

ON THE TEMPORALITY OF INDIGENOUS IDENTITY

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There is a tendency in readings of indigenous identity to impose notions of authenticity that place indigenous people out of time. The presumption is that time is so conditioned by modern life, that to articulate a genuine indigenous identity requires resistance not only to such time but also to time narratives. The contradiction, however, is that the very problematic of raising Indigeneity is a function of that temporal imposition. Thus, in effect, the narrative of authentic Indigeneity is a very much modern one. Writing on the U.S. context, Kevin Bruyneel puts it this way: “The point here is that the words *Indian* and *American Indian*, like *Native American*, *aboriginal*, and *indigenous*, emerged as a product of a co-constitutive relationship with terms such as colonisers, settler, and *American*” (2007, ix). It does not follow, however, that the problem must be posed in a Manichean all-or-nothing manner. That indigenous people of today are very much of the present means that the negotiation of imposed and resistance culture produces a mixture that could be called *the intersubjective constitution of contemporary culture*. In other words, there is the lived problematic of producing living culture. That means that the indigenous today, albeit connected to ancestral forms of knowledge and cultural formation, are also the transformation of those norms in the ongoing human production of culture. This argument leads to a criticism, then, of the construction of indigenous people as, in effect, haunting the present.

These problems are similar to those of Jews in the West. Many models of modernity were premised on the emergence of Christianity.

Although both Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism emerged through the historic mixture of ancient Judea and the Roman Empire, the transformation of the latter into the Holy Roman Empire led to the death of Rabbinic Judaism as a proselytising religion.¹ Ironically, combining the narrative of continuation in terms of pre-Roman times with the mixture of Roman laws and Judean laws (*halacha*) led to a narrative of Christianity pointing to the future with the expectation of Judaism being locked into the past. Judaism, went through its own transformations, as did Christianity: denominations of both emerged in a new form of modernity, namely the one governed, at least in epistemological terms, by natural science. The result is the continued presence of a Judean framework, now known as Jewish, in spite of a general demographic of two percent in Europe and North America and even less than that in many parts of the world, save the country of Israel (Fishbane 1987). Yet, though there are Jewish people in contemporary political life, there is a sense in which Israelites, the people on whom Judaism is based, may well be figments of the past (Gordon & Gordon 2009).

This narrative thus poses three problematics. The first is about the identity of a people. We could look at it as an ontological matter of their “being,” but it is also about their *meaning*. In other words, what they are is linked also to what it means to be whoever or whatever they are or supposed to be. It is a problem of anthropology—the extent to which it is a discussion of human beings, which implicates them in the complex logic (or anti-logic) of what it means to be human, especially where being human is challenged. The second problematic is about a

¹ On this history, see, e.g., Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) and Lewis R. Gordon, “Réflexions sur la question afro-juive,” *Plurielles: Revue culturelle et politique pour un judaïsme Humaniste et Laïque* No 16 (2011): 75–82.

fundamental predicament of the modern world. The modern West is wrought with narratives of freedom and emancipation wherein most Europeans seem to regard themselves as being unshackled from a stultifying past.² Although not always explicit, the historical narrative of Columbus's inaugurating modern colonialist expansion marked—for that world—a liberation from a period of domination in which, as they saw it, things were being set right in the form of a *Reconquest*.³ The Mediterranean having been dominated by Afro-Muslims in the west and a variety of so-called Oriental Muslims to the east, the new path of the Atlantic Ocean signaled a conception of Christianity and indeed, Christendom, of moving forward with Islam and Judaism, both once forms of modernity, now being condemned to the past.⁴ As Christendom made its transition into “Europe,” this notion of being locked into prior times extended also to people outside of the framework of Christianity. Thus, the eventual conception of freedom emerged in which the emancipation of Christendom, marked by its transformation into Europe, was accompanied by rigorous

² I am writing here on the logic of modernity. For an outline of various positions on this question, see Lewis R. Gordon, *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), introduction and first chapter, and Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

³ See, e.g., *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires*, eds. Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo, and Maureen Quilligan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Henri Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, trans. Bernard Miall (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1956); Ivan Van Sertima (ed.), *Golden Age of the Moor*, ed. Ivan Van Sertima (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992); and cf. also Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Peter Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), chapter 21, p. 76.

