

THE POPE MUST HAVE BEEN DRUNK
THE KING OF CASTILE A MADMAN:
CULTURE AS ACTUALITY, AND THE CARIBBEAN
RETHINKING MODERNITY¹

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On the basis of the Cenù Indians' perception of the Requisition, by means of which the Spaniards legitimated their claim to the indigenous lands, what seemed to the Spaniards to be a universally applicable order of truth, was "mad and drunken speech." The crisis of today's Haiti and the paradox of the United State's response to this crisis are to be understood in the terms of a parallel contradiction.

The crisis of the Caribbean as exemplified in the Haitian situation, is the crisis, too, of our present order of knowledge where the contemporary Western industrialized order, which represents its own local culture and its conception of the human, as natural, supracultural and isomorphic with the human species, is contrasted with the culturality of all other human orders. If this crisis is to be resolved, we must deconstruct this way of thinking and recognize that our contemporary culture, together with the actuality of our Western modernity, to which it gives rise, functions according to the same laws by which all other cultures and their belief systems function. The article concludes by suggesting that the major thinkers of today's Caribbean have challenged these "truths" and opened the way to a new hypothesis—that of the functioning of universally applicable *laws of culture* as the veridical etiology of all the "ills" endemic to Haiti as well as the other ex-slave islands.

Selon les indiens Cenù, le document intitulé la *Réquisition*, qui a permis aux Espagnols d'établir un ordre de vérité universelle et donc de légitimer l'appropriation des terres indigènes, serait un texte conçu par des «fous» et des «ivrognes». La crise actuelle en Haïti et le paradoxe de la réaction américaine

devant cette crise, doivent se comprendre dans le contexte d'une contradiction comparable. La crise de la Caraïbe exemplifiée par la situation en Haïti, illustre l'état de notre savoir actuel selon lequel le monde occidental industrialisé, basé sur une «culture locale,» tient sa propre conception de «l'humain» pour l'état «naturel» des choses. Par conséquent, on a tendance à le considérer isomorphe de l'espèce humaine en général et supraculturel, soit au delà de la «spécificité culturelle» par laquelle le savoir occidental caractérise les autres ordres humains.

Pour résoudre cette crise, il faudrait déconstruire ce mode de réflexion et reconnaître que notre culture contemporaine qui englobe l'actualité de notre modernité occidentale, fonctionne selon les mêmes lois que toutes les autres cultures et leurs systèmes de croyances.

C'est dans ce sens que les penseurs les plus importants de la Caraïbe actuelle ont remis en question ces "vérités" universelles et ouvert la voie vers une nouvelle hypothèse, celle qui propose des *lois de culture* qui fonctionneraient universellement telle une étiologie de tous les «maux» dont souffrent Haïti et les autres îles ex-esclaves de la Caraïbe.

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About the Pope being the Lord of all the universe in the place of God, and that he had given the lands of the Indies to the King of Castile, the Pope must have been drunk when he did it, for he gave what was not his....The king who asked for and received this gift must have been some madman for he asked to have given to him that which belonged to others.

(The Cenù Indian's reply to the Spaniard "local culture" conception of the legitimacy of the Papal Bull of 1492 as one which "gave" the New World to Spain) (Greenblatt, 1974, p.27).

This objectification of the world continually brings man into conflict with his fellows. This competition, however, is not in Heidegger's view the consequence of political or personal ambition, as Machiavelli or the ancients understood it, nor simply the result of a universal desire for self-preservation, as Hobbes might have characterized it, but the consequence of a new understanding of man's humanity and the subsequent attempt of men to realize it. (Gillespie, 1984, p.27)

THE QUOTATION of the first part of the title, i.e., “the Pope must have been drunk, the king of Castile a madman,” is taken from a report of the 16th century Cenù Indian’s comment on a politico-juridical Spanish document called the Requisition.² This document was drawn up about 1512-1513 by a bureaucrat of the Spanish State. It was intended to establish the grounds of legitimacy for that state’s expropriation of the lands, and sovereignty of the peoples of the indigenous cultural worlds of the Caribbean and the Americas. More directly, it was intended to legitimate, in dually religio-juridical terms, the then lucrative slave-raiding missions being carried out on the mainland territories by groups of Spanish expeditionaries who had been licensed to “discover and expropriate” (*descubrir y ganar*) lands intended to expand the sovereignty of the state as well as to enrich the expeditionaries and their backers (Wynter, 1991). The direct purpose of the Requisition was to legitimate the process by which the dynamic transfer of wealth and resources from the rest of the world to the Western European enclaves of the world system was set in motion, and be effected within the terms of what made the “real real” and the “normal normal” for the invading European Christians. Consequently, within the logic of the new ethical-political distinctions juridically crafted by the document any group of the indigenous peoples who refused to accept Christian conversion and resisted Spain’s sovereignty could be at once classified as *inimicos Christi* (enemies of Christ). On that basis, they could then be captured, enslaved and sold within the prescriptive rules laid down by the Church with respect to what could and could not be accepted as just causes for the enslavement of others.³

However, while deploying the classificatory terms of the Church, and its universal narrative, the Requisition now functioned within the particular terms of the new discourse of the incipiently civic humanist reasons of state, and its hegemonically political organization of reality, as effected by the modern European state, in whose primary interest the structure of our present world system was first laid down. The function of the juridical document was therefore to draw the “culturally alien” people of the Caribbean and the Americas within the classificatory logic of the Judaeo-Christian “local culture” theology, and yet to do so in specifically monarchical-juridical terms that could make their subjugation and expropriation by the Spanish state seem “real” and “normal.” The central declaration of the document was therefore based on the Church’s specific conception of history (*historia rerum gestarum*), in which, because Christ had given the Earth into the Pope’s keeping and the Pope had donated the

lands to Spain so that the Indians could be evangelized into the only True Faith (and thereby emancipated as “barbarous nations” from their enslavement to “diabolic” religions), any resistance by the indigenous peoples would make their lands justly expropriable and they themselves justly enslavable.

