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# Enrique Dussel and Afro-Caribbean Ethics

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In his critical response to my *Caliban's Reason* at the meeting of the American Philosophical Association in 2000, Enrique Dussel raised two particularly challenging questions for which I did not have good answers at the time. The first of these was the place of intersubjectivity in a work that dealt extensively with the ontogenesis of the individual ego. The second and closely related question was the place of ethics in Afro-Caribbean philosophy, particularly in light of its disappearance after the first chapter of the book.

This paper is an attempt to provide better answers to these two concerns of Dussel, particularly the latter. In the first chapter of *Caliban's Reason*, I addressed some of the ethical dimensions of the African and Afro-Christian phases of Afro-Caribbean philosophy and essentially left all ethical questions there. Consequently, to address Dussel's concerns, the primary task to be undertaken is the explicit thematizing of Afro-Caribbean ethics in the periods following the African and Afro-Christian phases. For reasons of space, I will deal with only one of these: the period that I have called historicist/poeticist. As a representative of the historicist wing, I will examine in detail the ethics of Frantz Fanon. Wilson Harris will serve as our representative of the poeticist wing. Further, I will argue that the ethical discourses of these two men share capitalist-inflected conceptions of evil and of liberatory aims with Dussel's ethics of liberation. However, they differ from him in their conceptions of the good that might be able to counter this specific form of evil. The ethics of the schools of existentialism, political logicism and feminism that have developed more recently must be left for another paper.

## 1. The Ethical Problem

In *Caliban's Reason*, I suggested that ethical discourses could be distinguished by the distinctive action-orienting or perlocutionary force that they exert on human behavior. The categoric coordinates of ethical action are good and bad, right and wrong, just and unjust. The perlocutionary orientation of ethical discourses is the motivation of human beings toward the good and away from the bad, to get us to do what is right and to avoid wrong. This ethical project of orienting human action toward the good suggests that we have strong inclinations toward evil and thus to do what is wrong. In this human inclination toward evil, we find the most difficult challenge that ethical systems have had to confront: that of fundamentally transforming, through ethical re-inscription, the flawed nature of the human subject so that it will both desire and do the good.

The nature of ethical systems has varied in accordance with how radical the evil is that they perceive in human nature, and thus the proportions of efforts that it would take to transform this

subject, assuming that transformation is possible. Broadly speaking, we can distinguish between two types of ethical systems: spiritual/religious ethical systems and secular ones that attempt to ethically re-inscribe human nature without the aid of religious or spiritual practices. In spiritual/religious systems of ethics, projects of ethically transforming human nature have typically involved austere, ascetic, or meditative practices that suppressed or repressed what was considered evil. The latter was usually any type of activity that reduced the ability of individuals to recognize or be open to the source of the good. Chief among these evils were selfish or self-centered behavior, strong attachments, pleasurable activities, material things, or non-spiritual ideas. All of these were seen as cultivating spiritual illiteracy and hence ignorance of the good. As such, they had to be countered by the repressive and perlocutionary forces of ascetic, meditative, and other spiritual/religious practices. In short, these ethical systems approached the ethical problem through a strategy of repressive sublimation that kept the evil genie in the bottle. The Greek figure of Prometheus bound or the Christian image of Lucifer/Satan confined to hell are two pointed representations of this ethical tradition.

In secular systems of ethics, the strategies for the transforming of human nature are quite different. The above practices of suppressing selfish and worldly impulses in the interest of spiritual opening are abandoned, and instead of repressive sublimation, secular systems of ethics practice various forms of what Herbert Marcuse has called “repressive de-sublimation” (56-83). In this strategy, the selfish, aggressive, and worldly impulses prohibited by religious/spiritual systems of ethics are de-sublimated, released, and given opportunity for expression and social recognition. However, the releasing of these “baser” impulses is not a completely unrestrained one. Rather, it is a controlled releasing that finds social outlets for these impulses while subjecting them to secular principles of regulation and ethical re-inscription. Some of these secular principles of ethical re-inscription include reason, as in the cases of Kant and Spinoza; the market, as in the case of Adam Smith; the state, as in the case of Hegel; aesthetics, as in the case of Wilson Harris; or the self-organization of human production, as in the cases of Karl Marx, Frantz Fanon and C.L.R. James. What separates these ethical discourses from religious ones is that they are based on letting the evil genie out of the bottle, but subjecting it to the discipline and transformative powers of the above principles. In the West, a prime symbol of this trend is the figure of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s “Prometheus Unbound.”

However, the classic statement of this secular approach to the ethical problem is Smith’s view of the market as having the power to transform base and selfish impulses into socially-productive and other-oriented activities. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith replaced empathy with the market as the crucial producer of moral sentiments. For him, the individual or national pursuit of wealth through the market was not only the optimal economic strategy, but also the most effective moral one. He was certain that the impulses to pursue self-interest through exchange, “to truck, barter and exchange one thing for another” were vital parts of the self-oriented aspects of human nature (Smith 25). Repressing them as religions often did was, therefore, not a good idea. Rather, they should be socially mobilized and channeled into competitive economic activity. Through the magic of the market, Prometheus unbound is here transformed into Faust the developer. The

market's invisible hand is capable of transmuting selfish motives not only into economic but also ethical gold.

Although it shares the secular space of Smithian ethics, the system of Marxist ethics established itself as a direct challenge to the former. Particularly in relation to the worker, Marx's portrait of the capitalist is anything but ethically-disciplined and restrained. On the contrary, his portrait is one of base impulses finding outlets in the rapacious exploitation of workers. In Marx's account, the market is the producer of the immoral sentiments that turned Prometheus unbound into "Mr. Moneybags." With fangs and claws now exposed, the capitalist becomes the very embodiment of evil in the Marxist system of ethics. Right and good are to be found in the resistance of workers and in their revolutionary aspirations to be free from being used as sources from which surplus value is extracted. Consequently, new solutions had to be found for both the ethical and economic problems of capitalism. For Marx, these solutions were to be found in human communities taking collective responsibility for the conscious organization of their ongoing reproduction. This was the basic principle of socialism that Marx developed as a direct counter to Smith's capitalism. However, as secular systems of ethics, it is the meeting of the roads to virtue and to material well-being in both that sets them apart from religious systems of ethics.