⁴ See Mignolo et al, *Rereading the Black Legend*, and Gordon and Gordon, *Of Divine Warning*, op. cit. See also Cedric Robinson, *An Anthropology of Marxism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

implements of servitude on those who belonged, supposedly, to the past. The third problematic is already hinted at in the first two—namely, how to account for all of this? The movement from Christian man to “man” and from Christendom to “Europe”, offered with it the presumption of moving away from the presupposition of emancipation through deed and knowledge, and as the latter increased, so presumably did the former. But how, if this were so, could it be justified? This last question demands, for the rest of our discussion, engagement with the first and the third problematics. In addition, they are germane to the task of this volume, as thinking about indigenous identity demands accounting for what it means and its justification.

Problem of Indigenous Identity

So we begin with the meaning of indigenous identity. However, in this instance, meaning is not merely lexicographic—a concern that could easily be addressed with a dictionary. What we are concerned with here are the circumstances faced by a human being whose relation to other human beings is mediated by being “indigenous.” To be such is already a transformed condition, for there is no reason for any group of people to think of themselves in such terms except where another group of human beings have attempted to or have displaced them. If the other group was to remain in its identity as guests, where the norms of belonging stay as they were prior to the new group’s arrival, then no contestation of first and last would emerge. There would simply be people doing what many people have always done: host guests. A peculiar development in the modern world, however, is the emergence of guests who transform themselves into settlers -guests who not only stay, but also assert a right to the future of the land. In effect, such guests affect belonging by rendering the hosts homeless, paradoxically, in their home.

In the course of such displacement, a peculiar logic of what Frantz Fanon (1967) called “zombification of culture” emerges, where the lived and living reality of indigenous people collapses into the contradictory reality of the living dead.⁵ A human and living existence, Fanon argued, is one of open-endedness, of being a genuine interrogative or questioning possibility. To be such is to live in the interrelations of intersubjective life. He built this case for the human being as possibility in *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952), translated as *Black Skin, White Masks*, through a series of provocative reflections of colonised and racialised subjects’ investments in systems of modern assimilation. For such subjects, the modern world poses a set of values by which they can supposedly live by virtue of participation. The problem, however, is that each effort is marked by the contradiction of presumed failure. Mastering the imposed language supposedly promises assimilation, for example, but the reality of the language expressed in a coloured body receives social condemnation as contradictory. Linguistic imposition also demands the elimination of the coloured body, which is unsurpassable. The realisation of the social dynamics of meaning—what Fanon calls *sociogenesis*—leads to the disintegration of the identity myth of self-sustained substance or, prosaically, the modern individual.⁶ This failure emerges because the

⁵ Cf. also Jane Anna Gordon and Lewis R. Gordon, *Of Divine Warning: Reading Disaster in the Modern Age* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2009), chapter 5, “Ruin,” pp. 103–116.

⁶ For discussion of Fanonian *sociogenesis*, see, e.g., Sylvia Wynter, “Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, Identity, the Puzzle of Conscious Experience and What It Is Like to Be ‘Black,’” in Mercedes F. Durán-Cogan and Antonio Gómez-Monaria (eds.), *Natural Identities and Sociopolitical Changes in Latin America* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 30–66, and Lewis R. Gordon, “Is the Human a Teleological Suspension of Man?: A Phenomenological Exploration of Sylvia Wynter’s Fanonian and Biodicean Reflections,” in B. Anthony Bogues (ed.), *After Man, Towards the Human: Critical Essays on the Thought of Sylvia Wynter* (Kingston, JA: Ian Randle, 2006), pp. 237–257.

individual is such *in relation* to other individuals, who, in turn, are such in relation to the world by which they are individuated—in other words, a social world. The problem, however, is that the social world in this case is saturated with colonising and historically racialised epidermal schema. Thus, efforts to escape it through individual will in acts of linguistic mastery, narcissistic love (being loved, and therefore seen, *as not coloured*, or more usually, *white*), dream and fantasy, humor, and valorised self-identity, fail. They do so because they commit the error of making the individual the problem instead of addressing the social system in which she or he lives.

