



## Disciplinary Decadence and the Decolonisation of Knowledge

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### Abstract

In celebration of the fortieth anniversary of CODESRIA, an institution from the Global South devoted to taking responsibility for the production of social science knowledge, this article explores what it means to pursue such a task under the threat of colonial imposition at methodological and disciplinary levels, which, the author argues, carries dangers of disciplinary decadence marked by the fetishisation of method. The author offers alternatives through what he calls 'a teleological suspension of disciplinarity, and raises the question not only of the decolonisation of knowledge but also norms.

### Resumé

Pour célébrer le quarantième anniversaire du CODESRIA, une institution des pays du Sud dévouée dans la production de connaissances en sciences sociales, cet article explore les implications de mener une telle tâche sous la menace de l'emprise coloniale à des niveaux méthodologiques et disciplinaires, qui, selon l'auteur, provoque des dangers sur la décadence disciplinaire marquée par la divination de la méthode. L'auteur propose des alternatives à travers ce qu'il appelle « une suspension téléologique de l'interdisciplinarité, et pose la question non seulement de la décolonisation de la connaissance, mais aussi celle des normes.

This article, offered in celebration of CODESRIA's fortieth anniversary, addresses some recent theoretical developments in the decolonisation of knowledge. That knowledge has been *colonised* raises the question of whether it was ever free. The formulation of knowledge in the singular already situates the question in a framework that is alien to times before the emergence of European modernity and its age of global domination, for the disparate modes of producing knowledge and notions of knowledge were so many that *knowledges* would be a more appropriate designation.

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Unification was a function of various stages of past imperial realignment, where local reflections shifted their attention to centres elsewhere to the point of concentric collapse. On their way, those varieties of knowledge coalesced into knowledge of the centre, and successive collapses of centres under the weight of other centres led, over time, to the global situation of *the centre* (centrism) and its concomitant organisation of knowledges into knowledge.<sup>1</sup> This path has not, however, been one exclusively built upon alienation, for along with the strange and the alien were also the familiar and, at times, the welcomed.

Enrique Dussel is a member of a community of scholars who have questioned the logic of self-reflection offered by the most recent stage of centric productions of knowledge.<sup>2</sup> The philosophical framework of such rationalisation is familiar to most students of Western philosophy: René Descartes reflected on method in the seventeenth century, grew doubtful, and articulated the certainty of his thinking self in opposition to the fleeting world of physical appearance. A result of such intellectual labour is a shift of first questions from meditations on what there is to what can be known. This focus on epistemology as first philosophy charted the course of philosophy in modern terms against and with which contemporary philosophers and social theorists continue to struggle and grapple. For political thinkers, the new beginning is a little earlier, in the late fifteenth century – through early sixteenth-century reflections on politics by Niccolò Machiavelli. Against these intellectualist formulations of modern life, Dussel raises the question of its underside, of the geopolitical, material impositions and the unnamed millions whose centres collapsed not simply from the force of ideas but sword and musket. That modernity was ironically also identified by Machiavelli but is often overlooked through how he is read today: in *The Prince*, Machiavelli wrote of the effects of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella's victory over the Moors in the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>3</sup> His focus on the repression wrought in the name of Christendom presumed, however, the continued significance of the Mediterranean in the commerce of world-constituting activity. Dussel's (and others') work argues that the continued conflict spread westward across the Atlantic Ocean, and by October of that year, 1492, a series of new relations were established with a New World that de-centred the Mediterranean, stimulated a new economy and, with it, an organisation of its management (new epistemologies), and re-aligned the western peninsula of Asia into a new political territory in the form of a continent, namely, Europe.<sup>4</sup>

Prior to the emergence of Europe, there were maps of the Mediterranean that would have to be turned upside down to be familiar to contemporary travellers, for, as was the case with ancient organisations of locations of

