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Radical Philosophy Review

Volume 9 • Number 1 • 2006

Editors' Introduction

Eduardo Mendieta & Jeffrey Paris ——— iii

Articles

• The Memory of Auschwitz ——— 1
Reyes Mate

• Phenomenological Encuentros ——— 45
Mariana Ortega

• Identity or Roots, Idol or
Icon? Exploration of a New
Critical Theory of Race ——— 65
Martin Beck Matušík

Book Reviews

• *The Radical Project*, by Bill
Martin; *Sartre on Violence*,
by Ronald Santoni ——— 79
Kevin William Gray

• *Rights, Democracy, and
Fulfillment*, by David Ingram,
*Globalizing Democracy and
Human Rights*, by Carol Gould ——— 85
Jorge M. Valadez

• *Democracy Matters*, by
Cornel West ——— 93
Cynthia Willett

Radical Philosophy Review

Volume 9 • Number 1 • 2006

Book Reviews

- *The Philosopher and His Poor*, by Jacques Rancière
Ronald Sundstrom ————— 97

- *Alienation and Freedom*,
by Richard Schmitt
Milton Fisk ————— 103

Contributors ————— 108

Editors' Introduction

Eduardo Mendieta & Jeffrey Paris

In 1964, Günther Anders—Hannah Arendt's first husband, a former student of Martin Heidegger during his Marburg years, and perhaps one of the most important and vocal post-World War II Jewish intellectuals to take a stand against the arms race—published an amazing little book entitled *Wir Eichmannsöhne: offener Brief an Klaus Eichmann* [*We children of Eichmann: Open letter to Klaus Eichmann*]. The book is made up of short entries, written over a period of time, in which Anders appeals to Klaus Eichmann to understand that he alone is not responsible for what his father did and what he came to stand for. Right at the outset, Anders affirms that the notion of “collective guilt” is meaningless. To what extent could he, Klaus, be responsible for something he was not party to? Nonetheless, Anders argues: we are *all* children of Eichmann. We are all children of the age that gave rise to Eichmann; our present is, and our future will be, suffused by the incomprehensibility and terror now and forever to be evoked by the name of Auschwitz.

It is the scandal evoked by this powerful appellation that Reyes Mate invokes in his essay “The Memory of Auschwitz,” a reflection on the duties we all we have inherited from and towards Auschwitz. The essay, a first-time translation (by Adam Wilkins) of chapter three of Mate's *Memoria de Auschwitz*, is a rigorous engagement with the philosophical, moral, and political “actuality” of Auschwitz. Mate's work is



a comprehensive and international engagement with ideas of Adorno, Horkheimer, Benjamin, Rosenzweig, Levinas, Agamben, and Derrida, as well as Habermas, Rawls, Bernstein, Arendt, and more; in other chapters of the book, for instance, Mate interrogates “Hitlerism,” the place of the camp in philosophical reflection, the authority of the witness, and the witnessing that stands between speaking and silence.

Neither pedantic nor narrowly scholastic, Mate focuses on the pressing question: if we are all children of Eichmann, what can and must Auschwitz mean to us today? In reply, he recalls two provocative theses. First, that Auschwitz imposed on humanity a new categorical imperative, as Adorno argued in *Negative Dialectics*. This imperative commands that we “we arrange our thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself, so that nothing similar will happen.” This new version of the categorical imperative does *not* say that we have a categorical imperative simply to remember, but to act directly against a recurrence of Auschwitz. Second, according to Mate, inasmuch as Adorno wants us to remember the suffering of past victims, it is not for the sake of our own moral well-being, but for the sake of that past suffering. This anamnestic remembering of past suffering is what Mate calls *historia passionis*. We remember so that past injustices that inform our present will not be passed over, concealed and forgotten in an amnesiac politics, and so that justice will be done in the present to them. The injustices of the past remain a guiding dark-light to the future. Auschwitz registers in space and time an event that, paradoxically, continues to generate thought precisely because it remains so incomprehensible. Here, thinking arises not from wonderment, but from horror, from the failure to comprehend our own inhumanity.

Mariana Ortega’s carefully researched and annotated essay on Latina and Latin American feminisms and their phenomenological background is a work of boundless usefulness. Ortega recalls the always-obnoxious absence of references to the philosophical and scholarly work done by Latin American and Latina feminists who are working within the so-called continental tradition. Against these absences, she announces and delineates what promises to be a generative and provocative line of appropriation of the Heideggerian corpus by Latina feminisms. What calls for thinking in Ortega’s program is not just the way in which Latina feminisms can benefit from this engagement with Heideggerian existential analytics, but conversely, how a deeper, expansive, and perhaps even liberating reading of Heidegger’s corpus may take place, if the questions Ortega articulates with such perspicacity and depth are allowed to clear horizons and open up lines of thinking.

