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## The Spiders of Truth

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Working out the logic of ethnic and racial conflict may be aided by a time-honored discursive form, the parable. Let us imagine an American high school biology teacher named Mr. K. Shortly after the popular festival known as Halloween (when children in costumes go door-to-door to get candy), Mr. K's advanced biology class is doing the part of the curriculum that focuses on poisonous arachnids. Mr. K keeps a small menagerie of creatures in his garage for instructional purposes, including a couple of black widows and brown recluses. Over the years, he has found that allowing the students to see the real thing is a very good way to teach them how to identify and avoid certain kinds of spiders, and it makes the material much more relevant and fun for them.

One bright morning Mr. K is rummaging around for a means to transport his creatures to school. As he steps out into his garage he notices a shoe-sized sturdy cardboard box that his wife recently discarded. It had been used as a container for a large quantity of Halloween candy bars. It has the logo of a popular candy bar prominently displayed on its top and sides. He takes the box, creates separate compartments for each creature, and creates cellophane "windows" in the box through which to view the stars of the show. He carefully loads his pets into their temporary home and is off to school.

Mr. K walks into his morning class and sits the box on the table at the front of the room. He explains to the class that these are real, living, and potentially very dangerous specimens. He tells the class that he wants two people at a time to come to the front to have a look. At that moment the principal appears at the classroom door and asks Mr. K to step outside. The principal informs Mr. K that he has an important phone call. Mr. K sticks his head back into the classroom and tells the students that he will be right back and, of course, not to bother the spiders.

Excited conversation breaks out around the room. A moment later, Joe, a football player who has been down in the whirlpool nursing a bruised thigh from the last game, comes late to the class. At first no one notices Joe. Bob, one of Joe's buddies, is sitting in the front row talking with a girl. Joe, being happy-go-lucky and a bit of a cut-up, sees the candy bar box and immediately starts to reach into it while winking at Bob. Bob yells, the girl gasps, and Bob tackles Joe just in the nick of time, saving him from a nasty bite. Joe is very upset with Bob. Just then Mr. K reenters the room yelling, and is very relieved to discover that Bob not only saved Joe, but his job and probably a lawsuit against the school.

Now, is Bob's violent act morally justified? Insofar as Bob truly believed that Joe was about to stick his hand into a box full of poisonous creatures, it seems that his actions are justifiable. In fact, to knowingly watch someone make such a mistake without taking action to stop him or her would be very immoral. It was more than just pleasant etiquette on Bob's part. It was his *duty* to tackle Joe. By Bob's action, Joe was saved from a nasty bite, and maybe even his life was saved.

Now, up the ante from mere mortal suffering and death to eternal damnation. If a religious person ("A") *truly, really*, absolutely, and positively believes that someone ("B") is making a mistake that will cost him his eternal soul, and if person "A" does nothing to alter "B's" behavior, then "A," in his indifference, has perpetrated a terrible sin, one that could even cost him his soul too. Thus, violence, far beyond tackling, can be justified. The stakes are absolute (nothing less than the essence of the self—the soul). Under such conditions (definitions), the actions which are taken are beyond the pale, "out of principle." As such, no act can be too harsh, too violent. And once "A" starts killing (converting) people from group "B" (identifiable by a different cosmological set of parameters for the, of the, self), it is highly unlikely that people in group "B" will appreciate the "help." If people in group "B" really and truly do *not* believe as group "A" people do, then the situation is bound for endless conflict. Hence, the many ethnic clashes around the world in Pakistan/India, the Middle East, the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Ireland, and so on.

"Race," which is often a part of ethnic identity, is a semiotic marker, and is usually accorded moral (absolute) significance, *because* it signals the other. Minimally, the other ethnic group is seen as "other." More intensely, the other group may be an eternal enemy. Principle breeds intolerance. However, even totalitarian systems, where everything exists by definition (like mathematics), exhibit great variety among themselves and also internal provisionalism (Merleau-Ponty, 1973; Kuhn, 1962). Over time, religious (qua divine) and natural laws change. Thus, appreciating the world synaesthetically may avoid privileging one reality over all others. Integral awareness allows one to see the others in the one.