regions that included northeast Africa, whose most known civilisation was Egypt (Km.t, as it was originally known before acquiring the Greek name by which it is now known), 'upper' pointed south, and 'lower' northward.<sup>5</sup> One, in other words, travelled *up* to what became known as Africa and down to what became known as Europe. The birth of new centres produced new geopolitical relations, and as focus on the New World eclipsed the effort to establish trade with southwest and middle Asia, the burgeoning economies affected the cultural life as well. In the production of cultural considerations also emerged those of new forms of life. A transition followed from Jews, Christians, and Muslims to Europeans, Asians, Africans, and New World peoples forced into some variation of the misnomer 'Indians' or 'red savages' at first along old Aristotelian categories of developed versus undeveloped 'men'. This movement, negotiated through conquest, colonisation, disputations, and enslavement, brought to the fore reflections of 'man' on 'man,' with constant anxiety over the stability of such a category. In such study, the process of discovery, of uncovering, also became one of invention and production: The search to understand 'man' was also producing him. Its destabilisation was inevitable as *his* possibilities called his exclusion of 'her' into question. The concomitant reorganisation of understanding him and her is oddly a schema that befits the dominating knowledge scheme of the epoch: Science.

The word 'science,' although also meaning knowledge, reveals much in its etymology. It is a transformation of the Latin infinitive *scire* (to know), which, let us now add, suggests a connection to the verb *scindere* (to divide – think, today of 'schism'), which, like many Latin words, also shares origins with ancient Greek words, which, in this case would be *skhizein* (to split, to cleave). Oddly enough, this exercise in etymology is indication of a dimension of epistemological colonisation, for most etymological exercises report a history of words as though language itself is rooted in Greek and Roman classicism. The tendency is to find the sources of meaning from either the European side of the Mediterranean or from the north. There is an occasional stop off in Western Asia, but for the most part, the history of important terms suggests a geographical movement that is oddly similar to the movement of *Geist* in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*.<sup>6</sup> Some further inquiry reveals, however, the relationship of the Latin and Greek words to more ancient Egyptian/Km.tian words *Crethi* and *kotket* by way of the Hebrew *Crethi*, which was derived from the root *carath*, which means 'to cut'. The word *Crethi* referred to the ancient Egyptian/Km.tian royal armies, which were split into two classes.<sup>7</sup> We thus see here

a transition from one form of ancient centre to various others on a course to European modern times. Oddly enough, there is an etymological link during the Latin transition with another Latin infinitive, *secare* (which also means 'to cut'), through which is more transparently connected the Hebrew *carath* (if one imagines *cara* as a possible spoken form). *Secare* is the source of the English word *sex*. A link between science and sex brings biology to the fore and the question of life sciences. Such a consideration indicates the importance of life reflections on the unfolding developing of systematic inquiry: As the question of a supreme deity motivated theological reflections and metaphysical inquiry, so, too, did concerns over the generation of life initiate scientific inquiry, although life was loaded with metaphysical content as anxieties and fear over the salvation of the soul without the theological guarantees attested to this day.

The subsequent unfolding story is familiar to most of us who study colonisation. Along with the expansion of Christian kingdoms into nation-states and their colonies, which resulted over the course of a few hundred years into European civilisation on a global scale, was also a series of epistemological developments that have literally produced new forms of life: new kinds of people came into being, while others disappeared, and whole groups of them occupy the age in an ambivalent and melancholic relationship by which they are indigenous to a world that, paradoxically, they do not belong to.<sup>8</sup> These people have been aptly described by W.E.B. Du Bois as 'problems'.<sup>9</sup> They are a function of a world in which they are posited as illegitimate although they could exist nowhere else. I am speaking here primarily of blacks and Indians/Native Americans, and by blacks I also mean to include Australian Aboriginals and related groups in the South Pacific and Indian Ocean. Such people are treated by dominant organisations of knowledge, especially those falling under the human or social sciences, as problems instead of people who face problems. Their problem status is a function of the presupposed legitimacy of the systems that generate them. In effect, being perfect, the systems that produce their condition resist blame for any injustice or contradiction that may be avowed by such people. They become *extraneous* to those systems' functions in spite of having already been generated by them. The contradictory nature of such assessments distorts the process of reasoning and the production of knowledge into doubled structures of disavowals and concealment, at times even with claims of transparency, and more problem people result. A consequence of such reflection is the proliferation of more kinds of problem people. Since 2001, when the US War on Terror was inaugurated, the production of such people has increased.

