APA Newsletters

NEWSLETTER ON PHILOSOPHY AND THE BLACK EXPERIENCE

FROM THE EDITORS, JOHN MCCLENDON & GEORGE YANCY

ARTICLE

STEPHEN C. FERGUSON II
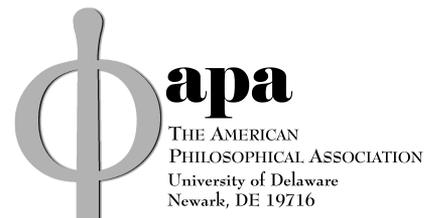"Teaching Hurricane Katrina: Understanding Divine Racism and Theodicy"

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FROM THE EDITORS

We welcome our readers to a new academic year, one that should prove to be most exciting on a number of fronts. Co-editor John H. McClendon III is now at Michigan State University as director of African American & African Studies and professor in the Department of Philosophy. And George Yancy is responsible for initiating a Critical Race Theory Speakers Series at Duquesne University where he teaches. The series interprets critical race theory liberally and welcomes scholars who are interested in issues of race, racism, whiteness, and the various ways in which race impacts issues of embodiment, the history of philosophy, political theory, legal theory, and social theory. For those who are interested, please contact Dr. Yancy at georgeandsusany@aol.com.

We are most happy to announce that the Collegium of Black Women Philosophers will hold its first conference at Vanderbilt University on October 19-20. Joyce M. Cook, the first Black woman to receive the Ph.D. in philosophy, will be recognized for her pioneering efforts. She will also be given an award for her early contributions to the field of philosophy. For additional information contact Dr. Kathryn T. Gines at k.gines@vanderbilt.edu.

The theme this year for the Philosophy Born of Struggle Conference is "Africa in the Dialectics of History," and it will be held at the New School University in New York City on October 26 & 27. For further information contact Dr. J. Everet Green at everet@optonline.net. There are also two sessions that will be sponsored by the Committee on Blacks in Philosophy at the Eastern Division APA meeting. The APA Committee on Blacks in Philosophy will sponsor a panel with Drs. George Yancy, Stephen C. Ferguson II, and John H. McClendon III on the topic "Beyond Alain Locke: African American Philosophers and the Problem of Interpretation in the History of African American Philosophy." There will also be a panel entitled "A Retrospective on Bernard Boxill's *Blacks and Social Justice*." The chairperson of the session will be Howard McGary (Rutgers University). The participants/critics shall be: Charles Mills (Northwestern University), Tommie Shelby (Harvard University), and Laurence Thomas (Syracuse University). Bernard Boxill (University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill) will be the respondent.

In this issue, Dr. Stephen C. Ferguson II provides an insightful essay entitled "Teaching Hurricane Katrina: Understanding Divine Racism and Theodicy." Many proponents of the philosophy of the African-American experience have argued that not only is there a rich tradition of African-American philosophical thought that scholars have largely ignored but also there is an abundance of experiences on which philosophical reflection is a most worthy endeavor. Dr. Ferguson ventures into the realm of philosophy of religion via his take on pedagogy and how to effectively get students to think philosophically about contemporary issues facing the African-American community. His summation about teaching students on the topic of Hurricane Katrina offers us a virtual goldmine on how to elicit greater philosophical reflection and improved discussion among students in the classroom.

There are also two insightful book reviews. Clarence Sholé Johnson reviews George Carew's *Democratic Transition in Postcolonial Africa: A Deliberative Approach* (Edwin Mellen Press, 2006). And Blanche Radford Curry reviews Shannon Sullivan's *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege* (Indiana University Press, 2006).

ARTICLE

Teaching Hurricane Katrina: Understanding Divine Racism and Theodicy

Stephen C. Ferguson II
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> New Orleans is the first of the cities going to tumble down...unless America changes its course. ...It is the wickedness of the people of America and the government of America that is bringing the wrath of God down.
>
> –Louis Farrakhan[1]

> Surely God is mad at America. He sent us hurricane after hurricane after hurricane, and it's destroyed and put stress on this country. ...Surely he doesn't approve of us being in Iraq under false pretences. But surely he is upset at black America also. ...We are not taking care of ourselves. We are not taking care of our women, and we are not taking care of our children when you have a community where 70 percent of its children are being born to one parent.
>
> –Ray Nagin, Mayor of New Orleans[2]

> There was a tsunami and there are terrible natural disasters, because there isn't enough Torah study... black people reside there [New Orleans]. Blacks will study the Torah? [God said] let's bring a tsunami and drown them. ...Bush was behind the [expulsion of] Gush Katif, he encouraged Sharon to expel Gush Katif...we had 15,000 people expelled here [in Israel],

and there [in America] 150,000 [were expelled]. It was God's retribution...God does not short-change anyone.

–Rabbi Ovadi Yosef[3]

Over the last two years, I have taught a course, "Contemporary African-American Philosophy." The course covers two sections. In the first half of the class, I examine the history of African-American philosophy focusing on the first-generation of African-American philosophers from 1865 until 1965. In the second half of the course, we examine what I call the philosophy of the Black experience. Here we examine philosophical issues, themes, and problems associated with the Black experience. The difference here is a qualitative one that is rooted, nonetheless, in a quantitative relationship. The former is more general in scope and is all-inclusive of African-American philosophers without regard for the precise nature of their philosophical works and practices. The latter, in turn, are the identifiable philosophical efforts toward elaborating on the precise characteristics and implications of the African-American experience.

One sub-field of philosophy we concern ourselves with—as part of the philosophy of the African-American experience—is the philosophy of religion. Black religious thought has had a tremendous influence on African-American life and culture. It has both affected and reflected the lives of African-Americans from slavery until now. Most importantly, Black religious thought has been not only a source of inspiration, but it has also served as an aversion to Black liberation. Many Black religious leaders like Richard Allen, Edward W. Blyden, and Martin Luther King, Jr. have fought to expand the bourgeois democratic rights to African Americans. However, more often than not, Black religious ideology has collapsed into quietism, that is, to the acceptance of Black suffering, oppression, and exploitation.

In my class, using the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina as a point of reference, we examine the issue of divine racism and theodicy. While the etymology of the word theodicy (that is, God's justice) serves as a point of departure, I emphasize that theodicy is more than the attempt to exonerate and justify God's purpose and work in light of the existence of human suffering brought about by either natural and moral evil. Most importantly, it is a concern to determine the cause of human suffering.

The mere sight of swollen bodies floating in flooded streets, citizens trapped on rooftops awaiting rescue that for many never arrived, and thousands of starving people crowded in the Superdome and the New Orleans Convention Center or stranded on highway overpasses raises in a profound manner the question of theodicy. How could an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly benevolent God allow this to this happen to so many innocent people? So many people prayed with all their heart for water, food, and shelter, and most importantly for their very lives, but where was God? And so, the many stories of horrible afflictions associated with undeserved suffering chronicled in Spike Lee's phenomenal documentary *When the Levees Broke* seems to be a representative case for posing the question, Was Hurricane Katrina an act of God?

While religion has been at the center of the African-American experience, substantive philosophical questions and issues about theodicy, the epistemological nature of religious beliefs, and even creationism have been avoided. In a similar vein, the tradition of secular humanism and/or scientific atheism in African-American intellectual culture and history has been greatly overlooked. (I find that many students, particularly African-American students, invariably see atheism and/or secular humanism as synonymous with whiteness. For example, only a white person would be an atheist. Or Black people are inherently a spiritual people.) Here it is important for students to contrast the dialectical idealism of Alexander Crummell, W.E.B. DuBois, and Charles Leander Hill to the secular humanism (atheism) of Richard B. Moore, Hubert Harrison, J.A. Rogers, George S. Schulyer, Walter Everette Hawkins, A. Philip Randolph, Chandler Owen, Eugene C. Holmes, and C.L.R. James.[4] While the former African-American intellectuals traveled down the road of atheism and humanism, I point out that African-American philosophers in general have adopted idealism and a religious *Weltanschauung*.[5]

Two important bridges between the traditions of materialism and idealism in the African-American philosophical tradition are the critical humanist philosophical theology of William R. Jones and Roy D. Morrison.[6] I use selections from Jones' monumental *Is God a White Racist? A Preamble to a Black Theology* in order for students to understand how the problem of theodicy emerges within African-American experience.

Introducing the Atheism

Before we plunge right into the issues surrounding theodicy and divine racism, I begin our discussion by outlining the Marxist critique of religion as developed by Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, and V.I. Lenin. In addition, I have the students discuss several passages from Kwame Nkrumah's philosophical magnum opus, *Consciencism*, concerning the epistemological and class nature of religious beliefs (see Appendix).

Unlike some traditions within the philosophy of religion, Marxism-Leninism (or scientific atheism) does not dismiss religion as metaphysical nonsense. On the contrary, as Lenin emphasizes,

> Marxism goes further. It says: We must *know how* to combat religion, and in order to do so we must explain the source of faith and religion among the masses *in a materialist way*. The combating of religion cannot be confined to abstract ideological preaching, and it must not be reduced to such preaching. It must be linked up with the concrete practice of the class movement, which aims at eliminating the social roots of religion.[7]

While scientific atheism as a worldview claims there are no rational, scientific grounds upon which to sustain a belief in the existence of God, it is also concerned with explaining the social and epistemological basis for religion and/or religious ideology in a materialist manner.

