Four Phases of Subjectivity: A Rhetorical and Phenomenological Analysis of Aimé Césaire And Cahier D’un Retour Au Pays Natal

Chelsea Binnie

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FOUR PHASES OF SUBJECTIVITY: A RHETORICAL AND
PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF AIMÉ CÉSAIRE AND CAHIER D’UN
RETOUR AU PAYS NATAL

A Dissertation
Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

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the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
Chelsea R. Binnie

December 2018
FOUR PHASES OF SUBJECTIVITY: A RHETORICAL AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF AIMÉ CÉSAIRE AND CAHIER D’UN RETOUR AU PAYS NATAL

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ABSTRACT

FOUR PHASES OF SUBJECTIVITY: A RHETORICAL AND
PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF AIMÉ CÉSAIRE AND CAHIER D’UN
RETOUR AU PAYS NATAL

By
Chelsea R. Binnie
December 2018

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Erik A. Garrett

This dissertation project sets out to perform a rhetorical and phenomenological analysis of the subjectivity that Césaire portrays in his epic poem Cahier d’un retour au pays natal, or Notebook of a Return to My Native Land. Césaire published and republished Cahier four times in a 17-year period and the modified accounts of subjectivity presented in the lines of the poem mirrors that of Césaire’s own human subjectivity. Césaire poetically unleashes Cahier and his Négritude project in an effort to shift the geography of reason from its self-appointed European center, to create a liminal space for the totalized and autonomous development of human subjectivity, and to reconceptualize understandings of humanism in an effort to create space for a future that is rich in its particularity—in this case the particularity of human subjectivity. Césaire did not call for a reparation of the past nor a reclamation of the present, but rather offered a
proclamation for a future wherein any conceptualization of the universal would be constituted by the particularity of the human subject as it presents itself to the other and the world. The dissertation project will critically examine the communicative, rhetorical, and phenomenological significance of Césaire’s accounts of human subjectivity in Cahier and his Négritude project as forms of linguistic empowerment aimed squarely at de-centering, shifting, and perhaps expanding the geography of reason so as to create and preserve a liminal space for the totalized and autonomous development of the richness that is found in the particularity of all human subjectivity.
DEDICATION

For Aimé Césaire.

For the ancestors.

For all who have lived and all who ever will live.
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Lastly, thank you to the many friends around the world that have supported and continue to support my intellectual pursuits. Thank you to the Caribbean Philosophical Association (CPA), in general, for creating a space for hours and hours of stimulating intellectual conversation. Thank you to the CPA for supporting my scholarship and introducing me to many intellectual friends and mentors these last several years. More particularly, thank you to Jane and Lewis Gordon for your intellectual friendship and mentorship; thank you to Paget Henry for your friendship, mentorship, and continued support of my research, and thank you to Robin W. Campbell, for continuing to shine so brightly in an otherwise dull world. Thank you, Robin, for bringing me into the nest! Thank you to LaRose T. Parris, H. Alexander Welcome, Jacqueline Martinez, Drucilla Cornell, Oscar Guardiola-Rivera, and Peter Park for your faith in me, for many stimulating hours of conversation, and for all you have taught me over the years. Thank you to the CPA crew, in particular, Emma Maurice, Adrianne Girone, Theodra E. Bane, Ben Curtis, Reese Faust, Dana Miranda, Derefe Chevannes, and Dr. Colena Sesanker, for your support and friendship, for all you have taught me, and for never being afraid to challenge me. Thank you for the many hours we have spent together most simply enjoying the state of being human and for continuing to make the complex process of knowledge acquisition and generation so positively delightful. Thank you to Dr. Arshia Anwer for your friendship and for all of your support and guidance over the course of our masters’ and doctoral studies. Thank you for all you have taught and continue to teach me and for many fond memories of intellectual adventures throughout the years! Thank you to Monale Alemika, Dr. Douglas J. Marshall, and Dr. Celeste Grayson-Seymour for your
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Chapter One — Introduction: Conceptualizing Philosophy of Communicative Experience

Statement of Project

This dissertation project sets out to shed light on the grievous nature and lived experience of colonial subjectivity and critically analyzes Aimé Césaire and the Négritude movement as a form of linguistic empowerment that sought to unmoor its largest oppressing force, namely the colonial system, from the inside out with tools of the oppressor’s own making. It is in this sense and through the force of this linguistic empowerment that Césaire was able to create a liminal space for the autonomy and totality in being of both himself and his counterparts. Négritude, perhaps Césaire’s greatest form of linguistic empowerment, allowed him to preserve the cultural legacy of his compatriots and to shift the geography of reason away from its self-appointed and fastidiously self-perpetuated European center and toward the actualization and recognition of a global conceptualization of human subjectivity in the life world.

The dissertation project will critically examine Césaire’s method of portraying and communicating lived experience as a method through which to create and preserve a liminal space for the particularities of human subjectivity to stand on its own terms. Césaire’s particular manner of communicating lived experience offers powerful alternatives to prescribed, Euro-centric conceptualizations of being in the world with the end goal of shifting the geography of reason so as to perpetuate a future characterized by a totalized human conception of human being in the life world that is firmly grounded in

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1 See Banchetti-Robino and Headley’s *Shifting the Geography of Reason* and the Caribbean Philosophical Association’s Mission Statement (http://www.caribbeanphilosophicalassociation.org) for further explication.
the very particularities that constitute human subjectivity. Césaire’s work matters today because though the historical moment has shifted, the challenges that human society faces have not disappeared and are not removed nor vastly different from those that existed during and characterized Césaire’s own historical moment; rather, they continue to manifest conceptually in the present just through different forms. This dissertation project will critically examine the communicative significance of Césaire’s accounts of human subjectivity that have not only worked to shift the geography of reason but also offer hope for a more constructive and inclusive future that preserves and protects a liminal space for the autonomous and total being of all human subjects in the life world.

**Conceptualizing Philosophy of Communicative Experience**

The dissertation project will adhere to a rhetorical and phenomenological framework in its analysis of Césaire’s *Négritude* project. Césaire’s understanding and portrayal of *Négritude*, as he releases it poetically and most notably in his epic poem *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*, is at times naturalistic, at others surrealistic, and at another still is socio-politically motivated. As such, Kenneth Burke’s understanding of rhetoric and employment of symbolic action will be read in tandem with Césaire’s *Négritude* project so as to flesh out the rhetorical significance of the complex human subjectivity that is given life through Césaire’s vitriolic verse. This pairing seeks to demonstrate the rhetorical significance of Césaire’s strict attention to and juxtaposition of form and content in his linguistic efforts to displace the very tradition that oppresses his being from the inside out through the use of linguistic tools of the oppressor’s own making. The work of Lewis R. Gordon will offer the predominate frame for a phenomenological analysis of Césaire’s concept of *Négritude*, particularly as depicted in
the four versions of *Cahier*. Gordon’s understanding and description of the phenomenological components of black human subjectivity will be read in tandem with Césaire’s *Cahier* so as to unpack the complex and multi-faceted phenomenological ramifications of black human subjectivity in the life world, most particularly during the 17-year period throughout which Césaire wrote and re-wrote *Cahier*.

Césaire’s *Négritude* project offers a powerful rhetorical and phenomenological representation of the complexities of black human subjectivity in the life world during the tumultuous years of 1935 and 1956. His *Négritude* project publicly came into being as early as 1935 and conceptually and formally emerged through the first publication of *Cahier* in 1939. One of the primary goals of Césaire’s *Négritude* project was to de-center and shift the geography of reason away from its Euro-centric core and toward a conceptualization of human being that is both grounded in and constituted by the particularities of human subjectivity. Césaire does not enact *Négritude* as a call for the reparation or re-constitution of the past nor for an immediate remedy of the present moment, rather, he calls for a new and different conceptualization of the future of humankind—one that begins at a point of similarity in the nature and condition of being human instead of one constituted by difference.

Kenneth Burke’s understanding of rhetoric and of symbolic action assists in opening the communicative significance of human subjectivity as portrayed in Césaire’s *Cahier*. Burke understands poetry to function as a “means of *self-expression*”, or as a

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2 See pages 123 and 120 of Filostrat’s *Negritude Agonistes*. Césaire first used and introduced the word *Négritude* in a May 1935 article titled, “*Conscience Raciale et Révolution Sociale*,” which was published in volume 1.3 of the radical and revolutionary periodical, *L’Étudiant Noir*. Césaire unleashed *Négritude* conceptually in 1939 through the first publication of his epic poem, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*, in volume 20 of the French periodical *Volontés*. This publication of the poem went largely unnoticed by its Parisian and French readership.
“means of communication (an address to an audience)” (Burke, “Poetry as Symbolic Action” 162). Césaire’s Cahier is an epic poem, which directly relates the lived experience of his particular subjectivity working in opposition to colonial order and imperialist regimes, as well as the human subjectivity of his compatriots, be they Caribbean, African, Asian, European, Amer-Indian, or any mixture thereof. Césaire chooses the linguistic form of poetry to communicate the atrocities of colonized human subjectivity to a global audience. The decision to use this form of language as a means of communicating lived experience demonstrates Césaire’s desire and efforts to master the linguistic code of the colonial oppressor so he would be able to work in rejection of the very system oppressing him. Césaire’s use of Négritude as a form of linguistic empowerment in the various versions of Cahier demonstrates his “prowess in symbolic action” and also supports that Césaire is indeed an “entit[y] capable of ‘symbolic action’”, a belief starkly contested and rejected by colonial oppression (Burke, Language as Symbolic Action 295; Burke, The Rhetoric of Religion 40). It is in and through the linguistic form of poetry that Césaire affirms and demonstrates his ability to achieve totality in being human in the life world—that he has actualized and come to grips with the primary, unchangeable facts of his existence.

Césaire’s Négritude project and his use of poetry as a form of linguistic empowerment allows him to make the shift from self-expression, or the projection of his particular, lived experience, to communication, or speech aimed at the conscience of the world, designed to shed light on the grievous nature and byproducts of systems of colonized rule. Burke imagines the poet to “suffer under a feeling of inferiority, to suffer sullenly and mutely” until the moment of creation wherein the poet links “emotion to a
technical form” and “generates a symbol to externalize this suffering” (Burke, Counter-
Statement 56). As a poet, Césaire works between and against the dialectic of attitude and
form when he brings his vitriolic verse to life in Cahier. The technical form of poetry and
employment of symbolic action allows Césaire to transcend the boundaries between the
lived and the imaginary, a linguistic action that when externalized allows him to
powerfully communicate the realities of his particular lived experience with the aim of
re-constituting global conceptualizations of being human. Césaire’s use of poetry as both
a means of self-expression and as a form of communication demonstrates the power that
emerges when raw, human feeling and emotion meets the sterility and strict order of
technical linguistic form. The result of this dialectical pairing, in Césaire’s case, takes the
form of linguistic empowerment as put forth poetically through la Négritude, as a call to
the conscience of the world to create a liminal space for the total and autonomous
existence of all human beings.

Kenneth Burke’s work opens up understandings of language and its relationship
with the human body. Burke’s understanding and famous Definition of Man defines man
as the “symbol-using animal” and distinguishes the human animal from all other animals
through the uniquely human ability to possess and use logos or language (Burke, The
Rhetoric of Religion 40). This conceptualization of the human animal is localized and
situated squarely within the Western tradition of thought—an ideological tradition that
recognizes Europe as the self-appointed center of reason and rationality in the human
world. Césaire, hailing from the Caribbean island of Martinique, works to overcome the

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3 See page 40 of Burke’s The Rhetoric of Religion for a concise, full text presentation of his Definition of Man. See pages 3-24 of Language as Symbolic Action for the full text and detailed explication of Burke’s Definition of Man.
oppression and exclusion that characterized his and his compatriots’ particular lived experience linguistically through his decision to write in the French language, or in the language of the colonial oppressor. In spite of the Caribbean origins of his subjectivity Césaire was “well known for always expressing himself in very elaborate and distinguished French” and often found himself addressing audiences who had not “mastered French as he had” (Perina 83). As a result of his linguistic prowess, Césaire was able to unleash Négritude poetically as a form of linguistic empowerment that worked from the inside out to de-center and shift the Euro-centrically located geography of reason. Kenneth Burke’s Definition of Man and understanding of language as a form of symbolic action sheds light on the rhetorical and communicative significance of colonial subjectivity that is represented poetically and symbolically in the lines of Césaire’s Cahier. Burke’s understanding of the relationship between language and the human animal allows Césaire to use language—specifically the language of the colonial oppressor—to demonstrate not only the human element of his particular Caribbean subjectivity, but also the contributions that Caribbean human subjectivity has made and continues to stitch into the fabric of human history. Lewis R. Gordon’s work on the phenomenology of black existence brings to light the significance of the phenomenological ramifications of colonized human subjectivity as presented in Césaire’s Cahier. Gordon describes the phenomenological experience of black human subjectivity as a multi-dimensional form of “embodied consciousness” (Gordon, “Existential Dynamics” 71). Phenomenologically, the human body functions as one’s “perspective on the world”, a perspective that Gordon understands as “‘ambiguous’” (Gordon, “Existential Dynamics” 71-72). This state of human being as ambiguous or as
ambiguity is not a “dilemma to be resolved”, but is rather a “way of living to be described” the “task” of the phenomenologist [i]s one of “draw[ing] out a hermeneutic of this ambiguity” (Gordon, “Existential Dynamics” 72). Gordon advocates a hermeneutic phenomenological understanding of the ambiguity of human subjectivity in his examination of human being in the life world. Gordon’s hermeneutic and phenomenological approach to understanding human subjectivity unfolds the complex realm of experiences when applied to Césaire’s *Négritude* project as portrayed in *Cahier*. Phenomenology adds a corporeal dimension to Césaire’s portrayal and relation of human subjectivity throughout the four versions of *Cahier*.

Gordon finds one of the strengths of phenomenology in its ability to de-center reason and rationality as guiding principles of philosophical systems. Part of the phenomenological crisis, as Gordon describes, is “Western philosophy’s continued effort to be the center of rationality while closing off radical resources of self assessment” (Gordon, *Her Majesty’s Other Children* 141). These radical resources of self assessment fuel the linguistic thrust of Césaire’s *Négritude* project; the ability to engage in self-reflexivity, or to see the self as self from uniquely the self’s perception, is one of the remedies Césaire calls for in his rejection and over-coming of colonized subjectivity. Gordon, in line with Césaire, perceives a more inclusive view of humanity and understands Western philosophy as “but one among many struggles in the human quest to understand itself and reality” (Gordon, *Her Majesty’s Other Children* 141). The West is unique but not alone in its continued efforts to understand the subjectivity of the self and the surrounding reality of the life world. Césaire and Gordon both point to the exclusion, phenomenologically and otherwise, of the black human subject in any global
conceptualization of humanity and/or human subjectivity. Gordon finds the “obvious problem” of the “exclusion of blacks” to signal an “artificial structuring of one branch of humanity into a species above another” (Gordon, *Her Majesty’s Other Children* 144). Gordon finds this circumstance of the exclusion of black human subjectivity to lead to “inhuman relationship[s]” that collapse into “cosmology”, or into a “world of gods and animals” (Gordon, *Her Majesty’s Other Children* 144). Césaire linguistically pivots off of the dialectical and phenomenological tension that emerges as a result of the exclusion of black human subjectivity in the life world through his *Négritude* project and in *Cahier*. Reading Gordon’s thought on phenomenology of black existence in line with Césaire’s *Négritude* project as poetically portrayed in *Cahier* adds an additional layer of texture to the complexities of human subjectivity in the life world. Communicatively, this pairing and discussion of the phenomenology of human subjectivity opens up Césaire’s text and makes it accessible to a wide readership. Gordon’s existential, ontological, and phenomenological understanding of the ambiguity of human subjectivity fully opens the complex forms of human subjectivity Césaire linguistically and palimpsestically portrays in the four versions of *Cahier*.