At this point, I should like to make some distinctions that may anchor some of the abstract terms of this discussion. That modes of producing knowledge can be enlisted in the service of colonisation is evident. Frantz Fanon, for instance, reflected, in *Peau noire, masques blancs*, that methods have a way of devouring themselves.<sup>10</sup> In doing so, he brought into focus the problem of evaluating method itself, of assessing methodology. If the epistemic conditions of social life were colonised, would not that infection reach also the grammatical level, the very grounds of knowledge? Put differently, couldn't there also be colonisation at the methodological level? If so, then, any presumed method, especially from a subject living within a colonised framework, could generate continued colonisation. To evaluate method, the best 'method' is the suspension of method. This paradox leads to a demand for radical anti-colonial critique. But for such a reflection to be radical, it must also make even logic itself suspect. Such a demand leads to a distinction between rationality and reason. The former cannot suspend logic, for to be what it is, it must, at minimum, demand consistency. The demand for consistency eventually collapses into maximum consistency, in order to be consistent. In effect, this means that rationality must presume its method, and it must resist straying from its generating grammar. Reason, however, offers a different story. To be maximally consistent, although logically commendable, is not always reasonable. Reasonability can embrace contradictions. Even more, it *must* be able to do so in order to evaluate even itself. This means that the scope of reason exceeds rationality.

Science is more at home with rationality than it is with reason. Departure from consistency-maximisation would disintegrate an important foundation of modern science, namely, the notion of a law of nature. A law in this sense cannot have exceptions. Since reason at times demands exceptions, a marriage between science and reason would be shortlived. The project of much of modern European philosophical thought, however, has been the effort to cultivate such a marriage. Toward such a goal, the instruments of rationality are often unleashed with the result of the effort to yoke reason to rationality. This effort could be reformulated as the effort to colonise reason.

The effort to colonise reason has had many productive consequences. Many disciplines have been generated by this effort. On one hand, there are the natural and exact theoretical sciences. On the other, there are the human sciences. The former set seems to behave in a more disciplined way than the latter. Although disciplining the latter has resulted in a variety of disciplines, the underlying goal of maximum rationalisation has been

consistently strained. The source of such difficulty – *reality* – has been unremitting. Karl Jaspers, in *Philosophy of Existence*, summarised the circumstance well: reality is not always obedient to consciousness.<sup>11</sup> Any discipline or generated system for the organisation of reality faces the problem of having to exceed the scope of its object of inquiry, but since it, too, must be part of that object (if it is to be something as grand as reality), it must contain itself in a logical relationship to all it is trying to contain, which expands the initial problem of inclusion. There is, in other words, always *more to*, and of, reality.

Failure to appreciate reality sometimes takes the form of recoiling from it. An inward path of disciplinary solitude eventually leads to what I call *disciplinary decadence*.<sup>12</sup> This is the phenomenon of turning away from living thought, which engages reality and recognises its own limitations, to a deontologised or absolute conception of disciplinary life. The discipline becomes, in solipsistic fashion, *the world*. And in that world, the main concern is the proper administering of its rules, regulations, or, as Fanon argued, (self-devouring) methods.<sup>13</sup> Becoming ‘right’ is simply a matter of applying, as fetish, the method correctly. This is a form of decadence because of the set of considerations that fall to the wayside as the discipline turns into itself and eventually implodes. Decay, although a natural process over the course of time for living things, takes on a paradoxical quality in disciplinary formation. A discipline, e.g., could be in decay through a failure to realise that decay is possible. Like empires, the presumption is that the discipline must outlive all, including its own purpose.

In more concrete terms, disciplinary decadence takes the form of one discipline assessing all other disciplines from its supposedly complete standpoint. It is the literary scholar who criticises work in other disciplines as not literary. It is the sociologist who rejects other disciplines as not sociological. It is the historian who asserts history as the foundation of everything. It is the natural scientist that criticises the others for not being scientific. And it is also the philosopher who rejects all for not being properly philosophical. Discipline envy is also a form of disciplinary decadence. It is striking, for instance, how many disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences are now engaged in intellectual history with a focus on the Western philosophical canon. And then there is decadence at methodological levels. Textualism, for example, infects historiography at the level of archival legitimacy. Or worse, in some forms of textualism, the expectation of everything being contained in the text becomes evident in work in the human sciences that announce studying its subject through an analysis exclusively of texts on the subject. There are scholars in race theory, e.g., who seem to

think that theorising the subject is a matter of determining what has been said on it by a small set of canonical texts. When appearance is reduced to textuality, what, then, happens to inquiry? What are positivism and certain forms of semiological imitation of mathematical phenomena but science envy? When biologism, sociologism, psychologism, and many others assert themselves, to what, ultimately, are they referring? In the human sciences, the problem becomes particularly acute in the study of problem people. Such people misbehave also in disciplinary terms. The failure to squeeze them into disciplinary dictates, from a disciplinarily decadent perspective, is proof of a problem with the people instead of the discipline. It serves as further *proof* of the pathological nature of such people.