Fanon makes many observations in his analysis of the construction of false *imagoes* and social rationalisations of oppression. One of them is about the pressures to offer the white world an image of the black self that is also alienating to the black. It is a portrait of what W.E.B. Du Bois calls the first stage of double consciousness, where one is pressured to see and present oneself as a dehumanised object.⁷ In the world of antiblack racism, that is the “negro” of the Americas or “nigger,” which was used throughout the European colonies, including Australia. This dehumanised object, in which all the negative features of Western civilization are invested, is always someone else (as indicated by many blacks who refer to other blacks as “niggers”) even, paradoxically, when it is self-referential, where a

⁷ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Conservation of the Races* (Washington, DC: The American Negro Academy, 1898); *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903); *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1940); and *John Brown* (Philadelphia: G. W. Jacobs & Co., 1909). For discussion, see Lewis R. Gordon, *Existential Africana: Understanding Africana Existential Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2000), chapter 4, “What Does It Mean To Be a Problem?,” pp. 62–95, and Paget Henry, “Africana Phenomenology: Its Philosophical Implications,” *The C. L. R. James Journal* 11, no. 1 (2005): 79–112.

schizophrenic separation of ego and body emerges, in which the “nigger body” is *there* identified by a self from a *here* that is, in the end, nowhere. This imposition has, over time, become an expectation of so-called authentic blackness. Thus, Fanon observed he found himself in various interactions with the white world, “secreting blackness”: “A man was expected to behave like a man,” Fanon declared, but “I was expected to behave like a black man—or at least like a nigger” (1952, 114). And further on, “Little by little, putting out pseudopodia here and there, I secreted a race” (Fanon 1952, 122).⁸ The secretion of blackness is an infected social field; it is the layering over of human relations with projections, stereotypes, and arrays of expectations, the effect of which is epistemic closure: to see blackness is to know all one needs to know (Gordon 1995).

There is a form of secreting indigeneity imposed upon indigenous peoples that is also embraced by those whose relationship to it is a form of first-stage double consciousness. This is where the indigenous person invests in the imposed identity and participates in the social field spread by presuppositions of authentic indigenous identity as an epistemically closed phenomenon. Secreting indigeneity leads to familiar presuppositions of contradiction, where being indigenous and modern are treated as oxymoronic: to be indigenous becomes wrought with mechanisms of pathology. For instance, Fanon argued that all human beings face maturation. Racism, however, bars maturity from whole groups of people, entrapping them in the logic of childhood. This leads to doubled abnormality: to be a black adult is to be abnormal; to be a black adult who acts like a child is to be an

⁸ Cf. also, Kelly Oliver, *The Colonization of Psychic Space: A Psychoanalytical Social Theory of Oppression* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004) and Lewis R. Gordon, “When I Was There, It Was Not: On Secretions Once Lost in the Night,” *Performance Research* 2, no. 3 (September 2007): 8–15.

“authentic black,” which, again, is an abnormal adult. The logic of childlike behavior is also temporal, it makes the subjects always situated behind the times, always, as Fanon observed, arriving too late.⁹

The temporality of indigenous identity has, however, a more insidious form born from the logic of conquest and land (Gordon 2000, 153-163). A feature of modern conquest, as we have seen, is the presupposition of empty or peopleless land, a principle known as *terra nullius*.¹⁰ To achieve a social world based on this premise required extraordinary acts of deception and self-deception. One approach was to annihilate the people, and although that tactic was often taken, it required admitting that there were people there in the first place—hardly supporting the principle of *terra nullius*. (Thurton 1990)¹¹ For those remaining people, and for others in cases where murder was not an option, the response was, through a complex network of pseudo-scientific and legalistic rationalisations, to render them, in effect, peopleless bodies. In such instances, indigenous and First peoples were rationalised as the source of intrinsic illegitimacy. In cases of enslavement, the tendency was to argue for them having childlike qualities at best suitable for physical labor. In others, where the desire

⁹ See *Black Skin, White Masks*, and Gordon, “When I Was There, It was Not,” and “Through the Zone of Nonbeing: A Reading of *Black Skin, White Masks* in Celebration of Fanon’s Eightieth Birthday,” *The C.L.R. James Journal* 11, no. 1 (Summer 2005): 1–43. [Reprinted in: *World & Knowledges Otherwise: A Web Dossier*, special issue: *Post-continental Philosophy*, edited by Nelson Maldonado-Torres 1, dossier 3 (Fall 2006):

<http://www.jhfc.duke.edu/wko/dossiers/1.3/LGordon.pdf>.

¹⁰ For discussion, see Martin Nakata, *Disciplining the Savages, Savaging the Disciplines* (Canberra, Australia: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007), p. 143; Carole Pateman, Carol Pateman, “The Settler Contract,” in Carole Pateman and Charles Mills, *Contract and Domination* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2007), pp. 35–78.