The Cenù Indians, on the other hand, speaking from within the quite different categories of their still polytheistic and divinized nature religious cultures, could only interpret the discourse of the Requisition, as pronounced by the subjects of the Spanish State, as non-sense, as the speech of “drunkards” or “madmen.” Their response to the Requisition’s reformulation of the Papal Bull of 1493, which had given most of the New World to Spain, (and eventually, Brazil to Portugal), therefore enables us to recognize that, as Richard Rorty was to argue several centuries later, our present “objective” mode of truth is only true within the specific terms of our present culture’s self-conception (Rorty, 1985). Equally, the discourse of the Requisition, like the correlated discourses which legitimated the West’s global expansion, was only true within the terms of the 16th century variant of the matrix Judaeo-Christian culture of the West, and therefore within the terms of its behavior-motivational belief system and neo-Augustianian principle of explanation.

Keeping this in mind, we now turn our attention to the Caribbean 500 years later, specifically to Haiti which has recently been at the centre of the news. The call for the United States invasion to dislodge the ruling military group was made in the wake of the failure of the policy of sanctions to do the job. History seemed to be repeating itself. The first United States intervention had been effected in 1915, in the context of the First World war. The long term purpose of the American occupation of Haiti (1915-1934) had been to enforce the kind of political stability needed for private foreign investment to continue to function as the integrative mechanism of our present global order of modernity and therefore of our present hegemonic cultural system of whose “form of life” the economic system of capitalism is the central expression.

When the United States intervened in 1915 to protect its investors’ “economic interests,” it had therefore done so within the prescriptive terms of a specific culturally instituted order of consciousness or belief system, and therefore within the logic of the specific “understanding of man’s humanity” with which these terms provided. As indicated in the second phase of my title (i.e., Culture as Actuality), the major thesis of this paper, is that it is the phenomenon of culture, rather than of either

“nature” or “history” that provides the ground of all human existential reality or actuality. Hence the inevitability with which the American occupiers of 1915 effected a process of modernization in Haiti in terms that were to benefit largely the Westernized Haitian elite—the mulatto business and political elite, and later, the Duvalieriste Black political elite or Noiriste⁴—thereby strengthening them against the Vodounist peasantry and agro-proletariat. Also acting within the same terms, however, the American occupiers carried out their mandate on the basis of an overt United States Southern anti-black or color line racism, displayed impartially to elite and peasantry, since racism, anti-black and non-white racism is as culturally prescribed by “our present understanding of man’s humanity,” and its purely biologized “metaphor of the self” (Pandian, 1988) on the model of a natural organism, as is our economically organized order of global reality.⁵

Reactions to the overt brand of United States type “racism” amongst certain sections of the French educated elite in Haiti led to the movement of *Indigénisme* whose thrust was to lay claim to and revalorize the African components of Haitian culture, specifically the popular neo-agrarian religion of Vodoun which, although syncretized with Roman Catholic elements, is essentially African-derived; as a religion that has been made, within the logic of contemporary Western thought, into the byword of an antithetical irrationality to its own ostensibly supra-cultural order of rationality, into the Derridean Fool to its Logos.⁶

TWO UNDERSTANDINGS OF HUMANITY,
TWO MODES OF REFLECTIVE THOUGHT: THE
NEO-AGRARIAN WORLD OF VODOUN, THE TECHNO-
INDUSTRIAL WORLD OF THE WEST

From the point of view of empirical science, Vodouisants would say that the entire cosmos, including all of the principles inherent in its mechanical, biological, and stellar functions, can be reduced to one higher principle, Bondye, who is the ensurer of universal order and the source of all human actions. The highest wisdom consists not only in recognizing the wholeness of the universal order as contained in Bondye, but also in affirming that same wholeness in the human community. (Desmangles, 1992, p.96)

Before the shock of the United States 1915 occupation, the popular religious culture of Vodoun, even where repressed and stigmatized by the elite as the “price of the ticket” for its assimilation into being “magnificent

coloured Frenchmen” (Price-Mars, 1983, p.8), had been nevertheless inscribed in the Haitian collective psyche, because of the unifying role that this counter-belief system had played in making possible Haiti’s anti-slavery, independence struggle and victory against the French. The “return” of the elite to a reclaiming of this legacy was therefore part of the intellectual challenge to what most Haitians now saw as their island’s neo-imperial occupation by the Americans. There were two variants to this challenge. One thrust, that of Price-Mars, laid the emphasis on the calling into question the distortions of Western ethnographic accounts of Vodoun. The other, that of Francois Duvalier (and his *Noiristes*), was to manipulate Vodoun, together with its secret society system⁷ as a powerful semi-official tool with which to displace the hegemony of the largely mulatto upper-class elite, replacing it with its own socially mobile lower middle black, but no less educationally Westernized, elite.