Synaesthesia is not transcendental, in the Platonic, other-worldly sense. Synaesthesia is not ultimate perspective or judgment, but rather, it is the process of

appresentiating integral differentiation. One might say that the synaesthetical awaring of comparative civilizations is an awaring of comparative validities, and the realization that one has no way to rank-order them in terms of referential or epistemic force without capriciously assigning privilege to one set of criteria over all others. To choose one set of criteria (or world) over others presupposes a metacriterial authority, *ad infinitum*. Like Ludwig Wittgenstein (1971), Jean Gebser (1985) argued that the most that can be said of a world-structure, as such, is that it is, or is not, vital (surviving by its own criteria). Each world, by definition, manifests different rules and criteria. The deconstructive tactic of reversing the duality of margin and center, for instance, presumes a modern power hierarchy that is not universal. Championing the "marginal voice" is basically Western Enlightenment liberal pluralism. Very few cultures value equality. Most are very ethnocentric.

### RELATIVE "KNOWLEDGE"? JAZZ AND AMPHIBIAN LOGIC

The mistake of arrogance made by Freud, Heidegger, and many others has been to presume that their conceptualizations of world-consciousness are absolutely generalizable (definitive). Given the struggles evident between various worlds, perhaps the most generalizable claim to be made is that most people make claims that they presume to be universally true.<sup>1</sup> The study of comparative civilizations has revealed fundamental differences in styles of awaring. The unique qualities of each modality are seen through other modalities.

For instance, very often when people travel abroad into a very different world, they come to see and learn more about their home culture (themselves) than the new one. The first realization may be that one's home culture is not the only one. But most systems, especially the more explicitly structured ones with well-defined feedback loops (written laws and transgressions), attempt to outtrope relativity, which would severely challenge their exclusive claim to validity (their onto-political might) by deploying the most formidable (even absolute) barriers to choice imaginable, such as threats of eternal torture or oblivion. Such barriers dissolve in the aperspectival world.

Nor is the experience of difference limited to binary opposition. Each different experience enables a different, "new" verition (not "revelation" because nothing is speculatively presumed to be hidden, but instead something is made) about one's home culture (and the other), with implicate change in the fluxing clouds we call "the" self and "the" other. However, unchecked perspectivism is not only a closed system (mind), but, as such, it inflates to totality via blind ignorance and arrogance. Totalitarians believe themselves to be exclusively and absolutely "right." The utterly blind prejudice favoring the taken-for-granted home culture is often articulated by the sense that the other, "strange" culture is somehow less "natural," less "real," or "valid." Such a sensibility is expressed as ethnocentrism, xenophobia, nationalism, and other dangerous re-

sponses to difference, experienced as competition and threat. At the same time, this process has the tendency to deflate the internal arrogance of ignorance which characterizes closed systems (minds) by opening the potential for other, including unsystematic, validities. Modern mental-rational nation-states, which legally define the citizen/noncitizen, generate legal definitions as a veneer of perspectivism added to ancient tribal tendencies. Tribalism is rationalized, not abandoned or surpassed.

### Protean Play

Proteus is the name of an ancient Greek water divinity. Proteus had the power to change its shape at will, to transform. After embracing the revolutionary realization that the world-game is not predetermined (“fixed”), that it is conventional, protean vitality is enabled. Aperspectivity is essentially protean. A good example of fluid “boundary conditions” is jazz, which presumes the structure of instruments, music, and coordination, while playing off of these stabilities (Gilroy, 1993; West, 1993; also see Chapter 2). Jazz is integral music. Difference need not be antagonistic. While fascists (like the Bolsheviks and Nazis) typically ban “discordant” music, without it their order would not be recognizable or “necessary.” To be a “champion,” one needs an opponent, even if one has to be invented. A jazz ensemble has no opponents.

One of the first college basketball games ever played between a white and a black team highlights the problem of determining a systematic norm. Early in the game, the black players brought the ball down the court. A black player dribbled behind his back, between his legs, and spun around. This was perceived by the white players, who never did this during games, as antagonistic taunting—not playing “right.” A fight broke out which ended the game. Although technically no rules had been broken, improvisation of that kind was not tolerated. The attitude of the white players was perspectival, diacritical.