Because the colonizing of Latin America, Africa, and the Caribbean were founding events in the emergence of European capitalism as a world system, these two secular systems of ethics—along with those of the Amerindian, African and Christian heritage—have been the major influences on the configuration of ethical discourses in these three regions. In the case of the Caribbean, thematizing the ethics of the historicist/poeticist period would be impossible without the inclusion of the above two secular systems. In Latin America, Dussel's ethics of liberation is also quite unimaginable without these two, particularly the latter.

## **2. Enrique Dussel's Ethics of Liberation**

Emerging in the mid-1960s, Dussel's philosophy of liberation constituted a major leap forward in the return of Latin American philosophy to itself. In the decades following 1911, which saw the decline of Latin American positivism, the local philosophical scene had been recaptured by a number of competing European philosophies. Among these were the works of Henri Bergson, Benedetto Croce, Martin Heidegger, and Karl Jaspers, to be followed later by the philosophies of Jean-Paul Sartre and Karl Marx. At the same time, an intense questioning of this dependence on European philosophy also marked this period in Latin American philosophy. At issue was what Augusto Salazar Bondy referred to as the "inauthentic" nature of Latin American philosophy. For Salazar Bondy, this was a costly inauthenticity, as Latin American philosophy had paid for it with a "sterility" that pointed to "a vital deficit" (236). In even more telling language, he characterized Latin American philosophy as "a plagiarized novel and not the truthful chronicle of our human adventure" (238). Consequently, among the many challenges confronting the young Dussel, the problem of the authenticity of Latin American philosophy was unavoidable. In other words, the philosophy of liberation would also have to take up the liberation of philosophy.

Given these two liberatory concerns, Dussel's philosophy has had to move on two levels: 1) the ethical critique of capitalist exploitation of the poor in its peripheries; and 2) the analyses of the transcendental spaces of both Marxism and Latin American dependency theory as so clearly pointed out by Eduardo Mendieta (xvii). Through its ethics, Dussel's philosophy of liberation engages the critique of capitalism at two crucial points: the point of the commodified and exploited laborer, and that of the dependent relations through which surplus value is transferred from peripheral nations. In short, it is the critique of the de-humanizing impact on the other from whom surplus value is extracted, whether individual laborer or peripheral nation, that is the primary concern of Dussel's ethics of liberation. However, this critique must at the same time liberate and become more conscious of itself, if it is to address the inauthenticity problems of Latin American philosophy and also respond to the crucial problems of the region. As a result, the above ethical critique has been accompanied and fed by phenomenological analyses of the transcendental spaces of Latin American philosophical and economic thought. The primary goal of these analyses is the categoric re-engineering of the above transcendental spaces in the interest of a more authentic Latin American philosophy and in particular a distinct peripheral Marxism.

Unlike many other great ethicists, Dussel begins his liberation ethics with the problem of capitalist evil, which he examines through a phenomenology of the "I Conquer" (Dussel, *The Invention* 38). The latter was a new twist on older human forms of violent socio-existential domination that made the other into the excluded sacrificial victim of one's own survival. Evil is thus that elemental ego-constitutive violence that will make a human subject or group negate the right of the other to be, so that he, she, or it can be in the world. However, for Dussel, evil cannot be separated from a surplus extracting, master/slave model of intersubjectivity. As Linda Martín Alcoff notes, "sin," for Dussel, is "about institutionalized domination" (252). We encounter such models of violent intersubjectivity at many levels of human societies: public organizations, institutions such as the family, the state, the economy, and in relations between nations.

In Emanuel Levinas's phenomenology of the other, Dussel saw a model of intersubjectivity in which the agency of the other was not only recognized, but also treated with absolute respect. It stood in sharp contrast to the master/slave model with its unethical ethics of the right of the master to dominate the other. For Dussel, Levinas's phenomenology of the other became an indicator of the good and also a critical guide for how the other should be treated as an ethical subject. In short, he established a critical relationship between the ethics of the master and Levinas's ethics of the other.

The system of organized existential violence about which Dussel wants to raise our ethical consciousness is that of global capitalism. As we have seen, more than any other social system, capitalism rests on the de-sublimating and mobilizing of human capacities for selfish violence. It encourages the releasing of these impulses both at home and abroad on the grounds that the market can transmute them into wealth-producing activities. However, in the same unprecedented manner in which these impulses have initiated technological and entrepreneurial revolutions, they have also produced excluded and dehumanized others on an equally unprecedented scale.

Of the many excluded others produced by the rise of capitalism, Dussel is particularly interested in two: the poor laborer and the peripheral nation. Both have become who they are as a result of being defeated and forced into some form of the master/slave relationship. In Latin America, this relationship has taken the colonial form including both the colonization of formal institutions and of the Latin American sense of “I.” The latter, Sylvia Wynter has called the “coloniality of being,” as it brought this violent imperial othering directly into the self-formative process of the Latin American subject (Wynter 287-88). Dussel measures the moral worth of capitalism by the volume of the poor whose lives it must consume, and by the volume of surplus value that it must transfer from peripheral nations. This mode of estimation reveals the colonial violence and the stark ethical lack at the heart of capitalism in Latin America. The critique and rejection of this lack is the basis of Dussel’s ethics of liberation that is directed at restoring the humanity of the poor laborer and the peripheral nation. This restoration, as Alcoff points out, requires “the creation of ethical communities, that is, communities without the exploitation of labor, the destruction of the earth, and the systematic production of poverty, malnutrition, and famine” (252).