A response to disciplinary decadence (although not often identified as such) has been interdisciplinarity. A problem with this response is that it, too, is a decadent structure. This is because presumed disciplinary completeness of each discipline is compatible with disciplinary decadence. Disciplines could simply work alongside each other like ships passing in the night. A more hopeful route is *transdisciplinarity*, where disciplines work *through* each other; yet although more promising, such a route is still susceptible to decadence so long as it fails to bring reality into focus. But doing that raises questions of purpose. It raises considerations that may need to be addressed *in spite of disciplinary dictates*. I call this process a *teleological suspension of disciplinarity*. By that, I mean the willingness to go beyond disciplines in the production of knowledge. This 'beyond' is, however, paradoxical. In some instances, it revitalizes an existing discipline. In others, it generates a new one. For example, a teleological suspension of philosophy generates new philosophy in some instances, and in others, it may generate new social thought that may not be philosophical. A teleological suspension of topology, chemistry, and biology could offer much to genetics and other sequencing notions of life. Germane to this special forum, it could also transform ways in which one theorises the relationship of dependency to development.

Teleological suspensions of disciplines are also epistemic decolonial acts. The discussion I have offered thus far places such acts squarely in, although not exclusive to, Africana philosophy. By Africana philosophy, I mean the exploration of modern life as understood through contradictions raised by the lived-reality of African Diasporic people. Because such people are often linked to many other communities whose humanity has been challenged, Africana philosophy is also a philosophy that speaks beyond the Africana community. Among the pressing themes of Africana philosophy are: (1) philosophical anthropology, (2) freedom and liberation,

and (3) metacritiques of reason. Their presence in this discussion is evident, but to summarise: The first is raised by the dehumanisation of people (making them into problems) in the modern world; the second pertains to the transformation of (emancipation from) that circumstance; and the third examines whether the first two, especially at the level of the reasons offered in their support, are justified. I cannot provide a detailed discussion of these thematics here because of limited space. Instead, I should like to close with several additional considerations.

The first is regarding the political significance of this critique. For politics to exist, there must be discursive opposition over relations of power. Such activity involves communicative possibilities that rely on the suspension of violent or repressive forces. In effect, that makes politics also a condition of appearance. To be political is to emerge, to appear, to exist. Colonisation involves the elimination of discursive opposition between the dominant group and the subordinated group. A consequence of this is the attempted elimination of speech (a fundamental activity of political life) with a trail of concomitant conditions of its possibility. It is not that colonised groups fail to speak. It is that their speaking lacks appearance or mediation; it is not transformed into speech. The erasure of speech calls for the elimination of such conditions of its appearance such as gestural sites and the constellation of muscles that facilitates speech – namely, the face. As faceless, problem people are derailed from the dialectics of recognition, of self and other, with the consequence of neither self nor other. Since ethical life requires others, a challenge is here raised against models of decolonial practice that centre ethics. The additional challenge, then, is to cultivate the options necessary for both political and ethical life. To present that call as an ethical one would lead to a similar problem of coloniality as did, say, the problem of method raised by Fanon. European modernity has, in other words, subverted ethics. As with the critique of epistemology as first philosophy, ethics, too, as first philosophy must be called into question. It is not that ethics must be rejected. It simply faces its teleological suspension, especially where, if maintained, it presupposes instead of challenging colonial relations. Even conceptions of the ethical that demand deference to the Other run into trouble here since some groups, such as blacks and Indians/Native Americans, are often not even the Other. This means, then, that the ethical proviso faces irrelevance without the political conditions of its possibility. This is a major challenge to liberal hegemony, which calls for ethical foundations of political life, in European modernity. It turns it upside down. But in doing so, it also means that ethics-centred approaches, even in the name of liberation, face a similar fate.