For the Haitian popular classes, however, the peasantry and agro-proletariats, whose practitioners of Vodoun lived within the terms of its quite different “understanding of man’s humanity,” the major issue was not the Southern style white racism of the Americans. Rather, it was the issue of the direct impact on their lives of the processes of modernization that the Americans carried out within the terms of a cultural logic and principle of organization directly opposed to their own. This clash would lead to their armed revolt under the leadership of the peasant leader Charlemagne Peralte (Wilentz, 1989). Although Peralte was eventually defeated and executed, semi-lynching style, by the Americans, he became both a national hero for the new Duvalierist Haitian elite, as well as a revered popular icon for the Vodouisant masses. This armed revolt had therefore been the expression of a profound clash between the Americans, as the bearers of the West’s techno-industrial “understanding of man’s humanity” and the still hegemonically neo-Agrarian and symbiotic African-cum-Judaeo-Christian “understanding,” of which the Haitian Vodouisant were and are the bearers.⁸

For in spite of the far-reaching impact of the techno-industrial mode of reflective thought⁹ which the Americans expressed through their modernizing activities, this thought was and is generated from the now purely secularized variant of the matrix Judaeo-Christian “local culture” of the West, as a variant which although now globalized, is itself “one of the forms life has locally taken” (Geertz, 1983). In consequence, the clash between the American occupiers and the Vodouisant Haitian peasantry was one between two ways of life, two orders of consciousness, or modes

of being, two modes of the “real and the normal,” both of which had until then, coexisted in the hegemonic cultural terms of the former; and therefore within the structural logic of the world system put in place by the West from the 16th century on (Wallerstein, 1974).

Hence the paradox that it was to be the modernizing and debt-collecting imperative of the first 1915 United States intervention that was to lead directly to today’s escaping-only-to-be repatriated-again-by the patrolling American coast guard vessels—boat-people—that is, as refugees that were only secondarily economic refugees (as they are classified as being, in order to be denied asylum status), but rather primarily escapees from the global effects of the implacable logic of our present techno-industrial mode of “reflective thought.” It is this mode of thought that motivates and legitimates the economic policies, not only of the Americans but also of Haiti’s Westernized elites, while these are the very policies that have set in train the world-systemic uprooting and jobless impoverishment of today’s escaping boat peoples of the G.7’s satellite worlds.

One needs to point out here that the Haitian boat people are, in their majority, the descendants of African slaves rather than, as in the case of Cuba, primarily of European settlers and their mixed descendants. Therefore, unlike the Cubans, the Haitians are black and not fleeing from a Communist, but only from a neo- or peripheral-capitalist, military dictatorship.

This is not to say that the call by both white and black Americans for the intervention to “restore democracy” by restoring Aristide to power is not sincerely meant. But rather that it is, in the larger context of the now fully effected shift to a consumer-driven, as distinct from the earlier production-driven, phase of the global-systemic accumulation of capital that the goals of blocking the entrance of a large mass of black Haitians refugees into the United States and of “restoring democracy” in its Western bourgeois definition¹⁰ to Haiti coincide. A democratically elected and restored Aristide or his like, together with a new cadre of technocrats, in the place of the military elite and/or dictators such as the Duvaliers, are now needed to enable the re-modernization of Haiti, in the new terms required by the ongoing re-ordering of the Western world system.

New prescriptive rules are now needed by the global economic system as a function of the stable replication of our present “local culture” and its Western bourgeois “understanding of man’s humanity.” If we see our present “understanding” as a transumed form (i.e., a new form which

nevertheless carries over the old meanings) (Bloom, 1983) of the original matrix “understanding” put in place by the rise of the Judaeo-Christianity’s then new conception of being human),¹¹ a culture-historical continuity can here be identified. For while even refugees from Castro’s Cuba are also being detained, it is against the would-be migrants of Haiti as the largest nation-state island of the ex-slave, and therefore in its majority, black Caribbean, that the most total exclusion is being carried out. The continuity here is that it had also been on these islands and specifically on the island shared today between Haiti and the Dominican Republic that the initial culturally legitimized division of labour, based on the West’s 16th century “invention of man” (Foucault, 1973, p.386), had established the hierarchical structures that were to be founding both to the Caribbean and to what is today’s world system. This first hierarchical structural pattern, one that had been based on the dominance/subordinate relationships of settler to natives or of Europeans to *indios*, on the one hand and of masters to slaves, Europeans to “negros”¹² on the other, had been put in place on the basis of two forms of forced labor institutions. These had been that of the neo-serf, the *encomienda* system¹³ manned by *indios*, and that of the slave plantation system manned by “negros,” both of which had been put in place by the Europeans, in the terms of their then specific 16th century “local culture” “understanding of man’s humanity.”

Another culture-historical continuity was to underlie the more total degree of exclusion being inflicted today on the Haitians, as contrasted to the Cubans. This was that, in the wake of the abolition of slavery and in the context of the West’s second invention of Man in a now totally secularized form, it was to be, as Jacob Pandian, the anthropologist further points out, the peoples of African hereditary descent, who were to be made into the physical referent of the ostensibly genetically dysselected Human Other (or nigger/nègre) to Man’s¹⁴ new self-conception (Pandian, 1988). That is, as the Eugenic (i. e., genetically selected) Self within the now biologized “understanding of man’s humanity.”

It is, therefore, within the terms of this now globalized “understanding” that the black popular majority of the ex-slave Caribbean and centrally of Haiti now find themselves imprisoned today, driving them to seek escape by migration as boat people to the United States at the same time as they are blocked by United States Coast Guard vessels.

There is another central continuity here. At the time of the initial putting in place of the founding structures of the post-1492 Caribbean by

the Spaniards, who had then coercively (with *their ships* hovering offshore), put these structures in place, these Spaniards too would have understood their own actions as *aculturally* as we understand our actions, too, today. That is, as actions/behaviours prescribed and legitimated by a universally applicable “understanding of man’s humanity” and its mode of truth.