Césaire poetically enacts *Négritude* as a form of linguistic empowerment that on one hand rejects the colonial system by working with tools of the oppressor’s own making against it in hopes of achieving liberation; and, on the other hand, as a philosophy of communicative experience. Philosophy of communication investigates “philosophical thought about how humans are communicatively situated in the lived world” (Arneson 7). Philosophy of communication seeks to study and examine the “ideas used to analyze, describe, and interpret communication as lived experience” (Arneson 7). Césaire
contributes to a philosophy of communicative experience through his *Négritude* project, a project in which the careful presentation of lived experience is crucial to the success and communicative force of his *parole*. Césaire believes that “everyone has his [or her] own Negritude” and understands *Négritude* as a “concrete rather than an abstract coming to consciousness” (Depestre and Césaire 91). According to Césaire, *Négritude* is steeped in the recognition and acceptance of “the first fact of our lives”, that of black human subjectivity and of the history attached to that particular form of human subjectivity via lived experience (Depestre and Césaire 91). The history that constitutes *Négritude* “contains certain cultural elements of great value” and indicates that black human subjects were not “born yesterday” as evidenced by the previous existence of “beautiful and important black civilizations” (Depestre and Césaire 91-92). For Césaire, *Négritude*, as a philosophy of communicative experience, affirmed “that we were Negroes and that we were proud of it”, asserted “that our Negro heritage was worthy of respect”, and stated that the values of our Negro heritage “could still make an important contribution to the world” (Depestre and Césaire 92). Césaire’s use of *Négritude* as a form of linguistic empowerment contributes to understandings and practices of philosophy of communicative experience through its poetic rendering of the dialectical tension between the colonial system and particular conceptualizations of human subjectivity.

Césaire demonstrates this dialectical tension between the colonial system and particular conceptualizations of human subjectivity most notably in his epic poem, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*. Césaire offers a poetic rendering of *Négritude* in the following verse:

*O lumière amicale*  
*O fraîche source de lumière*
ceux qui n’ont inventé ni la poudre ni la boussole
ceux qui n’ont jamais su dompter la vapeur ni l’électricité
ceux qui n’ont explore ni les mers ni le ciel
mais ceux sans qui la terre ne serait pas la terre
gibbosité d’autant plus bienfaisante que la terre déserte davantage la terre
silo où se preserve et mûrit ce que la terre a de plus terre
ma négritude n’est pas une pierre, sa surdité ruée contre la clameur du jour
ma négritude n’est pas une taie d’eau morte sur l’oeil mort de la terre
ma négritude n’est ni une tour ni une cathédrale
elle plonge dans la chair rouge du sol
elle plonge dans la chair ardente du ciel
elle trouve l’accablement opaque de sa droite patience.

O friendly light
O fresh source of light
those who never invented powder nor compass
those who could harness neither steam nor electricity
those who explored neither the seas nor the sky
but those without whom the earth would not be the earth
gibbosity all the more beneficent as more and more the earth deserts the earth
silo where that which is earthiest about earth ferments and ripens
my negritude is not a stone, its deafness hurled against the clamor of the day
my negritude is not a leukoma of dead liquid over the earth’s dead eye
my negritude is neither tower nor cathedral

it takes root in the red flesh of the soil
it takes root in the ardent flesh of the sky
it breaks through opaque prostration with its upright patience.
(Césaire, The Original 34-37)

This excerpt highlights Césairean Négritude as a philosophy of communicative experience. Césaire introduces Négritude poetically through the symbolic representation of light then immediately begins to speak in contradistinction to European society.

Césaire speaks first of the Chinese, who first invented gunpowder and the compass, and then to the ancient Egyptians of the African continent whose cosmological curiosity led them to harness steam and electricity as well as to vigorously explore both sea and sky.
early on in the development of the narrative of human history. Césaire next points squarely to Europe in stating that the earth would not be the earth absent European human being, a being which moves the earth away from its natural state through methods of its own making. Césaire sees Europe as the great silo where the earth’s riches are collected and stored. Up until this point in the verse Césaire has grounded European lived experience in naturalistic symbols. When he symbolically unleashes Négritude in the next two lines he does so through non-organic and mechanistic symbols such as the individual stone, which is used as a foundational building material to artificially construct the great towers and cathedrals that serve as standard-bearers and as long-lasting monuments, or perhaps memorial markers of European society. For the European these monuments epitomize the technological advances and capacities of human society while for Césaire they destroy the earth and move humankind farther away from its connection with and relation to it. Négritude restores the human condition to its natural attitude as it organically roots itself in both the soil and the sky so as to naturalistically rise or stand up and break through the “opaque prostration” of European society (Césaire, The Original 37). In this passage in particular, throughout the lines of Cahier, and in the lived world in general, Césaire unleashes Négritude as a form of linguistic empowerment that pivots off of the dialectical tension between the colonial system and human subjectivity in its efforts to shed light on the atrocities that characterized being human during this period. Césaire engages a philosophy of communicative experience symbolically and phenomenologically by enacting la Négritude as a poetic and symbolic juxtaposition of the starkly divergent lived experience of both the oppressor and the oppressed.

Introducing the Chapters
The first chapter of this dissertation project serves as the introductory chapter and sets out to conceptualize key concepts, such as philosophy of communicative experience, for example, that will serve as a guiding thread throughout the entirety of the project. The first chapter conceptualizes and analyzes key terms including philosophy of communicative experience, Césairean Négritude as a form of linguistic empowerment, Kenneth Burke’s understanding of language as both a form of and as a representative of the symbolic and symbolic action, language and symbolic action as distinctly human and human communicative processes, and Lewis R. Gordon’s phenomenological understanding of black human subjectivity in the lived world as forms of anonymity and ambiguity imposed upon black human subjects as a result of the colonial system of order, colonial ideology, and Euro-centric reason and rationality operating and manifesting in the colonial and modern periods as forms of bad faith. The first chapter outlines a conceptual preview of the dissertation project whereas the second chapter sets out to demonstrate clear philosophical and ideological distinctions between terms and periods such as colonialism, coloniality, the colonial system of order, colonial ideology, and the colonizer and colonized, to name but a few. Chapter Two sets out to set a clear historical frame of reference for the period in which Césaire unleashed la Négritude as a linguistic call to arms and as both a symbolic and corporeal projection and legitimization of his and black being in the life world. Chapter Two works to set the frame of reference for the period in which Césaire developed la Négritude as a philosophy of communicative experience in his efforts to develop a liminal space for the autonomous and totalized being of black human subjectivity in particular and all human subjectivity in general in the life world. The rhetorical and symbolic thought of Kenneth Burke coupled with the
existential, ontological, and phenomenological thought of Lewis R. Gordon allow Césairean Négritude to operate as a philosophy of communicative experience made rich by and through the differences found in the symbolic and corporeal expression of individual or particular human subjectivity in the life world.

The third chapter of the dissertation project analyzes the work and thought of Kenneth Burke and Lewis R. Gordon in its efforts to develop a rhetorical and phenomenological methodology through which to analyze Aimé Césaire’s epic (and palimpsestic) poem, Cahier d’un retour au pays natal, or Notebook of a Return to my Native Land. Chapter Three looks to Kenneth Burke’s thought, most particularly his definition of man, understanding of rhetoric, and conceptualization of language as being representative of symbolic action, in developing the rhetorical aspect of a philosophy of communicative experience. The third chapter also looks to the thought of Lewis R. Gordon, most specifically to the continued development of his existential, ontological, and phenomenological understanding of black human subjectivity, anonymity and ambiguity as forms of being, and his understanding and conception of the challenges and ramifications of black human subjectivity in the life world both in and outside the course of history as well as in today’s present historical moment. Chapter Three seeks to bring together the rhetorical thought of Kenneth Burke in conjunction with the phenomenological thought of Lewis R. Gordon so as to afford Césaire the linguistic opportunity to unfurl la Négritude as a philosophy of communicative experience that poetically asserts and legitimizes a liminal space for the total and autonomous development of black human subjectivity in particular, and all human subjectivity—particularly human subjects in marginalized groups—in general, in the life world.
The fourth chapter of the dissertation project begins analysis of Césaire’s presentation of la Négritude in the 1939 publication (the first publication) of his palimpsestic epic poem, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*. The fourth chapter draws from Kenneth Burke’s rhetorical thought on language as representative of symbolic action and Lewis R. Gordon’s phenomenological thought on black human subjectivity in its analysis of the particular subjectivity Césaire portrays in this version of the poem. Césaire offers the most raw version of human subjectivity, most particularly of black, Caribbean human subjectivity symbolically and phenomenologically throughout the poem. The fifth chapter of the dissertation project rhetorically and phenomenologically analyze the human subjectivity that Césaire portrays in the protagonist of *Cahier* in both editions that were published in 1947. The first 1947 *Cahier* was published in New York City in January by the publishing house Brentano’s and the second was published in March in Paris, France, by the publishing house Bordas. The 1947 editions of *Cahier* are the first prefaced editions of Césaire’s epic poem and both delve heavily into the realm of Caribbean surrealism. Chapter five sets out to rhetorically, with the guidance of Kenneth Burke, and phenomenologically, with the guidance of Lewis R. Gordon, analysis the surrealistic form of Caribbean human subjectivity that Césaire linguistically portrays in both of the 1947 editions of *Cahier*. Chapter six strives to rhetorically, along with Kenneth Burke, and phenomenologically, along with Lewis R. Gordon, analysis the human subjectivity Césaire portrays in the fourth, and largely considered to be the “definitive” publication of *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* in 1956. In the 1956 publication of *Cahier*, Césaire symbolically and phenomenologically makes the turn toward the socio-political and

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4 André Breton’s “Un Grand Poète Noir” served as the first preface for Aimé Césaire’s *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*. 
issues a call toward and a recognition of Africa for the first time throughout the seventeen year development of the poem. The sixth chapter of the dissertation project strives to rhetorically and phenomenologically analyze the form of human subjectivity portrayed in the 1956 edition of Cahier through la Négritude as a philosophy of communicative experience aimed at creating and maintaining a liminal space for the total and autonomous development of black human subjectivity in particular and all human subjectivity in general in the life world.

The seventh chapter of the dissertation project serves as the concluding chapter and strives to analyze the rhetorical and phenomenological significance of Caribbean human subjectivity, Césairean Négritude as a philosophy of communicative experience that seeks to create and maintain a liminal space for the preservation of black human subjectivity in particular, and all human subjectivity in general, and strives to analyze future implications of the dissertation project as well as offer potential direction for future research on Aimé Césaire, Césairean Négritude, and Cahier d’un retour au pays natal. The seventh and final chapter of the dissertation project seeks to critically analyze the rhetorical and phenomenological significance of Aimé Césaire’s conception of la Négritude as a philosophy of communicative experience. Chapter seven rhetorically, with the assistance of Kenneth Burke, and phenomenologically, with the assistance of Lewis R. Gordon, unpacks Césairean Négritude as a philosophy of communicative experience that begins with the common conception of humankind as being comprised of an infinite number of representations of the same entity, that of being human, and moves outward from a point of commonality in being rather than trying to move closer from a point of difference. Césairean Négritude seeks to offer hope for the future in the commonality
shared in the very condition of being human and in so doing strives to bring into being a more inclusive future for all of humankind that is made rich by the differences found in and between all particular representations of human subjectivity in the life world.

Introducing the Methodological Framework for Analysis

This dissertation project sets out to critically analyze the work of Aimé Césaire, most particularly his thought and conceptualization of la Négritude as a philosophy of communicative experience as portrayed most poignantly and poetically in all four published editions of his epic palimpsestic poem, Cahier d’un retour au pays natal, with and through the rhetorical, linguistic, symbolic, and communicative thought of Kenneth Burke and the phenomenological, existential, and ontological thought of Lewis R. Gordon. The dissertation project seeks to develop a rhetorical and phenomenological frame for analysis as such in an effort to fully analyze the fullness of the condition of being human in the life world and in an effort to flesh out new possibilities for a more inclusive future that transcends the spatiotemporal restraints of the modern moment and has the capacity to impact all of humankind. This dissertation project strives to bring together diverse thinkers from diverse periods and backgrounds in an effort to offer on the one hand a more inclusive conceptualization and understanding of the condition of being human in the Lebenswelt or life world, and, on the other hand, to develop a theoretically and methodologically sound frame through which to analyze and respond to the challenges that emerge as a result of everyday life. This dissertation project strives to connect and contribute to the disciplines of communication studies, rhetorical studies, and phenomenological studies by taking such a transdisciplinary approach to its engagement with the work and thought of Kenneth Burke, Lewis R. Gordon, and Aimé
Césaire. Burke’s rhetorical and linguistic thought allows the reader to understand
humankind as uniquely symbol-using animals that are brought into being with and
through the use of complex symbol systems—more particularly, language or linguistic
codes—for Burke, these are the tools the human animal uses to make sense of the self,
Others, the surrounding life world, and one’s individual and collective relationship to the
self, Others, and the surrounding life world. Burke’s thought allows humankind to fully
grasp the full scope of the ramifications of being linguistically situated in the life world.
Gordon’s work brings to light more corporeal aspects that emerge as a result of the
physicality of being human in the life world. Gordon’s work focuses on bringing to light
the phenomenological, existential, and ontological aspects and perhaps also ramifications
of one’s particular being in relation to the self, Others, and the surrounding life world
within which humankind remains firmly situated. Taking the work and thought of Burke
and Gordon as such and in tandem offers a fuller view of all aspects of being human in
the life world from both a physical and metaphysical perspective. It is the goal of this
dissertation project to use the physical and metaphysical frame provided by the rhetorical
thought of Burke and the phenomenological thought of Gordon in an effort to
dialectically analyze the changing versions of human subjectivity Césaire portrays
through presentation of the protagonist in all four published versions of Cahier in tandem
with Césaire’s own particular lived human subjectivity so as to develop a full and rich
account of human being and to conceptualize a more complete and inclusive
understanding of all human subjects and subjectivity in an effort to construct and
maintain a more inclusive future for all of humankind.
Bryan Crable, Professor of Communication and Rhetorical Studies at Villanova University, Founding Director of the Waterhouse Family Institute for the Study of Communication and Society, and Burkean scholar, brings to light an uniquely localized aspect of Kenneth Burke that is primarily concentrated in Burke’s 1950 text, *A Rhetoric of Motives.* Crable, through careful examination of Burke’s more than fifty-year friendship with Ralph Ellison, has picked up on the “subject of race” in the *Rhetoric* (Crable, “Race” 5). According to Crable, the *Rhetoric* is the “first (and only)” of Kenneth Burke’s published works that gives “consistent attention” to the subject of race and is “well-suited to consideration of discourse surrounding racial difference and racist violence” (Crable, “Race” 5). Crable is also careful to draw attention to the fact that “the contextual factor significantly shaping Burke’s discussion of race” is his friendship with “African American novelist and critic, Ralph Ellison”; a friendship which began when Burke and Ellison first “met in late 1942” and concluded in 1993 with the death of Kenneth Burke (Crable, “Race” 6). Crable’s research led him to discover that Burke and Ellison were at their closest point of friendship and were “in closest contact” during the spans of time within which Burke “was planning and writing the *Rhetoric*” (Crable, “Race” 6). According to Crable, Burke and Ellison were such close friend’s that Burke’s *Rhetoric* is the only of his “published books to specifically cite the work of Ellison” (Crable, “Race” 6). This detail that Crable draws attention to is significant when taking Burke’s *Rhetoric* and Kenneth Burke’s thought itself into consideration. Crable argues that Burke’s *Rhetoric* should be “recontextualized” and “read, at least in part, as one moment of dialogue between Ellison and Burke concerning race” (Crable, “Race” 6). Reading race in Burke’s *Rhetoric* on the one hand “adds depth to our understanding of
Burke’s contribution to the rhetorical canon”, and, on the other hand, opens up the possibility for new directions in Burkean scholarship in particular and communication scholarship in general (Crable, “Race” 6). Reading race in Burke’s *Rhetoric* brings to light a challenge to conceptualize an approach to the “study of race and identity” that emerges “out of Burke’s [own] rhetorical theory” (Crable, “Race” 6). Crable’s understanding of the interplay between Burke’s friendship with Ellison and the subsequent appearance of race in Burke’s work, the *Rhetoric* in particular, offers potential and new pathways for the study of the rhetorical and communicative structures utilized and embodied by and through human language in the life world. Reading Burke in light of his thought on race contributes to the discipline by expanding the depth and potential impact of Burkean scholarship. Examining Burke in the realm of race opens up his scholarship and lends it a transdisciplinary quality which allows it to make contributions not only to the study of rhetoric and communication but to and through all the disciplines. Displacing Burke in this way, then, at least from a disciplinary perspective, makes him more accessible and applicable to all aspects of human embodiment, particularly those that are linguistically bound.