In the third essay, Martin Beck Matušík discusses recent work by Lucius Outlaw, one of the most enduring and inspiring radical philosophers within the Radical Philosophy Association, and throughout other major professional associations (including the APA and SPEP). Part original analysis and part hagiography,



Matušík's essay recalls an earlier history of Outlaw's involvement with the last generation of radical philosophers, including Herbert Marcuse, creating a bridge between race theory and Yugoslav *praxis* philosophers, helping move issues of race and ethnicity to the foreground of critical social theory. Outlaw's recent book, *Critical Social Theory in the Interests of Black Folks*, as Matušík argues, offers a means to integrate "non-invidious racial, ethnic, and cultural interests into universal ideals of human liberation." The result, Matušík challenges, opens up a space for the discovery of racially-situated (or rooted) human sociality without recourse to self-idolatry.

This issue is rounded off by discussions of recent works on political philosophy by Carol Gould and David Ingram (reviewed by Jorge Valadez), on Sartre by Bill Martin and Ronald Santoni (reviewed by Kevin Gray), on Cornel West (reviewed by Cynthia Willett), and on Richard Schmitt (reviewed by Milton Fisk). We also include a remarkable contribution by Ronald Sundstrom on Jacques Rancière's *The Philosopher and His Poor*, showing the double-edged sword of critiques of philosophy's use and abuse of historically oppressed peoples. Such thorough inter-linking between issues of critical theory, recent political philosophy, critical race theory, feminisms, phenomenology, and existentialism has been a hallmark of the Radical Philosophy Association since its inception in the 1970s, and we are proud to continue that tradition today. — • —

Identity or Roots, Idol or Icon?

Exploration of a New Critical Theory of Race

Martin Beck Matušík

Abstract: What does race add to class, as both are secular social categories? The difficulties of invidious nationalism and the conservation of races that would not foment holy wars of terror persist for both secular or postsecular theorists. Postsecular thinkers are in a stronger position than a secular theorist to challenge religiously inflected social integrations, invidious nationalism, and fundamentalism. Unmasking them as social formation proffers an external criticism, to speak of them as sacralizations of identity exposes them at the root. Secular theorists ignore postsecular sensibility at the peril of failing to challenge the invidious claim to roots that secular nationalism and religious fundamentalism profess.

Two significant features distinguish Lucius Outlaw as a critical race theorist: Uniquely among Africana or African-American specialists, he has for a long time engaged figures and topics of critical social theory. And in contrast to critical theorists in the genealogy of the Frankfurt School, he has been until the Yugoslav wars and perhaps as late as the turn of the century a lone voice who stressed the need



to analyze ethnicity and race. Outlaw's lifework exhibits this two-edge positioning, and thus is remarkably suited to forge in the direction of a new critical theory that would integrate these two strains—socio-political or class and race analysis. He is well positioned to provide at once a bridge and corrective. The bridge leads from a Eurocentric social theory in the interest of White folks to Africana critical theory; the corrective dismantles the class bias and race blindness in most Marxist and critical social theory. Unlike other thinkers, like Charles Mills who shifts from class to race, or Shulamith Firestone and Luce Irigaray who have gender not only replace class but constitute the last “dark” continent, Outlaw holds race, gender, and class issues in creative tension. Extending into the twenty-first century W.E.B. Du Bois's political struggles at the color line, Outlaw formulates a sui generis critical race theory—a Black-Nationalist aspiration to exist within multicultural citizenship, and a New Left social movement that embraces radically democratic and nonviolent institutional forms.

After walking across Outlaw's bridge to his corrective, I want to take seriously Outlaw's question he addresses in the wake of the Yugoslav and Rwanda genocides to his or any interest in Black Nationalism: “[H]ow could I, in good conscience, ... continue to advocate for a theory and praxis explicitly crafted to be of service to partisan *racial* interests? ... What are the differences that make a crucial difference between ... the perpetrators of genocide ... and me?”¹ In the aftermath of modern nationalist wars and critical social theory's counsel to seek cure in cosmopolitan democracy and law, my question might be the obvious one, whether or not to serve a partisan racial interest? I raise a counterintuitive question instead, whether race or ethnicity should be regarded as one's identity or roots, and what difference to partisan racial interest does each approach make?