To rigorously thematize the manner in which capitalist societies produce the worker as its other, Dussel turns to Marx. However, this turn must not reproduce the problems of inauthenticity raised by Salazar Bondy and other Latin American philosophers. On the contrary, this turn must produce a peripheral reading of Marx that will illumine the othering of Latin America within the context of transferring surplus value from it. The strategy that Dussel uses in his breathtaking reading of the four redactions of Marx’s *Capital* is a transcendental/phenomenological one. Its primary aim is a peripheral re-orienting of the *a priori* categories of Marx’s evolving discourse on the conditions of possibility of the commodity. Of these categories, Dussel is primarily interested in Marx’s category of living labor, which he shows to have constituted the excluded or exterior category that made possible the discourse of the commodity. For him, the relation of capital to the exteriority of living labor is “the ethical relationship par excellence” (Dussel, *Towards and Unknown Marx* 193). In this exploitative economic model of intersubjectivity is located the ethical crisis of European modernity and the complicity of the market in the ongoing production of this crisis.

The major result of this phenomenological analysis is a transcendental relocating of the concept of living labor. In creating his peripheral Marxism, Dussel’s strategy is to discursively center those factors—the laborer and the peripheral nation—that functioned as the exterior of the capitalist system. By centering them, Dussel, the transcendental engineer, hopes to create a Marxist-oriented discourse that would reflect more directly the ethical and economic realities of the transfer of surplus value from the region. It is from this categoric restructuring of Marx’s discourse that Dussel derives his important notion of the transcendental status of the economic. This notion becomes a key source of his differences with the discourse ethics of Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas, which thematizes the transcendental domain in terms of the *a priori* conditions of everyday communication (Dussel, *Underside* 19-73).

Given this truly important and path-breaking contribution to the field of ethics, Dussel’s concerns about the place of ethics and intersubjectivity in Afro-Caribbean philosophy become quite

understandable. I am profoundly moved by the depth of his commitment to this area of philosophy. Consequently, I find the earlier mentioned call from Dussel for Afro-Caribbean ethics to speak to him, a very significant and moving gesture.

### 3. Afro-Caribbean Ethics and the Coloniality of Being

The discourses of Afro-Caribbean ethics reflect the broader human pattern of attempting to deal with the problem of evil through the perlocutionary agency of both religious and secular strategies. In the African heritage of Afro-Caribbean ethics, we can find classic examples of religious/spiritual solutions to the problem of evil. In pre-colonial African ethics, evil was not framed within a master/slave model of intersubjectivity, but within a regulatory and predestinarian one. This model of intersubjectivity arose from experiences of the counteractive and corrective responses of the African deities to the ego's excessive use of blind elemental violence in the self-realization of its projects of being in the world. Here, intersubjectivity is determined not only by interactions with human others, but also by the corrective intrusions of the deities.

Consequently, it is not the image of the master's elemental violence dominating the other that emerges from pre-colonial African ethics. Rather, it is the image of the spiritually challenged master who eventually surrenders his violence for reconciliation and cooperation with the deities. Thus it follows that these were reconciliatory systems of ethics whose teachings were aimed at effecting this transition from a position of ego-centric violence to one of cosmo-centric harmony and peace. The latter position constituted the conception of the good for which we must strive. These ethical teachings constituted what Teodros Kiros has called a "sapiential tradition" (11), and were usually cast in the form of proverbs. Examples of these ethical teachings are the following:

- 1) "Of all the wide earth, the Supreme Being is the elder."
- 2) "The destiny the Supreme Being has assigned you cannot be avoided."
- 3) "If the Supreme Being does not kill you but a human being kills you, you do not die."
- 4) "It is the Supreme Being who pounds the fufu of the one without arms."
- 5) "When the Supreme Being fills your gourd cup full of wine and a human being pours it away, He will fill it up again for you." (Rattray 17-28)

The Afro-Caribbean ethical subject is indeed quite different from this ethical subject of pre-colonial Africa. Between the two is the colonizing of the lived sense of "I" along with the colonizing of the formal institutions of Caribbean society. Coloniality as lived experience and as institutional reality now became integral parts of the self-formative process of the Afro-Caribbean subject. The latter was now included in a colonial model of intersubjectivity which did not counter but legitimized the elemental violence by which the colonizer othered the colonized. It was this exposure to the raw violence of colonial othering that accounts for the shift from the earlier theodician ethics of reconciliation to the more secular ethics of resistance and liberation. The sense of wrong felt by the pre-colonial African subject before the spirituality of being is here largely replaced by an intense sense of rightness before the coloniality of being. The latter is experienced as illegitimate and

immoral where as the former was experienced as legitimate and moral, hence the dramatic shift that takes place in the moral economy of the Afro-Caribbean subject. This living encounter with a Europeanized coloniality of being is a crucial point of overlap that establishes important areas of convergence between Dusselian and Afro-Caribbean ethics.

As in the case of Latin America, the colonizing of the Afro-Caribbean sense of “I” was effected through the re-inscribing of this center of selfhood in three major European discourses that were extremely dehumanizing. These were the discourse of the commodity, the discourse of the Negro, and that of heathen versus Christian. As we saw in the case of Dussel’s ethics, the discourse of the commodity displaced all prior indigenous identities and substituted in their place one’s capacity to labor. In the Caribbean, commodification produced a similar reduction of Africans to beasts of burden. It displaced identities such as those of Akan, Yoruba, or Fon, and reduced the Afro-Caribbean to the bestial status of tradable, enslaved labor power from which surplus value could be extracted without ethical restraint. As such, their exchange value (gallons of rum) became the primary makers of identity, rather than their state of ethical reconciliation. A classic description of this process of commodification is the opening chapter, “The Property,” of C.L.R. James’s account of the Haitian revolution in *The Black Jacobins*. Consequently, commodification was an integral part of imposing the coloniality of being on the Afro-Caribbean subject.

Also an integral part of this project was the discourse of the Negro, which racialized African identities as black in opposition to the white identity it gave to Europeans. The Negro, or worse, the nigger, was a caricature, a projection onto the African of everything that the European had to repress in order to be white. This negrification of the African was another layer of white ego-constitutive othering that generated even more violence than the class othering that Africans experiences as workers. As dehumanized stereotyping, negrification reinforced the extraction of economic surplus value by creating a caricature of the African from which racial surplus value was extracted to complement the existential capital of whiteness. This unrestrained extraction of both economic and racial surplus value pointed to a major failure in the discipline of the market to ethically re-inscribe and thus open the eyes of this blind elemental ego violence towards the humanity of the African other. The releasing of these blind impulses to the regulatory powers of peripheral markets transformed Prometheus unbound not into Faust, the developer, but rather into Prospero—the legendary colonizer, enslaver, and white supremacist. Consequently, for Afro-Caribbeans capitalism was more than political economy. It was a racialized political economy, a racial capitalism. In short, the discourse of the Negro was at least as important as the discourse of the commodity in creating the levels of elemental violence and dehumanization that Africans experienced in their encounters with the coloniality of being.