In a 2000 article published in *Communication Quarterly* Bryan Crable further examines the relationship between Burke’s thought on language and the condition of being human in the life world, or, more succinctly, the concept of human embodiment. Crable, in line with Kenneth Burke, understands human being to be not so much “represented in” language as one is “constituted by” language (Crable, “Defending Dramatism” 328). Crable finds that this distinction between representation and constitution of the human condition in the *Lebenswelt* or life world points to a crucial
aspect of Burkean thought which has caused Burke to reject epistemology in favor instead of ontology. According to Crable, Burke understands language as “an enactment” or as a “symbolic selection of circumference” which lends itself to the generation and development of “identifiable character (or substance)”; in other words, language “constructs the scene that provides the foundation for the identity of things” and therefore fully embodies the constitution of symbolic action (Crable, “Defending Dramatism 329).

Language, understood as such, fully embodies and constitutes the condition of being human in the life world, on the one hand, and serves as a vehicle of communicative expression that allows human beings to come to terms with and express their individual and collective situatedness in the life world, on the other hand.

Richard Thames, Associate Professor of Communication and Rhetorical Studies at Duquesne University, renowned Burkean scholar, and student and interlocutor of Kenneth Burke, also examine the relationship between language and the human embodiment in his research, perhaps most particularly in and through his research on Kenneth Burke’s work. Thames finds that the “body that learns language” suffers a certain “kind of ‘alienation’ from nature and its own body” because language establishes a “distance” between human beings and the surrounding natural world (Thames, “The Meaning” 11). For Thames, bodies that learn language do so in denial and perhaps also rejection of their own “animality” and individual or particular situatedness in the life world (Thames, The Meaning” 11). Thames finds a point of commonality in human being in and through the biologic conditions of life itself. For Thames, bodies that are “genetically endowed with the ability to learn language” are connected at a point of commonality in the shared “capacity for ‘action’ (which assumes motion)” (Thames,
“The Gordian (2)” 8). Thames sees the connecting thread in human beings to emerge through the shared desire to linguistically engage in “action for the sake of action”, or the desire to give “complete and thorough expression to the implications of language, no matter the consequence, following language itself to its ultimate ends” (Thames, “The Gordian (2)” 8). Thames examines this Burkean motive as a poetic or linguistic motive and sees the process Burke uses to arrive at this end as dialectic. The human use of language is shaped by a “desire to be one with that universal motive’ and results in only one kind of valid action, namely “action for its own sake”, or “symbolic action” that has gone through the process and system of Burke’s dialectic (Thames, “The Gordian (2)” 8). Language, understood in this way and through this method of analysis, clearly becomes a distinctly human communicative construct that strives to bring about points of connection and commonality through the very condition of being human in the Lebenswelt, or life world. Language as a symbolic representation and mode of expression that is grounded in and generated from the very condition of being human in the life world moves human beings out of the realm of pure animality and firmly entrenches them within the realm of symbolicity. Language simultaneously and dialectically moves humankind out of nature and away from the realm of pure animality while at the same time finds points of connection and commonality in and through the communicative and symbolic forms of linguistic expression that human beings engage in as they come to terms with the very circumstances that characterize individual and collective being in the life world.

This method of analysis, of analyzing linguistic expression as a form of symbolic action and as a representation of human connection, expression, and embodiment in the Lebenswelt, fits well within the dissertation project and was specifically chosen for this
dissertation project in an effort to highlight the dialectical significance of human beings as linguistic and perhaps also symbolistic animals on the one hand, and to open up and bring together the work of Kenneth Burke, Lewis R. Gordon, and Aimé Césaire in productive and meaningful ways, on the other hand. Burke’s work focuses on human beings as linguistic animals or as bodies that are situated symbolically within language. Gordon’s work on the phenomenology of black human subjectivity dovetails nicely with that of Kenneth Burke, particularly Burke’s text, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, as Gordon fleshes out the phenomenological, existential, and ontological significance of being a human subject, more particularly of being a black human subject in the life world. Burke’s recently uncovered thought on race, in large thanks to the work of scholars such as Bryan Crable, highlights a symbolic connection between language, linguistic capacity, and human embodiment that had previously not received a lot of attention in examination of Kenneth Burke and of Burke’s work. Burke’s linguistic and symbolic understanding of the human animal, when taken in tandem with Gordon’s phenomenological, existential, and ontological understanding of human being in the life world on the one hand offers a unique frame through which to analyze human being in the life world, and on the other hand, lends transdisciplinarity to the thought and work of each intellectual. It is also curious to note that Burke’s thought on race began developing and continued to mature into what would become *A Rhetoric of Motives* at the same time that Césaire began to fully realize the linguistic, symbolic, phenomenological, existential, and ontological significance of his own blackness in the life world, which in Césaire’s corpus first emerged in and through his thought and conceptualization of *la Négritude*, most particularly, and in the lines of his epic palimpsestic poem, *Cahier d’un retour au pays*
natal, more generally. Reading Césaire with and through the lens of the work of Burke and Gordon offers a more complete account of what it means to be human in the life world in light of humankind’s linguistic, symbolic, phenomenological, existential, and ontological capacities.
Chapter Two — Colonialism/Coloniality in Context, Aimé Césaire, and la Négritude

Colonialism/Coloniality in Context

Aimé Césaire’s entire life was driven and shaped by power forces and patterns that manifested in the forms of colonialism and of coloniality. The work of Nelson Maldonado-Torres examines the conceptual forces at play to necessitate a linguistic distinction between the morphemes of colonialism and coloniality. According to Maldonado-Torres, the power structure of colonialism is largely driven and determined by “political and economic relation” wherein the “sovereignty of a nation or people” is contingent upon the “power of another nation” thus elevating “such a nation” to “empire” (Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality” 243). Coloniality is born out of patterns of colonialism. Coloniality reflects “long-standing patterns of power” which came to be as a “result of colonialism” (Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality” 243). The power patterns of coloniality extend so far as to “define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production” far beyond the stringent “limits of colonial administrations” (Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality” 243). Coloniality, therefore “survives” and perhaps also supersedes “colonialism” (Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality” 243). Coloniality finds its origins in the empire-building power patterns of colonialism and came to be in a very “particular socio-historical setting,” namely, the discovery and resultant conquest of North and South America (Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality” 243). Power patterns constitutive of coloniality defined the parameters of the “spatio-temporal matrix” that came to be known as the Americas and exhaled this particular “model of power” as being central to and “at the heart of” what would come to be known as modernity, or an ideology “framed by world capitalism” and systemic domination
driven and structured “around the idea of race” (Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality” 243-244). This understanding of modernity deviates from understandings of modernity as a “product of the European Renaissance or the European Enlightenment” and instead sheds light on the darker, or perhaps underside, of modernity’s darkness from which modernity draws and has centralized its power (Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality” 244). Modernity, therefore, as either a “discourse” or as a “practice” is inseparable from coloniality in that modernity “would not be possible without coloniality” and coloniality, conversely remains an “inevitable outcome of modern discourses” (Maldonado-Torres “On the Coloniality” 244). The formation of the modern identity in tandem with the continued development and progression of coloniality of power paved the way for globalization to stumble onto the world stage perhaps as early as the discovery of the Americas in 1492. Globalization, then, has at its roots a self-perpetuating pattern of power that draws from the well of empire filled by the subjugation of human subjects and subjectivity.

Globalization, in line with coloniality of power and the modern identity, also has a darker underside. Globalization is inextricably tied to empire-building based upon the political and economic power and sovereignty of one nation over another. Anibal Quijano understands globalization to be the “culmination of a process” which started with the discovery and creation of the Americas which, simultaneously situated “colonial/modern” Europe and “Eurocentered capitalism” as the source or fount of a “new global power”

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(Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 533). In this power model, globalization is largely driven by the “social classification of the world’s population around the idea of race”, or around a “mental construction” that works to express the “basic experience of colonial domination” while at the same time pervading more significant dimensions of “global power”, most specifically its “rationality: Eurocentrism” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 533). Quijano finds the “racial axis” of globalization to have a distinctly “colonial origin and character” that over time proved to be “more durable and stable” than the colonial matrix in which it was born; globalization, as a model of power and from a hegemonic perspective “presupposes an element of coloniality” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 533). The discovery of the Americas served as the first spatio-temporal model of power on a global scale and as such gave birth to the “first identity of modernity” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 533). Quijano finds two power axes to be responsible for the spatio-temporal convergence that established colonialism, coloniality, modernity, and globalization. The first power axis centers upon the “codification” of difference between “conquerors and conquered” in the biological idea of race which placed some human beings in a “natural situation of inferiority” to others (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 533). The second axis of power, for Quijano, was the “constitution of a new structure of control of labor and its resources and products” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 534). The second power axis echoed of “all historically known previous structures of control of labor, slavery, serfdom, small independent commodity production and reciprocity” collectively through the lens of “capital and the world market” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 534). These axes of power birthed total domination and empire by bringing together the ideology of race based upon social
distinction and inferiority with the total control and domination of capital throughout the world’s markets. It is this convergence of colonial power and the development and proliferation of patterns of power through coloniality that allowed Europe to appoint itself as the world’s center of commerce, reason, rationality, and human subjectivity.

Quijano continues his examination of the political and economic relationship between colonialism and coloniality in tandem with Immanuel Wallerstein. Quijano and Wallerstein understand the political and economic axes of coloniality to function as a “set of states linked together within an interstate system in hierarchical layers” which “manifested in all domains—political, economic, and not least of all, cultural” (Quijano and Wallerstein 550). Coloniality set the stage for a fluid, rank-ordered hierarchy of sovereign states politically and economically bound to a more powerful state or nation-state to emerge. Quijano and Wallerstein indicate that the political and economic ordering of states in the hierarchy of coloniality was always changing and that the “Americas would become the first testing-ground” where it was possible “for a few [states], never more than a few, to shift their place in the ranking” (Quijano and Wallerstein 550). A classic example of such a shift occurred in the early 1700s with the “divergence of the paths of North America and Latin America” (Quijano and Wallerstein 550). The political and economic axes of coloniality were an “essential element” in the creation and “integration of the interstate system” as it not only created a “rank order”, but also set the rules of engagement for “interactions” between one state and another (Quijano and Wallerstein 550). Quijano and Wallerstein argue that the “colonial authorities” allowed a “certain fluidity” in the rank-ordering of sovereign states so that from a perspective of power, the divisional or “essential boundary-line” became that of one “empire vis-à-vis”
other empires (Quijano and Wallerstein 550). This synecdochal system of part (the individual, sovereign states) and whole (the entire nation-state or empire) versus other synecdochal systems of part and whole generated a patterned system of domination, or of coloniality, that built upon itself to the point that it came to be characteristic and definitional of colonialism and of the colonial period as a whole.

The domative and subjugative effects of colonialism and of coloniality reached not only the political and economic realms of individual and collective sovereign states that comprise a given nation-state or an empire, but also that of the social and cultural realms of such sovereign states. Colonialism and coloniality produced a power-driven culture of domination and subjugation as key markers of the relationship between “the European—also called ‘Western’—culture, and the others” (Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality” 169). In order to establish and maintain this culture of domination and subjugation, European and Western cultures began with “colonization of the imagination of the dominated” through a period of “systemic repression” of the specific “beliefs, ideas, images, symbols or knowledge” of the colonized culture that were not deemed “useful to global colonial dominance” (Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality” 169). At the same time that colonizers were stultifying the imagination or the imaginary of the colonized, colonizers were also “expropriating” knowledge, most particularly in the realms of “mining, agriculture, [and] engineering” as well as the work and products of the colonized (Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality” 169). The result of this social and cultural systemic repression allowed the colonizers to attain total power over the colonized and essentially erased the “modes of knowing, of producing knowledge, of producing perspectives, images and
systems of images, symbols, [and] modes of signification” of the colonized (Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality” 169). Once the geo-epistemic circumstances of the colonized had been erased the colonizers replaced them with their own particular geo-epistemic circumstances and beliefs through the forms of colonial “patterns of expression, and of their beliefs and images with references to the supernatural” (Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality 169). Domination of the supernatural beliefs of the colonized was important to the colonizers because it gave the colonizers the power to control the imagination and the imaginary of the colonized. Domination of the imagination allowed the colonizers to “impede the cultural production” of the colonized in addition to attaining and maintaining “social and cultural control” through the mystical imposition of the colonizers’ own “patterns of producing knowledge and meaning” (Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality” 169). Initially colonizers did not allow the colonized to have access to the tools that comprised the forms of their own geo-epistemic production; later in the colonial period colonizers introduced the colonized “in a partial and selective way” to the forms that comprised their own geo-epistemic production in an effort to “co-opt some of the dominated into their own power institutions” (Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality” 169). Finally, as another manner of achieving and maintaining total power and control, the colonized portrayed European and Western culture as “seductive” in the sense that it could give one “access to power” in a period of intense repression, domination, and subjugation (Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality” 169). The colonizers made European and Western culture appear seductive and desirable to the colonized in an effort to maintain power and total control over the social and cultural imaginary of the colonized. Anibal
Quijano calls this seductive approach “Cultural Europeanisation” which was enacted by the colonizers as a form of cultural aspiration for the colonized to achieve the same social and cultural status as the colonizers. This form of “cultural coloniality” made it all but impossible for the “imaginary in non-European cultures” to exist, and, above all, for it to “reproduce itself” outside of the power-driven political, economic, social, and cultural relationship that existed between the colonizers and the colonized (Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality” 169). The very relationship between the colonizers and the colonized was designed to keep one group at an elevated political, economic, social, and cultural status in relation to the other group; colonialism and coloniality were, are, and continue to be self-perpetuating, hierarchical power systems that thrive when one group achieves and maintains total control, domination, subjugation, and power over another group. This form of power system thrives and is fed from the sacrifice and total erasure of one group of humanity for the benefit of another.