1. Universal Emancipatory Interest as a Bridge Among Races

The formative impact of the Frankfurt thinkers on Outlaw's thinking has been formidable. Having been raised in the Jim Crow Apartheid of the American South during the mid-1940s, then undergraduate at Fisk University just as the Black freedom movement got steam in the early 1960s, Outlaw pursued his philosophy Ph.D. at Boston College trying to integrate theory and practice of liberation. He attended Herbert Marcuse's lecture shortly after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968. Marcuse spoke at Boston University to a crowded auditorium of socially-minded, mostly White activists. Outlaw recalls: “I left that gathering hungering

1. Lucius T. Outlaw, Jr., *Critical Social Theory in the Interests of Black Folks* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), p. xxx-xxx. Further references to this work will be inserted directly in the text.



for more of his articulations, anxious to get my hands on something, anything, he had written” (p. xii). Like Angela Davis, his contemporary who not only studied in Frankfurt but became Marcuse’s Ph.D. student at the University of California at San Diego, Outlaw extended Marcuse’s critique of the late industrial society to explain the struggle of Blacks in America. In 1968, he found in Marcuse also resources for coming to terms with King’s murder. He studied works of Marcuse, and this pointed him to other works of the Frankfurt School—Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, and Jürgen Habermas—as well as the writings of Marx and other radical theorists.

After receiving his Ph.D. from Boston College in 1972, Outlaw deepened his graduate school discoveries of the Frankfurt thinkers during a fellowship year spent in 1976 at the Moton Center in Philadelphia. At this time a friend recommended him Mihailo Markovic’s *From Affluence to Praxis: Philosophy and Social Criticism*, the work by a prominent Yugoslav “praxis philosopher” and critical theorist from Belgrade. Outlaw sought out Markovic at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington. After they spoke at length, Markovic introduced Outlaw to Erich Fromm who was visiting New York. Outlaw and Fromm only engaged in a long telephone conversation, but the conversation had a deep impact on the young scholar. Outlaw’s three initial encounters with critical theorists—Marcuse, Markovic, and Fromm—were crowned during the fellowship year by Habermas’s guest lectures at the University of Pennsylvania. Outlaw attended the lectures in which Habermas worked out the theory of communicative action. They also met in person. “We spent a couple of hours exploring some ins and outs of critical social theory,” Outlaw demonstrates as much his boldness as also Habermas’s proverbial openness, “and the applicability or adaptation of various construals of the enterprise to emancipatory efforts on behalf of black folks in the United States” (p. xviii).

Subsequent developments deepened the bridge between the Frankfurt thinkers and Outlaw’s interest in the liberation of Black folks. After joining Morgan State University in 1977, he became active in the group of what he describes as “leftist, mostly white female and male engaged philosophers and social theorists that were the beginning of the Radical Philosophers Association [sic]” (p. xxi). In 1980 he was invited to Haverford College, a predominantly White, selective undergraduate college operated in the Quaker tradition of consensual democracy. He would teach at Haverford the next twenty-one years, while impacted by its “decidedly democratic associated living” (p. xxvii). The spirit of pluralist and multiracial egalitarianism at Haverford influenced his thinking and teaching. He was able to pursue a partisan critical theory at Haverford not only because of visits by a number of scholars, such as Habermas, Albrecht Wellmer, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Svetozar Stojanovic, but also because of collaboration with his Haverford colleague, Richard



Bernstein, and Markovic, on editing the successor journal to Yugoslav *Praxis*, newly called *Praxis International*. Marshall Tito shut down *Praxis* journal in 1975 on account of its criticism of the failed Yugoslav experiment in workers' self-managing and humanist democratic socialism. He forced "the Belgrade Eight" scholars, among them Markovic, Stojanovic, and Golubovic, from their university and research posts (p. xxix). *Praxis International* was put together in 1981, with Bernstein and Markovic as co-editors, and Outlaw was brought by Bernstein as the Managing Editor of the new U.S.-based journal. Outlaw also had numerous encounters with the Inter-University Center in Dubrovnik where an annual seminar (originated together with the Belgrade "praxis philosophers" by Marcuse and Habermas at the Korcula island as a summer school) with critical theorists coming from Western and Eastern Europe and the U.S. took place under the shadow of Tito's strong hand. Yugoslavia stood as a model of the future where workers' open and creative socialism with a human face would prevail. It also promised socialist democracy with a foundation for multi-ethnic society: That promise held for Outlaw's bridge to critical theory in the interest of Black liberation as much as for neo-Marxists and the Frankfurt thinkers, and also for my East European generation after Alexander Dubcek's Prague Spring of 1968 was crushed by the Soviet tanks and we lost hope that any really existing socialism, even Castro's Cuba, could evolve into a form of life beyond state totalitarianism or return to corporate rule.