To these dehumanizing re-inscriptions as tradable, enslaved black labor power, must be added the further othering that came from being categorized as heathens—the religious opposite of European Christians. As heathens, Africans were the lost or unsaved others of the Christians, the ones with whom the latter could not live as equals. Heathens either had to be converted, eliminated, or excluded from the community. Consequently, this Christian discourse of the heathen was a further source of the elemental, ego-constitutive violence introduced by the European coloniality of



being. The latter, in its above three aspects, was a very different mode of intervention into the self-formative process from that of the African deities. It was a dominating rather than a corrective intervention that had the effect of making African resistance to this domination the basis for a new phase in Afro-Caribbean ethics.

As the new ethics of resistance took hold, it not only displaced the old but also introduced the secular turn in Afro-Caribbean discourses of right and wrong, good and evil. Even in the Afro-Christian period, African religious strategies of reconciliation were slowly abandoned for direct confrontations with the colonial violence of the imperial European. As in the case of Dussel, this imperial model of intersubjectivity gave birth to the new Prosperian face of evil. Confronting this new face would require releasing the Afro-Caribbean Prometheus from his religious reconciliatory restraints. He emerged in fighting form as Caliban. The rise of the secular insurrectionary ethics of Caliban was the broad pattern of change that followed the rise of the imperial ethics of Prospero.

#### 4. Double Consciousness and the Schools of Afro-Caribbean Ethics

In the English-speaking Caribbean, the new ethics of resistance and liberation took a variety of forms in spite of sharing a firm “no” to the slavery, negrification, commodification and heathenization that came with colonial domination. Some of these ethical discourses were more openly insurrectionist than others. Further, they were formulated in different discursive registers. Some were articulated in Afro-Christian registers, while others were formulated in poeticist and historicist registers. Even within these major schools of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there were important differences. Thus in the works of eighteenth-century writer Ottobah Cugoano, the themes of resistance and liberation are explicit and up front. His classic *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery* is uncompromising in its ethical condemnations of slavery and racism. At the same time, this opposition and its related concept of liberation are framed within an Afro-Christian providential model of intersubjectivity in which the hand of God is very active.

In contrast to Cugoano’s providential ethics is the compensatory ethics of the afterlife of many Afro-Christians. At the heart of this ethical discourse was a compromise: the conceding of the material benefits of the politico-economic life to the colonizer in the knowledge that one would be justly rewarded by God in the life after death. The character Ma in George Lamming’s classic, *In the Castle of My Skin*, captures very well the ethical discourse of many Afro-Caribbeans. Between these two extremes of Cugoano and Ma, we find the more moderate position of Afro-Christian writers such as Elizabeth and Ann Hart, whose ethical opposition to slavery was based on the obstacles it placed in the way of converting and saving Africans (see Ferguson).

In the late nineteenth century, the Afro-Christian school of ethics was displaced by the more secular ethics of the historicists and poeticists, who would dominate Afro-Caribbean thought in the twentieth century. This twin philosophical formation produced sharp increases in the significance of art, history and economics in Afro-Caribbean thought relative to religion. Although the school as a whole shared an ethic of resistance to colonial domination, there have been long-standing differences between its two wings over procedure and strategy. In addition to the ethical differences

between these two wings, there were also important differences within them. Afro-Caribbean poeticists have consistently argued for an approach to the dismantling of the imperial heritage which moves through a poetic de-instituting of the coloniality of being and a Caribbean re-writing of the lived senses of “I” and “We.” With the sense of self decolonized, the formal structures of colonialism would follow.

However, the specific formulations of this poetics of ethical resistance varied significantly among the poeticists. In George Lamming, it is formulated as the ethics of poetic entrapment, particularly the entrapment of Caliban in the language and discourses of Prospero. In Sylvia Wynter, the problem of poetic entrapment is formulated in the terms of an ethics of liminal categorization, which is part of a carefully elaborated philosophy of epistemic historicism. In Wilson Harris, the legacy of entrapment and recovery from it are framed within an ethics of the archetypal life that re-spiritualizes the path to recovery. Other important figures of this school include Aimé Césaire, Derek Walcott, Kamau Brathwaite, Jamaica Kincaid and Edgar Lake. In spite of these differences, what the poeticists share is the prime procedural importance of a poetic exploration of the disruptive impact on our self-formative processes of the coloniality of being.

On the other side of this procedural divide are the historicists. The major figures in this school include Antenor Firmin, Marcus Garvey, C.L.R. James, Franz Fanon, Eric Williams, Elsa Goveia and Tim Hector. As a group, they have argued for strategies of resistance and liberation that move through insurrectionary assaults on the formal institutions of colonial domination. With these colonial structures replaced by national ones, the de-colonizing of the senses of “I” and “We” would follow naturally. Thus one of the major sources of tension between the two wings of this school is the different priority given to coloniality (the subjective factor) and colonialism (the objective factors) in resisting the region’s state of imperial domination.

However, in spite of their emphasis on the institutional structures of colonial domination, Afro-Caribbean historicists differ significantly among themselves. In Marcus Garvey's discourse, priority is given to the structures of racial domination and to the place of race in the coloniality of being, as opposed to James and Fanon in whose works structures of class and race as well as their place in the colonizing of the “I” are more evenly balanced. Consequently, Garvey’s ethical discourse, particularly as formulated in *Message to the People: The Course of African Philosophy*, is primarily an ethics of racial liberation. This text makes great use of the form of the earlier sapiential traditions but instead of filling these forms with spiritual wisdom, Garvey fills them with wise sayings on recovery from racial domination. These sayings cover a wide variety of topics that range from God to the economy. Some of the sayings on reading could be summarized as follows:

- 1) “Never stop reading.” You should read about four hours a day.
- 2) Novel reading is for “getting information on human nature.”
- 3) “Read the best poetry for inspiration.”
- 4) “Always select the best poets for your inspirational urge.”
- 5) “Read history incessantly until you master it.”
- 6) “Never forget that intelligence rules the world and ignorance carries the burden.”
- 7) “Books are one’s best companions.”