One of perhaps the greatest and most devastating consequences of colonialism and of coloniality is the development of an omnipotent nation-state or empire with the ability to sustain and reproduce itself from its very own system and hierarchy of power. Linda Martín Alcoff examines Anibal Quijano’s understanding of the coloniality of power as a system that coordinated the “distribution of epistemic, moral, and aesthetic resources” in such a way that simultaneously “both reflects and reproduces empire” (Alcoff 83). Alcoff argues that coloniality of power, from a conceptual standpoint, sheds light on the manners in which the colonized “were subjected not simply to a rapacious exploitation of all their resources but also to a hegemony of Eurocentric knowledge systems” (Alcoff 83). Colonialism and coloniality of power allow one to think through a
European or Western conceptualization of the world that is built around the idea of Europe and the West as the self-appointed center of the world. Colonialism and coloniality of power, therefore, also shed light on European and Western hegemonic and geo-epistemic structures of knowledge, knowledge production, and of “thought and representation that continues to dominate much of the world today” (Alcoff 84). This Eurocentric understanding of the world and of world history is exclusionary by nature and does not accurately portray the progression and development of world history as worldly. As a remedy to the historical erasure that emerged as a consequence of colonialism and coloniality of power Enrique Dussel birthed the concept of “transmodernity” as a signification of the “global networks” that allowed “European modernity itself to become possible” (Alcoff 84). Dussel’s conception of transmodernity “operates to displace” the historical erasure that emerged with colonialism and coloniality of power. (Alcoff 84). The “Eurocentric imaginary” relegates “colonized areas of the world as peripheral” to world history and Dussel’s conception of transmodernity aims to displace Eurocentric spatio-temporal accounts of world history in such a way that the “whole planet is involved at every stage in history” (Alcoff 84). Dussel’s conception of transmodernity offers space for an all-inclusive, and perhaps totalized account of world history to emerge. Dussel’s conception of transmodernity opens up the possibility for world history to develop and sustain itself as worldly while simultaneously working to deconstruct Eurocentric hegemonic and geo-epistemic constructions or accounts of the history of the world.

Another side effect that emerged at the same time as and perhaps as a result of Europe’s projects of colonialism and of coloniality of power was the birth of humanism,
or of what it meant to be a human being from a Western, Eurocentric perspective. Europe’s initiation of colonialism and also of humanism inhabits the same “cognitive-political universe inasmuch as Europe’s discovery of its Self is simultaneous with its discovery of its Others” (Scott 120). This Eurocentric conception of self resulted in the belief of Europe “itself as synonymous of humanism” and demonstrated the extent to which Eurocentric conceptions of “Man” or of human being relied solely upon the “systematic degradation of non-European men and women” (Scott 120). The work of Caribbean intellectuals including Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon—*Discourse on Colonialism* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, respectively—highlighted the “systemic objectification and violence of colonialism” that exposed the “lie” of Eurocentric conceptualizations of humanism and of human being (Scott 120). David Scott finds significance in Césaire and Fanon’s conviction to humanism in spite of exposing the dark side of Eurocentric conceptualizations of humanism—neither intellectual wants to “abandon humanism” but rather each wants to “correct its vision and fulfill its promise” (Scott 120). The aim of Césaire and of Fanon’s work is to try to “create the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant birth” (Scott 120).

Humanism emerged as a distinguishing force in the structural hierarchy of colonialism and of coloniality of power. Humanism offered a source of light to the colonized in times of repression, subjugation, and total domination. The concept of humanism and of human being operated as a conceptual force that allowed colonized human subjects to reclaim their agency and to begin to come to terms with and overcome the historical and subjective erasure that was characteristic of the colonized as a result of colonialism and coloniality of power.
Aimé Césaire lived at a point in world history that was still reeling from the effects of colonialism and of coloniality of power and was beginning to come to grips with the devastation that imperialism would bring in its wake. Hannah Arendt indicates that imperialism “grew out of colonialism” and came to be as a result of the “incongruity of the nation-state system” coupled with the “economic and industrial developments” that took place in the “last third of the nineteenth century” which began and heralded a new version of “power politics” driven by the concept of “expansion for expansion’s sake” (Arendt v). Arendt found the power politics that came to characterize the imperialist era to have been highly effective because of an ideological shift away from “localized, limited and therefore predictable goals of national interest” and toward the “limitless pursuit of power after power” that had the capability of roaming and of laying waste to the “whole globe with no certain nationality and territorially prescribed purpose and hence with no predictable direction” (Arendt vi). The unpredictability of imperialism and the ideology of expansion for expansion’s sake as a demonstration of sustained power and strength coupled with the devastating effects of colonialism paved the way for a reconceptualization of the role of the nation-state and of empire. Césaire’s particular human subjectivity was largely impacted and influenced by the movements and desires of the French empire. The first French empire started in the seventeenth century with the acquisition of “modern-day Nova Scotia and Quebec” followed by the acquisition of “Louisiana”, “French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, [and] Saint-Domingue, now Haiti” (Murdoch 69). France continued its empire-building activities into the seventeenth century with the invasion and acquisition of Algeria, Southern Vietnam, Cambodia, “large swaths of western and central Africa (French Equitorial Africa, or Afrique
Occidentale Française, as it came to be known),” while Tunisia and Morocco fell to the French empire in the early 1900s (Murdoch 69). Guadeloupe and Martinique (Césaire’s native land) remain the only two Caribbean colonies of any nation to “undergo occupation and governmental change of any kind” during World War II (Murdoch 69). The French Caribbean colonies of Guadeloupe, Martinique, and French Guiana experienced French colonialism and imperialism through the hands of Vichy rule for a period of three years during the second world war—in other words, French Caribbean colonies were brutalized and lived through a period of subjective and historical erasure as a result of France’s empire-building dreams and desire of expansion solely for expansion’s sake as a manner of maintaining and demonstrating control of global power.

Aimé Césaire: Un homme des Antilles qui est bien debout

Aimé Césaire’s family was first touched by the grips of colonialism and imperialism as early as the sixteenth century and most definitely by the seventeenth century when one of Césaire’s ancestors was arrested in 1834 for “having been involved in the insurrection in Grand-Anse, Martinique” the previous year (Pallister xi). Fourteen years after Césaire’s ancestor was arrested Victor Schoelcher abolished slavery on the island of Martinique in April of 1848 which allowed Césaire’s paternal grandfather, “Fernand Césaire” to be born a free man in 1868. Aimé Césaire was born on 25 June 1913 in Basse-Pointe Martinique and was the oldest in a family of six children. Aimé Césaire attended primary school in Basse-Pointe and later the Césaire family moved to the Martiniquain capital of Fort-de-France so that Aimé could attend high school at the Lycée Victor Schoelcher where he met one of the three founding fathers of la Négritude, Léon-Gontran Damas for the first time. Césaire was instructed by “Gilbert Gratiant,
Octave Mannoni, E[ugene] Revert, and Louis Achille” throughout his time at Lycée Victor Schoelcher (Pallister xi). In 1932 Césaire is awarded a scholarship to begin his university studies in Paris, France, first at the prestigious Lycée Louis-le-Grand and later at L’École Normale Supérieure where he would meet “Ousmane Soucé and Léopold Sédar Senghor”, the third found father of la Négritude (Pallister xi). In 1935 Césaire, Damas, and Senghor found the radical review L’Étudiant Noir wherein Césaire first published the word Négritude for the first time (Pallister xi). Césaire begins writing his palimpsestic, epic poem, Cahier d’un retour au pays natal toward the end of his time in Paris and is particularly inspired by the island of Martininka that he views out of his bedroom window while visiting the family of Petar Guberina, a friend of Césaire’s from L’École Normale Supérieure (Pallister xi). Aimé Césaire married Suzanne Roussy in 1935, and in 1939 he published the first edition of Cahier d’un retour au pays natal “in the review Volontés” and returned to the island of Martinique for the first time since leaving to further his educational pursuits (Pallister xii). The 1939 publication of Cahier d’un retour au pays natal is significant because it marks the first time that Césaire conceptually publishes and explicates his ideology of la Négritude beyond releasing it as a word four years earlier in an article in L’Étudiant Noir.

The 1939 edition of Cahier portrays perhaps the rawest version of Caribbean human subjectivity in the character of the protagonist. This edition of Cahier was published just after Césaire completed his university career in Paris, France. Césaire did not receive a warm welcome to France and fully realized his own blackness for the first time upon arrival in Paris. Césaire and his compatriots from other “Third World” nations experienced a great deal of “incipient cultural alienation” which resulted in the
development of a “radically critical” ideological stance toward “European civilization and its arrogant claims to superiority” (Davis 7). The cultural alienation that Césaire and his compatriots experienced in Paris led to the development of a “‘counter-assimilationist’” culture as a form of colonial and imperial resistance (Davis 7). This cultural alienation was fueled by the “erasure” of “non-Western cultural traditions” both inside the curriculum of the university and outside in France as a whole which resulted in many students of “African origin” fighting to “repossess a degraded identity” because their “skin color marked them as ‘other’ in a manner both irreducible and pronounced” (Davis 7). Césaire fell victim to this identity crisis and did not do well as a colonial exception living and studying in imperialist Paris. Césaire’s time in Paris was characterized by “poor living conditions, bad eating habits, and his inability to manage a budget” (Wilder 154-155). Césaire himself describes this period as a time in his life when he was “sick” and suffering from “headaches” and “stomach aches” which he claims caused him to lose “perspective” (Wilder 155). Césaire suffered “some kind of psychological breakdown” in 1936 that rendered him “‘no longer capable of [doing] university work’” (Wilder 155). Césaire suffered an identity crisis as a result of his being a colonial exception in imperialist Paris which led him to fail his agrégation in literature at L’École Normale Supérieure. Césaire developed and unleashed his conceptualization of la Négritude as a result of his experience living and studying in Paris, the ideologically colonial and imperialistic capital of the French empire. The particular version of Caribbean human subjectivity Césaire portrays in the 1939 edition of Cahier emerged as a direct result of his time in the capital of the French empire throughout most of the 1930s.
Aimé and Suzanne Césaire returned to Martinique a few days after the formal outbreak of World War II and shortly after their return the full extension of French colonialism and imperialism reached the island of Martinique with the arrival of Vichy rule led by Marshal Phillipe Pétain and directly supervised by “Admiral Georges Robert” and “‘ten thousand’ French sailors” who inflicted the Vichy government’s “will on the area from 1939 to 1943” (Filostrat 143-144). The 1939 edition of Cahier d’un retour au pays natal that Césaire had published prior to leaving France portrays perhaps the rawest version of Caribbean human subjectivity in the form of the protagonist. The period immediately following the Césaire’s return to Martinique played a key role in future revisions that Aimé would make to the text of Cahier over the course of the next 17 years. The extension of colonialism and imperialism to the island of Martinique via Vichy rule during the Second World War led Césaire to develop an “appreciation of the black masses as a class” and forced all Martiniquains to have to fully recognize their ‘dark skinned sel[ves]’” (Filostrat 144). General Charles de Gaulle stormed the island of Martinique in June of 1943 and “overthrew the Vichy regime” promising the Martiniquain people access to a “mythical France” through his proclamation of “‘liberty, equality, and fraternity’” for all of France’s territories and overseas possessions (Filostrat 144). De Gaulle’s liberation of Martinique increased France’s political power over the island and its neighbors in the French Caribbean as the Vichy experience exposed the dependence that these overseas possessions had upon France and the French empire for leadership and protection. This dependence manifested in “demands for irrevocable bonds” between France, the “mother country” and its overseas colonies (Filostrat 144). The French communist party was the most vocal political party after the war that was
“most instrumental” in bringing the overseas colonies’ “demands to fruition” (Filostrat 144-145). It would not take long for the ideology of the French communist party to reach the island of Martinique and to make an impact on the life of Aimé Césaire and his fellow Martiniquais. Césaire’s relationship with the French communist party would prove complicated and would lead him well into a political career he, a teacher at Lycée Victor Schoelcher, had not foreseen on the horizon.

Aimé Césaire finds the concept of the myth of Martinique to be a key to the Martiniquain imaginary which serves to collect and mobilize the masses of Martiniquais on the island. Césaire understands the concept of myth in line with Georges Sorel as

‘un schéma dynamique, catalyseur des aspirations d’un peuple et préfigurateur de l’avenir, précisément parce que susceptible de mobiliser l’énergie émotionnelle de la collectivité’. Vous le voyez, le mythe catalyseur d’énergie indispensable pour l’action parce que lieu de fusion et d’exaltation à la fois de la raison et de l’émotion. (Césaire, “La Martinique” 187)

‘a dynamic scheme, catalyzer of the aspirations of a people and foreshadower of the future, precisely because it is capable of mobilizing the emotional energy of the community’. You see, myth catalyzes energy indispensable for action because of the location of the melting and elation of both reason and emotion.6 (Césaire, “La Martinique” 187)

Césaire advises those who doubt the capacity of myth to mobilize a collectivity or the masses to reflect critically on “ce qui vient de se passer en Iran?/on that which has just

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6 This is my own, independently formulated translation from the original French to the English language.