¹¹ see also Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty*.

was for their land, arguments were unleashed against their capacity to generate laws and thus function as sovereigns. Denied the basis of justification or right, they became people “without rights,” and thus found themselves attempting their defense according to impossible criteria; they had to be *other than who they were*: they had to be Christian or European, and, hence, white. A paradigm instance of this was *The Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831) in the United States. That case sanctioned the removal of the Cherokee people from their lands in Georgia and the Carolinas. The decision argued that the indigenous peoples of North America were “wards” in a “state of pupilage” under their supposed “guardian,” the United States. Justice Marshall, the judge with the majority opinion in the case, rejected the Cherokees’ claim to being a foreign state, a sovereign.¹² In her critical discussion of these events, Carole Pateman (2007, 35-78) points out that Australia, Canada, and the United States, three modern countries established upon settler agreements leading to cases such as *Cherokee v. Georgia*, all ultimately appealed to the falsehood of *terra nullius* as the grounds of their legitimacy. Premised on covenantal or social contract theories of original formation, what we could call a “settlers’ contract,” they each lay claim to having been founded on an original moment of social purity, a supposedly “clean slate.”

Worsening matters, Australia, Canada, and the United States claim to be democratic nations, and to be expressions of the will of the people under their jurisdiction. How could this be supported, however, when there are people under their domain whose will was never respected by virtue of the historic rejection of their humanity? The dominating national narrative of the indigenous populations contends that they did not object to their conquest and colonisation because *they could not have*. This is because a supposed condition of objection is

¹² For more discussion, see Bruyneel, *The Third Space*, chapter 2, pp. 27–64.

“civilized speech,” a property such people supposedly lack. Their protests throughout the periods of their conquest, colonisation, and historical disappearance collapsed into hauntings, ghostlike echoes of what is sensed or inferred but absent, the way one experiences prior inhabitants of an empty but furnished house, especially one that has become a museum. That the indigenous and First peoples resisted throughout, leads to an important reformulation of, for example, Gayatri Spivak’s famous essay on speech and subalternity, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988). In reality, the question should be, “Could the Subaltern Be Heard?” (Gordon & Gordon 2009) This question transforms the metaphor of hearing also into that of sight and touch, for they all come together in the question of a movement from appearance to disappearance and then to reappearance.

The expectations of secreted indigeneity undermines reappearance, since to appear in the logic that was part of the original disappearance carries with it the temporality of nonbeing in the future. This is because the political situation is, for the most part, unbearable to those whose legitimacy is a function of settlement society; their legitimate present and future makes the only temporal home for indigenous and First peoples properly the past.¹³

Violent Reappearance?

Indigenous and First peoples do not only face national fantasies of people locked in the past but also face exoticised narratives where the seduced include them as well. The modern world was not founded, after all, on a single narrative. There were also protests from within Christendom and Europe, and as high modernity led to moments of what Marxists call primitive accumulation and subsequent cycles of

¹³ See Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty* and Nakata, *Disciplining the Savages, Savaging the Disciplines*.

crisis, the misery unleashed led to longings for better days organised through the mythopoetics of Judeo-Christian lore, at first, and then eventual fantasies of “perfect people,” those among or without who “got it right.”¹⁴ “It,” of course, is whatever project a given society is trying to achieve. Here, whether they be “Jews,” “Christians,” “Muslims,” “peasants,” “capitalists,” “proletariats,” and then back again: “pagans,” “lost tribes,” or just “tribes,” such people are presumed out there, waiting for their historic moment to set humanity right. Here we find the extreme other side of the construction of problem people in the modern world—namely, the notion of intrinsically “unproblematic people.”¹⁵ The problem, however, is that in either direction, both extremes are, in effect, people who are other than human beings. In one direction, there is perpetual guilt, and in another, absolute innocence. Since children tend to be the models of

¹⁴ For Christian protest at the dawn of modernity, see, e.g., Bartolomé de Las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, trans. Stafford Poole, C.M., foreword by Martin E. Marty (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1992) and Enrique Dussel, “Anti-Cartesian Meditations: On the Origin of the Philosophical Anti-Discourse of Modernity,” trans. George Ciccariello-Maher, article #412 (2008): <http://enriquedussel.com/philosophy.html>, and Cedric Robinson, *A Philosophical Anthropology of Marxism*. Standpoint epistemology and politics tend to be at work with regard to the search for perfect people, but for a critical, nuanced view, see Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000) and Boaventura de Sousa Santos (ed.), *Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies* (London, UK: Verso, 2008). Cf. also, Lewis R. Gordon, “Esquisse d’une critique monstrueuse de la raison postcoloniale,” trans. Sonya Dayan-Hezbrun, *Tumultes*, numéro 37 (October 2011): 165–183.