- 8) “In reading books written by white authors of whatever kind, be aware of the fact that they are not written for your particular benefit, or for the benefit of your race.”
- 9) “In your reading and searching for the truth always try to get that which is helpful to the Negro.”
- 10) “Never yield to any statement ... that the Negro was nobody in history.” (Garvey 1-13)

The above variations in attitudes of rebellion, compromise and surrender between the different schools of Afro-Caribbean ethics can be related to some important changes in *a priori* or transcendental categories that resulted from both objective and subjective processes of colonization. These categoric changes can be best analyzed by using the Du Boisian theory of double consciousness (Du Bois 15-22). This theory suggests that the discursive violence of coloniality backed by the physical violence of colonial institutions produced deep splits in the self-consciousness of Afro-Caribbeans. In Du Bois’s view, this division in self-consciousness derived from the fact that the above three processes of re-inscribing the “I” forced Afro-Caribbeans to see themselves not through their own eyes but through the eyes of the colonizer; that is, to see themselves as heathen, Negro labor power rather than as Africans. This new capability of seeing one’s self through the eyes of the colonizer is what Du Bois called second sight. Second sight arose in polar opposition to first sight—the ability to see oneself as African or through other categories of one’s own choosing.

As a new way of seeing, second sight was the result of the changes in the *a priori* categories of African ways of seeing that were introduced by the triple re-inscribing of the Afro-Caribbean “I.” In the work of James, we saw the way in which commodification introduced the categories of property and beasts of burden into the Afro-Caribbean self-formative process. In their own ways, each of these re-inscriptions created categoric bases from which it became possible for the Afro-Caribbean to see him/herself in the stereotypical ways demanded by white ego-constitutive needs. In short, these categoric changes were the alternative transcendental bases of the second sight that produces double consciousness.

As Du Bois pointed out, second sight is a double-edged sword. Particularly in the context of the European colonizing of the “I,” the new or negrified view of oneself that comes with second sight is essentially a form of false consciousness that has the capability of making the colonized complicit in his/her own domination. This is the real source of the power of the coloniality of being—the strategic advantage that its hold on the subjectivity of colonized can give to the colonizer. Thus if second sight completely replaces first sight, the ability to see one’s self through one’s own eyes, the colonized is truly lost. He/she has lost control over the constituting of the most inner sense of “I.” As Fanon has shown, under a grip of second sight in which first sight is lost, the black colonized individual can be so self-estranged that he/she will attempt to become white. This varying loss of inner control reflects the categoric shift that made possible the ethical responses of surrender, compromise, and cooperation with the colonizer. This is the tragic edge of second sight.

However, as a double-edged sword, double consciousness also has an epic, insurrectionary side. Precisely because of its extreme levels of self-alienation and susceptibility to control by the colonizer, the self in second sight has within it the possibilities for an insurrectionary potentiation of epic proportions. All that is required is a reversal of the categoric changes by which it was cut off from its own powers of first sight and thus in a very real way blinded in relation to itself. Such a categoric reversal has the effect of returning the lost capabilities for seeing one's self through one's own eyes. With first sight restored, colonized Afro-Caribbeans such as Césaire and Fanon recognized with great anger the degree to which they had been dehumanized by the stereotypes that were introduced into their self-formative processes. For example, they were able to see that the stereotype of the Negro said nothing about them, and they soon stopped answering to that name.

In this recognition that the stereotypes of coloniality did not really represent the Afro-Caribbean but rather the capacity of the European imperial subject to dehumanize and deploy its elemental violence, an insurrectionary ethics of liberation was born. This ethics of liberation was further empowered when these insights into the European capacity for destruction and dehumanization were combined with new visions of self from the recovered capability for first sight. The combination of these two sets of categoric changes often produced processes of angry re-awakening and a readiness to strike at all those who were responsible for one's loss of self that was produced by negrification, commodification and heathenization. We can call this insurrectionary re-awakening "potentiated second sight." It constitutes the categoric foundations of the insurrectionary and more confrontational Afro-Caribbean ethical discourses such as those of Garvey, James, Césaire or Fanon.

In sum, the varying attitudes of insurrection, accommodation, cooperation and surrender that exist between the schools of Afro-Caribbean ethics can be grasped philosophically by linking them to the transcendental changes that produced the transition from first to second sight, and from the latter to potentiated second sight. Further, these Du Boisian categories of first, second, and potentiated second sight can help us understand some of the persistent barriers to good communication between historicists and poeticists. The divided and polarized subject that came into being with the onset of second sight made it very difficult for either the poeticists or the historicists to grasp simultaneously both sides of the negrified Afro-Caribbean. The poeticists, irrespective of whether they were insurrectionist or more for compromise, tended to see most clearly the subject who is trapped or lost in the conflicts and blockages that second sight brings to his/her self-formative process. Thus in the characters of Harris, Lamming, Kincaid, and Lake, it is very often the tragic drama of the individual blocked by or trapped in the dynamics of second sight that is being examined. These writers seldom explore in epic fashion the insurrectionary dynamics of potentiated second sight. On the other hand, the situation is exactly the opposite with the historicists and with Dussel. As the works of Garvey, James, and Fanon indicate, they tend to see the epic possibilities of the insurrectionary dynamics of potentiated second sight, with a more limited capacity for seeing and acknowledging the tragic powers of ordinary second sight. These differences will emerge more clearly from our examinations of the ethics of Fanon and Harris.