7 It is likely that Césaire is referring to the Iranian Revolution that came to be as a result of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini’s ascent to power as the Supreme Leader of Iran in the spring of 1979. Khomeini was able to wrest power from Shah Reza Pahlavi while living in exile in Iraq and later near Paris, France by tapping into the Iranian imaginary. Khomeini and his supporters secretly dispersed ideologically charged cassette tapes and pamphlets in an effort to mobilize the Iranian masses to support Khomeini’s bid for power through creation of an ideological community. See chapters 7 (“Language, Authority, and Ideology”) and 8 (“The ‘Heavy Artillery': Small Media for a Big Revolution”) in Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ali Mohammadi’s Small Media, Big Revolution: Communication, Culture, and the Iranian Revolution for more on the communicative and rhetorical tactics employed by Khomeini to access the Iranian imaginary as he sought to mobilize the Iranian masses to support his bid for leadership from exile (see pages 119-121 in particular). Césaire’s reference to the Iranian Revolution demonstrates the resilience of Imperialist ideology and illustrates the effects Imperialist ideology continues to have in the present historical moment. Following the guiding thread from the Iranian Revolution to the present
happened in Iran” (Césaire, “La Martinique” 187). Here, it is likely that Césaire is making reference to Ayatollah Khomeini and the Iranian Revolution wherein Khomeini played upon the imaginary of the Iranian masses to support his bid for supreme leader from exile. Césaire discusses the Martiniquain imaginary as an essential part of the three great periods of Martiniquain history. For Césaire, Martiniquain history and its myth of origin can be understood as follows:

*De 1635 à 1848: c’est la periode de l’esclavage. Et le mythe qui soulève le peuple martiniquais tout entier, c’est le mythe de la liberté générale, c’est le mythe de l’emancipation. Et c’est la deuxième periode de l’histoire martiniquaise: un siècle encore, mais cette fois-ci de colonialisme, d’autoritarisme, de discrimination raciale, et c’est alors l’apparition du deuxième mythe, le mythe de la deuxième periode: le mythe de la justice sociale et de l’égalité, le mythe de la citoyenneté française à part entière qui, sur le plan politique, nous mène tout droit à l’idée de la transformation du pays en département français. Mais ce mythe lui-même ne dure que ce que durent les mythes, l’espace d’une ou de deux générations, et voici qu’apparaît le troisième mythe qui est la negation du second: c’est le mythe de la Martinique martiniquaise, le mythe du pouvoir martiniquais, véhicule de l’aspiration nationalitaire martiniquaise. Car, c’est bien là désormais la problématique martiniquaise: il s’agit de savoir si ce mythe nouveau va se désagréger et s’effilocher avant de porter effet comme une vulgaire tempête tropicale ou s’il aura assez de puissance de renouvellement pour secouer les apathies, balayer les doutes et imposer en definitive une transformation radicale de la réalité antillaise. (Césaire, La Martinique 187)*

From 1635 to 1848: it is the period of slavery. And the myth that lifted the all of the Martiniquais, it is the myth of general freedom, it is the myth of emancipation. And it is the second period of Martiniquain history: a century later, but this time of colonialism, of authoritarianism, of racial discrimination, and it is then of course the appearance of the second myth, the myth of the second period: the myth of social justice and of equality, the myth of full French citizenship, that, in the political plan, leads us right to the idea of the transformation of the country into a French Department. But this myth itself only lasts as long as myths last, the space of one or of two generations and here appears the third myth which is the negation of the second: it is the myth of a Martiniquain Martinique, the myth of Martiniquain power, vehicle of Martiniquain nationalist aspirations. For, that is really from now on the Martiniquain problem: it is a question of knowing if this

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historical moment leads one to similar reactions against residual Western Imperialism which can be seen in events such as the Arab Spring and most recently and continuously through the actions of Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) across the globe. See pages 152-159 of Henry Kissinger’s *World Order* for more on the political construction and ramifications of Ayatollah Khomeini and the Iranian Revolution.
A new myth is going to break up and shred before having an impact like a vulgar tropical storm or if it will have enough power of renewal to shake up the apathies, to sweep away the doubts and definitively impose a radical transformation of the Antillean reality. (Césaire, *La Martinique* 87)

Césaire describes the three great periods of Martiniquain history as first, “the period of slavery” which lasted from 1635 until 1848 and was characterized by the “myth of universal freedom leading to emancipation”; second, “the period of continued colonialism and racial discrimination” that lasted from 1848 until 1948 and was characterized by the “myth of full citizenship within France” which led to the transformation of Martinique into an “overseas department of France”; and third, the period of the “end to neo-colonialism” which has lasted from 1948 until the present day and is characterized by the “myth of a Martinican Martinique, the vehicle of Martinican nationhood” (Arnold 281). In order to bring a Martiniquain Martinique into being Césaire pointed to the “necessity” of “galvanizing” the masses so as to inspire a “collective leap” forward to “inaugurate the new era” in Martiniquain history (Arnold 281). Césaire’s depiction of the three great periods of Martiniquain history and subsequent desire to bring into being a Martiniquain Martinique demonstrate his stark rejection of power structures and systems of colonialism, coloniality, and imperialism. Césaire places careful emphasis on the role of the imaginary and that of myth in mobilizing the masses or a collectivity of human subjects. Without a collective social, cultural, and perhaps also national imaginary the desire and vehicle with which to enact change for a given populous or group of human subjects becomes nonexistent.

Prior to the emergence of the third great period of Martiniquain history Césaire fell victim to the ideological beliefs of the French Communist Party and joined them in

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8 This is my own, independently formulated translation from the original French to the English language.
an effort to allow all Martiniquais to become full French citizens. This ideological belief led Césaire to push for Martinique to transform itself from a territory of France into an overseas department of France in 1946. The long-term result of departmentalization proved to be culturally crippling, as Césaire describes in the excerpt below:

And yet it is from this Black Africa, the mother of our Caribbean culture and civilization, that I await the regeneration of the Caribbean—not from Europe who can only perfect our alienation, but from Africa who alone can revitalize, that is, repersonalize the Caribbean. Yes, I know. We are offered solidarity with the French people; with the French proletariat and, by means of communism, with the proletariats of the world. I do not reject these solidarities. But I do not want to erect solidarities in metaphysics. There are no allies by divine right. There are allies imposed upon us by place, time, and the nature of things. And if alliance with the French proletariat is exclusive; if it tends to make us forget or resist other alliances which are necessary and natural, legitimate and fertile; if communism destroys our most invigorating friendships—the friendship uniting us with the rest of the Caribbean, the friendship uniting us with Africa—then I say communism has done us a disservice in making us exchange living fraternity for what risks
appearing to be the coldest of cold abstractions. I shall anticipate an objection. Provincialism? Not at all. I am not burying myself in a narrow particularism. But neither do I want to lose myself in an emaciated universalism. There are two ways to lose oneself: walled segregation in the particular or dilution in the ‘universal.’ My conception of the universal is that of a universal enriched by all that is particular, a universal enriched by every particular: the deepening and coexistence of all particulars. And so? So we need to have the patience to take up the task anew; the strength to redo that which has been undone; the strength to invent instead of follow; the strength to ‘invent’ our path and to clear it of ready-made forms, those petrified forms that obstruct it. (Césaire, “Letter to Maurice Thorez” 151-152)

As a remedy to the long lasting cultural destruction caused by departmentalization Césaire launches a tirade against Maurice Thorez, the leader of the French Communist Party. In this letter Césaire cries out for a reunion with Black Africa, who, in his view serves as the mother of Caribbean culture and civilization. After surviving periods of colonialism, coloniality of power, and imperialism, Césaire moves straight to the root when seeking a regeneration of Caribbean culture and civilization. Césaire locates this very root in Africa as the motherland of he and his fellow Martiniquais. Césaire’s rejection of Eurocentric conceptualizations of humanism and of human being pivots between conceptualizations of the particular and the universal. Césaire is careful not to bury himself too deeply in particularism not too broadly in universalism; rather, Césaire envisions a universal conceptualization of human being that is made rich by every particular and strives to deepen the coexistence of all particular forms of human subjectivity. Césaire calls for a new hegemonic and geo-epistemic structure in terms of knowledge production and conceptualizations of humanism and of being human. Césaire calls for a system of inclusion that is maintains its power and is made rich by the recognition of every particular human being rather than a system (such as systems of
colonialism, coloniality of power, and imperialism) that derives its power from the complete and total historical erasure of the particularities of human subjectivity.  

*A Call to Consciousness: Introducing la Négritude*

Aimé Césaire developed the concept of *la Négritude* in rejection of and in reaction to an intense period of colonialism, coloniality of power, and imperialism. For Césaire, *la Négritude* was born out of the “essential man” and contained within it a “cry, the fundamental cry” (Rowell 55). *La Négritude* is receptive to all cultures and to all human beings; it works to bring to light the manners in which human beings “in whatever part of the world” have come up with to “cope with life, to make life easier, and to face death” (Rowell 55). Césaire and his contemporaries conceptualized *la Négritude* during a period of “exacerbated Eurocentrism” which brought with it a “fantastic ethnocentrism” and an entirely “guiltless conscience” (Rowell 55). At the point in time that *la Négritude* was written into being there was no question as to the “superiority of European civilization” nor its “universal vocation” of domination and expansion (Rowell 55). According to Césaire, *la Négritude* came to be in a period that was “dominated by the theory of assimilation” which operated by replacing the imaginary or interior life of a colonized being with Eurocentric ideology (Rowell 55). *La Négritude* was first and foremost an affirmation of the self, a “return” to one’s particular “identity”, a “discovery” of the self”, and a manner by which the colonized could assert themselves (Rowell 55). Césaire’s conception of *la Négritude* heralds the particularity of human subjectivity and transcends the bounds of space and time in that as long as ethnocentrism dominates geo-epistemology and driving geo-epistemic structures there will also always be a space or a liminal opening for subjugated human subjectivity to reclaim one’s own agency.
Césaire’s conception of *la Négritude* offers colonized beings with the linguistic tools and emancipatory power necessary to generate just such a liminal opening through process of reclamation, reaffirmation, and assertion of one’s own particular human subjectivity as perceived from the inside out rather than from the outside in, or through from the vantage point of the colonizer. Césairean *Négritude* thrives on the very conditions that define human being and is made rich with the particularity of each individual form of human subjectivity—perhaps one of the greatest strengths of Césairean *Négritude* rests in its potential to thrive on the dialectical relationship between individuality and difference.

Césaire first unleashed *la Négritude* linguistically as a morpheme in a 1935 article titled “*Nègreries: conscience raciale et révolution sociale/*Nègreries: Racial and Social Consciousness” which was published in the radical French review *Volontés*. In this article Césaire introduces *la Négritude* as a form of linguistic empowerment that heralded the human qualities of blackness as “*bombes libératrices/liberatory bombs*” aimed squarely at de-centering and shifting the geography of reason away from its self-appointed European center and toward a more inclusive conceptualization of human being on a global scale (Césaire, “*Nègreries*” 1298). Césaire utilized *la Négritude* to champion and inspire pride in black identity and Caribbean human subjectivity alike in stating “*qu’il est beau et bon et légitime d’être negre*/that it is beautiful and good and legitimate to be black” (Césaire, “*Nègreries*” 1299). Césaire’s employed the morpheme of *la Négritude* in 1935 as a form of linguistic empowerment worked in reaction to and rejection of colonialism, coloniality of power, and imperialism to open a liminal space for the

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9 This is my own, independently formulated translation from the original French to the English language.  
10 This is my own, independently formulated translation from the original French to the English language.
totalized and autonomous development of Caribbean human subjectivity. Césaire’s first use of *la Négritude* in print appeared as follows:

*Ainsi donc, avant de faire la Révolution et pour faire la revolution—la vraie—, la lame de fond destructrice et non l’ebbranlement des surfaces, une condition est essentielle: rompre la mécanique identification des races, déchirer les superficielles valeurs, saisir en nous le nègre immédiat, planter notre négritude comme un bel arbre jusqu’à ce qu’il porte ses fruits les plus authentiques. Alors seulement, nous aurons conscience de nous; alors seulement, nous saurons jusqu’ou nous pouvons courir seuls; alors seulement nous saurons où le souffle nous manque, et parce que nous aurons saisi notre particulière différence, et que nous ‘jouirons loyalement notre être’, nous pourrons triompher de tous les esclavages, nés de la ‘civilisation’. (Césaire, “Nègreries” 1299)*

Thus, before the Revolution and to carry out the revolution—the true—, the destructive ground blade and not the shaking of the surfaces, one condition is essential: to break the mechanical identification of the races, to tear up the superficial values, to seize in us the immediate Negro, to plant our négritude like a beautiful tree until it bears its most authentic fruits. Only then, will we have consciousness of ourselves; only then will we know just how far we alone can run; only then will we know where we lack breath, and because we will have seized our particular difference, and that we will ‘loyally enjoy being who we are’, we can triumph over all forms of slavery, born from ‘civilization’.11 (Césaire, “Nègreries” 1299)

This early use of *la Négritude* brings social and cultural circumstances such as political revolution, ethnocentrism, Eurocentrism, and the particularities of Caribbean human subjectivity to the forefront of human consciousness. Here, Césaire offers *la Négritude* as an alternative to the subjugation, domination, and assimilation that many Caribbean human subjects experienced at the hands of the colonizers and as a result of world power structures such as colonialism, coloniality of power, and imperialism. Césaire advocates that the only way for the colonized to reclaim their individual imaginaries from the clutches of colonialism and to fill them instead with agency, authenticity, and the particularities of the own, individual human subjectivity. *La Négritude* operates as a form

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11 This is my own, independently formulated translation from the original French to the English language.
of linguistic empowerment through its espousal of the authentic self as a form of liberation from the clutches of colonial power structures, ideology, and conceptualizations of self. Césaire’s conception of *la Négritude*, from its earliest use, seeks to highlight human qualities of humanity and to highlight the many commonalities found in difference on both an individual and a global scale.

While Césaire introduced *la Négritude* as a morpheme in 1935 he would not release it as a concept until 1939 within the lines of the first publication of his epic poem, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*, or *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*. Césaire’s use of *la Négritude* in 1939 is rife with imagery that echoes the many atrocities that power systems such as colonialism, colonality of power, and imperialism subjected upon individuals and collective groups of human beings in an effort to ascend to the throne of world power and domination. The following excerpt demonstrates Césaire’s employment of *la Négritude* as a source of linguistic empowerment that calls for the creation of a liminal space so that all human beings in the life world can attain totality and autonomy on their own terms:

*O lumière amicale*
*O fraîche source de lumière*
ceux qui n’ont inventé ni la poudre ni la boussole
ceux qui n’ont jamais su dompter la vapeur ni l’électricité
ceux qui n’ont explore ni les mers ni le ciel
mais ceux sans qui la terre ne serait pas la terre
gibbosité d’autant plus bienfaisante que la terre déserte davantage la terre
silo où se preserve et mûrit ce que la terre a de plus terre
ma négritude n’est pas une pierre, sa surdité ruée contre la clameur du jour
ma négritude n’est pas une taie d’eau morte sur l’œil mort de la terre
ma négritude n’est ni une tour ni une cathédrale

*elle plonge dans la chair rouge du sol*
*elle plonge dans la chair ardente du ciel*
elle trouve l’accablement opaque de sa droite patience.

O friendly light
O fresh source of light
those who never invented powder nor compass
those who could harness neither steam nor electricity
those who explored neither the seas nor the sky
but those without whom the earth would not be the earth
gibbosity all the more beneficent as more and more the earth deserts the earth
silo where that which is earthiest about earth ferments and ripens
my negritude is not a stone, its deafness hurled against the clamor of the day
my negritude is neither tower nor cathedral

it takes root in the red flesh of the soil
it takes root in the ardent flesh of the sky
it breaks through opaque prostration with its upright patience (Césaire, Cahier/The Original 34-37).