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, Václav Havel both acted and choreographed, in the November days of 1989, the Central European fairy tale of a non-Jacobin and non-Bolshevik, hence *Velvet*, Revolution. Meanwhile captive nations behind the Iron Curtain returned to the corporate-cum-mafia rule where many a former communist party boss quietly laundered socialist wealth into a private venture. These transformed postcommunist capitalists, not democratic dissidents, became the key partners of free markets. After Tito's death, President Slobodan Milosevic used the rotating Yugoslav group presidency to stir up old ethnic conflicts, and to everyone's surprise, Mihailo Markovic became one of the chief advisors and ideologues for greater Serbia. Editors of *Praxis International*, Seyla Benhabib and Andrew Arato, in protest closed down the journal that began in solidarity with those eight Belgrade philosophers in 1981, some of whom morphed meanwhile into Serbian nationalists. In April 1994, a new journal was born, *Constellations*, the successor to *Praxis International* and the second successor to the Yugoslav *Praxis*, now with direct Frankfurt School genealogy and ties to Habermas. Shelled by artillery and air guns, Dubrovnik's seminar of critical theorists had migrated first to an Italian exile on the island of Ischia, then with my direct assistance, among others, found a home with the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in Prague where it has remained since. Under such momentous events, questions



of race and ethnicity moved to the foreground of critical social theorists working around Habermas. With parallel prior work done in literary critical theory and race theory, the joint space for a new critical race theory opened up.

I suggest that at this very juncture the need for *a new critical theory*, bringing such disparate strains of thought and praxis together, was born. It is thus no accident that Outlaw's work is published in the book series called, *New Critical Theory*. Has Outlaw's bridge, sought between the Frankfurt School approaches and the partisan racial theory, been destroyed not only by Belgrade nationalist betrayals but also with NATO's bombing of the democratic bridges in Novy Sad or elsewhere? He warned early in the mid-eighties, and he might have been then but one among many readers of *Praxis International*, that there was virtually no attention paid to ethnicity and race in critical theory. His bridge between race and class yielded meanwhile to a race corrective to the socialist as well as other racial melting pots.

2. Particular Interest in Liberation as a Corrective to Racial “Melting Pot” and Genocide

“But,” Outlaw writes, “I was neither an anarchist nor a nihilist; nor was I prepared to go way to the left and throw my lot in with the ‘revolutionaries’ of various stripes and posturings” (p. xiii). Since his studies at Fisk and Boston College, he chose as his primary revolutionary vocation to become a teacher who touches and changes lives of the youth. With maturity rarely found among doctoral students, he was determined not to get side-tracked by street activism, but to earn the necessary diploma as his entrance ticket for “a career of teaching as critical consciousness-raising in service to change for social justice for black folks and others in need” (p. xiii).

The core question running through Outlaw's work is the following: Can there be a critical theory serving non-invidious emancipatory racial and ethnic interests? He has been up front about a double requirement for any theory of social justice in the U.S., to uphold a partisan interest in Black liberation while striving for the well being of all peoples. The joint requirement is “that critical social theory in the interests of black folks be crafted and deployed without chauvinism or invidious regard for any other peoples or persons” (p. xxxiii). The class or White gender bias favors the melting pot idea of a washed out, mixed, or bleached race as the path to social justice. This racial salad bar or ethnic syncretism is true of most Marxist and critical theories that mask the initial and utopian Whiteness.

Outlaw develops a corrective to the assimilation bias from the vantage point of integration without annihilation: In case of the Africana struggles, he calls this angle a New Left Black Nationalism. His partisan approach forges a coalition between the cultural strains of critical race theorizing and universal ideals of social justice. Note



that his “race” thinking moves decidedly beyond any reductionist racial biologism as well as abstract social constructivism of race. Race is both less positivistically material than biological genes and more robust than the latest cultural fashion or politics of identity and difference. His thinking on race learns from the cutting edge research into great variations among genetic, epidermal, and cultural schemes. No race type can be genetically stabilized, yet race types are no social constructions alone. He resists the move by some thinkers, Anthony Appiah and Leonard Harris among them, to get rid of the race trouble even as a political category that defines ongoing struggles by various peoples. The regulative ideal of social justice cannot be some universally bleached species-being or humanism. With DuBois, Outlaw is poised to “conserve” race and yet resist biological racism, decadent nationalism as well as invidious separatism. A new critical race theory must be inscribed within a sophisticated “rainbow socialism”: Race may not be theorized by fixing its essence (here Outlaw agrees with social constructivists of race and gender) but rather as “a racial formation.”² From Du Bois’s struggle at the color line to the cosmopolitan citizenship pursued by Habermas, universal human liberation is to be composed of partisan race-based or ethnic particularities that, Outlaw insists, no longer allow for either separatism or nation-state sovereignty. Black Nationalism (unlike clans, tribalism, lebanonization of sovereign nations, or national liberation wars for independent statehood) matures in Outlaw’s lifework into multicultural citizenship.³

