banishing those who would expose them. This is not a bona fide banishment more than a desire to cast doubt on those inequities that have been known to plague us by recasting them as the subjective musings of those who just cannot seem to get ahead in life.

In many ways, secularization is the ultimate neutralizer of religious-cum-racial bigotry. It is true that Christianity and global development once went hand in hand, but with the onset of universalism, which theoretically, at least, draws attention to the mistreatment-slash-paternalistic belittlement of much of the rest of the world by the west, a sort of anticolonial mentality has taken hold in certain cultural and ethnic quarters. Where many have written off anti-colonialism as an absurdist, anti-western, retrogressive, *socialist-tinged* way of equalizing and legitimizing the coexistent realities of the *Other*, *inter alia*, our informant's very condition proves that anticolonial thinking, for all of its so-called absurdities and hang-ups with the past, has gone practical (*e.g.,* Kempf, 2009; Judge & Langdon, 2018): the fact that he has made it in the western world as a Nicaraguan points not only to the expansion of the capitalist rules of success to now include so-called Third World peoples, but also indicates that the grand narratives on which imperialism was built, including Christianity, had to be in some way deprivileged or relegated if "subaltern" access to the first world was ever even to be considered global (*cf.* Williams, 2015, 44).

The overlaps between success and religion are, however, not without a piercing sense of irony. Warring impulses still characterize the daily features of multiculturalism, notably in matters of religion, with race not too far off. Although our informant clearly has no problem with financial secular success, his professed relevance as a religious hardliner rhetorically and ideologically undermines his guiding secularism. Money earned in an impersonal, secular context should, one would think, draw the multicultural employee to the realization that there are many more like him who originated from somewhere else, but who by matter of inevitable course have brought their legitimate "cultural baggage" to bear on their elevated lifestyle; this realization in and of itself should affirm the daily value of cultural relativism, where everyone *should* be allowed, within the bounds of *fair* and *just* law, to exercise his or her basic right to live in accordance with *his* or *her* cultural sensibilities. Regardless, however, *matters of the heart* inhere their own rules that run contrary to the universal creed of equality that purports to guide globalization. This is why the informant in question can, in one breath, revel in the merits of secularism, while in the other condemn other incomers who stand guilty of an "erroneous" religious affiliation, while betraying, no less, certain racial, *racist* sentiments that point to a deep-rooted indoctrination that likely began with European imperialism.

In a term, race, religion, and multiculturalism in everyday life capture not only their inevitable roles in a globalized reality, but affirm the fluidity of their meanings and interpretations; it is for this very fluidity, developed through years of original indoctrination and then often disingenuous liberal investment, that render our human triptych unstable, affirmed by dint of the vast ways in which its effects can be harnessed to lock in inequality.

Towards Potential Rapprochement

Our path to an instituted global *culture of hope fulfilled* may be usefully contextualized and explored within the late John Rawls' philosophical tussle between the ideal and the non-ideal (1999). The alert social philosopher is aware that if the end result is entrenched societal, *social* justice for all, then the initial rhetorical dilemma to overcome would rest

on the contextual determination of whether to use the ideal theory or its non-ideal approximations and practices. In a progressive societal context guided by inalienable human rights and an elevated living standard, any subsequent push by some towards ultimate social justice for all is usually envisioned idealistically – which is to say, when social and national conditions are benign and happy *enough*, we have been known to push for ultimate social justice idealistically – that is, we express a quotidian hope that things can and will only get better for all of us. Yet consider the degree to which this view often presents itself in praxis as an ultimately misplaced philosophical precursor to true justice given its simplistic, feel-good, at times tone-deaf advocacy for the possibility of securing *national heavens on earth* – of securing, in two seemingly impossible words, *earthly utopias*.