If appreciated aperspectivally, improvisation is pleasing because it is unpredictable (even to the players/musicians/communicators). It opens to creativity. It can be seen as an invitation to create and improvise. This may help explain the excitement that usually receives a new technology like the automobile and the Internet. The fervent and explosive interest in the Internet, which is not systematically structured, comes from its aperspectival diffusion. The Internet has no hierarchical or pyramidal structure. It (not counting servers) does not (yet) pay “dividends,” which divide profits and investors from producers and consumers. Nor is it a closed modern system dedicated to feedback, or “cyber-space,” as William Gibson conceived of it in his 1984 science fiction novel *Neuromancer*. Instead, it is a shared autonomy (equality of expressed difference). It is a manifestation of aperspectivity, where no *one* owns or controls it, traditional identity cues are superfluous, clock time integrates with other forms of time, and the sense of “being somewhere” “together” in the same (but also different) room, as John Perry Barlow (1995) puts it, is both real and not real.

The Internet manifests *integrum*. The Internet changes by the second, and more importantly, many who constitute it understand this and celebrate its mutability, its amphibian logic.

Being comfortable with uncertainty and difference is a sign of aperspectival awaring. Such comfort often depends upon the dissolution of conventional identity. Anonymity is liberating. This modality is very different from Hegelian systematic destiny (even when it presumes it). As one famous film actor/director (Orson Welles) said about creativity, if he knew what he was doing, then he would not be creating something new. Instead, he would be too systematic, formulaic, repetitive, predictable. Artistic life is a constant experimenting without the benefit of prophecy—prediction. Sometimes experiments “fail”; that is why they must be made.

Potent(ial) is the nondistinct, indeterminate origin of empowerment. If something is not readily predictable, then, and only then, is it significant. Where/when prediction is successful, one has located redundancy, powerlessness, a sense of nihilism (surveillance of the future). Why try, it makes no difference? The game is rigged. Tautology allows no play.

Despite the best efforts of some who would know us better than we know ourselves, life is open. It is a continual experiment. It is not always positive or happy. That is why it is still worth living. But the ever-present origin of aperspectivity, like a blank slate, makes it possible (is a necessary condition for) for various arrangements to emerge. This is why any expressive process that is vital, like science, cannot be predicted. Scientists cannot tell us when, where, how, by whom, or what breakthroughs will be. Because it is a surprise, discovery (not tautological definition) is exciting. When the creative activity that is science is strictly controlled, as in the former Soviet Union, there is little invention or discovery. The same used to be true of the restrictive authoritarian system of knowledge in Japan. Science, as Husserl (1962) argued, is part of life too.

“Breakthroughs” (like taking a “break” or having a “breakdown”) violate the system (paradigm), crossing the liminal boundary between nothing and something, absence and presence. As Linus Pauling (the only American to win two Nobel Prizes, in 1954 and 1962) used to say, “I work in the dark.”

### DANCING ZOMBIES

Potency is dynamism. Whether human civilizations began as accidents or not, their maintenance is not accidental. Human behavior is a constant striving against entropy; creativity includes making predictions which we then “outrun,” and laws that we break. The hump in the bell curve moves. We try harder.

Dead materialism is not evinced by all worlds. It is the modern consciousness, with its dedication to a materialistic, metaphysical faith, that exhibits a paternal power-drive which conceives a world as essentially dead stuff that can be endlessly dissected and reconstituted into any use-form desired. Animals, and less-

than-human slaves, suffer from this attitude. The idea that matter is "ripe" for indiscriminate manipulation betrays a particularly modern patriarchal attitude.

"Matter," "mutter," "mother" all share a common Sanskrit root *mat*, which became Greek *mater* and *meter* (both meaning "great mother" as in Demeter). Unlike matter, however, humans continually *make* plans and predictions (project complex future horizons), read them, and then decide whether or not they will attempt to make them happen or deny them viability (abandon them). Today, species do not survive solely because they are adaptable or the "fittest." They survive if humans *want them to*. The systatic process is one of a continual integrating function of *human* existence. For instance, on the basis of all past experience we predict that future population growth will be disastrous. We don't want a disaster so we take action to falsify our own prediction. Dead matter cannot do this. In the modern world, matter is truly disinterested.