The proposed parallel here is that the legitimating speech put forward by President Clinton to defend the paradox of both attempting to “restore democracy” to Haiti (with warships and marines) at the same time as his Coast guard vessels enforce the exclusion of Haitian migrants to the United States, makes sense and therefore is not a parallel “mad” discourse, only within the terms of our present “understanding of man” and its “local culture” order of truth. Since if for the Americans, Aristide’s return (as a popularly elected leader) will, it is believed, serve two purposes (i.e., be the most effective guard against the threat now posed by the boat people to the racial-national interests of the United States, a country that still conceives of itself as being culturally, a Euroamerican, and, biologically, a white nation,¹⁵ and second, provide a stable atmosphere for United States investments), the Haitians themselves, including the boat people stopped at sea, are being asked to believe that the only goal of the Americans is to “restore democracy” represented as the only cure for the “affliction” that ails Haiti. As if Haiti’s past ills, exacerbated by its political leadership, are not themselves fundamentally due to the world systemic role of “underdevelopment” imposed upon it within the terms of our present Western bourgeois “understanding of man’s humanity” and the attempt of people to realize it; an understanding of which the United States is now the global enforcer.

Yet the issue here, as Heidegger brilliantly implies (1977), is not the issue of those who seek to realize this understanding or to militarily enforce it. The issue here is that of the “understanding” itself, and of those, we the scholars of contemporary academia, who formulate, elaborate and represent this “local culture” understanding as if it were a universally applicable and acultural one.

HISTORY AS “HUMAN ACTUALITY”? OR THE “LOCAL CULTURE” OF THE WEST AS THE GROUND OF CONTEMPORARY HISTORY, OF MODERNITY

As we have seen, the question, ‘What is history?’ asks whether history is human actuality or merely the product of human imagination, i.e., whether it is the *res gestae* or only the *historia rerum gestarum*. Modernity has come to the conclusion that it is the human

actuality....The philosophical development that occurs ... represents the increasing and ultimately utter historicization of Western life and thought.... It is thus not accidental that in our times we note an even more vehement and partisan attachment to particular conceptions of history. (Gillespie, 1984, p.24)

The post-1492 Caribbean, the world system of which its islands were to be founding units, and the era of modernity, were all three brought into existence by the same dynamic process of cultural discontinuity, and therefore of historical rupture. This discontinuity/rupture was effected by the intellectual revolution of lay humanism in the context of the rise of the modern European state, as the first, if still partly religious, form of a secularizing mode of human co-existence. While it was in the context of these dual movements of intellectual and socio-systemic transformation that a new order of transculturally applicable truth, that of the natural sciences, was also to gradually emerge.

This new order of truth, which had emerged in the wake of both the 15th-century voyages of the Portuguese and Columbus, and of Copernicus' challenge to the earlier correlated belief system in the ostensibly divinely-ordered non-homogeneity of a universe divided between the moving celestial realm as the realm of the Redeemed Spirit, and the terrestrial realm of the Earth which, as the abode of "fallen" mankind, had to be fixed and unmoving at the centre of the universe, based itself on a new hypothesis. This hypothesis was that nature functioned in the same way "in Europe" as "in America," "in heaven as on earth," and all according to the same laws, to the "same accustomed course of nature" (*cursus solitus naturae*).¹⁶ While given that these laws could now be recognized as governing all parts of the universe, they could be made the basis for the elaboration of a new order of knowledge in whose terms, the knower could now extrapolate from the qualities of bodies that are "found to be within the reach of our experiments," what the qualities of all bodies whatsoever, however distant, would have to be (Funkenstein, 1986, p.29).

This new image of Nature as an autonomously functioning force or cause in its own right was to accompany the parallel process of the secularizing or degodding of the criterion of being human at the public levels of existence that was to be the defining characteristic, both of the process to which we give the name modernity, and of the world system that was to be its condition of existence. The foundations of both modernity and our present world system were therefore laid down in the context of the rise of the post-feudal European state, whose first project of

extra-European colonization was to bring into existence the new sociopolitical structures of today's Caribbean. In turn, these structures were to be themselves founding, both to the world system in which we now find ourselves and to the single history within whose dynamic we all now live. At the same time, as both Foucault and Pandian show, the degodding of being, the institution of the post-1943 Caribbean politics and the initiation of modernity, were themselves to be inseparable from the invention both of Man and of its human Others, first that of the indio/negro complex, later, that of the nigger/native complex.¹⁷

The major point is that if Latin Christian Europe secularized itself in the 15th and 16th centuries, as the West, eventually secularizing all human models of being and behaving, it was to do so in the transumed specific terms of its own "local culture." This is nowhere more evident than by the term "secular" itself. For as will be noted, I have used the term secular several times here and used it interchangeably, with the term degodding. The term "secular," as given in the Oxford English Dictionary (O.E.D.) is a meaning specific to the religio-cultural field of Judaeo-Christianity, and therefore, to its behavior-motivating Grand Narrative of Emancipation (Lyotard, 1989), based on the explanatory schema of enslavement to Original Sin/Emancipation from Original Sin through the-mediation-of-baptism, and of behaviours oriented toward the goal of Spiritual Redemption. The O.E.D. gives the etymology of the English word "secular" as coming from the Latin term *saecularis*, that is, from the adjective correlated with the noun *saeculum* which means "generation, age" and more generally the "World" as opposed to the "Church" (O.E.D. 1971, p.365). By the nature of our shared response to the meaning of the word secular, we are therefore already responding within the terms of a specific cultural field, as enacted by the formal rules of a now global and purely desupernaturalized variant of the original feudal Judaeo-Christian culture of Western Europe.