Genocidal nationalism in Yugoslavia, Chechnia, Israel, Rwanda, and we could go on, seems to implore us to give up partisanship for race and ethnicity in favor of the Kantian cosmopolitan law. Nationalist wars of the last two centuries inspire Habermas’s project for the European Union and the reformed Security Council of the U.N. as much as his increasing critique of the new imperial nationalism of the U.S. after 9/11. The disgraced assimilationist idea of an American melting pot lacks both the requisite elements of procedural justice and due attention to politics of recognition. Black Nationalism emerged as an amalgam of universal Civil Right Movements and the political revival of particular cultural and racial identities. New social movements sought to preserve their identity-in-difference without melting them down in the supremacist’s White or patriarchal or heterosexist pot(s). With the debates among communitarians, like neo-Hegelians Charles Taylor or Michael Sandel, and political liberals, like Habermas or John Rawls, the politics of recognition of various peoples forms an inextricable component of universal political ideals. Perhaps the late Rawls alone, in advocating for the law of peoples, regresses into

2. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, in *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge, 1986), provide tools for preserving race after postmodern critiques of essentialism.

3. See especially Outlaw, *Critical Social Theory*, chapters 4, 7-8, and 9 on Will Kymlicka’s *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).



supporting invidious forms of tribal and even imperial nationalism. But elevated into procedural democracy, the composite figure of multicultural and cosmopolitan citizenship enshrines the most promising alternative to invidious assimilation and genocide alike.

I submit that at the turn of the century, Outlaw with Habermas and other critical theorists, such as Tom McCarthy, Charles Mills, Leonard Harris, or Eduardo Mendieta, who all correct now the White bias of critical social theory, welcome each other from opposite sides of the old bridge. From this late historical vantage point, Outlaw's lifelong racial partisanship, considered once by the melting pot idealists as atavistic because dangerously close to genocidal nationalisms, emerged as an avant-garde of a new critical theory serving the complex interests of social movements. A genuine question facing us nowadays is no longer whether or not to integrate a non-invidious racial, ethnic, and cultural interests into universal ideals of human liberation, but rather what is it that should not be assimilated, what do we "conserve" in race or ethnicity?

3. Identity or Roots?

Jean-Paul Sartre sparred with the problem how to define racial or ethnic particularities otherwise than negatively. The liberal democrat assimilates the Jew into an "abstract 'human nature'" of the cultural mainstream and becomes just as oblivious to Jewish particularity as the anti-Semite who hates it. Sartre anticipated multicultural democracy by correcting the melting pot assimilation with "concrete liberalism." "[T]he Jews—and likewise the Arabs and the Negroes—from the moment that they are participants in the national enterprise, have a right in that enterprise; they are citizens. But they have these rights *as* Jews, Negroes, or Arabs—that is, as concrete persons."⁴ Social or economic oppression and racism must be overcome together: "The authentic Jew simply renounces *for himself* an assimilation that is today impossible; he awaits the radical liquidation of anti-Semitism for his sons. ... What is there to say except that the socialist revolution is necessary to and sufficient for the suppression of the anti-Semite? It is for the Jew *also* that we shall make the revolution."⁵

But Sartre never satisfied the nagging doubt that even his concrete liberalism fails to name the Jew otherwise than through social and political constructions. His existential sensibility taught him that even in radical freedom (or perhaps especially in freedom) concrete humans are more substantive than social or symbolic constructs

4. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), p. 146, original emphasis.

5. Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, p. 150f.



or effects of their cultures and societies. Yet if critical race theorists rightly reject all biological reductionism to speak of human types, then biological boundary conditions for raciality are so many varied genetic “clines,” then race is a cultural-biological, social-geographical, but always non-deterministic and disjunctive “*cluster concept*” (pp. 88, 145). If race theorists reject essentialism, which in invidious forms, along with biologism, provided a fodder for genocidal nationalism, then short of urban racial nihilism lamented by Cornel West, wherein consists meaningful human concretion to be conserved as race? What about race must not be assimilated, what should be conserved in “racial formation” within multicultural democracy?