Humans are not merely in motion but in action. We can therefore "outrun" predictions by variance. We can change the rules, abandon the system precisely because we are not exclusively systematic creatures. So it always was, even as leaders went to hear the Oracle at Delphi. They did so because they believed that they could use the information in order to make plans, not because planning was irrelevant in the face of inevitability. If determinism had been the faith of the classical Greeks, telling the future would have been an utterly senseless activity. It would not have existed. The attempt to predict is a proactive form of agency. *Because of agency*, people want to hear predictions (oracles have a rationale) and *adjust* accordingly. The irony is that the cultures that are most obsessed with seeing the future are also most active in making it fit their vision.

By contrast, deterministic fatalists postulate a dead world that is lethargic and unadventurous, totally systematized, and consequently, predictable; so much so that prediction is irrelevant. It is no accident that the German word *Tot*, as in "totalitarian," means "dead." Prophetic (visionary) cultures move and make. This is why Soren Kierkegaard (1941) called Hegel's grand systematics a splendid and solid edifice unfit for human habitation, a tomb of pure logic. According to Hegelianism, there are "reasons" why things happen, not emotions. It does not matter what you *want*. Often visionary, prophetic ideologues (who personify hypertrophic emotionalism, reveling in pageantry and political theater) exploit the same rhetorical tactic as operational definers. They evoke "destiny" as a way to inoculate their desires from criticism. Adolf Hitler decreed that the Third Reich would last a millennium, not because he wanted it to happen (besides, he identified himself with the Reich) but because the Aryan race was "naturally" superior to all others, and the laws of nature are said to be utterly unbreakable. Likewise, the Communist revolution is inevitable because the reason of history (not human consciousness) unfolds with "iron necessity" (Marx, 1967: 8). History will change minds, not the other way around. Unfortunately, the followers of Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, Mao, and many modern "organizational men" have not caught the drift of Kierkegaard's insight into the prison-house of systems thinking.

Unlike molecules, humans have minds to change. They can anticipate and interpret what the method is "trying to get at." That is why researchers of humans must sometimes exercise their ingenuity to trick their subjects by using placebos, confederate respondents, redundant questions, and other deceptive techniques such as the fake shocks utilized in the famous experiments about obedience conducted by Stanley Milgram (1974). Humans are temporal creatures (where time happens). Death is timeless. Civilizations that lose vitality are "lost." Vital, open processes continually integrate predictions into plans; the past into the future. Predictions are always made in the past, while "history" is yet to be enacted in the future, and histories written after that. And this integrating process is continually "now," which is never "the same."

As Jean-Paul Sartre (1960) said, humans are condemned to freedom. We cannot avoid the responsibility of our actions *or failures to act*; our jazz. We make our music and endure it. Many "historic figures" have noted that the absence of behavior can be more important than its presence (Niebuhr, 1976). History is the story of changing architectures, fashions, paradigms, languages, boundaries, philosophies, cosmologies, worlds. But it is a story with no meta-narrative, no transcending rhyme or reason. Communicating is an effort, an expressed potent(ial). A steady-state, self-correcting system yields no history. Humans *make* history and vice versa, which means that (unless one posits a superordinate, divine plan or inescapable natural system) humanity is a process of self-production without a goal. Consequently, it is not a simple, two-valued dialectic, nor is there a final synthesis. The aperspectival science of genetic engineering demonstrates that even human "nature" is subject to human evaluation. Human nature is no longer perceived as a determinate and unalterable coherence (a perspective), and neither is "material" nature, as quantum physics has demonstrated.

### SIGHT-BASED MODERN TRIBALISM

Despite the manifest unfolding of aperspectivity in the sciences, the arts, and "letters," currently the dominant structure that characterizes "the West" is the mental-rational perspectival manifold. Modernity is synonymous with perspectivism. Racism is essentially perspectival. No matter what colors are involved, racism posits an intolerantly exclusive identity. Its origin can be found in tribal boundary conditions which almost always lead to violent confrontation.

According to perspectivism, only matter, as extension in space, is real. Therefore, only statements about extension can be valid. In the modern world, only things which can be seen (material surfaces) and measured "count" (are valid). By definition, empiricists cannot do historical research, or make predictions or discoveries, because such actions are more than simply reactions to "real-time" stimuli. Furthermore, such actions involve the invisible. Materialism does not recognize magical identity and mythical imagination/emotion as "real." As Marshall McLuhan (1967) noted, the modern preaches that

one should believe none of what one hears and only half of what one sees. "Typographic man" is visually oriented, which expresses an obsession with lineality (but is not restricted to that form alone but to space generally) in opposition to Jacques Derrida's concept of phonocentrism (Kramer, 1988, 1993b; Derrida, 1974).