This semantic shift had entailed the increasing hegemony of the secular World at the public levels of existence, together with increasing privatization of religion, and therefore of the Church (in the wake of Luther's "Reformation"). With this shift, the term secular now came to be applied to "literature, history, art" not "concerned with or devoted to the service of religion" (O.E.D., 1971, p.365). In consequence, the new doctrine of secularism which followed from this step, came to function as the new narrative schema on which modernity was to be based. However, although the term secular would now come, within the terms of its new

narrative-schematic field, to signify reality as contrasted to the increasingly negatively marked irreality of the Church, it did so in terms that were themselves generated, as variant forms, from the matrix narrative schema that had been founding both to the culture of the Judaeo-Christian West, and that of its precursor, the still polytheistic cultural and philosophical system of the ancient Greek polis.

The new discourse of civic humanism which effected this transfer of hegemony did this by transuming the matrix Judaeo-Christian Grand Narrative of Emancipation and its Augustinian “principle of explanation” of mankind’s enslavement to Original Sin and its imperative quest for remission from this sin, and therefore of redemption in the other-worldly City of God. This new schema had been that of mankind’s represented enslavement both to the pre-political “state of nature” and the irrational, particularistic and self-interested aspects of its own nature, with remission from this enslavement being only possible by subjecting oneself to the rational order of the political state. Seeing that only the state-as-universal was now empowered to secure the “common good” as against the threatening chaos and disorder of the war of each against all, of the particular and private self interest of the one, against those of the others. It was this behaviour-motivating schema and the correlated “understanding of man’s humanity” from which it derived, that had therefore served to revalue the terms of the former Church/World opposition, i.e., to revalue the world as the sphere of a fixed and stable, although temporal, reality—at the same time as it relegated the Church to the private sphere as an increasingly “spiritual” realm of “irreality.”

It was to be in the context of this process (one of whose effects was also that of the transformation of the Church into the spiritual arm of the state, as the state had earlier been the temporal and military arm of the Church), that the terms of legitimation on whose basis Spain expropriated the New World, were prescribed and enacted—that is, as terms which although found by the Cenù Indians from their culturally-external observer perspective, to be “mad” and “drunken” and therefore non-sense, were to be indispensable to the specific culture-historical dynamics out of which “Modernity,” the contemporary Caribbean, and the Americas were to emerge and on the basis of whose “ground” Europe’s conquest of the Americas was both effected and made to seem legitimate and just.

Our shared understanding of the word secular (as academics and scholars all of whom, whatever our cultures of origin, have been *disciplined* in Foucault’s sense of the word, in the conceptual models of the

epistemological order derived from the original basis of the *studia*), is only made possible by our already enculturation in the specific culture systemic categories in which this word has come to have the same transcultural meaning as other such terms as degodding or de-supernaturalization. However, within the shared field of our mutual understanding, the expression itself, i.e., culture systemic categories, cannot help but strike a jarring note. In that given the acultural premise on which our present shared mode of comprehension is based, i. e., the premise, specific to our present now purely secularized variant of the matrix Judaeo-Christian culture, that we are not in a culture at all, and that our native model of reality (Legesse, 1973, p.274) is reality-in-itself, the term “culture-systemic categories” cannot be “heard” or normally understood to make sense for us within the Foucauldian “regime of truth” of our present order of knowledge and its disciplinary paradigms. At the same time, because our present episteme or order of knowledge elaborates itself on the basis of a now purely biological description of the human, in whose terms, man had been invented in its second form, on the model of a “natural organism” (Foucault, 1973, pp.310, 351), and with this model serving as a non-questionable rhetorical a priori (Grassi, 1980), this aprioristic model then enables our present disciplinary paradigms to represent their “local culture” conception of the human as if this conception were isomorphic with the human species itself. This conflation of Man/human then enables the well-being of this specific category of the human, man to be represented as if its well-being, too, were isomorphic with the well-being of the human species as a whole; and by extrapolation, as if the well-being of the West, and of the Westernized “developed” enclaves, were, are, or could ever be, isomorphic with the well-being of their “underdeveloped” satellite areas such as Haiti.

The crisis of the Caribbean as vividly exemplified these past few weeks in the Haitian situation is, therefore, like the overall crisis of modernity, the crisis, too, of our present order of knowledge, as the elaborated expression of our present understanding of man’s humanity, and its correlated behavior-motivating schema, in which the culture-systemic conception, Man, is mis-represented as if it were the human itself. If this crisis is to be fundamentally resolved, therefore, this misrepresentation, together with the founding rhetorical strategy which makes it believable, must be deconstructed.

Franz Fanon, Aimé Césaire and other major thinkers of the ex-slave Caribbean have challenged the ostensibly supracultural and therefore

value-free nature of the “objective knowledge” of our present episteme. From their liminal perspective of alterity—they have shown that by means of its disciplinary paradigms, one “local culture’s” conception of the human Man, is strategically presented as if its referent were the human species itself, as if its culture-systemic “world” were the new “Church,” its ground of actuality, supracultural, its speech not as mad and drunken, as inside that ground it is rational, logical, and alone experiential as true.