Scientific atheism (1) is necessarily grounded on dialectical materialism; (2) consequently rejects the religious assumption that there exist a necessary, transcendent, or incorporeal entity that exercises causal agency (i.e., God) in the natural and social world; (3) rejects empirically unsupported *ad hoc* hypotheses on the existence of God; (4) argues that religion as a form of social consciousness reflects the material world in a distorted and false way; (5) views all modern religions and churches, and each and every religious organization, as instruments of bourgeois reaction that serve to defend the exploitation of the working class; that is, religion and religious ideology ultimately leads to quietism, to the acceptance of one's own suffering and that of others; and (6) rests claims about the nonexistence of God on the advances of science.

After outlining the nature of scientific atheism, I raise the following question with students: Is there an argument for atheism based on the existence of natural and moral evil that may rationally justify someone in being an atheist? To this I give the affirmative answer and try to support the answer by setting forth a strong argument for atheism based on the existence of evil.[8] The argument proceeds as follows:

(1) If God exists, God is a perfectly benevolent omnipotent being. (By definition)

(2) A perfectly benevolent being would prevent any unnecessary natural evil if he could. (Premise)

(3) An omnipotent being could prevent all unnecessary natural evil. (Premise)

(4) Therefore, if there were a God, there would be no unnecessary natural evil. (From 1, 2, and 3)

(5) But there is unnecessary natural evil. (Premise derived from experience)

(6) Therefore, there is no God. (From 4 and 5)[9]

The biggest hurdle most students face in dealing with this argument is seeing how it is logically impossible for both God and evil to exist. Here I argue that claiming that God and evil exist is like saying that square circles or married bachelors exist. If someone claims that it's impossible for something to be both a square and a circle, an obvious response for one who thinks otherwise is to draw one. We know that's not really possible. But if someone *could* draw a square circle, it would refute the claim that square circles can't exist. In order for the theist to refute the claim that it is logically impossible for God and evil to exist, they must describe a situation where God permits unnecessary natural evil for a morally justified reason. After an extensive discussion of this argument, we watch approximately two hours of Spike Lee's *When the Levees Broke*. Through first-person accounts of the destruction brought about by Hurricane Katrina, Spike Lee's documentary presents a host of individuals who are trying to come to terms with God's role in this human tragedy.

Was Hurricane Katrina an Act of God?: Confronting Divine Racism and Theodicy

Does the existence of unnecessary suffering witnessed during Hurricane Katrina pose an evidential challenge to the existence of God? I use the set of interpretive principles formulated by William Jones (in *Is God a White Racist?*) to serve as a guideline for an evaluative assessment of God's role in the unnecessary natural evil associated with Hurricane Katrina and the moral evil that followed Hurricane Katrina.

Before we outline Jones's concept of divine racism, it is important to mention that previous discussions of Hurricane Katrina, in my estimation, have been hampered by a rather restrictive ideological scope, viz., focusing exclusively on the role of race and racism. This exclusive focus on race and/or racism ultimately looks for a legal (legislative/judicial) strategy to address and undermine racism, if not national oppression. What this approach requires, by way of analysis, is defining racism and national oppression, wherein they are defined *without* due consideration given to the *material* context of social relations of production and the state as an instrument of the ruling class. It is important to emphasize the *material* context for the critical investigation of racism and national oppression, constituted in the dialectic relationship of bourgeois civil society with the capitalist state. I contend that an analysis of the devastation brought about by Hurricane Katrina must have as its starting point that racism and national oppression are grounded on class exploitation. Talk about how and whether "race matters" obscures the role of class in racial disparities. As Adolph Reed has poignantly noted,

It's certainly true that George W. Bush and his minions are indifferent to, or contemptuous of, black Americans in general. They're contemptuous of *anyone* who is not part of the ruling class.

Reed continues

To paraphrase historian Barbara Fields, race is a language through which American capitalism's class contradictions are commonly expressed. Class will almost certainly turn out to be a better predictor than race of who was able to evacuate, who drowned, who was left to fester in the Superdome or on overpasses, who is stuck in shelters in Houston or Baton Rouge, or who is randomly dispersed to the four winds. I'm certain that class is also a better predictor than race of whose emotional attachments to place will be factored into plans for reconstructing the city.[10]

So, while we are discussing the issue of divine racism, it is important for students to see that we have abstracted from the class dimensions of Hurricane Katrina.

So, according to Jones, divine racism has the following components: (1) God does not value all men equally; consequently He treats them differently. And this difference is not accidental but central to His will and purpose; (2) In the context of divine racism, the two-category system is correlated with an imbalance of suffering; (3) God is responsible for the imbalance of suffering that differentiates the "in" and the "out" groups; (4) God's favor or disfavor is correlated with the racial or ethnic identity of the group in question; and (5) God must be a member of the "in" group.

To raise the issue of divine racism, William Jones argues, is simply another way of addressing the traditional philosophical problem of evil and human suffering. For the sake of the argument, if we see the ruinous floods brought about by Hurricane Katrina and the desolation left in its wake as disproportionately affecting Blacks living on the Gulf coast, why did God bring his wrath upon African Americans? As Jones puts it, what is the meaning, the cause, and the "why" of Black suffering? Not long after the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina was unleashed on the Gulf Coast, various members of the African-American bourgeois establishment including Al Sharpton, Louis Farrakhan, and Ray Nagin argued that Hurricane Katrina was a form of divine retribution meant to punish Black New Orleans and purify their souls. On the other hand, we had a chorus of people who argued that God cannot be responsible for the evils that resulted from Hurricane Katrina. So, is God accountable for Black suffering or not?

Given the theist assumption that God is perfectly benevolent, there is a tendency on the part of the theist to make either man or some other creature, e.g. the devil, the ultimate source of evil. Here we can utilize Jones' concept of multievidentiality as means of understanding the disagreement over God's intrinsic goodness and the divine role in Hurricane Katrina. For Jones, the concept of multievidentiality serves as a method of empirical scrutiny that highlights the ambiguity of events in life. More particularly, any given occurrence of human suffering harmonizes equally well with antithetical positions, divine favor or disfavor, God's grace or God's curse. So, ultimately, we are forced to answer the question, How do we understand God's motives?

Given the ambiguity of evidence, then, what supports our beliefs about God? While many students appeal to either the Greater Goods defense or the Free Will defense, the vast majority of my students resign that it is not necessary to have rational, objective evidence for their belief in God's existence.[11] Religious belief, they say, is a matter of faith. If you want answers about God, then you will have to look to prayer. If you are sincere, God will answer. The adoption of fideism or the "Black prophetic faith" of Eric Michael Dyson—for many students—settles the issue raised by the problem of evil.[12]

Here I found it necessary to suggest the alternative explanation the atheist might offer for the Hurricane Katrina tragedy via Ockham's razor. According to Ockham's razor, if two or more possible explanations exist choose the one that (a) explains what is to be explained with the fewest assumptions and explanatory principles; and (b) explains all, or most, of the facts that need explaining as satisfactorily as any of the other theories. Rather than appeal to God as the ultimate explanation for natural or moral evil and all the attendant assumptions that go along with that belief, the scientific atheist seeks an explanation in the material world itself, that is, a scientific analysis of social and natural reality. In the instance of Hurricane Katrina, the scientific atheist wants a rational explanation of what actually happened in the Gulf Coast *without* reference to God. Here we begin to investigate the failure of the bourgeois state (from George Bush to Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and former FEMA Director Mike Brown to the Army Corps of Engineers to New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin) to protect human lives as opposed to the socialist government of Cuba. Here it is noteworthy that between 1996 and 2005 only thirty-one Cubans died as a result of hurricanes such as Hurricane Ivan (a category 5 storm that hit in 2004) and Hurricane Dennis (a category 4 storm that hit in 2005). The U.S. death toll, on the other hand, for Hurricane Katrina ALONE was 1,836! As August Nimitz has recently pointed out, Cuba's disaster legislation, public education on disasters, meteorological research, early warning system, effective communication system for disasters, comprehensive emergency plan, and Civil Defense structure depends on community mobilization at the grassroots level under the leadership of local authorities, widespread participation of the population in disaster preparedness, and response mechanisms.[13]

Appendix

Man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is, indeed, the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet won through to himself, or has already lost himself again. But *man* is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is *the world of man*—state, society. This state and this society produce religion, which is an *inverted consciousness of the world*, because they are an *inverted world*. Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual *point d'honneur*, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, and its universal basis of consolation and justification. It is the *fantastic realization* of the human essence since the *human essence* has not acquired any true reality. The struggle against religion is, therefore, indirectly the struggle *against that world* whose spiritual *aroma* is religion. *Religious* suffering is, at one and the same time, the *expression* of real suffering and a *protest* against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people. The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is the demand for their *real* happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to *give up a condition that requires illusions*. The criticism of religion is, therefore, *in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears* of which religion is the *halo*.

Karl Marx, "Introduction, Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" (1844)

The economic oppression of the workers inevitably calls forth and engenders every kind of political oppression and social humiliation, the coarsening and darkening of the spiritual and moral life of the masses. The workers may secure a greater or lesser degree of political liberty to fight for their economic emancipation, but no amount of liberty will rid them of poverty, unemployment, and oppression until the power of capital is overthrown. Religion is one of the forms of spiritual oppression which everywhere weighs down heavily upon the masses of the people, over burdened by their perpetual work for others, by want and isolation. Impotence of the exploited classes in their struggle against the exploiters just as inevitably gives rise to the belief in a better life after death as impotence of the savage in his battle with nature gives rise to belief in gods, devils, miracles, and the like. Those who toil and live in want all their lives are taught by religion to be submissive and patient while here on earth, and to take comfort in the hope of a heavenly reward. But those who live by the labour of others are taught by religion to practise charity while on earth, thus offering them a very cheap way of justifying their entire existence as exploiters and selling them at a moderate price tickets to well-being in heaven. Religion is opium for the people. Religion is a sort of spiritual booze, in which the slaves of capital drown their human image, their demand for a life more or less worthy of man.