Outlaw deploys a sophisticated notion of “racial formation” (p.100f.) to rethink Marxist anthropology. He erects in “generalized peoplehood” a more robust ideal than Marx’s universal human species being envisioned in the classless society: The ideal is “to achieve unity in diversity” (p. 6). Outlaw’s Black Nationalism not only leans with Marx to democratic center-left but also toils for universal liberation of “all peoples” in their particularity. His critical interest of African-descended peoples is neither separatist nor reductionist but “a necessary part of struggles throughout the world for generalized, emancipated human existence” (p. 12). But does not Sartre’s difficulty with conserving human particularity return for any nationalist regardless whether Black and Left or some other kind? This same difficulty underwrites Outlaw’s objection to Marx’s reductive economic and class-based “false universality of European and European-descendant worldviews,” Outlaw’s rejection of assimilation and “uncritical intellectual integration” of races, and his updated, nationalist-multicultural defense of Du Bois’s argument for the conservation of races (p. 3, cf. chap. 8).

This is the difficulty: What do race, ethnicity or culture as particular “social-political formations” or “identities” add to Marx’s universal class, since both class and racial formations or identities are thoroughly secular social categories? What does it mean to resist assimilation and conserve races in the secular context of modernity where “African-American” often means culturally “North American”? Nelson Mandela or Bishop Desmond Tutu inhabit more of a “community of meaning” (p. 159) with Joschka Fischer or Habermas than with Colin Powell or Condoleezza Rice, and Cornel West shares more existential values with Václav Havel than with Clarence Thomas. Who in these wider solidarities “conserves” race and who is a “race traitor”? What does it mean to cook a Fourth of July barbeque in the U.S. and strive for liberation not as an assimilated member of abstract humanity but a member of one’s race or culture? Frederick Douglass had clarity in asking this rhetorically on behalf of Africana slaves during the U.S. Civil War. Given that “communities of meaning” (p. 159) are always already also communities of choice, can we adequately



answer the question if we limit race to a political or nationalist project (pp. 153, 157) or a narrative identity (p. 134) of various peoples?

The U.S. passport equivocates between the categories of nation and state: My “nationality” is called U.S.A., while my ethnic particularity, combining Czech and Slovak, is relegated to a “place of birth” or even less so—to what on employment forms I may designate (my Caucasian race) and what I may not name (Jewish). After Czecho-Slovakia’s split in two nations, the U.S. State Department denied my passport renewal with the claim that Czechoslovakia no longer existed. Just as many naturalized emigrants from Yugoslavia, I had to change retroactively my place of birth. I was now from Slovakia as if Czechoslovakia never existed. In the classical European usage, it is the nation that represents what is particular, ethnic, or racial about a person; the state grants citizenship and political culture. Since the French Revolution, nationalism emerged as a secular political project that replaced the religious culture and sacred monarchy. Napoleon spread the state Civil Code by expanding the French “nation” with fire and citizenship papers. Imperialism shares some of these ambitions, reinvigorating the missionary zeal with flag, economy, and cultural hegemony. Modern nation-states, their more or less stable national identities, are preceded and forged by nationalism; nation is not what one conserves, it is what one for better or worse imagines and constructs.

Some of the U.S. passport equivocation emigrates with interesting twists into the category of Black Nationalism (pp. 46f., 53ff., 61-75, 99). Outlaw (pp. 125, 133, 169f.) employs the classical European usage of nation, as opposed to state sovereignty or the U.S. imperial nationalist project, in order to speak of particular ethnicity or race. It is with such unexpected European lenses that he condemns the U.S. nation-building as a form of invidious assimilation of Black Nations into the state political project. The U.S. melting pot inherits the French Napoleonic model of spreading democratic fraternity at the barrel of the gun and by promoting a new world order. Yet even an updated conservation of races shares one notorious blindness with three modern revolutions—the French, American, and Bolshevik: Regardless whether nation, race, and ethnicity are thought of as socially constructed or as co-varied with clines capturing significant biological, sexual, or geographical clusters, these categories, like the one of class, spearhead thoroughly secular political projects. Race theory in search of a national identity formation, albeit in the interest of Black folks, partakes with Marxist and critical theory traditions in the same project that never questions the *deracination* of modern groups and individuals.