Unlike Derrida, who argues that modernity is marked by phonocentrism (the "Voice of Being"), I argue that modernity (at least since the advent of Athena's concept of knowledge and the well-aimed lance) is obsessed with visual presence (visiocentrism) and absolute truth ("constants"). The modern Athenian orientation is evident in such processes as surveil-lance and ba-lance. Already in 1913, in the book *Ideen I*, Edmund Husserl described as "naive" the thesis of the existence of the lifeworld as being exclusively restricted to concrete extension. In the 1930s and 1940s, Gebser more specifically traced the modern lifeworld to the emergent dominance of a spatializing attitude and its consequent perspectivism.<sup>2</sup> Building on these ideas about the ideological force (ontopolitical inertia) of the "natural attitude," the current author calls the modern (neo-Aristotelian) emphasis on a material/spatial metaphysic and its correlated visual epistemology "visiocentrism."

Visiocentrism is an epistemological prejudice that stresses spatial orientation and sight (the category known as "empirical" observation). Physical surfaces, such as phenotype, are all that "matter." By describing this metaphysical prejudice, one can understand not only the tremendous power that faith in physical observation entails, but also the birth of phenotypical identity. The idea of "surface" (which is an ideational category) phenomena is a manifestation of the natural attitude of the perspectival consciousness structure. The modern is pre-occupied with correlating surface color with behaviors. What difference does it make?

In the modern world seeing is believing. Empirical observation (though premised upon the direct *personal* perception of a free, nondogmatic subject—romantic individualism) is the only valid path to reality qua truth. Being "straight" is being "true," "honest." But seeing is also perspectival. It does not admit the validity of the not seen, such as meaning, context, and history. That which is "outside" of the cone of vision does not "count." Thus, observation is distorting. As any sleight-of-hand artist knows, the more exclusively we trust our eyes, the more we are tricked. We confuse perception with stimulation, and both with knowledge.

In the hypertrophic modern world of screens and images, what people look like is more important than their quality of thinking. The televised political theater of today is evidence enough. Instead, the label "genius" is increasingly applied to the slick management of image, the "shadow part of politics," and a "knack," as Socrates called it in Plato's *Gorgias*, which has become centralized and professionalized. According to visiocentrism, the "internal process" of thinking is defined as nonexistent. Hence, the absurd antagonism between the brain and the mind. Information (no matter in what quantities) is not the same

as knowledge. The potential for a third sophistic, a new darkness caused by the snow blindness of the screen, is not impossible (Kramer, 1993a).

In the modern world, inequity is rationalized via naturalization expressed as Spencerian eugenics and "market forces." The autonomous systematics of "free" markets are preached to others by those who control them. Such market forces thrive on sexual and military/vigilante imagery. However, as Cornel West (1993) has noted, it is disingenuous to chant the mantra that market mechanisms can do no wrong in the face of chronic underemployment and slavery, which, according to The Anti-Slavery Society for the Protection of Human Rights in London, is still a thriving institution. Over 200 million people worldwide are suffering under various forms of servitude including debt bondage, serfdom qua "contract labor," sham adoptions, concubinage, and chattel slavery (50 million of whom are children).<sup>3</sup> Many in servitude are identified by their phenotype, which is a convenient way to avoid mixing and mingling with the master class, and/or escaping and "blending in."

Stark empiricism leads to nihilism because meaning is not a thing. Discourse is seen as discord. Debate about action is preempted (deemed irrelevant) because values are not things and agency is reduced to stimulus/response. Logically, nothing should move. So long as those who are movers and shakers can opiate everyone else with this ideology, resistance is defused by the hegemony of "objective" determinism. We bind ourselves with chains of causation and systematic surveillance and behavior modification ("corrections" or "re-habit"). Amnesia is encouraged. There should be no history, for that would undermine the apodictic force and eternal inertia of the system. Contingency must be exterminated, transcended. If the system gives itself as eternal, then we forget that we make it and, therefore, can change it. This amnesia is the essence of disenfranchisement, disempowerment. Empowerment presumes the potential to make a difference, to discourse and play.