Lenin, "Socialism and Religion"
***Collected Works*, Vol. 10 (1905)**

[Communism] bases its whole world-outlook on scientific socialism, i.e., Marxism. The philosophical basis of Marxism, as Marx and Engels repeatedly declared, is dialectical materialism, which has fully taken over the historical traditions of eighteenth-century materialism in France and of Feuerbach (first half of the nineteenth century) in Germany—a materialism which is absolutely atheistic and positively hostile to all religion…Marxism has always regarded all modern religions and churches, and each and every religious organisation, as instruments of bourgeois reaction that serve to defend exploitation and to befuddle the working class.

Marxism is materialism. As such, it is as relentlessly hostile to religion as was the materialism of the eighteenth-century Encyclopaedists or the materialism of Feuerbach. This is beyond doubt. But the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels goes further than the Encyclopaedists and Feuerbach, for it applies the materialist philosophy to the domain of history, to the domain of the social sciences. We must combat religion—that is the ABC of *all* materialism, and consequently of Marxism. But Marxism is not a materialism which has stopped at the ABC. Marxism goes further. It says: We must *know how* to combat religion, and in order to do so we must explain the source of faith and religion among the masses *in a materialist way*. The combating of religion cannot be confined to abstract ideological preaching, and it must not be reduced to such preaching. It must be linked up with the concrete practice of the class movement, which aims at eliminating the social roots of religion. Why does religion retain its hold on the backward sections of the town proletariat, on broad sections of the semi-proletariat, and on the mass of the peasantry? Because of the ignorance of the people, replies the bourgeois progressist, the radical or the bourgeois materialist. And so: "Down with religion and long live atheism; the dissemination of atheist views is our chief task!" The Marxist says that this is not true, that it is a superficial view, the view of narrow bourgeois uplifters. It does not explain the roots of religion profoundly enough; it explains them, not in a materialist but in an idealist way. In modern capitalist countries these roots are mainly *social*. The deepest root of religion today is the socially downtrodden condition of the working masses and their apparently complete helplessness in face of the blind forces of capitalism, which every day and every hour inflicts upon ordinary working people the most horrible suffering and the most savage torment, a thousand times more severe than those inflicted by extra-ordinary events, such as wars, earthquakes, etc. "Fear made the gods." Fear of the blind force of capital—blind because it cannot be foreseen by the masses

of the people—a force which at every step in the life of the proletarian and small proprietor threatens to inflict, and does inflict "sudden," "unexpected," "accidental" ruin, destruction, pauperism, prostitution, death from starvation—such is *the root* of modern religion which the materialist must bear in mind first and foremost, if he does not want to remain an infant-school materialist. No educational book can eradicate religion from the minds of masses who are crushed by capitalist hard labour, and who are at the mercy of the blind destructive forces of capitalism, until those masses themselves learn to fight this *root* of religion, fight *the rule of capital* in all its forms, in a united, organised, planned and conscious way.

Lenin, "The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion"
***Collected Works* Vol. 15 (1909)**

Insistence on the secular nature of the state is not to be interpreted as a political declaration of war on religion, for religion is also a social fact, and must be understood before it can be tackled. To declare a political war on religion is to treat it as an ideal phenomenon, to suppose that it might be wished away, or at the worst scared out of existence. The indispensable starting point is to appreciate the sociological connection between religious belief and practice on the one hand, and poverty on the other. People who are most aggressively religious are the poorer people; for, in accordance with the Marxist analysis, religion is social, and contemporary religious forms and practices have their main root in the social depression of workers. Quick confirmation can be found in Africa, Asia, Latin America and among the people of African descent in America and the Caribbean. Terrifying pauperism, arising from the pre-technical nature of most contemporary societies, combined with the encroachments of world capitalism, a combination which can mete out prostitution, destruction, ruin and death from starvation and exploitation to its victims, quickly reinforces the religious feeling. Fear created the gods, an preserves them: fear in bygone ages of wars, pestilences, earth-quakes and nature gone berserk, fear of 'acts of God'; fear today of the equally blind forces of backwardness and rapacious capital.

Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism* (1964)

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Endnotes

1. "*Farrakhan: God punishing U.S. for Iraq with storm,*" ExChristian.net, September 4, 2005 at: http://exchristian.net/

2. "Storms Payback from God, Nagin Says." *Washington Post* (January 17, 2006): A4.

3. "Nature's Wrath, or God's." *The Jewish Week* (September 16, 2005).

4. Anthony B. Pinn has been a trailblazer in terms of documenting and discussing the tradition of African-American humanism. See, for example, *Moral Evil and Redemptive Suffering: A History of Theodicy in African-American Religious Thought* (2002), *Why Lord? Suffering and Evil in Black Religious Thought* (1999), and *African-American Humanist Principles* (2004).

5. For an account of humanism from the standpoint of Marxism-Leninism, see M. Petrosyan, *Humanism: Its Philosophical, Ethical and Sociological Aspects* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972).

6. See Roy D. Morrison, *Science, Theology and the Transcendental Horizon* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1994). For information on Richard B. Moore, see John H. McClendon, "Richard B. Moore, Radical Politics and the Afro-American History Movement: The Formation of a Revolutionary Tradition in African-American Intellectual Culture." *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 30 (July 2006): 7-46.

7. V.I. Lenin. "The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion." In *Collected Works* Vol. 15.

8. For a good introduction to the evidential argument from evil, see Daniel Howard-Synder, *The Evidential Argument from Evil* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1996).

9. This argument is adopted from Gideon A. Rosen, "The Problem of Evil," http://www.princeton.edu/~grosen/puc/phi203/evil.html.

10. Adolph Reed, Jr. "Classifying the Hurricane." *Nation* (October 3, 2005).

11. See, for example, John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*.

12. See Eric Michael Dyson, "Supernatural Disasters? Theodicy and Prophetic Faith." In *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster* (New York: Basic Books, 2006): 179-201.

13. August Nimitz. "Natural Versus Social Phenomena: Cuba and the Lessons of Katrina." *The Black Scholar* 36 (2006): 43.

BOOK REVIEWS

On Democratic Governance and (Transitional) Postcolonial States: A Review of George Carew's Democratic Transition in Postcolonial Africa: A Deliberative Approach

George Carew (Edwin Mellen Press, 2006).

Reviewed by Clarence Sholé Johnson

I

Introduction

For far too long, questions about postcolonial Africa's capacity for democratic/political governance have befuddled scholars, especially because of the rampant political instability that has dogged the continent since many of its countries gained independence after World War II. With few exceptions, most countries have tended either toward near anarchy, as manifested in *coup d'etats* and wars, or toward authoritarian/

dictatorial rule, when there is stability. This unsavory state of affairs thus naturally invites the question: Can postcolonial African states ever be subject to democratic rule?

We have come to identify democratic governance with certain structural elements such as a multiparty system, free and fair/open elections, parliamentary procedures, the rule of law, a free press, and the like. From this point of view, then, it is generally believed that if these institutional arrangements are established then we should have democratic governance. In other words, the existence of these politico-structural institutions is sufficient for democratic governance. However, this belief has been given the lie by the rampant political instability in many postcolonial African states. Even when these institutions have been put in place, they have been either short-lived or, despite their existence, there has not been democratic governance. How then is this state of affairs to be explained?

George M. Carew, in his book *Democratic Transition in Postcolonial Africa: A Deliberative Approach* (Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), takes a two-pronged approach to addressing this question, and *a fortiori* to addressing the original question proposed, namely, whether or not postcolonial African states can be subject to democratic governance.[1] First, Carew contends that the kind of democracy that the colonial powers bequeathed to African states, namely, Western liberal democracy, is incompatible with the complex multiethnic/pluralistic make-up of African societies. More perspicuously, the imperatives of Western liberal democracy are antithetical to the cultural features of African societies, and generally multiethnic/pluralistic societies, hence, democracy as has traditionally been conceived is unworkable in such societies. In this context, Carew's claim applies as much to postcolonial states in Africa such as Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Rwanda, and South Africa as to non-African societies such as Yugoslavia and Iraq. Given this contention, then, Carew advocates a different kind of democracy for such polities, namely, deliberative democracy (I briefly elaborate the concept of deliberative democracy below).

Carew's second approach to accounting for the predictable lack of democratic governance in postcolonial African states is transhistorical. He points to the fact that these states inherited from their colonialist predecessors sociopolitical structures that were inherently authoritarian/dictatorial, and that were deliberatively constructed in such a way as to preclude the existence of a civil society. A civil society is the medium through which democratic culture is sown, cultivated, fashioned, and sustained over time. In Carew's view, since the postcolonial successor state was built upon the pillars of the predecessor state void of a civil society, it was inevitable that democratic governance would not exist because there was no sociocultural grounding for it. In short, the failure of democratic governance in the successor state was predictable given this transhistorical set-up. In what follows, I will amplify these two central claims in Carew's discussion, and then go on to bring out a few issues that I believe Carew will need to address in order to translate his theoretical insights into practice.