Here, Césaire introduces la Négritude as a source of light, or perhaps also as a source of salvation. He sheds light on some of the deficiencies of European society in the form of inventions, mastery, and navigation that the colonizers stole from the colonized because they had not been able to create such an object within their own hegemonic and epistemic systems. In light of all this, Césaire defiantly asserts his Négritude in rejection of Eurocentric models of human being and instead calls for the creation of a spatiotemporal circumstance that will yield the total and autonomous development of all human subjects in the life world. Césaire’s la Négritude does not find life in the great monuments of European society nor in the conditions which permit humankind dominance over Mother Earth. Rather, Césaire’s la Négritude is rooted in the soil, finds flesh in the sky, and overcomes Eurocentric conceptualizations of the world and of human being with patience and defiance. This first conceptualization of la Négritude echoes of the spiritual in its quest to de-center and shift the geography of reason in such a way that creates space for a true humanism—one made rich by commonality found in difference—to emerge. It is
because of this thread of commonality found in difference that Césaire’s conception of *la Négritude* is able to continuously renew itself and extends from the particular situation of Caribbean human subjectivity to global situations of subjugated human subjectivity.

Césaire’s thought on the concept of *la Négritude* matured as time, history, and culture moved forward. Twenty years after the conception of *la Négritude*, Césaire’s gaze remained fixed upon a firm sense of self as a key component of liberation and emancipation. By 1959, *la Négritude* drew its power and strength from one’s own “‘awareness of being black, the simple acknowledgement of a fact which implies acceptance of it a taking charge of one’s destiny as a black man, of one’s history and culture’” (Baraka 981). Here, Césaire’s *la Négritude* is driven by “self-knowledge”, “self-affirmation”, and “liberation” (Baraka 981). Power systems, most specifically those of colonialism, coloniality, and imperialism, left devastating consequences upon those who were colonized that extended from the “cognitive, ethical, aesthetic, political, and psychological” realms of colonial life and were bound up in the “colonial discourse”, or in discourse which relied upon a systematic “practice of violence imposed on people and things” in an effort to “organize social existence and reproduction” (Walker 761). Césaire’s *la Négritude* was and continues to be powerful and relevant because the “problem of individual and collective alienation” has yet to be solved (Walker 761). Art, or the aesthetic, and literature were “sacred” for Césaire because of the “intimate role” both played in rehabilitating “personal and national identity” (Walker 761). Césaire highlights the significance of the relationship between art, the aesthetic, and the literary with personal and national identity in the following passage:

*Dans les conditions qui sont les nôtres, notre littérature sacrée, notre art, art sacré. En haussant à l’universal la situation particulière de nos peoples, en les*
reliant à l’histoire, en les hissant sur un plan qui est précisément du devenir, donc négation de la stagnation, la création artistique, par sa force, doit mobiliser les forces émotionnelles vierges, et voici qu’à son appel se lèvent des ressources psychiques insoupçonnées qui contribuent à rétablir le corps social ébranlé par le choc colonial dans son aptitude à résister et sa vocation à entreprendre. (Césaire, L’homme 122)

Under the circumstances that are ours, our literature must have as its greatest ambition to tend toward becoming sacred literature, our art sacred art. In raising to the level of the universal the particular situation of our people, in linking them to history, in placing them on a trajectory that is precisely one of becoming and, therefore, a negation of stagnation, artistic creation, by its power, must mobilize untapped emotional forces, and thereby, at its summons, will rise unsuspected psychic resources that will contribute to restoring the social body, which has been so traumatized by the impact of colonialism in its capacity to rebel and its will to carry on. (Walker 761)

Césaire places great significance on art, the aesthetic, and the literary here as pathic rhetorical tools which possess the capacity to awaken and invigorate the human soul. This awakening, or process of coming into one’s authentic self and agency, in turn, resituates human subjectivity within the narrative of human history in such a way that works to actively displace and shift the colonial center of power away from Europe and the Western world and toward a more totalized conceptualization of human being in the life world as a whole. Césaire’s conception of la Négritude works to spatiotemporally situate all human being within the narrative of human history and in so doing also works to de-center and shift the geography of reason away from its self-appointed European center and toward a global conceptualization of humanism; a humanism that is made rich by the very differences and particularities that serve to comprise the global populous of human being. For Césaire, humanity is enriched by the difference and particularity found in each individual human subject.

A few years later, in 1967, Aimé Césaire found himself in Cuba at the Cultural Congress of Havana wherein he spent some time speaking with Haitian poet and political
militant, René Depestre. Depestre took this opportunity to interview Césaire about his conception of la Négritude during their conversation at the Cultural Congress of Havana. When asked about la Négritude, Césaire was quick to say that “above all it is a concrete rather than an abstract coming to consciousness. Césaire continues and indicates that the concept of la Négritude was largely influenced by the tumultuous time during which he and his compatriots lived—an atmosphere characterized first and foremost by “assimilation” which caused the “Negro people” to become “ashamed of themselves”, and, secondly by “rejection” which caused many “Negro people” to develop an “inferiority complex” (Depestre and Césaire 91). According to Césaire la Négritude worked to overcome assimilation, rejection, and any pathic feelings of inferiority by calling for a “concrete consciousness” of black identity, which was attained by accepting and affirming the “first facts” of black life, namely that black human being exists and has a history, and that this history contains “certain cultural elements of great value” and that “there have been beautiful and important black civilizations” that have played a significant role in the narrative development of human history (Depestre and Césaire 91-92). Césaire states that at the time that he and his compatriots “began to write” it was possible to generate a “history of world civilization without devoting a single chapter to Africa, as if Africa had made no contributions to the world” (Depestre and Césaire 92). It was against this attitude and historical erasure that led Césaire and his compatriots to develop their own respective conceptualizations of la Négritude. La Négritude allowed Césaire and his compatriots to affirm their own blackness and to reclaim their own identity while developing an authentic sense of human agency. Césaire’s la Négritude praised and celebrated blackness and demanded that “Negro heritage” was not only
worthy of respect but also espoused that its “values were values that could still make an important contribution to the world” (Depestre and Césaire 92). Césaire’s conception of la Négritude worked to spatiotemporally situate all human subjectivity in such a way as to allow for the totalized and autonomous development of all human subjects in the life world.

By 1987 Césaire’s conceptualization of la Négritude still contained elements of the spiritual and functioned as a form of self-discovery and self-affirmation, but it also extended its gaze toward the ethnocentric and metaphysical consequences that continued to plague the colonized as a result of global power systems including colonialism, coloniality, and imperialism. In a speech titled, “Le discours sur la Négritude/Discourse on Négritude,” which was delivered at Florida International University on 26 February 1987, Césaire speaks to the ethnocentric and metaphysical concerns of la Négritude:

> En fait, la Négritude n’est pas essentiellement de l’ordre du biologique. De toute evidence, par-delà le biologique immédiat, elle fait référence à quelque chose de plus profond, très exactement à une somme d’expériences vécues qui ont fini par définir et caractériser une des formes de l’humaine destinée telle que l’histoire l’a faite: c’est une des formes historiques de la condition faite à l’homme. (Césaire, “Le discours sur la Négritude” 80-81)

In fact, Négritude is not essentially a biological order. Of all the evidence, beyond the immediate biological evidence, it makes reference to something more profound, most exactly, to a sum of lived experiences that have come to define and characterize one of the forms of human destiny as history has made it: it is one of the historic forms of the condition made to man. (Césaire, “Discourse on Négritude” 80-81)

Here, Césaire locates the power of la Négritude in lived experience as a harbinger of human history—a historic record of the conditions which have shaped definitions of humanism and of what it means to be a human being alike. Césaire’s location of la

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12 This is my own, independently formulated translation from the original French into the English language.
Négritude as experiential directly ties the linguistic force of such a concept to Caribbean human subjectivity and black human subjectivity alike. This extension of the linguistic and metaphysical power of la Négritude allows the concept to expand the narrative of human history. Césaire states:

La Négritude n’est pas une métaphysique. La Négritude n’est pas une prétentieuse conception de l’univers. C’est une manière de vivre l’histoire dans l’histoire: l’histoire d’une communauté dont l’expérience apparaît, à vrai dire, singulière avec ses déportations de populations, ses transferts d’hommes d’un continent à l’autre, les souvenirs de croyances lointaines, ses débris de cultures assassinées. (Césaire, Le discours sur la Négritude 82)

Négritude is not a metaphysic. Négritude is not a pretentious conception of the universe. It is a way of living history within history: the history of a community whose experience appears, true to say, singular with its deportations of populations, the transfer of men from one continent to the other, the memories of distant beliefs, its debris of assassinated cultures.¹³ (Césaire, Le discours sur la Négritude 82)

Césaire employs la Négritude as a form of linguistic empowerment designed to rewrite the course of human history in such a way that allows world history to appear as worldly rather than from a Eurocentric perspective which, to say the least, has proven itself over the years to be exclusionary by nature. Césaire’s la Négritude is careful to focus attention on the experiential nature of human history and highlights the significance of finding commonality in the differences of each particular form of human subjectivity. Césaire’s conceptualization of human history can only be achieved through la Négritude as the concept draws its greatest strength from its call for authentic human agency to emerge. Further along in his speech Césaire fleshes out the significance and ramifications of la Négritude and authentic human agency:

Si la Négritude n’a pas été une impasse, c’est qu’elle menait autre part. Où nous menait-elle? Elle nous menait à nous-mêmes. Et de fait, c’était après une longue frustration, c’était la saisie par nous-mêmes de notre passé et, à travers la poésie,

¹³ This is my own, independently formulated translation from the original French into the English language.
à travers l’imaginaire, à travers le roman, à travers les œuvres d’art, la fulguration intermittente de notre possible devenir. Tremblement des concepts, séisme culturel, toutes les métaphores de l’isolement sont ici possibles. Mais l’essentiel est qu’avec elle était commencée une entreprise de réhabilitation de nos valeurs par nous-mêmes, d’approfondissement de notre passée par nous-mêmes, du ré-enracinement de nous-mêmes dans une histoire, dans une géographie et dans une culture, le tout se traduisant non pas par un passisme archaïsant, mais par une réactivation du passé en vue de son propre dépassement. (Césaire, Le discours sur la Négritude 85-86)

If Négritude has not been an impasse, it is because it was leading somewhere else. Where was it leading us? It was leading us to ourselves. And in fact, after a long frustration, it was the seizing by ourselves of our past and, through poetry, through the imaginary, through the novel, through works of art, the intermittent lightning flashes of our possible future. Trembling concepts, cultural earthquake, all the metaphors for isolation are here possible. But the essential point is that it started an enterprise of the rehabilitation of our values by ourselves, the in-depth study of our past by ourselves, the re-integrating of ourselves in a history, in a geography and in a culture, all of that translating itself not by an archaic attachment to the past but by a reactivation of the past in view of its own overcoming.14 (Césaire, “Le discours sur la Négritude” 85-86)

Césaire’s la Négritude is essentially tied to all aspects of human life. La Négritude, as a morpheme, conceptually, or as a way of life, ultimately leads each particular human subject toward one’s one true and authentic self. Césaire’s la Négritude involves an affirmation of authentic human agency that comes into being as a result of the intersection of lived experience and the pathic quality, or inner life, of human being. For Césaire, la Négritude is strengthened by its ability to interweave pathos and lived experience with the cultural, the societal, the political, and the economic interests of a given public on both a local and global scale. La Négritude remains powerful and resilient to this day because of its very design—la Négritude, through its very nature, is made strong by its capability to continuously overcome and renew itself through affirmations and projections of authentic human agency in the life world.

14 This is my own, independently formulated translation from the original French into the English language.
Chapter Three — Kenneth Burke and Lewis R. Gordon:

Constructing a Rhetorical and Phenomenological Framework

This dissertation project sets out to rhetorically, with the assistance of Kenneth Burke, and phenomenologically, with the assistance of Lewis R. Gordon, analyze the varying accounts of human subjectivity and embodiment that appear throughout the lines of Aimé Césaire’s epic palimpsestic poem, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* as well as throughout the course of Césaire’s own particular lived human experience. Burke’s rhetorical approach to human subjectivity and embodiment in the life world takes a metabiologic approach in that Burke examines the human subject as separate from the natural world because of humankind’s innate linguistic prowess and as firmly embedded within the natural world as the animal with language. Burke’s treatment of humankind examines parts of the whole at times but never examines the part as separate from the whole. Applying this rhetorical approach to Césaire’s poem allows the reader to generate a fuller and more complete account of human subjectivity from the texturing of the protagonist that Césaire offers and reoffers throughout the four published editions of *Cahier*. Lewis R. Gordon brings a corporeal approach to his phenomenological, existential, and ontological treatment of human subjectivity and embodiment. Gordon’s work lends a distinctly visceral level to the linguistic prowess of the animal with language. Gordon’s corporeal approach to the phenomenological implications of human subjectivity open up the lines of each published edition of Césaire’s *Cahier* to fully demonstrate the rich complex humanity of the protagonist, on the one hand, but also of Césaire himself, on the other hand. Burke’s rhetorical thought and Gordon’s
phenomenological thought provide access to the full complexity of human being in the 
life world both symbolically and corporeally through their varying approaches. Césaire’s 
work and presentation of human subjectivity becomes full and complete through this 
method of analysis because human subjectivity and embodiment are analyzed in terms of 
their synechdochal relationship and interconnected nature. This transdisciplinary method 
of analysis is made rich by the very particularity of its approach; in other words, the 
disciplines as a whole are made full, rich, and complete by the sum total of each part as it 
comes into being through relation with itself, Others, and the Lebenswelt or lived world 
as a whole.

Bryan Crable points to the significance of the rhetorical link shared between 
dialectical Burkean concepts such as nonsymbolic motion and symbolic action in his 
2003 journal article titled, “Kenneth Burke’s Continued Relevance: Arguments Toward a 
Better Life”, which appeared in the publication, Argumentation and Advocacy. Crable 
pushes against those who “simply identify motion as the ‘natural’ or ‘biological’” and 
those who identify “action as the ‘linguistic’ or ‘cultural’” (Crable, “Kenneth Burke’s” 
122-3). To bolster his point Crable points to Burke’s own thought on the subject as 
articulated in Kenneth Burke’s 1978 journal article titled, 
“(Nonsymbolic)Motion/(Symbolic)Action”:

both ‘Nature’ and ‘Culture’ would be on the symbolism side of the line. Thus, in 
effect, the case for the relation between biology and symbolism would be over 
anthropologized, as both ‘Nature’ and ‘Culture’ would be stages of ‘Culture,’ 
whereas ‘Nature’ is the precultural state out of which the human infant develops 
in acquiring the culture of its tribe. (Burke, “(Nonsymbolic)” 822)

Crable tells us, via Kenneth Burke, that the “‘nonsymbolic’ realm of motion is what it 
‘is’”; the nonsymbolic realm of motion “takes on its particular character” as a result of
the “basis of our symbolic constitutions of it” (Crable, “Kenneth Burke’s” 123).

According to Crable, humankind’s “symbolic conceptions of ‘nature’” infects its vision and the result is a “blindness of sorts” which only allows us to view and understand nonsymbolic motion “only insofar as it is already ‘translated’ into terms of symbolic action” (Crable, “Kenneth Burke” 123). In other words, Crable, via Kenneth Burke himself, strives to warn and attempt to correct humankind from the dangers of errantly attempting to separate the two. In line with Kenneth Burke’s thought on metabiology, nonsymbolic motion (or, the natural or biological) and symbolic action (or, the linguistic or cultural) together demonstrate the fullness and complexity of being human in the life world in such a way that one informs the other and they cannot be taken separately. The human being is a full and complete entity and cannot the whole cannot appear fully whole without the full sum of all of its parts.