This challenge to ethics raises the question of the scope of normative life. An example of this is the presumed universality of the concept of justice. What many people in the Global South have experienced is that justice could be consistently advanced in the interest of profound suffering simply by rendering illegitimate the humanity of whole groups of people. Thus, it could be claimed that justice was achieved in the United States through the Civil Rights Movement and the legislation it occasioned or that it was accomplished in South Africa through the ending of legal Apartheid and the process of the Truth and Reconciliation commissions, or that the many former colonies that have become what Achille Mbembe aptly calls ‘postcolonies’.<sup>14</sup> These moments of justice (or, as some readers might prefer, supposed justice) did not transform the question of the human status of black peoples and the presumption of humanness enjoyed by people with, or those who have managed to acquire, the special credit or capital of whiteness. The result has been an effort to seek in normative life what is, in effect, beyond justice. In fact, the particularity of justice could be such that while necessary for a certain dimension of political and legal activity, it is insufficient for the deeper question of establishing a human relationship to human institutions. If this is correct, a more radical inquiry into the decolonisation of normative life is needed along with that of epistemic practice.

The third is about the imperial significance of standards as a correlate of the second critical concern. Consider the problem of philosophical anthropology. Simply demonstrating that one group is as human as another has the consequence of making one group the standard of another. In effect, one group seeks justification while the other is self-justified. The demonstration itself must be teleologically suspended. Shifting the geography of reason means, as we take seriously such developments as South-South dialogue and what the Caribbean Philosophical Association has called ‘shifting the geography of reason’,<sup>15</sup> that the work to be done becomes one that raises the question of whose future we face.

Fourth, at least at the epistemological level, every empire has a geopolitical impact by pushing things to its centre. In the past, the range of empires was not global. Today, because global, we face the question of the traces they leave when they have dissolved. In the past, empires constructed civilisations that lasted at least a few thousand years. They soon diminished to several hundred, then to a few hundred. Today, time is imploding under the weight of rapid and excessive consumption (with the bulk of natural resources being consumed in North America, Europe, and increases on the horizon in Asia), and we must now struggle through

a complex understanding of decay and the dissolution of empires. As with all empires, the consciousness from within continues to be susceptible to an inflated sense of importance, where the end of empire is feared as the end of the world.

Fifth, subjects of dehumanising social institutions suffer a paradoxical melancholia. They live a haunted precolonial past, a critical relation to the colonial world from which they are born, and a desire for a future in which, if they are able to enter, they are yoked to the past. A true, new beginning stimulates anxiety because it appears, at least at the level of identity, as suicide. The constitution of such subjectivity, then, is saturated with loss without refuge.<sup>16</sup>

Sixth, the theme of loss raises challenges of what decolonial activity imposes upon everyone. I call this *the Moses problem*. Recall the biblical story of Exodus, where Moses led the former enslaved Israelites (and members of other tribes who joined them) to the Promised Land. Moses, we should remember, was not permitted to enter. Commentary, at least at Passover Seders, explains that Moses's sense of power (and ego) got in the way, and he presented his might as a source of the Israelites' liberation. There is much that we who reflect upon decolonisation, those of us who seek liberation, could learn from the mythic life of ancient people. Fanon paid attention to this message when he wrote the longest chapter of *Les Damnés de la terre*, namely, 'Les Mésaventures de la conscience nationale'.<sup>17</sup> The admonition is this: Those who are best suited for the transition from colonisation/enslavement to the stage of initial liberty are not necessarily the best people for the next, more difficult stage: Living the practice of freedom. It is no accident that instead of the end of colonisation, new forms of colonisation emerge. The movements, in other words, are as follows: from initial freedom to bondage/colonisation, to decolonisation/initial liberation, to neocolonisation, to internal opposition, to postcolonies (neocolonialism in a world in which colonialism is shameful), to concrete manifestations of freedom. What this means is that the more difficult, especially in political and ethical terms, conflict becomes the one to wage against former liberators. Like Moses, they must move out of the way so the subsequent generations could build their freedom. We see here the sacrificial irony of all commitments to liberation: It is always a practice *for others*.

And seventh, but not final, as a consequence of the problem of leadership, Fanon was critical of what is now called postcolonial leadership and ruling groups in many Afro-majority societies. This leadership, whose moral evocations led the process of decolonization, continues to formulate capital in moral terms. Theirs is a supposedly or at least avowedly *moral* leadership.