II

Liberalism, Democratic Governance, and Plural Societies

The view that Western liberal democracy is unsuitable for multiethnic/pluralistic societies is not particularly new.[2] However, its significance can never be overstated especially in an attempt to account for the lack of democratic governance in postcolonial states in Africa. While this is not the place for a full-blown examination of the nature of liberal democracy, the following can nevertheless be said about it. Deriving as it does from Locke and Hobbes, among others, liberal

democracy emphasizes the notion of individual freedom that is believed intrinsic to the human being. The centrality of the notion of freedom to pursue one's goals derives from an atomistic conception of the human being, as is evident in the postulates of a presocial mode of existence in the writings of Locke, Hobbes, and others. In such postulates, the individual is deemed inherently free, in the sense of autonomous, and independent of social ties even in a state of nature. Given this conception of human nature as both inherently autonomous and individualistic, politics comes about via a social contract only and because of security considerations without which such inherent freedom as each individual possesses inevitably will lead to conflict. In other words, the role of politics is to mediate actual and possible conflicts that may arise among social contractors whose very freedom is the cause of such conflicts in the first place. Given this consideration, Locke will thus go on to distinguish between the public and private spheres, limiting the role of politics to the public and reserving the private for the exercise of individual freedom in the pursuit of individual goals. More particularly, for Locke, politics is the medium through which social contractors elect those whose representation and advocacy in the public sphere would first and foremost safeguard the inherent freedom of the contractors so that the said contractors could pursue their individual goals in the private sphere unimpeded.

Granted, not all Western political theorists subscribe to this conception of politics, and Carew notes that. Rousseau, for example, offers a somewhat different view of the *raison d'être* of political society that recognizes the particularities that have shaped the individual and that are a part of the individual's mode of existence. For Rousseau, these particularities are relevant and so have to be factored, not transcended, in social bargaining. This is in sharp contrast to the Lockean individualist mode of existence that implies a rejection or transcending of particularities in order to establish consensus. (It is to be noted in this regard that John Rawls' concept of a veil of ignorance is a contemporary variant of a Lockean move to transcend particularities in order to establish a consensus. Or so I read it.[3]) Thus, cognizant of such variations of points of view, Carew distinguishes between Lockean liberalism and Rousseauan republicanism, and, following the scholarly tradition, calls the former the substitutionist model of democratic governance and the latter the political/participatory model.[4] This characterization is crucial to understanding Carew's reasons for, in my view, rightly rejecting Lockean liberal democracy that is dominant in sociopolitical discourses on the ground that it is unsuitable for democratic governance in multiethnic/pluralistic societies. As against the Lockean model, Carew favors the less acknowledged Rousseauan republican participatory/socially contextualized form of democracy and thus draws upon it to fashion a democratic system of governance that he believes is suitable to the societies in question. Limitations of space prevent me from dilating on Carew's concept of deliberative democracy. However, this much can be said: as the name implies, and is evident from the preceding remarks, "deliberative democracy" emphasizes discussion and exchange of ideas among diverse groups/interests; a process that acknowledges the points of view and concerns of all contending parties, and whose end result is an outcome to which the various parties can all agree and accept. For the present, however, what are some specific problems with Lockean liberal democracy that, in Carew's view, prohibit its application to plural societies?

At least three distinctive features of Lockean substitutionist model of liberal democracy put it at odds with the social framework of multiethnic/plural societies and thus limit its application to such societies. First, its conception of the individual agent in abstract terms—i.e., as an entity stripped

of its particularities of time, place, and connectedness to other individuals, whose sole motivation as contractor is to promote her/his individual advantage—is antithetical to the African conception of the individual. This means, in other words, that the Lockean substitutionist model, as a prescription for political governance, is built upon a worldview that is conceptually at variance with the worldviews of most plural societies. In the case of African societies, in particular, the individual, though logically independent, is conceived of in social terms, that is as coextensive with other members of her/his social (read ethnic) group. This is because in African societies, the group is ontologically, and hence socially, prior to the individual. It is this ontological and social priority of the group to the individual, or, alternatively, the social concept of self, which informs the African worldview, that is succinctly expressed in the well-known African proverb "I am because we are."[5] This social concept of self is not just antithetical to that of the West, which gives primacy to the individual, as represented in and immortalized by Descartes' "Cogito," but even the manner of expressing the social concept of the self in the African worldview is deliberately meant to be an unequivocal repudiation of the Western worldview.[6]

Second, the Lockean conception of politics, as already noted, construes the role of politics in instrumental terms—i.e., as a means to enable each individual to pursue her/his interest unimpeded. On this model, not only is society conceived of as a collection of disparate entities—the aggregative model—but also political activities are structured in such a way as to highlight a competition in which the winner takes all. It is in this way that the political process and the rules that govern it serve as the means to overcome conflict. But while this model of politics may well work for homogenous societies whose members are conceived of in purely atomistic and individualistic terms, no particular genius is required to see that it will not work for plural societies that essentially give primacy to groups wherein the groups themselves are of differing and unequal numerical strengths. Consider, for example, the Nigerian Civil War of the late 1960s. Some may argue that this war was caused by, among other things, ethno-regional considerations that eventually resulted in a secessionist move from the federalist system by the state of Biafra. Of course, such a view is arguable, but that is not the point that concerns me here. The point for present purpose is that, to the extent that the Nigerian system of politics and government was fashioned along the lines of Lockean liberal democracy with its "winner takes all" imperative, the conclusion is inescapable that what that model of politics offers plural societies with groups of differing numerical strengths is a prescription for democratic disaster rather than a prescription for democratic governance. And it is precisely such disaster that has plagued many postcolonial African states.

Third, Carew characterizes as "fraudulent" (Carew, 45) the very act by the colonialist regime of bequeathing a Lockean model of democratic governance to the postcolonial successor state. The act is fraudulent because the use and viability of a liberal democratic system of political governance presupposes, among other things, the existence of a civil society that upholds and sustains democratic values among various competing interests—what Carew refers to as certain shared values among participants. Knowing this fact, and knowing also that the colonial state in pursuit of its hegemonic interests had precluded a civil society, the colonialists thus knew beforehand that their invented successor (postcolonial) states were destined to fail. This point calls for expansion even at the price of repetition.

To begin, the methodology by means of which the colonial state was established and administered was anything but democratic. The colonial state was obtained largely by conquest and subjugation, deceit, and even violence, and it was administered by bureaucrats who were accountable to the metropoles. To maintain its power grip and dominance over its colonial subjects the colonial regime utilized various devices among which was the deliberate frustration and discouragement of the emergence of a civil society (Carew, 66). Indeed, the colonial state was necessarily an oppressor state. However, forced by world events, World War II specifically and concomitant events, to relinquish their hold on colonial space, sometimes reluctantly, colonialist regimes embarked upon a hasty departure by imposing on their colonial entities political structures and attendant practices hitherto unknown to the colonial subjects. But the very use and sustainability of the new structures and their concomitant practices, as I have already noted, presuppose an ethos, common and shared values, the existence of which is contingent upon a civil society—precisely the link needed for the structures and practices to work in the first place. It is in the absence of this link, then, that the successor postcolonial states came into being. And the custodians of such states took off where their predecessors left off by determining how best to advance their own hegemonic interests. Like their predecessors, postcolonial regimes originated various devices to ensure political survival and promote their hegemonic interests. And the device that most readily lent itself to their disposal was patrimonialism. In short, the postcolonial state in its most benign form became a patrimonial state, but in its cankered form became a state of civil disorder. Carew rightly sums up the story of the origination of the postcolonial state as follows:

> Once the agents of the colonial state, among whom were the traditional elites, were displaced by the modernizing elites, the latter felicitously referred to as nationalists, an entirely new form of hegemonic relationship became necessary. ...That is to say, once the colonial state had been penetrated by nationalists, politics was altered in a way which permits only prebendel and rent-seeking activities. In the absence of shared values, the postcolonial state was faced with only one option, which was to patrimonialize the state. That is to say, state patronage gave access to state resources in exchange for political support. Subsequently, flourishing patron-client network ensured the political survival of the rulers. (Carew, 45)

III

Democratic Transition: A Civil Society as Precursor to Democratic Governance

It is obvious from the foregoing exposé that, for Carew, a precondition for the occurrence of democratic governance is the existence of a civil society. A civil society is what was lacking in the hastily constructed postcolonial polities and was (is) the much needed bridge to enable such polities to transition from the authoritarianism of both the colonialists and their post-independence successors to successful democracies. A fundamental ingredient of the participants in/members of a civil society is that they must be civic minded, wherein their civic-mindedness is acquired through undergoing a moral transformation. Moral transformation is central to Carew's project because it occasions in individuals the capacity to view each other as humans with shared values—i.e., common goals, aspirations, and above all as objects worthy of recognition and dignity. In essence, moral transformation will foster in each individual the capacity to acknowledge the humanity of each other, given which they can all engage in discussions and deliberation about their common good *qua* humans coexisting in one and the same political space. I take this to be

Carew's overall meaning in his characterization of democracy as a process whose implementation calls for "an innovative framework to situate and transform the moral personalities of social beings thereby enhancing their ability to engage in critical discourse and democratic decision-making" (Carew, 53).[7] Indeed, it is on the basis of this view that Carew will later lament that "if late colonialism had nurtured rather than opposed the development of indigenous civil society, the pre-constitutional state would have brought diverse groups together to reach agreement on how the constitutional process itself should be structured" (Carew, 68).

IV

Some Problematic Logistical Issues

It is true that all of what Carew suggests is what ought to have been done prior to the attaining of self-governance of the said postcolonial states, so I agree with him on the need for such a framework as he has proposed. However, I want to call attention to two empirical issues that I think Carew overlooked in his discussion about how to cultivate a civil society infused with democratic personalities as a precondition for democratic governance in postcolonial plural states. First, given our present historical moment, when many of the societies in question are falling apart at the seams, how is such a framework to be designed? And second, assuming the designing of such a framework, what should be the governance status of the postcolonial states themselves *in the interim*? These questions highlight logistical issues that I think Carew needs to address for his positive view to be realized.