¹⁵ On this matter, cf. Lewis R. Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiracism* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities International Press, 1995), chapter 16, “Exoticism: Antiracism Under the Guise of Love,” pp. 117–123 and Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

the latter and the demonic that of the former, such routes are welcoming, perhaps, only to the perverse.

The demonic route offers the structural trap of illicit appearance. The exotic one, in effect, that of being angels, promises rude awakenings when attempted as practice. When one expects angels and gods and ends up meeting human beings, disappointment could easily collapse into rage—specifically narcissistic rage—since, in the end, imagining people in such terms could only be projection. Where that is the case, as Sara Ahmed (2004) among others have shown, it is the logic of narcissism at work. In fact, as Fanon (1967, 179) has also shown, the demonic is also a narcissistic performance but in the form of a projected threat through which the ideal self is able to shine. With the dark demonic exemplars on one hand, and the angelic ones on the other, they are two sides of the same desire for the ideal national self. That such a self receives much investment means it will not crumble lightly, and as it defends itself, it, in effect, regards itself victimised by efforts of disintegration, and it is unlikely that neither the present nor the future would be welcome temporal considerations for those whom they regard as the source of such a threat.

So, we come to an important challenge of any group facing structural dehumanisation. One strain of logic claims this to be a situation of being The Other. Such a position doesn't hold, however, since to be The Other, one must at least be a human being, and although one may be a human being in reality, it doesn't follow that one is perceived as such, especially by those controlling the conditions of legal appearance. As Fanon states, "Though Sartre's speculations on the existence of The Other may be correct...their application to a black consciousness proves fallacious. That is because the white man is not only The Other but also the master, whether real or imaginary" (1967, 138). Making this matter worse is one of two conditions of right.

Recall those premised on settler society assert the supposed rightness of their society and their place in it. For those under the heels of settler society, their right place suffered displacement and they are left with the options of either maintained injustice or the search for justice in a reconstituted future. There is no reconciliation of these two conceptions of concrete justice.¹⁶ One conception depends on the maintained inequality of indigenous and First peoples as indigenous and First peoples, for if they were to abandon that status, to become bodies that no longer signify indigeneity or firstness, there is the avowed promise of full membership.¹⁷ The indigenous and First peoples then face the question of complicity in their continued social and political inequality or the transformation of that relationship through changing the social world of maintained inequality.¹⁸ That, however, would mean to appear where they were supposedly not to appear. Put differently, that would mean violating the sphere of appearance, to be, in effect, “violent.”

This violence is, however, one of equality, and thus there is a paradox here. The modern world, after all, has offered equality as one of its

¹⁶ See Frantz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre*, préface de Jean-Paul Sartre (Paris: François Maspero éditeur S.A.R.L./ Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1991; originally 1961), in English as *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington, with a preface by Jean-Paul Sartre (New York: Grove Press, 1963), and for discussion see Lewis R. Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man*, chapter 4, pp. 67–84, and cf. also Lewis R. Gordon, “Phenomenology of Biko’s Black Consciousness,” in Amanda Alexander, Nigel Gibson, and Andile Mngxitama (eds.), *Biko Lives! Contestations and Conversations* (New York: Palgrave, 2008), pp. 83–93.

¹⁷ I will leave aside here the question of whether this could actually be achieved since the formulation already has the problem of, in effect, making such people’s appearance problematic.

¹⁸ For more discussion through a concrete example of this problem—namely, its unfolding in U.S. Native American politics—see Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty*, especially chapters 5 and 6, pp. 123–216.

values. The problem is that it is paradoxically an unequal equality. Equalising equality requires the transformation of social location, which means changing the relations by which human beings are ordered in a society. It means going through the decolonisation of the social world, which is, basically, to go through the painful process of radical change. Is this possible?

Some Concluding Considerations

One of the ways by which indigenous and First peoples are made into ghosts is through a failure to see them as agents of contemporary society and the modern world. There is no instance of such people in any quarter of the world without any contact with modern economies and ways of life—unless one continues to subscribe to notions of “lost tribes.” One could imagine the scene: cutting through the bush, finding a remote area of the outback, or perhaps climbing slippery peaks, to discover a group of dazed people, perhaps sitting round a fire. “Who are you?” asks our explorer. “Don’t know,” the people respond. “We’re lost ...”