In order to find a contrast with the category of race as social identity formation, I want to draw on an example of the postsecular search for roots. The difference between modern racial identity and cosmological roots is driven home no better



than by the Mayan struggle in Chiapas.⁶ Shortly after the Zapatista uprising in 1994, a controversy arose over the so-called San Andrés Accords on Indigenous Rights and Culture signed between indigenous communities and the Mexican Federal government. These Accords were never implemented in the way they were intended and signed—recognizing Mayans to be distinct peoples with right to indigenous self-governance, law, education, use of natural resources on their lands, and custom. The Mexican Federal government consistently misinterpreted the Mayan struggle for recognition as a cultural and social particular that could be brought under the liberal democratic umbrella of the modern, thus always-already deracinated, social and political universal. The Accords do not intend to safeguard the Mayan interest in race as a democratically organized social or national identity. Their struggle is not nationalist in either the classical European struggle for sovereignty or derivative Black Nationalist political struggle informing racial social formation. Rather, the Accords promise to preserve an autonomous space for the Mayan roots to safeguard their received cosmological sensibility and organize indigenous political and local culture. While partisan interest in racial or national identity formation is a modern secular project that complements the social struggles for political and economic equality, the interest in indigenous roots underwrites how one is to think about social, political, and economic projects in the first place. In the Mayan struggle, the roots ground social identities, not vice versa. Thus, even Subcommander Marcos, who is an educated outsider to the Mayan culture, speaks for indigenous interests more like a poet-cosmologist than like a critical race theorist. Identity delivers peoples to a developmental, evolutionary, activist standpoint; roots embody a cosmological, transformative, and ultimately spiritual angle of vision. The Chiapas populations in resistance (they are well informed by the context of the modern world in which their struggle transpires) strive to preserve memory, hence rediscover and nurture their roots. One can be against invidious assimilation and genocidal nationalism alike, but can one sustain either course of action by conserving race as mere secular identity formation? Do postsecular roots make just a difference in degree or all the difference in kind?

I submit that the difficulties of ethnic cleansing, invidious assimilation, imperial nation-building, on the one hand, and the conservation of race that would not foment national, ethnic or holy wars of terror (or those against it), on the other, persist regardless whether or not one thinks as a secular or postsecular critical race

6. My current exploration of the cosmological roots or icons of races and ethnic groups began at the time of my humanitarian sojourn to Chiapas. It continued during a journey I undertook into my Jewish matrilineage and the ways the Holocaust affected my family. I am thankful to Patricia Huntington for being my companion on both journeys and, thus, for inspiring the direction of these reflections. Cf. Huntington's "Listening to Zapatismo: A Reflection on Spiritual Deracination" (unpublished ms.), pp. 1-29.



theorist. But a postsecular thinker is in a stronger position than either a secular Marxist, critical theorist or nationalist to challenge religiously inflected social integrations. A postsecular thinker can critique religious forms of invidious nationalism or fundamentalism immanently. To unmask them as social formation proffers only an external criticism; to speak of them as new sacralizations of identity formation is to expose them at the root.

A cosmological or spiritual sensibility for racial, ethnic, or cultural roots lives at the heart of all peoples and also in North America. It defines the nonviolent vision of Martin Luther King, Jr. as much as the transformative Islamic ethic that MalcolmX discovered on his Mecca pilgrimage. It forms the core of West's existential and prophetic articulation of race matters, Michael Lerner's rabbinical call for *tikkun olam* (mending of the world) as well as Eduardo Mendieta's and Enrique Dussel's integration of critical theory with liberation philosophy in the interest of Latin American and Hispanic folks. Native American cosmologies are among the oldest, often richest roots of the Continent. Even if a racial partisan, such as Outlaw's, decidedly refrains from examining the mythical dimensions of race or, like Habermas, suffers from musical deafness to religious tones, the secular theorist ignores the new postsecular sensibility at the peril of failing to challenge the invidious claim to roots that most dangerous forms of secular nationalism and religious fundamentalism alike profess in the present age.⁷

The distinction between identity and roots is forced upon us in the twenty-first century with terrorism and wars on terror alike, as both, and each in religious as well as secular costumes, are outgrowths of deracination. Outlaw's (pp. 99-101, 113, 145) partisanship for Du Bois's "racial formation" views nationality in non-invidious manner of universal solidarity. Still a de-rooted race seems just as empty a category for new forms of communal solidarity and individual growth as the one assimilated into class or ideal society by White Marxists or liberal democrats. Returns the Sartrean difficulty.