It must not be thought that in posing these questions I am being cynical about the prospects for democratic governance in postcolonial plural states. To the contrary; my concern, however, is that while I believe that it is good to theorize about democratic governance, as indeed we must, I also believe that we should go beyond theory and work out practical strategies for implementing theory. And so what I am suggesting is that Carew needs to work out the mechanics and dynamics of how to implement his suggested recommendations about constructing a civil society *especially in light of the status quo about which he himself is all too familiar*.[8]

To appreciate the significance of the issue I am raising, consider, for example, that those who have a stake in the *status quo* would be most reluctant to accommodate the idea of a civil society. This is because they would view a civil society, and rightly so, as an informed and politically active citizenry whose interest is the well being of the society at large *and to which they would and should have to be accountable*. Saying a civil society is politically active is not to say that its members necessarily view themselves as political actors, in the sense of a shadow cabinet, or have any political aspirations at all. Indeed, such individuals need not be interested in holding political office in any way whatsoever. They simply would be civic minded and so would be fully informed about political governance and all that it entails. To that end, such individuals would view themselves as watchdogs over the uses and abuses of power, and from such a vantage point they are in a position to demand accountability from the political class to the point of influencing the direction of policies and even determining the political fate of members of the political class. But there lies the rub, for it is precisely such accountability as vested in such a body that the political leadership would deem inimical to its own interest, which is to hold on to power at all costs. This means then that in all likelihood the current/existing political class would flat out reject or undermine the idea of a civil society. It is noteworthy in this vein to imagine, even just for laughs, how Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe might react to the idea of a civil society! My concern

then is how to get the political class to loosen its grip on power so as to make room for the emergence of civil society in order to transition to democratic governance. This is the import of the two questions I posed earlier, and it does not seem to me that Carew has provided us with a directional map on this front.

Before I offer some suggestions that I think may address this matter let me consider one other factor that Carew posits as a limiting constraint on the capacity of the political leadership of postcolonial states to pursue democratic governance. Carew cites external factors such as the old/established polities— former colonial states and other dominant powers such as the United States—and the international bodies they establish and dominate, and whose policies they also originate and direct. These bodies include the United Nations (UN), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank. According to Carew, the new international order, operating on liberal democratic principles that identify democratic governance with free-market activities, have often instituted and imposed on the new/emerging states economic policies that have negatively affected the new states, including the domestic policies the new states have been compelled to pursue. For example, historically, these aforementioned external agencies required the new states to liberalize their economies by eliminating agricultural subsidies to farmers and devaluing their currencies so that their raw materials would become accessible to the international market. Note, however, that the international market was (is) again dominated by the very same powerful states. But then, as Carew notes, those policies had severe adverse effects both on the new and fragile governments, in terms of their (in)ability to meet their international obligations, and on their citizens, in terms of the considerable economic hardships imposed upon them in their day to day living. Carew cites these activities of the external agencies as constraints on the economic and political viability of the new states, including the new states' orientation toward democratic governance.

The upshot of Carew's view is that the new states, as sovereign entities, commenced at a disadvantage, being subject to adverse policies of the established/dominant states and their proxies. This means that the new states were nonviable both economically and politically, and thus their supposed sovereignty was merely formal, not substantive or meaningful. Given this background, Carew suggests that the rectification of this disadvantaged state of affairs, and hence a motivation for the new states to be oriented toward democratization, is to ensure that they become economically viable. Such economic viability would positively impact their domestic policies, and this in turn would translate into a willingness to originate a civil society to engage in public discourse. And for Carew the initial step toward economic viability is the active involvement of the international order. As he says:

> Before the African state can govern democratically it must be transformed into a viable sovereign entity. This requires an interstate system free of structure of oppression and domination. Those who govern in the African state should not be agents of external forces but servants of those who elected them to that high office. Thus the quest for democracy can be cast as a goal that lies outside as well as inside of the state. (Carew, 132)

But this view immediately brings me to my second concern about Carew's discussion, namely, his view about the willingness of the political leaders to entertain (the idea of) a civil society contingent on economic viability. There is no disputing the hegemonic and even immoral conduct of the older and stable polities through the international agencies mentioned in dealing with newer and vulnerable states. And

these activities often have been motivated by self-interest, a key driving principle in liberal capitalism. But it appears that Carew wants to use this phenomenon as a causal factor to explain (or explain away?) the domestic hegemonic drive of the political class of the new states to tighten its grip on power in order to maintain state sovereignty. Carew gives the impression that the new states, as embodied in the political leadership, *would have been willing* to engage in democratic governance but for the external constraints he has highlighted. I find this explanation highly problematic. At the very least, it begs the question about the willingness of the political class toward democratic governance in the first place. As is well known, external factors have always been convenient excuses for the political leadership in many postcolonial African states to rationalize their grip on power and their adoption of initiatives that curtail civil liberties—all in the name of national security and state sovereignty. At best, then, external factors may have exacerbated the problem of democratization, but I certainly do not think that they caused it. So Carew would have to rethink this explanation. In any case, the issue that, again, has reared its head, even through this circuitous route, is: How to get the political class to be willing to entertain the idea of a civil society considering that, as Carew has rightly observed, a civil society is an essential transitory step toward democratic governance?

V

Overcoming the Problem: Stipulations for Political Engagement

I will conclude by offering some suggestions that may address this issue. My remarks hopefully will point to a way of translating Carew's theoretical insights into praxis. To that end, I will begin by suggesting that, from a methodological standpoint, Carew's very idea of developing a civil society infused with democratic personalities to engage in public discourse should be expanded to include members of and aspirants to political office, with one major difference, namely, that all such individuals be required to undertake formal instruction about political governance and what it entails. In other words, anyone who engages or desires to engage in political activities must undergo a period of schooling in democratic governance over a sustained period of time as a precondition for political activity. The end of such schooling is to foster in the individual a democratic personality. (There are certainly echoes of Plato and Aristotle here.) I insist on this point because, although the desired outcome—the acquisition of a requisite personality—is not guaranteed, still, I believe we would be compelled to prefer the suggestion I am putting forward when we consider the alternative that exists at present and the consequences thereto, namely, complete ignorance about governance.

To appreciate the gravity of the existing alternative, consider the overwhelming evidence that the political deterioration of many/most African states has occurred under the leadership of highly Western educated elites who are professionals in their own right, but whose professional credentials have made no difference overall, in terms of democratic governance, to the political life of their countries. As an example, in the 1970s and '80s, a substantial percentage of the members of the Sierra Leone Cabinet under then President Siaka Stevens had doctorates in various fields, but, except for an insignificant few, the bulk of them were thoroughly illiterate on matters of governance. This shows that it simply does not follow from the fact that an individual is very highly educated that s/he has any knowledge of democratic governance let alone has a democratic personality. It is in light of this fact, and in agreement with Carew's view of creating a democratic personality, that I am recommending a rigorous training and education in

governance as a prerequisite for political agency. The hope is that a sustained period of education and training will effect a change in the character and disposition of the individual by inculcating in her/him a democratic personality.

That this idea of education and training in democratic governance may not be as farfetched as it appears, consider that during the colonial era, colonial subjects were formally trained in Civil Service Training Colleges, and on an on-going basis, to become civil servants. Such colleges were established throughout the colonies. I am suggesting, analogously, that institutions like those Training Colleges be set up to provide formal instruction about governance to political actors and aspirants. Of course, such a suggestion would also require a Constitutional Amendment and ancillary measures for its obligatoriness in each of the various postcolonial states. But these are secondary, albeit important, matters that can be addressed. The key issue, to repeat, is to make it a prerequisite for aspiring to and holding political office that individuals undergo formal and rigorous training in democratic governance, which training (hopefully) will culminate in their acquiring a democratic personality. On my view, unless this is done I do not believe that there is any hope for democratic governance in postcolonial African states.

Unquestionably, to effect the transformation I am suggesting would certainly call for strong external support from the stable democratic polities. This could be the place for International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and similar bodies to help with the process of democratization. It is to be noted in this respect that the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs in Washington, D.C. is one external body that is already engaged in some form of activities along the lines that I am recommending. For example, the institute has an African Statesmen Initiative through which it invites superannuated leaders who have voluntarily left office in a democratic manner to participate in seminars and discussions on how to help foster democracy in their various countries.[9] Thus, my suggestion in a way dovetails with Carew's call for the very external powers that he considers partially responsible for the political predicament of the postcolonial states to help make those states economically viable. Recall that Carew's appeal derives from his examination of the disadvantaged position of emerging postcolonial states relative to the established states, and his assertion that economic viability is a precondition for political viability. I am suggesting that a similar appeal to and involvement of the very external powers therefore would be necessary both for the cultivation of democratic personalities in political aspirants and for the creation of a democratic culture in postcolonial states. In essence, then, I am echoing Carew's call for external assistance, but one that should be directed specifically at fashioning the kind of institutions essential for the transformative enterprise that is a prerequisite for democratic transition.