The search for people who got it right, for people of innocence, is also a search for purity (Monohan 2011; Gordon 2013). Supposedly unadulterated by the present, they remain “noble” and “pure.”¹⁹ Anxieties and fears of impurity have often taken the form of a battle against mixture. We are familiar with attacks on biological mixture, but fear of the hybrid, the mixed, takes other forms as well. By making sure certain people stay in the past and cannot inhabit the future enables the logic of unadulteration. The problem, however, is that

¹⁹ See Trouillot, *Global Transformations*, chapter 1, “Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness,” pp. 7–28; for critical discussion, cf. also Jane Anna Gordon, *Creolizing Political Theory: Reading Rousseau through Fanon* (New York: Fordham University Press, forthcoming 2014).

human beings are always in relation to each other, which means that acts of separation are often done through the performative contradiction of connections; every effort to force purity requires contact, which establishes not only mixture (contamination) but also new sets of relations that change those who attempted to prevent them. Put differently, mixtures occur at every level of cultural life, even in the logic of its absence. More radical forms of mixture result in creolisation, where what actually lives in the present and reaches to the future are not supposedly authentically separate purities but something that transcends them.²⁰ The logic of purity imposes on this creolisation a normative purity that makes the lived reality of such societies one of constant self-disavowal. At the biological and cultural level, indigenous and First peoples are aware of this—the extent to which nearly all live a doubled existence today of genetic ancestry both local and abroad, and cultural ancestry from levels of language and names of similar kind to the basic movement of the body in time.²¹ Think today of how strange it is to see the way people once *moved* as we see motion pictures from the past, whether directed or simply documented. The clue this story suggests is one of no small relation being changed without adjustments, and that if these are sufficiently accelerated, they could be the equivalent of a cultural chain reaction.

If I am correct that all human beings are ultimately part of the *present* condition of our species, then these changes must follow the logic of technological, geographical, and temporal compression that are

²⁰ See Monahan, *The Creolizing Subject*, chapter 6, “The Politics of Purity: Colonialism, Reason, and Modernity,” pp. 136–182, and Jane Anna Gordon, *Creolizing Political Theory*, chapter 5, “Thinking Through Creolization.”

²¹ Cf. Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty*, chapter 6, “Indigenous Sovereignty versus Colonial Time at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century,” pp. 171–216, and Nakata, *Disciplining the Savages, Savaging the Disciplines*, chapter 7, “Disciplining and Regulating the Body,” pp. 129–154.

features of twenty-first-century life. Everything, in other words, is moving faster and everywhere is getting closer. We could call this the compression of time and space, or to be more culturally specific—temporality and geographical reach. The result is a world that is getting smaller as our species gets numerically larger—7 billion to date. Having so many human beings on a decreasing terrain means that human relations are now living through a radical upheaval that is nothing short of radical.²² What this means is that *everyone* must change to adapt to a world whose geophysical and environmental conditions will not obey the logic by which our various identities were formed. In other words, we are facing a transformation of the human being as each of us has understood ourselves to be, where only our formal capacity to question our condition as a closed one may be what is left, as we discover how much is no longer sustainable as we face the unknown. For indigenous and First peoples, then, the question of what it means to face the next epoch becomes one of challenging the categories that governed living in the current one. There is, then, indeed much to be done.

²² For some considerations on these changes, see Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty*, “Conclusion: The Third Space of Sovereignty,” pp. 217–230; Nakata, *ibid*; Nalini Persram (ed.), *Postcolonialism and Political Theory* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007); Boaventura de Sosa, “Globalizations,” *Theory Culture Society* 23, nos. 2 and 3 (2006): 393–399; Lewis R. Gordon, “Labor, Migration, and Race: Toward a Secular Model of Citizenship,” *Journal of Contemporary Thought* 32 (Winter 2010): 157–165; Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*, “Afterword: ‘Freedom to Choose and the “Decolonial Option / Notes toward Communal Futures,” pp. 295–336; and “On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory, and Re-Imprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of *Désêtre*: Black Studies toward the Human Project,” in Lewis R. Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon (eds.), *Not Only the Master’s Tools: African-American Studies in Theory and Practice* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), pp. 85–106.

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