I conclude with a maverick suggestion, inspired by Jean-Luc Marion's religious distinction with which he, hoping to improve even on Heidegger's momentary nationalism in the interest of German folks, proposes to overcome onto-theo-logy. Ontotheology, a "God" fashioned along the lines of philosophical metaphysics, was supposed to die with Nietzsche's proclamation of the "death of God." Nietzsche did not end the search for roots, he only hoped we would be able to transvalue our search by giving up the notion of God as value, thus of all values. At the twilight of idols, which every "God" of ontotheology always already incarnates, our

7. See Michael Lerner, *The Left Hand of God: Taking Back Our Country from the Religious Right* (San Francisco: Harper, 2006); Jürgen Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2003), p. 114.



deracinated age, fearful of its nothingness, adopts secular values to replace those invented by human religious integrations. It is at this juncture that I am interested in Marion's distinction between idol and icon.⁸

Why not think of race or the broader categories of ethnicity and culture as either idols or icons? While idol and icon alike are neither pure social constructions nor biological reductions, there is a difference between what substantial and concrete humanity means in terms of social identities and what in terms of one's roots. Race, ethnicity, and culture regarded as idol, signify a religious or secularized value-positing and a linguistified, partly acquired and constructed, social identity. Idols are fulfilled intuitions of human-all-too-human intentions. One can indeed, ought to caricature idols; one can commit sacrilege only against the icon. Thus the only "sin against Holy Spirit" can be one's rejection of icons of hope, forgiveness, and the messianic promise that a more just world than this one is possible. The unjust religious and secular idols must be both caricatured and mended.

Even a religiously tone-deaf critical theorist can appreciate the political dangers of idolatry, whereby one's intentions—race or nation or culture—come to occupy the onto-theo-logical place of "God" in the role of social, cultural, or racial supremacy. All claims to racial or cultural supremacy express misguided claims to roots, a desire to be "God," otherwise such claims really mean nothing to worry about. Idols of one's own kind (and these can be any social identity) allow one to love one's land and people. Idolatry differs from finite love of idols when identity formation becomes absolutized. Idolatry arises from self-apotheosis of one's human value, and religious fundamentalism or secular nationalism or imperialism or racial supremacy are prime examples of idol-worship. But does a one-sidedly secular thinker have that penetrating notion in the critical tool box?

If we regard race, ethnicity, and culture as icons, we open cosmological, I admit spiritual, windows through which one either discovers or apprehends one's roots—without self-idolatry. Idols are social mirrors through which we pursue regulative ideals of selfhood or humanity; icons are faces with cosmic eyes or windows deeper than the Hubble telescope or ancient wells through which cosmos calls us to self. As idol is to social identity, so icon is to roots. In idolatry I worship my social or psychological identity as if it contained cosmological roots. The intuition behind the life-and-death need to conserve race is without doubt, but if modern dangers of carving and conserving idols are legion, then must we not speak about conserving races as icons and meanwhile lampoon and cartoon all conservation of racial, cultural, religious, and other idols?

8. See Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 7-52.



One may love well one's racial, ethnic, and cultural identity, all social values, in a finite, multicultural, non-divinized manner as one loves ethnic food, clothing, music, or sex with one's kind or desire transgressing all social frontiers. Can self-love remain non-invidious when I do not know my identity as distinct from my roots? Must I not learn that the latter are never in anyone's possession? For those with spiritual or cosmological sensibility, whether among modern individuals or various indigenous peoples, roots always play a revelatory role. That is why like icons, roots revealed in race or culture can open a window beyond the reciprocal recognition within a social-universal to our acceptance in the infinite. In one's roots, to be a Jew is not to fight over a piece of prime "holy" real estate, to be a Jew is to embody an icon or witness-window to the infinite. But could either Sartre's defense of the Jew against the democrat and anti-Semite, could a secular or fundamentalist Jew say just that much and not more?

Negatively, even if Outlaw as a secular critical race theorist does not or cannot or will not speak about the Africana spiritual roots, those many icons of Black folks, still thinkers following in his footsteps must hold the distinction between idol and icon minimally in order to resist the genocidal or terrorist desire to become "God." A Sartrean following Nietzsche could disclose this much truth about our age: No identity formation should replace the twilight of idols or the revelation of one's uncanny post/modern deracination. Or, again said only negatively, with the conclusion of Camus's *Rebel*, humans must tell one another that none of us is God. What should one say positively about the roots of African-descendant? Can one speak positively about icons without the dangers of invidious nationalism and fundamentalism—without racial, political or religious idolatry? Once atheists become sufficiently and properly atheistic and so together with honestly genuine religionists learn to resist idol-worship in all its forms also in our secular age, what icons are we to conserve beyond political projects, rap songs, and received national or social identities? We can only hope that Outlaw's racial partisanship can stimulate future generations in pursuing these questions of race to their cosmological and spiritual roots. — • —

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