## 5. Fanon and the Ethics of Afro-Caribbean Historicism

As in the case of James, Fanon's historicism contains a classic statement of the insurrectionary ethics of the Afro-Caribbean philosophical tradition. Fanon's ethical discourse was born in the fire of potentiated second sight and illustrates the epic potential of this complex categoric/discursive formation. The insurrectionary impulses of Fanon's discourse carried within them an ethical "yes" to revolutionary violence against the colonizer. Also encoded in these ethical impulses were conceptions of a new "I" and a new "We," a postcolonial self and a postcolonial nation whose realization was an imperative. It was the guarding of these still unborn postcolonial realities that helped to determine the new categories of right and wrong, good and bad. In this new ethical order, the good was "that which is evil for 'them'" (Fanon, *The Wretched* 50). Fanon's insurrectionary ethics mobilized the perlocutionary powers of this new conception of the good and directed them to the de-colonizing of both the "I" and the "We" through revolutionary assaults on the socio-historical institutions of colonialism. This call to revolutionary action can be viewed as one of the major expressions of what Dussel has called the voice of the other. For Fanon, this revolutionary consciousness found its fullest embodiment not in himself or the working class, but the African peasantry.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon undertakes a masterful psycho-existential account of the confrontational birth of the post-negro or postcolonial self. Right and good are constituted by the people and the practices that facilitate this birth. Evil is everything that stands in its way. This struggle to decolonize the "I" produced a bipolar ethical discourse: at one pole was the ethics of the rightness of confrontation and opposition to the colonality of being; and at the other was a new ethics of autonomy, potentiated second sight and love between the colonized. As we will deal more thoroughly with the first pole when we examine the ethics of decolonizing the sense of "We," I will focus here on the ethics of love that is integral to Fanon's process of decolonizing the "I."

As Nelson Maldonado-Torres has shown, in the course of this struggle for a postcolonial "I," the colonized discovers not only his/her own dehumanization, but also the cry of one's own self for its recovery as well as the cries of other fellow colonized subjects. Performing a masterful phenomenology of "the cry" in Fanon's emerging post-Negro/postcolonial subject, Maldonado-Torres has been able to pinpoint the precise place of love in Fanon's revolutionary ethics (see especially 130-59). It emerges in the context of a new model of intersubjectivity between colonized individuals who are struggling to free themselves from the nightmares of colonized and negrified second sight. Love for Fanon is "a gift of the self" to the other. This giving of the self to the other Fanon regarded as the highest expression of the "ethical orientation" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 41). This orientation is the guiding principle of the new model of intersubjectivity. This giving of self is called forth by the cry of the other and brings with it a love that seeks to heal the selves broken by negrification, commodification, and colonization. In short, the ethics of *Black Skin, White Masks* moves between the love and solidarity of this new intersubjectivity and the justified confrontation with the elemental violence of the colonizer.

Important as the decolonizing of the “I” is to Fanon’s ethical discourse, the latter would be incomplete without the contributions made by his project of decolonizing the sense of “We.” Here, Fanon returns with full revolutionary force to the first of the two poles of his ethical discourse. In the first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*, we have the still unsurpassed phenomenological description of the revolutionary consciousness by which the “We” will be decolonized through the smashing of colonial institutions and the creating of a postcolonial nation. Fanon emphasized the absoluteness with which this consciousness experiences the rightness of its ethical categories. These were categories of absolute substitution: the replacing of an evil and rapacious species of men by a good and liberatory set. Their condemnation of the colonizer was absolute, one that would hear nothing of his/her goodness.

Fanon also makes it clear that the insurrectionary fires of this decolonial turn also vaporized the perlocutionary powers of the ethics of the Afro-Christian period. In its heat, the Christian part of this heritage came to be seen primarily in terms of its place in the colonial order of things and not in the light of its powers to ethically re-inscribe selfish human impulses. This role in the colonial order Fanon compared to the pesticide DDT: as the latter destroyed undesirable insects, so Christianity would rid the African heritage of its primitive religious beliefs that had been poisoned by superstition and ignorance. In short, from the insurrectionary perspective of decolonizing the “We,” the recession of yellow fever and the advance of evangelization formed part of the same balance sheet.

From this perspective, even the African part of the Afro-Christian heritage appeared in a different light. The strategies of repressive sublimation of pre-colonial African religions were now seen primarily in terms of their role in repressing, containing, or displacing the violence that is now being mobilized against the colonizer. In other words, African religions came to be viewed as the primary mechanisms through which the now precious violence was in the past inhibited and channeled away from its rightful target. Fanon notes two ways in which this redirection was done. The first was through beliefs in fate and destiny that removed all blame from the colonizer and attributed poverty and oppression to divine punishment. The second was the mobilizing of its repertoire of terrifying myths and evil spirits. This revelation of the anger-managing role of the Afro-Christian religions contributed greatly to declines in the perlocutionary powers of their ethics.

After this carefully crafted phenomenology of the insurrectionary consciousness and its ethics of liberation, Fanon devotes the next two chapters of *The Wretched of the Earth* to its critique, which is both transcendental and empirical. The transcendental analysis focused on the constituting of the ideal concepts or absolute claims of this ethics such as “the people,” “the enemy,” or “the nation.” Fanon showed that these were premature idealizations that had to be re-conceptualized. From this critique, Fanon concluded that this insurrectionary consciousness was a “rudimentary” one with significant internal weaknesses. In particular, he noted the weakness of its spontaneity and anger, and the danger that the latter might turn on its own. Against these, he matched the harsh neo-colonial realities of the postcolonial world. Thus it was a consciousness that had to be further educated, enlightened, and disciplined. Like James, Fanon saw this education and ethical re-

inscription as being possible within frameworks of collective self-organization in both economic and political life.

These internal weaknesses must be reflected in the ethics of this consciousness. It is in this context that Fanon takes up the possibilities of failure, both ethical and political. . He is very aware of the ethical dangers that must be faced now that Caliban's elemental violence has been freed from religious repression and sublimation. The success of his concept of the postcolonial nation and its ethics would therefore depend upon the careful educating of this consciousness and the ethical re-inscribing of its violent and selfish impulses in the norms and practices of collective self-organization. As we look around the postcolonial world today, we are confronted with the realization of some of Fanon's worse fears including the turning of the violence released during the insurrectionary period on its own. They have been made real in part by the failure to adequately educate and ethically re-inscribe this insurrectionary but rudimentary consciousness.