The greatest threat to community is deterministic (redundant, automated) nihilism. This is the death of hope, the closure of the future. This is the horrendous message of conservative social "science" (like Herrnstein and Murray's *The Bell Curve*) that tells minorities that they have been scientifically determined to be doomed to failure. So much for family, or any other kind of values. At the moment of its apodictic triumph, human science reduces (explains) its subject matter out of existence.

However, unlike Newton's idea of the conservation of energy requiring an "outside" force (such as "the market") to make us move, there is phenomenologically evinced "internal forces" that manifest proaction. Proaction is not conservative or reactionary (to "external" stimuli), but creative. Internally motivated movement is usually goal-establishing, with an idea to produce a difference in the not yet present future. Action and reaction are differentiated by the presence or absence of consciousness. So long as we allow ourselves to be defined as piles of reactionary atoms, we surrender to existentialism, self-loathing, and despair. Systematized complexes of causal chains do not escape

dead empiricism. In fact, in its attempt to conceptualize the genuine reciprocity of communications, systematization inadvertently overrationalizes by introducing "feedback" as a solipsistic control mechanism. Again the model is the zero sum conservation of energy. Creativity dissolves this barrier to change.

Systasis integrates time with static system. This involves liberation from systematics. System exhibits dynamism only according to internal criteria. Flow charts do not flow. They exempt themselves from their own logic. But as soon as dynamism becomes reflexive and disrupts criteria, the system is breached ("fails"). Life is creative, revolutionary. Systasis recognizes the momentary validity of systems in time. Systasis is morphological, meaning interested in transformation as much as reactionary efforts toward equilibrium, control, conservation. Systasis is not metamorphical, because the Platonic/Cartesian concept of a two-world system of transcendental rules, and resendent things that follow the rules, is seen as pure metaphysical speculation. Systasis is a recognition of relativity and dynamism. Systasis does not deny, or deconstruct the validity of perspectival system, but temporalizes it. The dualistic perspective is no longer seen to be totalitarian (eternally and exclusively valid).

Dynamism continually reintegrates systematic structures while affirming their validity as only momentary. Each sentence is a new invention. Even the rules change. Communication is play. Claude Levi-Strauss's (1978) and Noam Chomsky's (1968) genetically grounded prison of universal grammar is swallowed by Kronos.

### SYSTEMATIC RACISM

For many, race is a system which precludes the potential for change. However, the "system" of race is continually changing. But, it is not necessarily moving toward a goal in teleological fashion. In other words, race relations are not necessarily "progressing" or "getting better." However, we can be proactive rather than reactive. We can establish a goal and work toward it. Contingent though it is, we can set valued direction.

Relationships between things are not fixed material things. And since the meaning of "things" is dependent on their mutual vitality, things themselves are mutable. Despite every systematizing effort, time, as change (including human agency), is not "arrested." It is not a criminal, but instead it is the essence of potential. Time is the necessary condition for inessential contingency. Empiricism argues for a steady-state universe. Empirical systematics take many forms such as the modern nation-state with its self-maintenance via internal surveillance (feedback or "cybernetics"). Under such conditions, "progress" becomes a permanent condition guided by functional rules and laws.

The syncretic awaring of the continually integrating process of the integrum enables one to appreciate the fact that writing about race relations changes race relations so that what one was referentially describing is no longer the case. Take H. B. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as an example. The description inval-

idates itself via time. The universe is not a steady state. Humans are creative agents, not merely unconscious responders to stimuli. Humans create stimuli. One could observe the entire prehistory of humanity and not be able to infer from it space flight. Quite the contrary, after observing human behavior from say 40,000 B.C. to 1000 A.D., it would be more rational (presuming a linear steady-state universe) to predict that humanity would never fly because in fact it *never* had flown. But, aperspectivity, which acknowledges indeterminacy and discontinuity, presumes the unpredictability of mutational change, discovery, invention (genuine creativity, free association, and free dissociation).