Richard Thames approaches Kenneth Burke’s thought on nonsymbolic motion and symbolic action in its fullness rather than in an attempt to add together the sum of its parts. Thames finds language, or the linguistic capacity of human beings, as a “motive [that] is ultimately natural”—meaning the natural world would encompass more than the merely physical or material. Thames’ emphasis on recognizing the fullness of human subjectivity and embodiment echoes the thought of Bryan Crable as discussed in the preceding paragraph. Thames and Crable understand Burke’s thought on nonsymbolic motion and symbolic action on a meta-level and in terms of the fullness inherent in the very condition of being human. For Thames, Burke views “Nature as our larger Self” in such a way that human beings “do not live apart from It but are a part of It” (Thames, Persuasion’s 69). Nature and the natural world, understood in this way, is “not something
over which we rule” but rather something “within which we dwell”; nature is not a “slave to be conquered” but rather a “parent to be loved” (Thames, *Persuasion’s* 69). Bryan Crable picks up discussion of the relationship between human beings and nature or the natural world in his 2006 journal article titled, “Rhetoric, Anxiety, and Character Armor: Burke’s Interactional Rhetoric of Identity”. In the article Crable examines Burke’s definition of human existence through the “claim that we are not equivalent to animals”; for Burke, to “be an animal is to live relatively simply, within an environment pre-programmed with significance”—in pure Burkean terms, “to move, but not act” (Crable, “Rhetoric, Anxiety” 5). Human beings are not equivalent to animals because part of the condition of being human involves not being “governed by bodily instincts” but rather using “symbols” or complex symbol systems to linguistically “confer the power of transcendence over the ‘state of nature’” (Crable, “Rhetoric, Anxiety” 5). Crable also emphasizes Burke’s point that “human symbol systems ‘have a second-level (or ‘reflexive’) aspect’ which allows human beings to “talk about themselves” (Crable, “Rhetoric, Anxiety” 5). The use of symbols as a linguistic or communicative means of expression allows human beings to “unleash a new power in the world” because symbols “allow human beings to both go beyond the natural world and comment upon our situation” (Crable, “Rhetoric, Anxiety” 5-6). Thames and Crable both highlight the oscillation present in Kenneth Burke’s thought in terms of human embodiment or situatedness in the surrounding *Lebenswelt* or life world. Burke thinks of human existence in its fullness and through all of its complexity and he presents accounts of it throughout his work from a metabiological point of view. That is to say that Burke oscillates between the general and the particular elements of human embodiment.
throughout his work and is careful to always discuss and highlight the commonalities, divergences, and interrelationships between the realm of the nonsymbolic, or the realm of motion, and the realm of the symbolic, or the realm of action.

This dissertation project enacts a rhetorical, with the assistance of Kenneth Burke, and phenomenological, with the assistance of Lewis R. Gordon, framework for analysis of human subjectivity and embodiment as portrayed in both the depiction of the protagonist and in Aimé Césaire’s own particular lived experience as expressed linguistically and symbolically throughout the four published versions of Césaire’s Cahier. Burke’s work opens up the linguistic and symbolic capacities of human subjectivity and embodiment when read in tandem with Césaire’s Cahier. Lewis R. Gordon’s phenomenological work brings to light a distinctly corporeal aspect when read in tandem with Césaire’s Cahier. Gordon’s intellectual work in general is transdisciplinary in nature and, as a result, has implications and opens up new opportunities for further study across the disciplines. The very nature of Lewis R. Gordon’s transdisciplinary intellectual work has geo-epistemic ramifications that transcend the ordinary boundaries and confines of disciplinarity in particular, and instead contributes to the continued accumulation and proliferation of knowledge in general. One recent outlet wherein the transdisciplinary nature of Lewis R. Gordon’s work and resultant geo-epistemic contributions can be analyzed is in the collection of essays that comprise a 2011 special issue of the Atlantic Journal of Communication titled, “Beyond Disciplinary Decadence: Communicology in the Thought of Lewis R. Gordon”. The special issue features a series of essays from a collection of communication and philosophy scholars that address the transdisciplinary nature of Lewis R. Gordon’s
scholarship. Gordon, in tandem with Burke, both demonstrate the ability to work synechdochally in their respective analyses of the relationships shared between and interrelated nature of the part and the whole or the general and the particular. Burke does this rhetorically, symbolically, and linguistically, whereas Gordon accomplishes this phenomenologically, existentially, and ontologically. Both Burke and Gordon, from their own respective frames of reference, and as parts of a greater whole, oscillate between the general and the particular and the ramifications that emerge from such investigation in their respective scholarship. Burke and Gordon’s methods of analysis are similar in that they both move between general and the particular in efforts to situate the full richness and complexity of human subjectivity and human embodiment both linguistically and corporeally. It is for this very reason that this dissertation project strives to bring together the rhetorical work of Kenneth Burke and the phenomenological work of Lewis R. Gordon; the two together, both rhetorically and phenomenologically offer a method of analysis that results in the development, presentation, and situatedness of a fully rich and complete understanding of human subjectivity and human embodiment in the life world by looking fully and completely at the condition of being human in the life world and the very processes and interactions that shape the continued development of the human throughout the general and particular course of being in the life world.

Kenneth Burke and Symbolic Action

Human beings are, by nature, storied and relational beings. Humans tell stories about lived experiences in an effort to relate to and understand the surrounding life world, one another, and one’s self. Human beings are relational beings and engage in story telling activities to generate community, construct and sustain an individual and
collective imaginary, to preserve and generate geo-epistemic structures, to enact memory, and to recount and account for the narrative construction of human history. According to Walter Fisher, “recounting and accounting for constitute stories” that human beings tell themselves and one another in order to “establish a meaningful life-world” and as a manner through which to relate “a ‘truth’ about the human condition” (Fisher 62). Fisher finds the “Homo narrans” metaphor, or humankind as narrative relational creatures, to operate as an “incorporation and extension of Burke’s definition of ‘man’ as the ‘symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal.’” (Fisher 63). According to Fisher, the human use of narrative and storytelling “posits the generic form of all symbolic composition” in such a way that allow symbols to be “created and communicated” as stories which “give order” to lived human experience. The use of symbols also encourages other human beings to “dwell” in narrative as a way of living in common with others, in generating “intellectual and spiritual communities”, and as a way of attaining “confirmation for the story that constitutes one’s life” (Fisher 63). Fisher states that human life is, “as suggested by Burke”, first and foremost a “story” that “participates” in the stories of “those who have lived, who live now, and who will live in the future” (Fisher 63). Narrative or storytelling, then, encompass and make accessible all of lived human experience through the use of symbols, symbol systems, symbolicity, and ultimately through the creation and use of language as a form of the symbolic via symbolic action. Such a narrative employment of the symbol as representational of lived human experience allows humankind to begin to grapple with and make sense of one’s own particular subjectivity, the subjectivity of other human beings, and the objectivity and subjectivity that constitutes the surrounding life world or Lebenswelt. The symbolic
The use of symbols and of symbolic action in narrative and storytelling allows particular human subjectivities to come to know and make sense of one’s own lived experience as well as the lived experience of other human subjects in the Lebenswelt. Symbols and symbolic action allow human beings to understand lived experience in terms of both its particularities and its generalities. Symbols and symbolic action make it possible for human beings to participate in universal experiences, or the “various kinds of moods, feelings, emotions, perceptions, sensations, and attitudes” that all human subjects have the capacity to access (Burke, *Counter-Statement* 149). According to Kenneth Burke, universal experiences are considered to be universal because “all men, under certain conditions, and when not in mental or physical collapse, are capable of experiencing them” (Burke, *Counter-Statement* 149). Human beings are able to access universal experience through what Burke calls “modes of experience” which arise “out of a relationship between the organism and its environment” (Burke, *Counter-Statement* 150). Burke finds the modes of universal experience to include both the “[f]rustration and gratification of bodily needs” as well as “ethical systems”, “customs”, and the “ideology or code of values among which one is raised” (Burke, *Counter-Statement* 150). Universal experiences and the modes which provide access to human experience are universal and therefore accessible to all individual human subjects specifically because of their pathic location within the heart of human affectivity. Universal experiences and the modes of human experience, particularly when expressed through narrative or storytelling in their Lebenswelt.
symbolic form draw their very symbolism from the wellspring of pathos and affectivity. As sentient beings, all human subjects experience pathic emotion and affectivity when trying to come to terms with and make sense of one’s own particular human subjectivity, the particularities of other human subjectivities, and the surrounding *Lebenswelt.*

Burke continues his examination of the symbolic capacity of language as representational of lived human experience in narrative or storytelling form by drawing a distinction between that which is magical and that which is rhetorical. Burke considers magic to be a form of “a ‘primitive rhetoric’” that is “not rooted in any past condition of human society” (Burke, *A Rhetoric* 43). Rhetoric, on the other hand, “is rooted in an essential function of language itself”, a function of language that is both “wholly realistic” and is “continually born anew” through the use of “language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols” (Burke, *A Rhetoric* 43). Burke finds rhetoric and magic to be intertwined in that both rely upon the “persuasive use of language” through the use of symbols or of symbolic action (Burke, *A Rhetoric* 43). Burke finds primitive magic and magic to be “faulty derivation[s]” of the persuasive use of language which attempts to produce “linguistic responses in kinds of beings not accessible to the linguistic motive” (Burke, *A Rhetoric* 43). Rhetoric, the persuasive use of language, and the linguistic employment of the symbolic and of symbolic action, allows language to function “as addressed”, or as a “direct or roundabout appeal to real or ideal audiences, without or within” (Burke, *A Rhetoric* 43-44). The use of rhetoric as a linguistic form of symbolic action introduces an element of persuasiveness in humankind’s attempt to come to terms with and understand not only one’s own self but also with one’s own particular subjectivity as it comes into contact
with the particularities of other human subjects in the Lebenwelt. Rhetoric, as a linguistic symbol, draws upon persuasion as a mode of universal experience that all human beings are able to access when attempting to understand the self on its own, in relation to others, and in relation to the surrounding life world or Lebenwelt.

In his 1966 text, Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method, Kenneth Burke offers his five-clause definition of man which squarely situates humankind within and between the Lebenwelt and the realm of the symbolic. According to Burke,

*Man is*
the symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal
inventor of the negative (or moralized by the negative)
separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making
goaded by the spirit of hierarchy (or moved by the sense of order)
and rotten with perfection. (Burke, Language as Symbolic Action 16)

Burke examines humankind as an animal steeped in symbolicity. This bifurcated understanding of the human condition situates human being squarely within the Lebenwelt as individual human subjects come to terms with the first facts of their existence and express said facts linguistically through the use of symbol systems or of symbolic action. For Burke, “‘symbolicity’” involves the linguistic expressions of cognitive processes while “‘animality’” speaks to the “realm for our sheer bodily processes” as well as “sheer ‘physicality’” (Burke, Language as 27-28). The animality of human being manifests in the desire for “food, shelter, mates, [and] rest” whereas symbolicity tends to manifest in “complex, alembicidated” forms that “arise out of our symbolicity” as “the aims developed by custom, education, political system, moral codes, religion, money, and so on” (Burke, Language as 28). According to Burke, “‘symbolicity’” is composed of “four primary linguistic dimensions” which include (1)
“logic, or grammar;” (2) “rhetoric, the *horatory* use of language, to induce cooperation by persuasion and dissuasion; (3) “ethics”, or the manner in which human beings express their character “through language” whether intentionally done or not; and, (4) “Poetics”, or the “sheer exercise of ‘symbolicity’ (or ‘symbolic action’) for its own sake, purely for the love of the art” (Burke, *Language as* 28-29). Burke points to a passage in Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria* to highlight his understanding of the linguistic capabilities of symbolicity and of symbolic action. Coleridge states: “Every man’s language has, first, its *individualities*; secondly, the common properties of the class to which he belongs; and thirdly, words and phrases of *universal* use.” (Burke, *Language as* 28). Burk points to a passage in Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria* to highlight his understanding of the linguistic capabilities of symbolicity and of symbolic action. Coleridge states: “Every man’s language has, first, its *individualities*; secondly, the common properties of the *class* to which he belongs; and thirdly, words and phrases of *universal* use.” (Burke, *Language as* 28). Burke interprets this passage through the ethical dimension of language and finds that language reflects the “‘personal equations’ by which each person is different from any one else” and by which each person possess a “unique combination of experiences and judgments” (Burke, *Language as* 28). The individuality of language, for Burke, allows “each poet” to speak his or her “own dialect” on one end of the dialectic and on the other, highlights the ways in which human beings “use language ‘universally’” (Burke, *Language as* 28). Human beings are symbol-using animals that approach “everything” in the Lebenswelt through “modes of thought developed by the use of symbol systems” (Burke, *Language as* 28). Poetics, for Burke, allows human beings to demonstrate their symbolic prowess, and perhaps also enjoyment of it, through the use of language. Poetics, poetry, and the poem allow human beings as the symbol-using animal to linguistically make sense of the self, others, and the surrounding Lebenswelt through the use of complex symbol systems or the employment of symbolic action. A poem functions not just “as poem” but also as an “example of *language in general*” in the same way that human being is bifurcated
between the realms of animality and symbolicity (Burke, *Language as* 29). The linguistic employment of symbolicity or of language as symbolic action allows human beings to be able to come to terms with the circumstances that characterize their existence and, at the same time, allows them to enter into relation with the self, others, and the *Lebenswelt* by symbolically communicating with and through language.