It is now relatively easy to see how this transformative enterprise can help loosen the grip that politicians have on power. Since a democratic personality/character is one who would privilege the well being of the state over personal interest in her/his political decisions and actions, it stands to reason that when an individual has acquired such a personality/character, her/his actions and decisions would be dictated by observance of the democratic norm, namely, that societal well being *ought always* to take precedence over individual/personal self-interest. That norm is what would compel the individual always to (aim to) act in the interest of the society. Furthermore, if it is determined through public discourse that an individual's conduct is detrimental to the well being of the society, then that individual would voluntarily act in a manner that is consistent

with that determination. Again, observance of the democratic norm is what would dictate how public officials would behave in office.

VI

Conclusion

My examination of Carew's discussion on the problem of democratization is certainly not exhaustive. There is a lot more to this very important, groundbreaking book than I can reasonably discuss in these few pages. Thus, notwithstanding the logistical issues I have raised above, there is absolutely no doubt that Carew has produced an original work that calls attention to the fact that the failure of democratic practices in Africa is not owing to a pathological condition of Africans; rather, it is simply because the assumptions and values that drive democratic practices in the West are wedded to certain cultural features in Western societies, and these cultural features are very different from those that obtain in complex multiethnic societies in Africa. Thus, to institute a "one size fits all" kind of democracy to societies with varying particularities as has often been the case is unequivocally to institute a practice that in all probability will fail most abysmally. And this has been the case throughout much of postcolonial Africa. Given this insight, if democracy is to succeed in African states, then of necessity it will have to take into account the cultural particularities of those societies.

For Carew, it is axiomatic that democracy is normative, in the sense that its ultimate end is to promote the good life that upholds and celebrates individual freedom. Since this end is also what all human beings inherently seek in life, then democratic governance, as a means to its realization, should factor in those contingent features of varying societies that would enable the members of those societies to realize that end. And I agree. For this reason and more, I consider Carew's contribution both to the scholarship in political theory in general and to the scholarship on the issue of democratic governance in postcolonial African states in particular absolutely exemplary.

Endnotes

1. George M. Carew. *Democratic Transition in Postcolonial States: A Deliberative Approach* (Lewiston, New York and Queenston, Ontario: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006). Hereafter cited as Carew, with page numbers given in parenthesis.
2. See, for example, Kwasi Wiredu's "Democracy and Consensus in African Traditional Politics: A Plea for a Non-Party Polity," in *Cultural Universals and Particulars* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 1996); rpt. in Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (ed.) *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publisers, 1997), chapter 14. For a penetrating critique of Wiredu's position, see Eze's essay in chapter 15 of the same volume, "Democracy or Consensus? A Reply to Wiredu."
3. John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), chapter 1.
4. These competing positions are also sometimes represented as a debate between liberalism, which conceives of the self in atomistic terms and thus emphasizes a rights-based ethics, and communitarianism, which conceives of the individual within community and thus gives primacy to community ethics over individual liberties. For more on this see, for example, Michael Sandel (ed.), *Liberalism and Its Critics* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), "Introduction" and also chapter 8.
5. There are a number of counterhegemonic publications now that have adopted that expression as titles. For example, Fred Lee Hord and Jonathan Lee (eds.), *I Am Because We Are* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1995); Liz Mosbo VerHage, *Living Theology: Reflection, Theology, Practice*, an online

publication in http://livingtheology.net/; Satish Kumar, "You Are Therefore I am," in *Resurgence*, Issue 199 on http://www.resurgence.org; and A.M. White, "I Am Because We Are: Combined Race and Gender Political Consciousness among African American Women and Men Anti-rape Activists," on http://www.ingentaconnect.com.
6. Because of the role of God in Descartes' ontology, his position can thus be more accurately represented as "I am because God is."
7. Hence, Carew characterizes his approach as "process oriented" (Carew, 47, 53).
8. I later suggest a direction that Carew might go in effecting this phenomenon.
9. See the Special Projects section; in particular, "The African Statesmen Initiative," at the National Democratic Institute web site: http://www.NDI.org.

Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege

Shannon Sullivan (Indiana University Press, 2006).

Reviewed by Blanche Radford Curry

Introduction

In this review I will provide an overview of Shannon Sullivan's *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege*. I will also provide a synopsis of each chapter as well as a critique of her main ideas and arguments.

The book presents an in-depth analysis of how white privilege operates simultaneously in the manifestation, sustainability, and transformation of racism. Sullivan's analysis of these three operations of white privilege shows racism is grounded in discussions about American pragmatism, psychoanalytic theory, race theory, and feminist thought. Sullivan very ably weaves across multiple and diverse resources that embellish her thesis and speak volumes to the depth of her research in support of her thesis. She aptly draws upon many scholars' ideas that support her thesis while explaining her rejection of other ideas they espoused. Sullivan reveals her own white privilege as it has affected her in theory and lived experience as significant to her theorizing about race and her endeavors to undo racism. Similarly, she addresses whiteness and race in a manner that does not undermine whites or blacks. While Sullivan's book focuses predominately on whites and blacks, the discussions are also about Native Americans and applicable to other minority groups.

Underlining her examination of white privilege is its connection with the concept of unconscious habit and many ramifications of it, which is the focus of Part I of her book, "Unconscious Habit." What Sullivan offers that is different is an extensive examination of how "unconscious habit" offers plausible arguments for exposing and explaining the existence of white privilege to white people in particular in terms of a conscious and unconscious psyche and the kind of environment that leads to racism. She argues that white privilege as a source of racism can operate as unseen, invisible, seemingly nonexistent, conscious habit, and unconscious habit, and that its hidden mode of operation requires more than conscious argument to undo it. She describes "habits" saying that "if the self can be understood as a complex tapestry of woven fibers, habits are the various threads that make up the tapestry itself." There are habits of race, gender, sexuality, class, etc., and they are a part of psychic as well as our environment and constitute "dispositions for transacting with the world," a world that privileges white people.

Sullivan finds habit to be a viable concept for explaining white privilege in five fundamental ways that can sometimes empower whites to undo racism. First, this approach avoids mind-body dualism by positing habit as both psychical and somatic. Secondly, habit construes ontology as historical without race and white privilege being static or acontextual necessities. Thirdly, it reveals how white domination resides in both the individual person and one's world. Fourthly, it exposes the external nature of white privilege. Finally, it explains how white privilege operates as invisible. Of the third claim she says, "racism is not located solely in the individual person; it has a long history of perpetuating itself through political, economic, national, global, education and other institutions that are much larger than any individual." Of the fifth claim she explains how white privilege continues to gain power during the twenty-first century by operating as if it does not exist, preferring "silent tiptoeing to loud stomping." She uses the Ku Klux Klan and Aryan as examples to show that it is not necessary to be a member of racist groups in order to be a white supremacist. On the contrary, as long as white domination is consciously embraced and affirmed in the world, it is only necessary to possess a style for transacting with it.

She explains further that habits of white privilege as "unconscious" can involve roots too deep and stubborn for conscious correction to eliminate. The body is not only an expression of "I can" but also of "I won't." Recognition of repugnant aspects of one's habits is necessary if resistances are to be possible. Habit cannot be changed merely through an intellectualized positing that one will no longer think or behave in particular ways. In addition to good intentions and intellect, transformation involves disruption of habits through environmental change with the hope of another improved habit in its place, which is not guaranteed. For sure there are numerous examples that demonstrate that intellectual reasoning alone is not sufficient to persuade people to do the right thing in moral or non-moral situations. Sullivan notes further that transformation is possible for white people who relocate themselves out of geographical, literary, political, and other environments that encourage white solipsism of living as if only white people existed or mattered. She explains that relocation can be a powerful way of disrupting and transforming unconscious habits of white privilege by exposing one to other realities. A predominant unconscious habit of white privilege, as she explains, is ontological expansiveness, "a particular co-constitutive relationship between self and environment in which the self assumes that it should have totally mastery over its environment." She provides several examples of white people's undoing of such control; for instance, the decision not to live in an all-white neighborhood. Of interest here, Sullivan might consider Frederick Douglass's idea that power concedes nothing without struggle.

Essential to Sullivan's work is the need for whites to understand their white privilege as unconscious habit with all of its ramifications in order to undo the racism it produces. She acknowledges in particular how middle-class white women, like herself, whose class makes it "improper" to speak out for others, have contributed to the oppression of people of color. Sullivan unravels some of the complexities of gender, race, and class to demonstrate the intertwining relationship to white privilege, using herself as an example. She makes the point that white middle-class women tend to have gendered habits that lead them to downplay their own point of view, which not only strengthens her invisibility as a woman, but also the invisibility of her classed white privilege in understanding her raced and classed habits. Of interest here for Sullivan's consideration is my essay, "Whiteness and Feminism: Déjà Vu Discourses, What's Next?" and George Yancy's "Feminism and the Subtext of Whiteness."

Chapter one, "Ignorance and Habit," focuses on the definition of habit, its relation to ignorance, and rational conscious argumentation against racism. Sullivan's description of habit and its significance for race and white privilege maintains that in a pragmatic sense habit is an organism's subconscious predisposition to transact with its physical, social, political, and natural worlds in particular ways. Habits constitute the self and they compose the style by which an organism engages with the world, and "style" is understood phenomenologically. Habit is both physical and mental, addressing the live organism in all its psychosomatic complexity. And habit is pragmatic within the context of race and white privilege. Habits are not only individual, but they are also institutional. Sullivan provides examples and discussion of this point by drawing upon Tocqueville's analysis of slavery as overt white supremacy and its transfer to covert habits of white privilege at the end of "formal" slavery. As such, Sullivan notes in the case of institutional habits of white privilege the necessity to address the environments that encourage and discourage racism. She points out further the classroom as a significant environment in which habits are formed and transformed, and notes examples of privileging of standards of whiteness in U.S. educational practices. Sullivan's observations could be enhanced here by drawing upon the work of Alain Locke on transforming education and Dewey's discussion of "real" democracy through "diverse" education wherein the ideas of Locke and Dewey overlap on what such education means, Locke provides a pragmatic model for achieving it.