In this context and against the central premise of modernity with respect to the *non-homogeneity* of our contemporary Western industrialized order which represents its own actuality as supracultural as contrasted with the *culturality* of all other human orders, we can put forward the following hypothesis: that our contemporary culture, together with the actuality of the Westernized modernity to which it gives rise, functions according to the same laws by which all other cultures, and their behaviour-motivational belief systems, including that of Vodoun, function.

CULTURE AS ACTUALITY: THE EX-SLAVE
CARIBBEAN AND THE DISENCHANTING OF
CONSCIOUSNESS/BELIEF/IDEOLOGY

the child does not know
the map of spring has always to be
drawn again ...
the undared form ...
o fresh source of light
those who unveiled neither
gunpowder nor compass
those who tamed neither a steam nor electricity
those who explored neither sea nor sky
but without whom the earth would not be earth. (Césaire, 1938)

Given the role of alterity or of Human Otherness imposed upon the recently freed slaves of the Caribbean and of the Americas (Pandian, 1988) as a function of the West’s 19th-century reinvention of Man on the model of a natural organism, it has been precisely this biologized understanding that the major thinkers of the ex-slave Caribbean have been compelled to call into question. This has been so because, as the educated elites of the majority ex-slave but still until the 1960s, colonized population,

they also had been socialized by the education system of the European colonial powers, in the terms of the same “understanding of man’s humanity” and therefore of the order of consciousness to which it gives rise, that calls for their group negation as both the Native and the Nègre/Negro/Nigger Other to the Western bourgeois criterion of being human, Man. It was this “double consciousness” that led to the Copernican challenge made by the Martinican psychiatrist Franz Fanon in his book *Black Skin, White Masks*, to this “understanding.” Faced with the regularity of the autophobic and reflexly aversive responses displayed by his black patients to themselves, their physiognomy, together with their equally reflex preference for “whiteness,” Fanon proposed that such an “aberration of affect” could not be an individual problem to be dealt with by psychoanalysis. Fanon set in motion the disenchanting of our present understanding and conception of being human.

Even before Fanon, however, the Negritude poet, Aimé Césaire, had not only confronted the reality of this “aberration of affect” as he himself had experienced it, as the condition of attaining to human status in the terms of our present understanding, but had also called into question the imperative of the techno-industrial world task to which this understanding, and the mode of subjectivity which it embodies prescriptively leads. Césaire did this poetically in his 1938 *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*, as well as theoretically in his 1955 *Discourse on Colonialism*, so that in the stanza of the poem cited as epigraph to this section, for example, what he reveals in these, normally very much misunderstood lines and the sequence that follows,¹⁸ is that Heidegger’s (1977) prescriptive world task, to which all mankind is increasingly subordinated, is a task mandated by a single and relative criterion of what it is to be human, made into an Absolute.

Celebrating and revalorizing non-techno-industrial Agrarian civilizations, including centrally, those of Africa, in his poem “Notebook,” as civilizations that the West has been able to see only as the negation and lack of its own techno-industrial imperative, Césaire refers to them, ironically, in the very terms of negation/lack through whose prism, contemporary Western scholarship has consistently seen them “those who unveiled neither gunpowder nor compass/who tamed neither steam nor electricity/who explored neither sea nor sky and yet without whom the earth would not be earth.” Here, by his use of this series of inversions, Césaire uncovers the very techno-cultural fallacy that the ethnologist, Asmaron Legesse has also analyzed as the fallacy central to the self-conception of Western modernity. For while, as Legesse argues, it is abundantly clear that technologically inferior

societies such as those of the Stone Age Australians had sociologically more stable and viable institutions, contemporary scholars, thinking within the framework of the technocultural fallacy as well as of the evolutionary paradigm which underlies our present order of knowledge, remain unable to confront this fact. Because they use technology as their ultimate criterion of human value, they tend to magnify “tenfold those aspects of society that are ... dependent on the technological order,” even going so far as to define culture itself as “an assemblage of tools and human patrimony as a tool-making tradition” (Legesse, 1973).

The duality of the challenge that Césaire makes in *Notebook of a Return to my Native Land* is therefore poetically logical. While the poem revolves about his exorcism of the depths of alienation of his own socialized consciousness—one that induces him to be reflexly aversive to his own physiognomic being, as well as to that of his always already stigmatized nègre population group—and as the prelude to his revalorization of his/their human *iness* or Negritude, this thrust which calls into question our present understanding of man’s humanity is linked to its complement. That is, to the thrust which calls into question the effects to which this understanding leads. Following up on the series of ironical inversions cited in the epigraph to this section, Césaire in a great cadenced outburst, revalorizes the very agrarian civilizations and their quite different understandings of man’s humanity that Western modernity posits as its Other, as the World to its techno-industrial Church. In doing so, Césaire here effects a radical discontinuity with contemporary Western thought, with therefore, the enabling fiction in the terms of whose behaviour-motivational principle of explanation, the one-sided techno-industrial goal of the mastery of nature/mastering of Natural Scarcity, has been made into the single Absolute criterion of being human:

Heia for the royal kailcedrate!