## 6. Harris and the Ethics of Afro-Caribbean Poeticism

Like many other Afro-Caribbean poeticists, Harris's ethical discourse shares Fanon's bipolar structure. At one end there is the anti-colonial confrontation with the evil motivations of Prospero; at the other, there is the search for the good in a model of intersubjectivity that would allow the postcolonial subject to truly emerge from its colonial entrapments. Thus the ethical discourses of both Harris and Fanon share secular conceptions of right and wrong that are inextricably tied to resisting colonial domination and to the being of the postcolonial subject in the making. Further in support of this emerging subject, both embraced projects of national liberation as alternatives to colonial domination.

However, the specific polarities constituting the particular bipolarities of Fanon and Harris are quite different. For example, Harris reverses the priority that Fanon established between the two poles and placed greater emphasis on how the post-Negro or postcolonial self was to be produced. The corresponding birth of the postcolonial nation receives little treatment in Harris. Consequently, there is no Harrisian work that corresponds to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. Harris saw the emergence of the postcolonial self as being even more difficult than Fanon had indicated. With this strong emphasis on the mode of self-production, there is a corresponding underdevelopment of the insurrectionary potential within the mode of politico-economic production. In this regard, Harris is representative of his fellow poeticists. On the other hand, as a historicist, Fanon was very unrepresentative of his school in the degree to which he did pay attention to the difficulties inherent in the colonial mode of self-production. Further, Harris pays much more attention to the defeats suffered by the colonized than Fanon. Thus he sees both Latin America and the Caribbean as examples of failed or defeated civilizations. This is particularly clear in the novels *Jonestown* and *The Mask of the Beggar*. It is through this legacy of defeats that has been encoded in our most insurrectionary or victorious moments that Harris surveys the possibilities for the emergence of the postcolonial subject in postcolonial Caribbean and Latin American nations.

Given Harris's view of the difficulties of overcoming the colonization of the "I," the subsequent realization of Fanon's worse fears in the current crisis of the postcolonial world has not been a surprise for him. Thus one of the first questions that Harris would probably have asked Fanon is the following: are the inner contradictions, pre-mature absolutes, and ethical shortcomings of our insurrectionary consciousness the result of just its under-educated state? Harris would insist that these difficulties had deeper roots and that without getting to these roots the ethical problems of the now fully born postcolonial subject will only continue.

For Harris, the decolonizing of the "I" must go beyond insurrectionary assaults on colonial or neo-colonial institutions and the forging of intersubjective bonds of loving and productive solidarity between the colonized. By themselves, these practices are unlikely to solve two current ethical problems of the colonized or neo-colonized: 1) entrapment in Prospero's already compromised sense of right and wrong; and 2) the challenge of ethically re-inscribing the ego-constitutive violence of the Afro-Caribbean Prometheus that was released from religious regulation during the insurrectionary period. Harris is not convinced that the love called forth by "the cry" or the discipline of collective self-organization are up to the challenges of opening the eyes of this blind violence to the presence of the other, or of undoing Caliban's entrapment in the discourses of Prospero.

In addition to these weaknesses, the strategy of insurrectionary confrontation has strong tendencies toward inflationary and compensatory self-assertion. The problem with these tendencies is that they are really attempts at self-concealment and self-evasion. For Harris's strategy of self-recovery and ethical advance, the worst response to the trauma of the colonizing of the mode of self-production would be to conceal it behind compensatory and self-evasive activities. These activities carry the price of cutting the self off from vital sources of creativity that have the power to undo discursive entrapment and create genuinely new identities. For Harris, access to these sources must be had at all costs. It is the central pre-condition for the ethical and cultural emergence of a genuine post-Negro/post-colonial subject.

What exactly are these sources of creative self-production and how can we access them? For Harris, the creativity that brings the human self and other life forms into being is that of an "unfathomable creator" (Harris 76). He often refers to this creator as the universal consciousness that constitutes a formative presence in our lives even though we are usually unaware of it. However, between the creativity of this universal consciousness and the inherent creativity of the human self there are many layers of mediation. These Harris describes as archetypes or surrogates of the unfathomable creator. These surrogates intervene in a regulatory fashion in the formation of the human self. In other words, they are integral parts of any society's mode of producing its human subjects and are capable of voiding or affirming particular choices and practices. Each mode of producing a self represents a particular "architecture" between the inherent creative powers of the self and those of the archetypes.

Clearly, there is here a structural similarity between these archetypal surrogates and the deities of African and other religions. However, rather than external projections, Harris has converted many of these deities, such as Quetzalcoatl, into inner creative forces shaping the mode of



self-production. Consequently, the projected constructions of the Afro-Christian period are not vaporized by insurrectionary heat as in Fanon, but carefully withdrawn and read internally. In short, released from their ego-maintained states of projection or denial it is the creative powers of the archetypal substitutes that Harris thinks are capable of ethically transforming the increasingly out of control ego-constitutive violence of the Afro-Caribbean Prometheus.

To gain access to these self-producing and ethically transforming resources, the emerging Afro-Caribbean postcolonial self must be able to apprentice itself to the higher and more capable powers of the archetypal surrogates. Because of the already noted blindness of our ego-constitutive powers, such an apprenticeship is for us a very difficult undertaking. These archetypal surrogates can easily become just another case of an encounter with the other, who must be dominated in some fashion within egocentric models of intersubjectivity. Harris notes that in the interest of the coming to be of the subject, the universal consciousness and its surrogates allow themselves to be dominated and contained by these unseeing ego forces. However, beyond a certain point, they assert their greater power and counter or void an action or capability of this recalcitrant ego.