Important to note at the outset is that an ideal solution to a persistent, often downplayed social problem – in this case, problems generated by civil inequities – will fail again and again because the interpretive idealism frame being utilized, given its precise, *actual* impossibility, cannot be up to the task of securing true justice for all. Attempting to unravel the *precise impossibility* which surrounds idealism's ultimate worldly uselessness, consider the musings of ancient Greek philosopher Plato. Plato believed that the purity of any material object – for instance, a piece of chalk or a table, or a rock – could never be as pure and unblemished as its so-called essence or ideal – say, the essential *whiteness* of chalk or the essential *hardness* of a rock. For Plato, thus, the pure essence of any tangible thing is located in an abstract, ideational realm beyond our worldly reality. This is why current multicultural Platonic ideals meaningfully realized by humans will still represent impure reflections of their perfect, unattainable, idealistic, so-called abstract essence; and this is why our current idealistic moral sense keen on ensuring difference in equality cannot work, because difference and equality, as we have seen throughout this book, can be disagreeable and quite incompatible in our physical, social space, regardless of any spirited rhetoric that too eagerly and/or disingenuously affirms the instinctive rights and liberties of everyone.

It is a good thing that our secular modern political systems have long since – or *should* have long since – rejected the virtues of utilitarianism by which whatever "happy" doctrine the majority benefits from is, by default, *right*

and good, a civil position that may not make meaningful allowances for any imposed discrimination or unfair action that "majority-think" might have on otherwise unpopular minority positions and conditions; say, a hopeful, frustrated homosexual minority in the Cayman Islands clamoring for the *natural right* to be seen and treated as equal. There is the argument to be made that the earthly, human limits of the pursuit and application of universal human rights rest within a distinct moral space, where, in our haste to promote *our* moral, cultural and ethnic singularity, we tend to cynically downplay the moral, religious, cultural, and ethnic differences of others, in turn developing and naturalizing snide conceptualizations and articles of speech with which to express couched inegalitarian, anti-ideal tendencies nonetheless rhetorically masquerading as spirited idealism. This overlook in large part accounts for why stereotyping and underhanded rhetorical odium have become so commonplace across the social western world and indeed in many a modern multicultural jurisdiction despite their so-called ideal living conditions.

The non-ideal feature, on the other hand, 'focuses on "[h]ow justice requires us to meet injustice' (Rawls, 1999, 215). The injustice implicated here is based on observable, consequential conditions of social inequity. Where some would argue that rampant injustice cannot and should not be applied to the "ideal west," let us, if only for the provocative moment, argue otherwise. Consider the new American who too commonly says, "all WASP Americans are racist, xenophobic scum." Then, contemplate the "white" American who with a similar frequency expresses that "these stinking foreigners are stealing jobs meant for *real* Americans." Both verbalizations, despite their differing contextual degrees of virulence and social positionality, are morally acceptable and justifiable in our present multicultural dispensation. Why? Because both the white and new American are working within the same principled boundaries, in which it becomes necessary, indeed ethical, to denigrate *the Other* as either of them fight for their equality or as either of them labor to eradicate what they perceive to be unfair, unjust actions and motivations towards them and people like them. In the end, however, the group with the greater access to social and political influence and power will "win the day" if there are no *spirited* anti-discriminatory checks on their projected bigotry, thereby continuing and further entrenching injustice via a one-sided, depriving,

moralizing trajectory. Although prosperous multiculturalism represents an ideal *enough* situation for those incomers from poorer countries, the ideological and ethnic schisms that develop as a result of multicultural interaction, one could argue, is less than ideal and just, and thus unjust and non-ideal.

Any effective empirically-driven non-ideal approach to justice should not find itself trapped within ineffective extant, hypocritical moral boundaries. Does this therefore mean that any non-ideal approach to an achievable entrenched justice must itself become idealistic? Not quite. The non-ideal solution is empirical and/or practical in nature because it is an authentic, logical – *not idealistic* – outworking of an otherwise appropriately crafted system of ideals that has failed time and time again because it does not adequately or honestly account for the inherent tensions that difference-cum-diversity can generate. Impassioned by idealistic failure, any non-ideal solution stems from reworked understandings concerning why, *ideally*, policies developed out of an honest enough abstract sense of justice have failed, and why solutions grounded in reality, not impossible utopias or insincere moral postures, are necessary. When we earnestly consider and reconsider just why widespread, so-called normative human equality has generally failed, then in our quest to correct this failure and to render well-ordered and more just societies, we will work to develop a philosophy grounded in praxis, a philosophy made practical in its common-sense counter to a system that is simply not working according to the biased, selfish nature of our current idealistic pursuits.