Heia for those who have never invented anything

those who never explored anything

those who never tamed anything

those who give themselves up to the essence of all things

Ignorant of surfaces but struck by the movement of all things

free of the desire to tame but familiar with the play of the world. (Césaire, 1938)

Humans, Nietzsche (1971) argued, know their reality only through specific modes of world perception that are the condition of our coming

to know the world in a stable and consistent manner. These world perceptions and the consciousness to which they give rise are always, however, relative to specific “local cultures” and therefore to Fanon’s always already culturally socialized, individual subject. It is only, therefore, because the individual subject is able to forget the fact of his/her being a represented subject, that he/she can “live with some repose, safety and consequence”; since were this individual subject to get out of the prison walls of his/her faith, even for an instant, his/her “self-consciousness would be destroyed at once.” As a result, the human subject is enabled to experience himself/herself as a fixed and stable subject only by repressing the relativity both of his/her mode of being and his/her related mode of cognizing; while because it already “costs him some trouble to admit to himself that the insect and the bird perceive a world different from his own,” (that, in effect also the Cenù Indians when culturally autocentric, and today’s Haitian Vodouisants “perceive a world” that is also different from our now Westernized own), such a subject must, as the condition of its very being, perceive its world perception as the only possible one. Yet it is clear that the question, “which of the two world perceptions” (that of the Westernized subject, that of the Vodouisant, or that of a bird), is more accurate, is quite a senseless one, since to decide this question it would be necessary to apply a (transculturally and transpecies valid) standard of right perception, i.e., to apply a standard which does and can not exist.

The fact that the 16th-century Cenù Indians had been enabled to “hear” the discourse of the Requisition, within the terms of its own quite different world perception and its standard of right perception and, therefore, outside the terms of the world perception of the hybridly politico-religious 16th century variant of the matrix Judaeo-Christian “local culture” of the West, makes possible a parallel recognition with respect to the paradox of today’s Haitian / United States crisis. It is from a parallel reoccupation of the place of both Church and State and their respective ethics, by a new reasons-of-the-economy ethic,¹⁹ and therefore from the “prison-walls” of the latter’s world perception, that we must now be liberated. A liberation, however, that cannot be effected, either in the terms of Aristide’s politicized and creolized Judaeo-Christian theology, nor, indeed, in that of Marx’s revolutionary but still culturally Judaeo-Christian counter-ideology, but rather in the new cognitive terms called for in Césaire’s *Notebook of a Return to my Native Land*, as well as in Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*; terms, on the one hand, of an exorcism, and, on the other of a sociodiagnosics of our present order of consciousness,

its “local culture” understanding of man’s humanity, and related behavior-motivational schema, or belief-system. Terms that would therefore call for the disenchanting of all belief—from Vodoun, the “root of all belief” to our contemporary Westernized own.

CONCLUSION

Like the Cenù Indians who most fully paid the price for the “mad and drunken” speech of the then first secularizing variant of the Judaeo-Christian culture of 16th-century Europe, no one more pays the price for the now hegemonic speech and the related behaviour motivational-schema of its second purely secularized variant than the peoples of the ex-slave Caribbean islands. No people more so among these than the peoples of the island of Haiti who, mired in poverty, and in an accelerating environmental degradation (Wilenz, 1989), remain caught in the pincers of three belief systems, one neo-agrarian and religious (that of Vodoun), the other also religious and Judaeo-Christian (the official religion of Roman Catholicism), and the third the now totally hegemonic economic-techno-industrial belief system of our present “understanding of man’s humanity,” the one that increasingly impels us all to attempt to realize it.

“Islands,” wrote Césaire in his “Notebook,”
 that are scars upon water
 islands that are evidence of wounds
 crumbled islands
 islands that are waste paper torn up and strewn
 upon the water
 islands that are broken blades driven into the
 flaming sword of
 the sun. (Césaire, 1938)

The ex-slave islands, the “waste paper existence” of whose peoples have been nakedly verified by United States coast-guard vessels which move to block all attempts on their parts to flee their “condemned of the earth” status, as those who most bear witness to the “hidden costs” of our present variant of the “mad” and “drunken” speech, will be compelled to move now, not just beyond the local dystopia of the by now anachronistic Haitian military elite, but beyond our now global and hegemonic

“understanding of man’s humanity.” The second “true victory” of a new science of the Word can only be possible when we are able to look at the world from the outsider vantage point of the 16th-century Cenù Indians. When that happens, we will recognize that the history of the last 500 years from the Requisition onwards has been a culturally and not an historically determined one. We will understand that our present behavior motivational constructs and their “programming language”—constructs such as “Natural Scarcity,” the “Debt Mechanism,” and the “cure” of the “world task” as imperatives of Material Redemption through economic growth—are no more “true” outside our present variant culture’s “ground” of actuality than the pronouncements of the Requisition could have counted as true outside the “ground” of actuality of the earlier 16th-century form of the Judaeo-Christian culture of the West. In the same way, the Vodoun’s anti-social workers of “witchcraft,” irate ancestors and offended loas, and the “ethno-medicine” of hounngans and mambos²⁰ were only able to “cure” the afflictions within its Neo-Agrarian culture’s mode of actuality; within the “root” of the Vodouisants’ belief.

Human beings are magical. Bios and Logos. Words made flesh, muscle and bone animated by hope and desire,²¹ belief materialized in deeds, deeds which crystallize our actualities. “It is man who brings society into being” (Fanon, 1967, p.11). And the maps of spring always have to be redrawn again, in undared forms.

ENDNOTES

1. This article is the condensed version of a longer text that will be published at a later date. (Editor’s note)
2. See for this Stephen Greenblatt’s *Learning to curse: Essays on early modern culture*. New York: Routledge, 1974, pp.26-31.
3. Liberal historians tend to oversee the implications of the fact that in the variant culture of the 16th century, Europeans still thought in terms of just and unjust titles to sovereignty and slavery. See Sylvia Wynter, “New Seville and the Conversion Experience of Bartolome de las Casas,” *Jamaica Journal*, 17: 2 and 3, May and August, 1984.
4. I use the term *Noiristes* to refer to the black Haitian bearers of the cultural nationalist discourse which functioned as the legitimating ideology of Duvalierism. Because “race” and “culture” are collapsed into each other in this discourse, the *Noiristes* were enabled to invert the racial supremacist theories of Europe and of Euroamerica into a counter-racial supremacy theory used to harness the energies of the popular Black majority of Haitians to the interest of this New class’s overriding

aim, as members of the educated lower middle class, of displacing and replacing the hegemony of the traditional mulatto bourgeoisie.