Aperspectival systasis does not accept only the perspectival mode of givenness to be the whole story. Nevertheless, the abandonment of race by biologists does not affect the everyday interactions of most people. Racism is real. The claim that the "dilemma of race" (in America at least) can be resolved by learning history, or by generating a "prophetic vision" or plan that will generate leaders, and soon, begs the question of which history (that of Malcolm X or Thomas Sowell) and which unifying vision/identity? Both solutions presume criteria that are not stipulated and categories that are presumed but ill-defined. For instance, West (1993) wants to avoid essential statements in favor of a "prophetic framework" from which to launch ethical evaluations of black behavior! His (1993: 43, 44) attempt to avoid categorical claims collapses almost immediately when he discusses black style, specificity, "mature" black identity, "dominant modes of expression," humanity, and ethics, thus:

[typically, wrongly] . . . blackness is understood to be either the perennial possibility of white supremacist abuse or the distinct styles and dominant modes of expression found in black cultures and communities. These styles and modes are diverse—yet they do stand apart from those of other groups. . . . Mature black identity results from an acknowledgement of the specific black responses to white supremacist abuses and a moral assessment of these responses such that the humanity of black people does not rest on deifying or demonizing others.

Identity is dependent upon difference. Insofar as we minimize difference, we must be prepared to surrender our identities, to supersede the focus of the perspectival modern world, the individual self. Writers on race are fundamentally modernists. They must presume the category "race" in order to begin. And as they attempt to distance themselves from the charge of being racist, they are caught in the contradiction of denying the validity of the concept they are discussing. It is similar to the quagmire of being an atheist. Being an atheist is a logical impossibility because one cannot demonstrate the nonexistence of something.

A good example is Tony Brown (1995), who likes to say that he has no interest in people who go around calling themselves "white" or "black." But he does this after expending great energy talking about how "blacks" own no hotels, how many "blacks" there are and how much "they" collectively earn

annually, how "blacks" could finance programs in their "own communities," and how no instrument designed to measure "white" cultural literacy can accurately assess a "black" youth's abilities, and so on.

Another confusion that permeates the vast race literature is the call for an abandonment of selfish individualism (hedonism) in favor of personal responsibility and a moral reasoning based on the Protestant ethic. This has been preached by King, West, Farrakhan, X, Brown, and others. Of course, responsibility presumes the modern self as autonomous from institutional and orthodox determinisms. This ethical call away from selfishness toward individualism is senseless. What is required is a clarification of dimensionality, and identity.

So we are faced with several kinds of spaces, times, histories, and selves. Magical and mythical dimensions must not be ignored because they are not extinct, but actively constitute what the surface color means, which (despite rationalizing objectivation) is presumed by mental-rational organization. Racism is more than simply acknowledging phenotypical differences. Nor is it adequately appreciated by reducing it to "mental illness." Racism involves magic and mythic attitudes that identify phenotypical characteristics with all sorts of emotional "associations," numeric correlations, and magical attributions. Association is in quotes because to associate presumes a separation. But the magic dimension of race perceives no separation between color and qualities. For instance, Blacks *are* lazy. Whites *are* cruel and unjust. When I see a black man I see a lazy man. This is magic identity. There is no thinking involved, no "about." Perspectival thinking involves strategy, rationalization of, and correlation with.

Race is a reaction; a communication. Race is an interpretation and therefore an expression. "Race" is not a physical thing but a cultural artifact, an interpretation. It is ideational in that everyone, regardless of color, has "race." Physical differences alone do not constitute "race." Physical difference is not a sufficient condition for racial identity. Physical difference may not even be a necessary condition as in the case of Jewish identity. However, for those who do not reflect upon their own prejudices, race is an aspect of passive synthesis, and is therefore believed to be "physical," "real," "natural," and as such a legitimator of all sorts of contingent comparisons and "correlations." In other words, the innate conditions of color and facial features are always already meaningful; self-evident.

Physical features are meaningful and are real. Like it or not, the color of Michael Jackson's skin "matters" to many people. For those suffering from what Husserl (1962) called the "naive natural attitude," (from the illness of metaphysical prejudice), the word "matter" indicates or means reality. Jackson's skin tone really means something about his politics, his economics, his character, even, and especially, his identity. Because as Husserl (1962) demonstrated, experience is always experience of meaning, physical features are experienced as an expression that is quite unintentional and as such, prereflectively blind. Ironically, our preoccupation with what we see (our visiocentrism)

exposes a profound blindness (Kramer, 1993a). However, simply because one's color or type of hair is not intentional it does not follow that the myriad of interpretations and associations attached to it are "natural" or inescapable.