The European bourgeoisie developed concepts, however, in coordination with infrastructural resources with great social reach. We see here another blow to the kinds of liberation argument that prioritise ethics over other modes of action and the organisation of knowledge. The poor, as a category to stimulate an ethical response, need more than submission and tears from their leadership. Meditation on and cultivation of maturity, of how to negotiate, live, and transform a world of contradictions, paradoxes, uncertainty, and unfairness, may be the proverbial wisdom well sought.

## Notes

1. On this matter, see, e.g. Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000) and Boaventura de Sousa Santos, ed., *Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies* (London, UK: Verso, 2008). Cf. also, Lewis R. Gordon, 'Esquisse d'une critique monstrueuse de la raison postcoloniale,' *Tumultes*, numéro 37 (October 2011): 165–183 and Jane Anna Gordon, *Creolizing Political Theory: Reading Rousseau through Fanon* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).
2. See, e.g., Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, ed. and trans. Eduardo Mendieta (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996). This community of scholars includes Linda Martín Alcoff, Paget Henry, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Eduardo Mendieta, and Walter Mignolo, works by all of whom, among others, I discuss in *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Cf. also Walter Mignolo's recent, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012). To this epistemic challenge, I would also add the problem of the decolonisation of normative life. On this matter, see Mabogo More, 'South Africa under and after Apartheid' in Kwasi Wiredu, ed., *A companion to African Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 148–157. A variety of expanded definitions are offered in Drucilla Cornell and Noyoko Muvangua, eds, *Law in the Ubuntu of South Africa* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012). Cf. also Leonhard Praeg, ed., *Thinking Africa: A Report on Ubuntu* (Scottsville, SA: UKZN Press, 2014).
3. See, e.g., Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Peter Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 76.
4. For discussion of the historical process and the historians and theorists who demonstrate it, see Lewis R. Gordon, *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy*, chapters 1 and 2.
5. E.g., see, Liz Sonneborn's discussion of the Medieval Islamic empires in the first two chapters of *Averroes (Ibn Rushd): Muslim Scholar, Philosopher, and Physician of the Twelfth Century* (New York: The Rosen Publishing

- Company, 2005). Cf. also M. R. Greer, W. D. Mignolo, and M. Quilligan, eds, *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
6. G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures in the Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956).
  7. See *The Academy of St. Louis, Transactions of the Academy of Science of St. Louis*, vol. 1, 1856–1860 (St. Louis, MO: George Knapp and Company, 1860), p. 534.
  8. For more discussion, see, e.g., Lewis R. Gordon, ‘Not Always Enslaved, Yet Not Quite Free: Philosophical Challenges from the Underside of the New World’, *Philosophia* 36.2 (2007): 151–166; ‘When I Was There, It Was Not: On Secretions Once Lost in the Night,’ *Performance Research* 2, no. 3 (September 2007): 8–15; and ‘Décoloniser le savoir à la suite de Frantz Fanon,’ *Tumultes*, numéro 31 (2008): 103–123.
  9. See W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1903). For discussion, see Lewis R. Gordon, *Existencia Africana: Understanding Africana Existential Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2000), chapter 4, ‘What Does It Mean to be a Problem?’
  10. Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1952).
  11. Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy of Existence*, trans. Richard F. Grabau (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971).
  12. For more detailed discussion, see Lewis R. Gordon, *Disciplinary Decadence: Living Thought in Trying Times* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2006).
  13. See Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, chapter 1.
  14. See Achille Mbembe, *De la postcolonie: Essai sur l’imagination politique dans l’Afrique contemporaine* (Paris: Karthala, 2000).
  15. See that organisation’s website: <http://www.caribbeanphilosophicalassociation.org/>
  16. For more discussion on this way of reading melancholia, see Paul Gilroy’s *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), Nathalie Etoke’s *Melancholia Africana: L’indispensable dépassement de la condition noire* (Paris: Éditions du Cygne, 2010), and Lewis R. Gordon, ‘When Reason Is in a Bad Mood: A Fanonian Philosophical Portrait,’ in Hagi Kenaan and Ilit Ferber, eds, *Philosophy’s Moods: The Affective Grounds of Thinking* (Dordrecht: Springer Press, 2011), pp. 185–198.
  17. Frantz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* (Paris: La Découverte, 2002).