In her discussion of ignorance, Sullivan begins by addressing white solipsism, noting that it is a real problem given the *status quo* of race relations. While white solipsism may literally acknowledge the existence of people of color, it is often on an abstract level resulting in ethical solipsism, which recognizes white values, interests, and needs as more important and worthy over those of people of color. Similarly, she opposes the position that racism disappears once it is replaced by accurate knowledge of both races. There are numerous examples that substantiate this position. One is that willful ignorance is a part of white privilege that benefits and supports domination by white people. It is not completely accidental or unintentional, and it is problematic because it seems to excuse whites from racism. For white people to be held responsible for their racism, they must know about it. All the same, society should not excuse their willful ignorance. Unwillful ignorance is nonculpable, but willful ignorance is not.

Sullivan broadens this discussion by drawing upon DuBois and others. She relates that DuBois, early in his career, agreed with the liberal approach to racism, that racism could be eliminated through rational argumentation. His initial belief that white people at their core were morally and personally good was replaced with the idea that we cannot believe that at their core [most] white people will do the right thing given rational argumentation to do so. For DuBois, this ignorance was used as a mask for racism and viewed as unconscious racist habits and irrational urge. Sullivan continues by arguing that

> [w]hile rational, conscious argumentation has a role to play in the fight against racism, antiracist struggle ultimately will not be successful if the unconscious operations of white privilege are ignored. White unconscious resistance to understanding racism as a problem must be tackled if inroads are to be made against specific problems of racism.

Moreover,

> [c]ritical race theory cannot proceed effectively by assuming either that logical arguments against racism

will convince racists to change their beliefs or that racism can be ended by conscious fiat. Even though logical arguments about race might lead a person to consciously decide to endorse non-racist ideas, such a decision does not necessarily have much, if any, impact on his or her unconscious habits.

Sullivan continues by explaining that the purpose of her book is the "charting of unconscious habits," a phrase she borrows from DuBois' position that addressing these unconscious habits require other remedies and judgments, which he calls "surveying and measuring the limits of uncharted lands." Sullivan's account includes seemingly invisible yet productive unconscious habits of white privilege that include the body, the psyche, and the world in their co-constitutive transactions. The limits include the mutual constitution of the psychical, geographical, and economic; and ontological expansiveness—whites' consumption of non-white worlds— relationships of race and space. She explains that her "goal of understanding race as habit is not to urge patience with racism, but to identify one of the main ways that personal and institutional racism operates so that it might be better fought." It is also her position that "[a] self constituted by means of raced habits can be changed, but the remaking of one's racial identity likely will be a slow and painstaking process with no guarantee of success."

Sullivan concludes chapter one by providing us with a reality check of our world. She states that

> [i]n a racialized world, and particularly a racist one, race always constitutes who and what individual human beings are. Even the newborn that has no conscious awareness of race is impacted by it in an ontologically constitutive way vis-à-vis the way that people treat her, the current and future opportunities that are available to her, and so on.

She reiterates clarity of her concept of racial ontology, which is a pragmatist concept of habit that is not racial biologism, namely, arguing that one's physiological or genetic makeup determines one's race or the claim that human existence must always be raced. She notes that at some time and place in the future, race may no longer exist, but for now the world is raced in a variety of sometimes settled and sometimes shifting ways. Race is not a fixed, unchanging structure, nor does its malleability mean that it is totally fluid. Drawing upon Outlaw, Sullivan explains further that "[a]s a practical habit-based reality, race has durability that must be reckoned with rather than wished away." And she highlights Outlaw further explaining that the goal of freedom from race is not always desirable or necessary for the elimination of racism. She agrees with Outlaw that the baby of race need not be thrown out with the bathwater of racism. Of further interest for this discussion is DuBois' essay, "The Conservation of Races."

In chapter two, "Engaging the Isolated Unconscious," Sullivan focuses on the connections between pragmatism and psychoanalysis—not on similarities or dissimilarities but what each offers in explaining white privilege in terms of habit. Additionally, she clarifies the distinction between white supremacy and white privilege and discusses the role of intellect in undoing racism. She argues that intellect is not sufficient to eliminate white privilege as habit. However, she shares examples such as security guards not being suspicious of her store browsing, while this is often not true in the case of a person of color; she, however, notes that "[a] complaint about the security guard's behavior from the 'upstanding' white person might make a store manager reconsider his or her security policies." This suggests her support of intellectual

reasoning as important, though not necessarily sufficient to undo racism. Indeed, intellect does play a role on some level for some situations in the elimination of racism since racism is often a form of false consciousness or ideology. More consideration of this point by Sullivan would be useful.

Regarding white supremacy and white privilege, Sullivan maintains that consciousness plays a larger role in the former than in the latter. She argues further that in contrast to white supremacy, white privilege is an idea that many white people are emotionally tied to in ways of which they usually are not consciously aware. White privilege also allows whites the option not to see race as relevant. Of interest for Sullivan's consideration here is Bernard Boxill's argument about white liberals who maintain that they do not see people's race. Sullivan describes white supremacists as whites who need the racial other to exist—desiring to mingle because the differences between them were explicitly and legally recognized. On the other hand, fear of "contamination" from non-white people characterizes white privilegists as obsessional racists who work to avoid and even eliminate them in the name of welfare reform, the war on drugs, etc. Sullivan, however, views white privilege racism just as horrific as white supremacy.

It may be valuable for Sullivan to consider Fanon's idea of the need for whites to feel superior and, consequently, their need to have an Other that is inferior. This would be applicable to both white supremacy and white privilege and what Fanon calls "warped thinking," as well as limited dualistic thinking. Sullivan explains that white privilege maintains itself by appearing normal, natural, and unobjectionable. It functions best by remaining invisible, that is, unconscious. The question arises whether from Sullivan's analysis we can sufficiently make a distinction between how white privilege functions and the *reality* of it as conscious and unconscious. On another note, Sullivan explains what critical race theorists take to be an important distinction—the distinction between raciation (using racial categories to differentiate racial groups) and racism (asserting the superiority of one race over another). Of further note here for Sullivan may be consideration of Outlaw and DuBois' celebration of individuals' race. One may also argue that the race of another is not in reality an option for one, just as being a lesbian is not an option for me as a heterosexual. For as Thomas Nagel has observed only a bat knows what it means to be a bat.

The focus of chapter three, "Seductive Habits of White Privilege," is how we obtain habits of white privilege. Sullivan begins with a discussion of white privilege as psychical and somatic habits formed through transaction with a racist world. She discusses the nature of seduction along with how and when seductive habits of white privilege take place. She continues with a discussion of how parents and other caregivers teach children racism whether intentional or unintentional as sources of seductive habits of white privilege. Accordingly, we are not totally responsible for our unconscious habits. Also important to Sullivan is viewing the unconscious as transactional so as to reveal how unconscious habits impact the world. This impact can be for better or worse and viewing the unconscious as transactional does not guarantee that it will be for the better. But it does increase the chances that the impact will be positive because it allows us to understand unconscious habit as productive rather than representational. More elaboration is needed here from Sullivan on why habit cannot be both.

Sullivan draws examples of her position from Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and her own racist experience of Mexicans in connection with her parents and other caregivers, along with the smell of cumin. For Sullivan, seduction involves not just the mind, but the body too. The unconscious includes

bodily sounds, bodily gestures of smell, hearing, seeing, etc., and they represent key sites for operations of unconscious habits of white privilege. In Sullivan's analysis of the example from Toni Morrison, she makes a distinction between the *Thing* and Claudia's perception and association of beauty with Shirley Temple and light-skinned black girls. The conclusion is that her friend Maureen Peal is not the enemy, but the real issue is the *Thing* that is white privilege. It is the *Thing* that causes white beauty ideas for black women that becomes a powerful influence on her unconscious habits. Claudia learns self-destructively to cope with it by loving the whiteness that she hated.

Another consideration here that Sullivan may find valuable is analysis of the many counter examples to Claudia and their relation to the *Thing* as a source for transforming it. Additionally, the distinction between the *Thing* as "white privilege" detached from the person raises the question of what it means and the extent that there is also an individual who is attached to the *Thing*. Of further concern is what we can say about one's ethical responsibility in transforming the *Thing*—white privilege in this case as a parent, caregiver, or otherwise in so far as the child is not able to totally understand the unconscious habits. It is what Patricia Hill Collins refers to as being accountable for our actions in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*.

Sullivan's conclusion of chapter three indicates that she begins to give consideration to another perspective of her analysis of the *Thing* and Claudia. She places emphasis on the productivity of unconscious habit that allows not just the possibility of taking, but also the need to take responsibility for racism. She demands that the person asks herself, What kind of racial and/or racist world am I helping to produce? She states that "[c]haracterizing white privilege as unconscious habit does not mean letting white people (or others) off the hook for their racist practices, or their implicit and explicit acceptance of the benefits of white privilege. If people cannot be held wholly responsible for their unconscious habits, they can be held accountable for their attempts (or lack thereof) to transform them." Her goal, she states, is not to increase white guilt about racism, but to demonstrate how action can be taken to eliminate it.