From the perspective of a phenomenologist, "naturalism" is a metaphysical proposition and as such is considered speculative. Nevertheless, the ideological (meaning unreflecting naive attitude) danger of naturalism is that it inoculates its propositions from reflection. What is "natural" is "self-evident." What is natural is Reality, and what use is it to argue with reality? While color and other physical features are visiocentrically powerful (even "natural"), interpretations of them are not—they are cultural (Kramer, 1992). But interpretations, though relatively mutable, inconsistent, and contingent, are no less real. In fact, the metaphysical doctrine of empiricism itself is an interpretation. Therefore, race is real; just as real as physical features. But importantly, for the unreflective person, they (meaning the physical and the ideological) are identical; race is a *physical thing* and therefore a legitimate, meaning "objective," point of reference for evaluating the quality of a person. In the cultural world, which is the human world, race is real. Regardless of one's metaphysical preferences, racism, and therefore race, exists.

Because race is a mutable interpretation, it is an expression. Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967) have argued that one cannot not communicate. This is in accord with Husserl's (1962) claim that perception *is* meaning. Whether we like it or not, our physical features communicate. One does not experience discrete stimuli of a particular visual frequency *and then* interpret that spectral array as "moving" and as "coming toward me" and as "a person," and then as a type of person, and so on. Rather than seeing a "blob" of "color," because I am a cultural being, I *see*, I recognize a "friend" or "stranger," a "black, young, male, scary, swaggering, threatening, menacing human being coming at me." And that seeing is passively synthesized. It happens without conscious reflection, and is given instantly. But as soon as a person can speak in terms of "constituting" reality, and interpretation, a deconstruction occurs. One begins to recognize the contingent nature of reality and at that moment one is enabled to evaluate the consciousness structure that constituted that reality and to become free from it.

Racism is culturally inflected reaction. Perception is identification which involves categorization as part of the constitutive process of awareness. "To observe" means to examine, assess, and survey. It also means to say, comment, and remark. Observation is always already valuative. Race is a categorical interpretation born of the primitive distinction between self and Other. There can be no identity, no meaning/experience, without difference. It is natural that a person have "color" and facial features, that people are different. But the interpretation of what those physical phenomena mean (their quality), even when they are always already constituted as meaningful (even at the preconscious level of passive synthesis), is not natural but cultural. This is evident by the vastly differing interpretations of colors, facial features, and by our ability to reeval-

uate. While all may agree that a person is "black" (presuming that they share the same language which is already a deep bias), few may agree as to what this means.

Because, as Immanuel Kant (1929) demonstrated, consciousness is not passive but active and capable of reflection, interpretations can be reinterpreted, evaluations can be reevaluated, and transvaluated. In short, interpretations can be seen as such (as contingent) and can be evaluated in light of metaphysical and moral criteria which enable one to consciously reject or reinforce them; as Nietzsche (1974) put it, to be "wide awake" and self-reflective about one's "objective" reality. People can change their minds. Despite the pseudoscience of eugenics, race vanishes at the molecular (genetic) level. All DNA is the same color, but this is irrelevant anyway because no one sees the Other's DNA.

Race is a projection. Racial proclamations tell very much more about the person making the proclamation than about the subject described. Correlations of color with sociocultural and psychological traits are even more ephemeral. The correlations social scientists choose to pursue often tell us much more about those scientists than it does about the people they are studying. Multiculturalism is not an ideology or a goal. Multiculturalism is a fact and it has been a defining characteristic of the American experience since before the word "America" was associated with the land masses of the Western hemisphere. Cultural streamlining and global adaptation resulting in a nondistinct amalgam has never existed. Such ideas are figments of the social "scientific" imagination.

## NOTES

1. In all Nietzschean honesty, this is a category statement that can reflexively include itself.
2. All page citations refer to the 1985 translation of *Ursprung und Gegenwart*, which appeared as two volumes in 1949 and 1953. The English title is *The Ever-Present Origin*, translated by Noel Barstad and Algis Mickunas.
3. Slavery has been known throughout history and among peoples of every level of material culture. Slavery is not unique to any particular type of economic system. Experts divide the institution into two types: commercial slave societies, where slaves are used as a primary work force as in the southern United States, and slave-owning societies, where slaves are used principally for personal and domestic use such as concubinage.

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To my three *hidamari*