When interactions occur against a backdrop of inequality, '…[such] interactions will predictably engage stigmatizing ideas, manifested in various forms of discrimination and unhappy interaction' (Anderson, 2013, 182). The author does tend to agree that integration is a step in the right direction here. An integrationist policy that is *genuinely* supported by governments and powerful private actors and lobbies, then further deliberately – not just rhetorically – encouraged at every level of human society, may well work toward the eventual diminishment of various forms of interactive animosities that encourage discrimination. When meaningful attempts to integrate are pursued organically – *idealistically*, a difficult position to get to – it is more likely that strong biases toward this or that

group will diminish over time, and an improved sense of *justice for all* will be that more attainable. As Elizabeth Anderson succinctly put it, '[integration] requires the construction of a superordinate group identity, a "we" from the perspective of which cooperative goals are framed, and appropriate policies selected and implemented' (*Ibid*.). If a society is to eventually, *genuinely* be driven by the organically cultivated impulse of democracy, this "we," to provocatively extrapolate into Anderson's train of thought, would generally represent a shared identity of well-meaning, tolerant residents/employees/neighbors first. The author disagrees with Anderson's well-meaning declarations, if only in their momentary context as provocatively crafted by him in the first place, that appear, uncritically, to promote a counter-intuitive, impossibly idealistic vision. Yet when Anderson's work is taken in its non-idealist totality, we are likelier to arrive at the conclusion that it is not obligatory that we like or get along with everyone in Pollyannaish fulfilment of any ostensibly idealistic, collectivist *WE*. Instead, consider that any push towards improved structural equity for all is dependent, not on an idealistic vision but a tangible, proactive societal commitment to constructing *justice*. As a non-corporeal entity, justice, together with its warranted revelations initially depends on intellectual, human deliberation and implementation – this means that if notions of justice are to be effectively incorporated into our day to day social structures, after which these notions are expected to structurally function without biased human input, these very notions would have to have been enabled in the first place by the human programmers of the social structures in question. Our guiding legal, political, economic, and other civil social structures that are supposed to treat people both equally and equitably should be allowed to do just that, without their intervening human managers and legal framers – their programmers – often arbitrarily stepping in to privilege or deprive certain individuals or groups of individuals at the expense of that structure's encoded justness; without this sort of biased human insinuation into the process to justice, we would not constantly be fixated on the gross contravention of the well-honed, structurally-encoded western principle which demands ultimate justice for any injustice rendered, and would be well on our way to more satisfying democratic conditions. Nonetheless, the trenchant, pervasive argument remains that we are *all* well on our way to an unmistakably just reality for everyone, precisely because such institutions and organizations do

currently exist, even if they remain plagued by human foibles; this state of affairs, we are assured, is a work in progress, moving slowly but surely towards a reality in which social inequalities and inequities will eventually figure as insignificant and ultimately inconsequential (*cf.* Pinker, 2011; Eagleton, 2018); yet to pose this book's final provocative question, just how likely is this future reality in light of our *current* reality in which many of us continue to think – and insidiously practice – that if we are to continue to cherish and ritualize *our* original cultural orientations, we must do so in an environment in no way predisposed toward the earnest attempt to understand what makes us different? To provide a partial answer, many instead seem more than content to resort to name-calling, stereotyping, self-segregation, vindictiveness, etc., as ways to explain away, justify, and inferiorize social differences. Here, in the very final analysis is a current state of affairs, whose every day western denizens, many of which, do not seem eager to want to anticipate-by-practice the genuine systemization of *hope* and justice fulfilled; instead, our anticipation of any such systemization seems to be guided by the principles of an inert self-motivated idealism.

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