In chapter four, "Global Habits, Collective Hauntings," Sullivan's focus is beyond individual white privilege; she turns to global or collective unconscious habits of white privilege. She discusses the idea that collective unconscious habits of white privilege from the perspective of the individual do not seem to exist. Similarly, she argues that there is no collective knowledge about white superiority, although it clearly exists. Her analysis of this claim continues with the discussion of the existence of contemporary slavery and racism because of collective unconscious. Sullivan also discusses the transfer of white privilege vis-à-vis textbooks, songs, and movies. Among her examples is the Tarzan series where the white conqueror is identified over the black "savage" and comic books in which the wolf, devil, evil spirit, the bad man, the savage are always symbolized by Negroes or Indians. The end result is a transfer of white privilege moral values that represent ethical slippages for Sullivan. As with the individual and white privilege, there is the question of accountability and how it applies to collective unconscious habits worth consideration by Sullivan.

Of interest with collective unconscious habits, as well as individual unconscious habits, for Sullivan, may be another perspective of Fanon's and Hegel's ideas, that is, the dialectic account of human relationships and the need to impose existences on another in order to be recognized by others, along with Sartre's idea of alienation from one's self and

DuBois' idea of double consciousness. It is the perspective that white privilege creates a false reality of one's true self; one's full potential as a human being and a quality of life devoid of the limits that racism imposes. White racists seem oblivious to the alienation of self in their racism and its harm for both blacks and whites. Also worth considering here is William Jones's ideas about power and the position that white people's understanding of their white privilege, as well as the lack of actions by them to undo racism, is deeply connected to a misconceived endowment of power.

Part II, "Possessive Geographies," of Sullivan's book focuses "on proprietary relationship that unconscious habits of white privilege tend to have with non-white spaces and examines strategies for changing that relationship." She reveals the connections between race, ontology, and geography—how habits of white privilege can be ontologically expansive. Additionally, she discusses how well-intentioned attempts to change racist environments can be just another expression of the white privileged habit as if all available spaces were available to them. Sullivan's focus in chapter five, "Appropriate Habits of White Privilege," is "[t]he intertwining geo-economic, ontological and psychological aspects of white habits of possession…." Whiteness as possession entails unconscious habits of white privilege wherein the appropriate relationship to the earth is one of appropriation of "lands, people, and the fruit of others' labors and creativity as one's own." The benefits for whites, Sullivan explains, include not only economic gain, but also greater ontological security and "satisfaction of unconscious desires."

Sullivan begins the chapter drawing upon DuBois' "The Souls of White Folk," in particular World War I, wherein he explains the "ugly" core of whiteness as "complete and total ownership" revealing white habits of propriety; the war as a struggle between white nations to exploit darker nations. She examines white possession in terms of the dynamics of blacks as white property, white ownership of the contributions of black people to the development of America, and debates about reparations to African Americans for slavery and return of land to Native American tribes to undo the related white habits of possession. She cautions us that increased inclusion of blacks as consumers and potential consumers does not mean that this is a case of more racial justice.

She also discusses ways in which colorblindness, multiculturalism, pluralism, and diversity promote the continuation of the theft of black contributions in the name of antiracism. On the contrary, she argues that in reality and in the struggle against racism, these can be a mask for racism. Moreover, she discusses the problem of the abandonment of racial identity that is essential to the present struggle against racism. She notes DuBois' position that the conditions under which distinct race identities will no longer be needed remains in the distant future. She also notes Patricia Williams's position that the fact that white people refuse to recognize and are oblivious to race is a sign of disingenuousness or a form of transgressive refusal to acknowledge their own racism. This allows them to continue to see themselves as morally good. The end of racism, Sullivan argues, requires significant transformation of the white psyche, including the white purse. More than appeal and argument against racism is needed to eliminate racism, namely, psychoanalysis and education of the growing generation. Sullivan may find consideration of Alain Locke's "The Need for a New Organon in Education" useful here.

The focus of chapter six, "Race, Space, and Place," is an examination of the ways in which white people claim all spaces as rightfully theirs, representing ontological expansiveness by

white privilege. Sullivan argues that race is a determinant of space and, accordingly, an extension of racism. She draws on the well-known Howard Beach incident and others. In the Howard Beach incident, she discusses how Howard Beach became an "illegitimate" space for blacks and explored the consequences for blacks who entered so-called white space. Another example she cites is whites' appropriation of black space discussing white tourists' visit to black churches to observe worship practices without appropriate permission. She notes that racialization of geographical space is inextricably linked to racialization of lived space.

Sullivan also discusses ways whites can challenge their racist spatiality in objection to racism. She cites white people selling their homes in "white space" to blacks and the consequences for the whites and blacks utilizing their white privilege to fight racism. However, she points out that there is no loss of white privilege for these given white people. Sullivan concludes this chapter emphasizing that "white people need to be held and hold themselves accountable for the ways that they live the racial magnetization of space, even though many of them operate unconsciously."

In chapter seven, "In Defense of Separatism," Sullivan focuses on her foregoing stances to overcome racism and maintains that an appeal and defense for separatism is sometimes justifiable as a means for abating racism. She discusses space and school integration as examples, noting that "white space was not destroyed by integration in the way that non-white space was," adding that "concentrated space of non-whiteness was dismantled along with disempowerment of non-white people who occupied it." She elaborates further, drawing on DuBois' work about black people's preparation to "integrate." Regarding white people's appropriate and inappropriate engagement with blacks, Sullivan proposes that whether white people should engage more intimately and fully with the worlds of non-white people is both yes and no. It depends on the specific situation, and for white people to be well-intentioned in their engagement does not guarantee that their presence in non-white worlds serve antiracist ends. Sullivan may find it useful to consider the following: Yes, it is yes and no depending on the situation—e.g., it may be simply a matter of disagreement, while in another case it indeed is racism. Consequently, attention is needed beyond the idea of the unconscious white privilege habit—possibly a connection to moral obligation—considering Patricia Hill Collins's demand for accountability of our actions. Is Sullivan letting white privilege off the hook?

Sullivan's conclusion cautions us about the pros and cons of multiculturalism, diversity, and more in the fight against racism. She discusses the Michigan Law School Affirmation Action case in reference to the former point. She argues that

> Like colorblindness, the rhetoric and strategy of multicultural diversity eschews difficult discussions of institutional racism, or economic, material, and educational inequalities across racial divides, or restitution and reparation for past injustices committed against people of color, and so on. Multicultural diversity and colorblindness work hand in hand to both see and not see racial differences, a contradictory vision that has the ultimate effect of blinding people to issues of racial (in) justice. Diversity is not a cure-all for white privilege, and celebrations of multiculturalism do not necessarily eliminate racism.

She ends with several strategies in terms of which white privilege can be used to fight racism. One of the most interesting of these is her recommendation for faculty, administrators, and students at predominately white institutions. Her recommendation is that they should "find ways to use white privilege against itself [by abandoning] strategies of colorblindness and openly acknowledge the roles that race, racism and white interests play in the structure and functioning of the school."

In conclusion, Sullivan's book invites much debate, as well as further debate on multiple other topics. Having a background in philosophy and psychoanalytic theory is crucial to understanding the text, making its readers primarily graduate students, researchers, and faculty. It is the readers beyond these persons that concern me, a concern that is too often applicable to much excellent philosophical writings and other academic areas. This work is critically important to the current racist status of our society and to the lived experience of everyday people to join "intellectuals" in the work to undo racism. While the concepts "white privilege" and "solipsism" are substantially recognized and much understood by ordinary people, and philosophers are to be commended for this, the range of philosophical concepts in this book shows, we as philosophers have a long way to go in making the scope of important critical race theory more understandable to significantly more people we would like to become transformative agents of racism.

Along with my review, there are several academicians to whom I would recommend this book with the thought that it would enhance their understanding of the contributions that Sullivan offers for the fight against racism. The text will enable them to better undo it through endeavors in their respective disciplines. One person among these would be a sister institution's chancellor who is in a unique educational leadership position to impact transformation of racism within the environment of that given institution. Another person would be a law professor at a predominately white sister institution who would utilize Sullivan's work to make a difference with racism for her students and in becoming a better transformative agent of racism in many other endeavors. It would also reveal to her an enhanced perspective on many of the issues Patricia Williams discusses in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights: Diary of a Law Professor*.

I would also like to share this book with my practicing psychiatrist friend, my psychology colleague, and my counselor colleague for the theory it offers to make a difference to their clients and students in undoing racism. Still another colleague that I would include is a historian who teaches and researches the pros and cons of diversity, multiculturalism, pluralism, and colorblindness. My colleague whose culture and lived experience positioned her to think in turns of colorblindness would be informed in multiple ways about racism better than I have been able to do. Another colleague I would include is a white sister philosopher as a resource for analysis about the change in our relationship. Finally, there is my philosophy colleague who would provide a review of Sullivan's book that would further embellish my own. But then, there is my beautician who is among those everyday people who has a window of understanding "white privilege" and is eager to learn more as she inquires about what I am reading while under the hair dryer, and I attempt to make Sullivan's work understandable to her. I have wet her appetite to the point that she decided to purchase the book so she can learn more about racism and help to eliminate it.

While my scenario about sharing Sullivan's book may not be considered orthodox and theoretical in terms of a review, it is an attempt to bridge theory and reality into praxis to enhance the transformation of critical race ideas established through and grounded in convincing arguments. She provides important transformative strategies for those who no longer want to remain in their unconscious whiteness to develop habits of

resistance to racism. But for those who want to read it just for the sake of reading, I have a paraphrased version of a question raised by Wittgenstein and Karl Popper for them: Why spend your life studying logic or sharpening a knife if you are not going to use them? We cannot afford to accept this latter position when racism is so pervasive in our society and Sullivan offers such new and promising strategies.

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