The Noiristes, although no less europhone than the latter, given the French system of education, sought to exploit the popular culture of vodoun, selecting out elements which it manipulated and harnessed to its own socio-political goals.

5. In his *The Order of things: An archeology of the human sciences*. New York: Vintage, 1973, Foucault traces the ways in which our present disciplines which were put in place during the 19th century, were, and still are, articulated on the basis of the new "understanding of man's humanity" on the model of a natural organism, (i.e., "Man" as one who lives (biology), labors (economics), and speaks (linguistics). See "Labour, Life, and Language," pp.250-302.
6. See Jacques Derrida, "Cogito and the History of Madness," *Writing and Difference*, where he argues that every system of thought (or logos) can only articulate itself as true through the mediation of the category of that which functions as its Fool. That is, as the category of the mad functioned for the Logos of the Age of Reason, and as Vodoo economics functions for our present hegemonic logos and its order of objective truth.
7. See Wade Davis (1988). *Passage of darkness: the ethnobiology of the Haitian zombie*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, pp. 244-262. Duvalier was to harness elements of this system to the keeping in place of his dictatorship.
8. See Harold Morowitz'(1991). "Balancing Species Preservation and Economic Considerations," *Science*, 253, AAAS. 16th August, for a discussion of the different modes of "reflexive thought" of the Agrarian and of the Industrial eras.
9. *Ibid.*, p.753
10. In our present system of thought "democracy" is used as a term of commendation, while the fact that it is both a conception specific to a "local culture," that of the West, as well as to its now middle-class variant (rather than aristocratic and/or popular), is overlooked. See for a critique of this "fallacy" D.B. Redford (1992). *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in ancient times*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 372-373.
11. See Peter Brown (1982). *The Cult of saints: Its rise and function in Latin Christianity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Hans Blumenburg (1983). *The legitimacy of the modern age*. (R.M. Wallace Trans.). Cambridge: MIT Press.
12. Both the terms *indios* and *negros* were generated from the semantic field of the Judaeo-Christian culture of the West. See Sylvia Wynter (1992). *Do not call us negros: How multicultural textbooks perpetuate racism*. San Francisco: Aspire Publications.
13. The *encomienda* was a forced labor institution where, Spain in reconquering its territory from Islam, had entrusted large numbers of the Spanish Moors to the overlordship of a Spanish-Christian military commander. In the New World variant of this institution, Indian families were "serfs" rather than slaves, and entrusted as a workforce to Spanish settlers in exchange for their ostensible Christianization.

14. See V. Y. Mudimbe (1988). *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, philosophy and the Order of Knowledge*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press; Anthony Pagden (1982). *The Fall of natural man: The American indian and the origins of comparative ethnology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
15. While politically the U.S. is defined as North America, inclusive of all its peoples, this is not so at the cultural level where the disciplines, specifically of the Humanities define the U.S.A. in Euroamerican (and thereby racial-national) terms. See "Do Not Call Us Negroes", (cited in note 11).
16. See Sylvia Wynter (1995). "1492: A New World View," Vera Hyatt, et. al. (Eds.), *Race, discourse, and the origins of the Americas*. Washington: The Smithsonian Institution Press; see also Sylvia Wynter, "Columbus and the Poetics of the Proper Nos," in (Djelal Kadir, Ed.), *Discovering Columbus in Annals of Scholarship*, 8:2, Spring 1991, pp. 251-286.
17. See Jacob Pandian (1995). *Anthropology and the Western tradition: Towards an authentic Anthropology*. Prospect Heights: Waveland Press. The non-Western and largely non-white peoples colonized by the West were also defined as natives and placed on a racial-cultural scale defined by the West—IndoEuropeans at the top and Africans at the bottom. The two terms natives/niggers or nègres, are therefore part of the same complex of Otherness that is founding to our present "understanding of man's humanity."
18. Wole Soyinka has been the most strident critic of these lines, which as a Western educated writer and thinker, he interprets in the very terms of the "techno-cultural fallacy" of contemporary Western civilization and its understanding of man's humanity, which Césaire was here calling in question. See Soyinka's extended essay (1980) *Myth, literature and the African world*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
19. Little has been done on the parallel "reasons-of-the-economy" ethic brought in by the new order of discourse from Adam Smith to Malthus to Ricardo. See in this respect Kenneth Lux (1990). *Adam Smith's mistake: How a moral philosopher invented economics and ended morality*. Boston and London: Shambhala.
20. *Mambo* is the term used for the vodun priestess, the female equivalent of the houn-gan, the male priest.
21. Dave Wagner uses this phrase in an essay on C.L.R. James whom he quotes: "Hegel," he told the Detroit readers, "is going to make a tremendous organization and analysis of thoughts, categories, etc. But he takes time out to say, and we will forget this at our own peril, that categories, the forms of logic, in Desire, Will, etc., are *human feelings and actions* (James' emphasis). History, in other words, is the animation of muscle and bone by hope and desire." See Dave Wagner (1986). "Philosophy and Culture." P. Buhle (Ed.), *C.L.R. James: His life and work*. London, New York.

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