This state of being countered or voided is extremely important for Harris's ethics. It is a point at which genuinely new beginnings or turns can be made. Thus it is the equivalent of Fanon's "zone of nonbeing." Harris develops a phenomenology of this difficult zone of ego consciousness that is comparable to Fanon's phenomenology of the insurrectionary consciousness. For Fanon, the zone of nonbeing is an "arid region ... where an authentic upheaval can be born" (*Black Skin* 10). Harris could not agree more. However, he would contest the degree to which Fanon developed the significance of this crucial point. Consequently, he has developed in great detail the nature of this authentic upheaval that can take place when the ego has been defeated or voided by the universal consciousness or its surrogates. This upheaval is one that challenges the pre-mature or inauthentic defensive maneuvers by which the ego often enforces its self-closure, establishes absolutes, or effaces the other. In other words, an archetypal apprenticeship is all about the honest facing of the inauthentic moves that have been made on the ego side of the mode of self production. It is an education into the awareness of the partial and premature nature of one's most certain and sovereign absolutes. This archetypal educating of the ego has the power to undo the latter's false absolutes and premature self-closures and also to release the violence encoded in them, hence the important Harrisian claim that if we do not resist an archetypal voiding, but dwell within it with hope, spontaneous and unpredictable creative forces will emerge that will take the self-formative process in directions one never imagined.

What then is the connection between being defeated by universal consciousness and the overcoming of the defeats the colonized have suffered? Harris's answer is that if we do not attempt to conceal the trauma of the colonizing of the "I" but approach this invasion as an archetypal voiding, its subjective impact will open gateways to the same re-creative forces that can come from a real archetypal voiding. These self-recreating powers of the universal consciousness are for Harris the real source of genuine ethical re-inscription in the context of the modern world. Consequently, his postcolonial ethics are rooted in a model of intersubjectivity that includes ongoing dialogues of decreasing egocentricity with the archetypal surrogates of the unfathomable creator as well as with

other human beings. Thus the real Harrisian postcolonial revolution is first and foremost a new architecture in Afro-Caribbean self-consciousness that is the result of new relations between the “I” and surrogates of the universal consciousness. In *The Palace of the Peacock*, Harris shows that both colonizer and colonized are in need of this transformative relationship with the universal consciousness. He places them all—Donne, Da Silva, Vigilance, and Carrol—in the same boat of ego closure as they journey inward towards an enlightening vision of both self and universal consciousness. In so many of his other novels, Harris will explore the consequences of an inability to ethically re-inscribe ego-constitutive violence because of the absence or failure of such inward journeys toward the palace and its ego-transforming visions.

### **7. Conclusion: The Ethics of Dussel, Harris, and Fanon**

From the preceding accounts of the ethics of Dussel, Fanon, and Harris, it should be clear that the roots of all three are to be found in their oppositional responses to the new face of evil that they saw at the very heart of Western capitalism. This new Prosperean face replaced that of Satan and other religious representations of evil. Thus our three ethicists have all moved beyond the categoric frameworks of the ethics of traditional religions.

But in spite of this shared theme of liberation, there are significant differences between their ethics. These differences concern two crucial issues: 1) the details of capitalism’s evil face; and 2) the ethical principles and practices that would constitute the good in this period of post-religious hegemony. With regard to the first of these two issues, it should be clear that in Harris and Fanon race constitutes a bigger factor in the sketching of the evil face of capitalism than in the case of Dussel. For him, this face of capitalism is constructed primarily by the motives and models of intersubjectivity that facilitate commodification and surplus extraction. Although Dussel has written more extensively than Fanon or Harris on the impact of Christianization, he maintains a rather strict line of separation between his philosophical and theological writings on ethics.

With regard to the new conception of the good and its ethical principles, the lines of difference and similarity shift quite significantly. This issue brings Fanon and Dussel closer together, with Harris being alone this time. The new conceptions of the good in Dussel and Fanon share Marx’s assumptions regarding the ethical powers of the discipline and solidarity of collective self-organization among the oppressed. Fanon in particular emphasized the need for this participatory factor in the everyday life of the organizations of the oppressed. He saw it as being crucial for the education of the rudimentary state of their consciousness and for the new mode of containing and transforming its elemental violence. In Dussel, the emphasis is more on the empowering effects of the bonds of love and solidarity produced by the self-organized activity of resisting imperial domination and the building of ethical communities. But in spite of these differences, Fanon and Dussel share an ethics of liberation that sees the good in the transformative and empowering capabilities of collective self-organization in both resistance and the daily work of communal self-reproduction.

In contrast to Fanon's and Dussel's ethics of collective self-organization is Harris's ethics of the archetypal life. For Harris, the first or original face of evil, before its religious or capitalist manifestations, is the blind violence contained in the exclusions, false absolutes, premature totalizations, and other-effacing practices that are usually a part of the human self in formation. These are definite indicators of unresolved existential problems that are being evaded. This self-formative or intra-subjectively motivated violence often produces master-slave models of intersubjectivity that must compromise the freedom and agency of the other. It is in this context that the partial and the fraction become important symbols of the good for Harris. Partials and fractions are the realities that are revealed when false absolutes and premature totalizations are voided within the framework of an archetypal apprenticeship. For Harris, capitalism became a prime symbol of evil because of the unprecedented degree to which it had socially and technologically empowered this elemental violence encoded in the self-formative process of Prometheus unbound. Given these similarities and differences, it should be clear that Dussel is closer to the historicist than the poeticist wing of Afro-Caribbean philosophy. Yet, together, these three ethical discourses are quite distinct from those of traditional religions or more contemporary ones such as the discourse ethics of Habermas and Apel, or the ethics of postmodernism. In traditional religions, evil was defined by the ego-constitutive violence of the individual whose intersubjective practices challenged and effaced the activity of God. In the relativism of postmodernism, the very categories of good and evil tend to disappear. In discourse ethics, the problem of evil is abstractly represented as that of strategic action (Apel 69). Thus in making the shift from the paradigm of the subject to the more intersubjective one of communication, discourse ethics virtualized and lost sight of the intra-subjective dimensions of the problem of evil. It was virtualized and robbed of its elemental resistances by making its solution a counterfactually anticipated result of the communication paradigm.

Such reductions in the proportions of the problem of evil are not to be found among our three ethicists. They continue to emphasize a notion of evil that is closely related to the imposing of the violent logics of capitalist domination.. In the cases of Fanon and Harris, the proportions of the problem have only increased in the postcolonial period with the capitalist empowering of the now unbound peripheral Prometheus. These particular emphases and their specific conceptions of the good are what account for the distinctive nature of the liberation ethics of Dussel, Harris and Fanon.

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