In a 1989 Kenneth Burke published a poem titled, “Poem”, in the anthology, *The Legacy of Kenneth Burke* which builds upon his definition of man and develops into a definition of human being. Burke’s “Poem” reads:

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BEING BODIES THAT LEARN LANGUAGE
THEREBY BECOMING WORDLINGS
HUMANS ARE THE
SYMBOL-MAKING, SYMBOL-USING, SYMBOL-MISUSING ANIMAL
INVENTOR OF THE NEGATIVE
SEPARATED FROM OUR NATURAL CONDITION
BY INSTRUMENTS OF OUR OWN MAKING
GOADED BY THE SPIRIT OF HIERARCHY
ACQUIRING FOREKNOWLEDGE OF DEATH
AND ROTTEN WITH PERFECTION

FROM WITHIN OR
FROM OUT OF THE VAST EXPANSES OF THE
INFINITE WORDLESS UNIVERSE
WE WORDY HUMAN BODIES HAVE CARVED
MANY OVERLAPPING UNIVERSES OF DISCOURSE
WHICH ADD UP TO A
PLURIVERSE OF DISCOURSES
LOCAL DIALECTS OF DIALECTIC (Burke, “Poem” 263)
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For Burke, human beings are “wordlings” who “learn language” and make, use, and misuse symbols. A human being’s use of symbols or of symbolic action as a form of language demonstrates the human ability to operate on a “neurological as well as a biological” level (S. Foss, K. Foss, and Trapp 210). That is to say that human beings exist and participate in the realm of symbolicity as well as in the realm of animality or of
beastiality. The “principle of the negative” or of negativity is “inherent in a symbol system” and, as such, the concept that “something can be not something else” is made possible “only through language” (S. Foss, K. Foss, and Trapp 210). The principle of the negative is significant because it exists solely in the human realm or in the realm of symbolicity; the negative “does not exist in nature” or in the natural world where things “simply are” (S. Foss, K. Foss, and Trapp 210). The principle of the negative is situated squarely and solely in the realm of symbolicity, not in the realm of animality. The principle of the negative can be understood to function as one of the instruments that human beings have created that separate and alienate them from their natural condition. Nature, or the natural realm, for Burke is always grounded in the biologic or in biology. Humankind developed and situated human being in the realm of symbolicity with the “tool of language” (S. Foss, K. Foss, and Trapp 210). Linguistic communication and the use of language allows human beings to “transcend” biology, or the natural world, and can never again be or exist “in a purely natural condition” because once language has been developed “it ‘is ever present’” which causes individual human subjects to “perceive nature through the fog of symbol-ridden social structures” (S. Foss, K. Foss, and Trapp 210). Reality, then, becomes a socially constructed phenomenon that exists solely in the realm of symbolicity and manifests differently in nature or in the realm of animality. Symbols are the instruments of human invention and linguistic instruments, for Burke, encompass “all of the tools that have been invented with language” (S. Foss, K. Foss, and Trapp 210-211). Human beings are goaded by the spirit of hierarchy which ultimately to the development of a system of ordering or of structuring humankind and human society. Human beings, who dwell in symbolicity, differ from other animals
because humans have access to the “foreknowledge of death” (S. Foss, K. Foss, and Trapp 211). Human beings are able to access knowledge of and understand death both “through the acquisition of language” and on a corporeal level (S. Foss, K. Foss, and Trapp 211). Human beings are able to understand death linguistically because they dwell in the realm of symbolicity and human beings are able to understand death corporeally because, as the symbol-using animal, they are also a part of the realm of animality. Human beings are also rotten with a sense of perfection and continuously “desire completion” which they attempt to attain by infusing their lives with the often unattainable ideal or concept of perfection (S. Foss, K. Foss, and Trapp 211). In the second stanza of Burke’s “Poem” and conceptualization of what it means to be human, Burke shifts his examination of human beings from the lens of individual or particular human subjectivity and toward an examination of general human subjectivity. Burke uses language as a form of symbolic action to move the investigation out of the realm of animality and toward the realm of symbolicity. In the second stanza of his poem Burke looks at both individual and collective human subjectivity through the individual (universe of discourse) and collective (pluriverse of discourse) use of language as a mode of human communication. Each particular human subject generates a “universe of discourse” whereas a collectivity of human subjects generates a “pluriverse of discourse” or a “dialect of dialectics” (Burke, “Poem” 263). This dialectical positioning of the symbolic capacity of language positions humankind squarely within both the realm of symbolicity (language) and animality (biology)—the human subject does not exist in one realm or the other but inhabits and embodies both simultaneously.
Human beings, as symbol-using animals, simultaneously experience life in the realm of animality and in the realm of symbolicity as they grapple to make sense of and come to terms with the circumstances that comprise everyday life. According to Burke, a “specifically symbol-using animal” will “necessarily introduce a symbolic ingredient into every experience” and the concept of “[s]heer ‘animality’” is not possible to the “sensory experiences of a symbol-using animal” (Burke, “Postscripts on” 209). For Burke, human beings are “‘rational animal[s]’ sometimes” but they are “‘symbol-using animal[s]’ all the time” (Burke, “The Party” 64). In his 1976 article titled, “The Party Line”, Burke aligns his understanding of action, specifically of symbolic action with Aristotle’s conception of the “‘act’” (Burke, “The Party” 64). Burke “feel[s] most at peace with [him]self when [he is] on his side” and finds that he “can be” because Aristotle’s “key term is ‘act’” and Burke’s “theories of language and human relations are built around the term, ‘symbolic action’” (Burke, “The Party” 64). Burke continues to outline that his understanding of symbolic action, at its most basic level, revolves around conceptualizing a “total distinction between the realms of (symbolic) action and (nonsymbolic) motion” (Burke, “The Party” 65). Burke finds the distinction between action and motion to be “the central issue with regard to his fully developed theory” of symbolic action and understands symbolic action to manifest in “‘The Nature of Form; Patterns of Experience; Ritual; Permanence, Universality, [and] Perfection’” (Burke, “The Party” 65). Burke also states that his full and final definition of symbolic action is “published as the first chapter” in his 1966 text, “Language as Symbolic Action” (Burke, “The Party” 65). Burke’s understanding of action lies in the realm of the symbolic or that of symbolicity. The symbolic capacity of language allows human beings to cohabit multiple realms of
existence which both together and individually all form the basis of lived human experience in the Lebenswelt.

Burke locates action in the realm of symbolicity; he finds action to be representative of the symbolic and motion to be representative of the nonsymbolic. For Burke, the “realm of motion is now par excellence the realm of instruments” and it is not possible for an instrument to “record or gauge anything in the realm of action (‘ideas’)” unless the “subject-matter” in question can be “reduced to the realm of motion” (Burke, A Grammar 234). This ambiguity between action and motion calls back the same “philosophic issue that arose with Cartesian dualism” and has led to the development of a “vocabulary” that rests halfway “between ‘mind’ and ‘body’”, or halfway between the “terms for the act of ‘consciousness’” and the “terms for the scenic ‘conditions’ of those manifestations we call consciousness” (Burke, A Grammar 234-235). Action and symbolic action rest in the mind or in the act of consciousness while motion manifests in the body or in the material conditions that constitute consciousness. Symbolic action lives and thrives in the mind or in the realm of ideas and motion comes to life as the human body comes into contact with the surrounding life world or Lebenswelt. Motion, or the nonsymbolic, manifests both in the body and in the material conditions that collectively constitute the Lebenswelt. Motion or the nonsymbolic, as an instrument, does not possess the capability to access the realm of action. Action or symbolic action lives and thrives in the realm of ideas or in the life of the mind. Action, more particularly symbolic action, enters into the realm of symbolicity and uses symbols to linguistically represent lived human experience in the Lebenswelt. The linguistic use of symbols as a representation of action and symbolic action assists in expressing, recording, sharing, and communicating
the lived experience of one particular human subject with the rest of humankind. The ambiguity or the between of action and motion (or, the ambiguity of mind and body, of ideality and materiality), when taken collectively, constitute that which Kenneth Burke calls symbolic action. Symbolic action is neither solely grounded in action (the mind, ideality), nor is it solely grounded in motion (the body, materiality), rather, it relies upon both to express, record, share, and communicate human experience in the life world.

Burke furthers his examination of action and poetry as a linguistic expression of Symbolic action through discussion of metaphor. Burke draws a distinction between the “purposive or teleological metaphor (the metaphor of human action or poetry)” and the “mechanistic metaphor (the vis a tergo causality of machinery) in his 1935 text, Permanence and Change. Burke finds the mechanistic metaphor to be “objectionable” because it “leaves too much out of account” of lived human experience; the mechanistic metaphor “is truncated” and only displays “those aspects of experience which can be phrased with its terms” (Burke, Permanence and 261). The poetic metaphor, on the other hand, is “buttressed by the concept of recalcitrance”, its “ultimate goal” is a “society in which the participant aspect of action attained its maximum expression”, and, it places great stress upon the communicative (Burke, Permanence and 261; 269-270). The mechanistic metaphor is limiting, does not squarely describe the possibilities contained within lived human experience, and, can only be described in terms of its own mechanics. The mechanistic metaphor is laden with hierarchy and systems of order whereas the poetic metaphor works to squarely capture lived human experience as human beings grapple and come to terms with the first facts of their existence with themselves as well as the relationship between themselves and others and
themselves and the surrounding life world or Lebenwelt. The poetic metaphor employs language symbolically to express, record, share, and communicate lived human experience. The poetic metaphor dwells in action and symbolicity in its efforts to symbolically enact language as a mirror of lived human experience. Poetry and action work hand in hand to symbolically reconcile the life of the mind with that of the Lebenwelt—in order to achieve totality humankind must simultaneously dwell in both the realm of action (the mind, ideality) and that of motion (the body or biologic, materiality). Human beings, as the symbol-using animal, therefore must dwell as much in the realm of symbolicity or of the symbolic, as in the biologic, or natural world while they strive to make sense of and come to terms with the very conditions that serve to characterize everyday life in the Lebenwelt.

Lewis R. Gordon and the Phenomenology of Black Human Subjectivity

The condition of being human in the life world, or Lebenwelt, is a complicated (and also bifurcated) situation at best. The condition of being human in the life world requires and embodies the most peculiar unity of contraries wherein to be or to exist is also as much not to be or not to exist. Lewis R. Gordon understands the condition of being human as “linked both to the free and the unfree” and the latter of the two constitutes the “human being’s situation in the world” (L.R. Gordon, Bad Faith 16). Gordon understands the concept of situatedness to generate meaning in “confrontation” with aspects of the human “condition” that are out of the “control” of the human—for example, humankind’s “past biography and the freedom of others” (L.R. Gordon Bad Faith 16). In the case of slavery, the situatedness of the slave tends to manifests as a “function of the slave’s choice to assert his equality” in confrontation with the “master’s
choice to deny it” (L.R. Gordon, Bad Faith 16). Children born into slavery often learn this the hard way, according to Gordon. A child born into slavery is “born on a plantation” and his or her situation in the life world is one such that he or she only sees his or her mother when it is time to receive “nourishment” which is often paired with forms of affection including “love” and “kindness” (L.R. Gordon, Bad Faith 16). When the child is old enough to speak and walk, one day, he or she will decide to pursue his or her mother as she heads to work in the fields and will inevitably hear the “crack of a whip” as he or she “discovers” and attempts to pursue a “peculiar point in the distance” outside the stringently drawn confines of his or her particular Lebenswelt (L.R. Gordon, Bad Faith 16). The child will decide to pursue mother in spite of the initial sound of the whip and this time “the whip lashes across his [or her] back and tears open his [or her] flesh” and suddenly the child’s situation or “factual horizon” becomes clear—his or her horizon “stops short of the point in the distance” but others are able to “roam there freely” (L.R. Gordon, Bad Faith, 16). The tearing open of flesh makes the slave child aware of the “limitations” imposed upon his or her particular existence” and as a result the child becomes “conscious” of his or her situatedness “as a slave” (L.R. Gordon, Bad Faith 16). Gordon offers this example to demonstrate how the reality of being human “constitutes itself in the flesh” as the “nihilation of a possibility” for one human reality (the situation of the slave) but simultaneously “projects its possibility” to constitute another human reality, that of the slave owner (L.R. Gordon, Bad Faith 16). While the lived reality of the slave begins and is situated within the negative, the slave as a human being is also “conscious of the beyond” and is “aware of not fully being a slave”—the situation of the slave is bifurcated in that the “situation of the slave is that of being a slave

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and simultaneously not being a slave” (L.R. Gordon, *Bad Faith* 16-17). The institution of slavery places “limitations on the options over which the slave chooses” but does not limit the “slave’s ability to choose”—central to this institution is the conception of the “ideal slave” or the “effort to make him, in his [or her] entirety, into a slave” (L.R. Gordon, *Bad Faith* 17). The slave must still come to terms with a bifurcated sense of self wherein one part of his or her existence is linguistically and corporeally codified and the other part is very aware of the master’s attempt to enslave and totally control all aspects of his or her lived experience. An “ideal slave”, according to Gordon, does not resist this process but blindly succumbs to the master’s vision of the slave and internalizes it in such a way that it becomes representative of the slave’s individual existence and the slave no longer thinks that he or she can exist in the world of human being otherwise (L.R. Gordon, *Bad Faith* 17). This totalizing effort to breed “ideal slave[s]” serves as an example of Lewis R. Gordon has come to call “bad faith”, or the anguish-riddled-flight from anguish, involves an effort to take advantage of the human condition as freedom and the human being as a being who lacks some control over the impact of others’ freedom to affect and to effect certain aspects of its various situations. In bad faith I may assert that what I ‘really am’ transcends my situation in the world; for example, I ‘am’ my freedom but not my gender or biography. Or I may try to take refuge in those aspects of my situation over which I seem to lack control; I can assert that I can’t help being what I am. Further, I can make an effort to be what I was or to disengage myself entirely from my past and my present by claiming only to be what I will become. Each of these cases involves taking refuge in a form of being what I ‘really am,’ as though my ‘real’ being is as static and as complete as a stone. I can try to take refuge away from myself as a conscious being and take advantage of my situation of also being presented to others as a being subject to their interpretation of me. I can claim that other people have knowledge of a self that is ‘me’ but that that self is not really me. Or I may claim that the self that is presented to others is the real me. In either case, it is another effort to take refuge in what I ‘really am.’ (L.R. Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiblack Racism* 16-17)
Bad faith attempts to replace one’s own particular human subjectivity or sense of self with a subjectivity that is externally imposed and is not innate to each individual human subject. Such an attempt to replace or erase subjectivity on the one hand has led to the development of the ideal slave through a process of linguistic and corporeal brainwashing and, on the other hand, led to the development of sentient human subjects who reject this imposed external consciousness and revolt in an effort to sustain and maintain their own particular human subjectivity. Bad faith, in this light, serves as a linguistic marker of geoeipistemic colonization, the ramifications of which are still very much alive and resonant in the current historical moment as they were throughout the narrative development of human history.

In his 2010 essay titled, “Theory in Black: Teleological Suspensions in Culture”, Lewis R. Gordon describes the phenomenological ramifications of being black in the life world. Gordon finds the human action of “[s]peech” to be “crucial for social appearance” and sees it expressed through the “face” and the “gesturing force of the hands” (Gordon, “Theory in” 209). Gordon states that “black faces” are often distorted to the “point of near speechlessness or emotive cacophony” which results in the condition of “facelessness” in the social realm of the \textit{Lebenswelt} (L.R. Gordon, “Theory in” 209). In order for “black speech” to be heard and “appear as speech” necessitates a connection to “reason” that brings blackness or “melancholy to the fore” (L.R. Gordon, “Theory in 210). Black beings or colored beings “struggle against unreason in the modern world”, but it is a form of “unreason” that cloaks itself as “reason” thus creating a “neurotic situation” of black or colored beings “having to fight an unreasoning reason reasonably” (L.R. Gordon, “Theory in” 210). Gordon finds “melancholy” to represent the “loss born”
of black subjectivity, which, for Gordon, is a “productive loss” because the condition of black suffering involves “having to transcend a world that is the condition of black being” (L.R. Gordon, “Theory in” 210). Black suffering embodies the paradox of black human subjects “living as exiles in the world from which they are born”—it is in this sense that black human subjects become and are “homeless in their home” (L.R. Gordon, “Theory in” 210). The condition of freedom in the Lebenswelt “ultimately demands going home” for it is in one’s home that “one can really speak freely, can really appear” (L.R. Gordon, “Theory in” 210). Black human subjects find themselves unable to return to such a home and as such experience what Lewis R. and Jane Anna Gordon have explored as the “problem of cultural disaster” (L.R. Gordon, “Theory in” 210). The problem of cultural disaster involves a phenomenon wherein a “culture is frozen in its past as a consequence of colonization”; the result of such an act is that a group of human subjects, in this case black human subjects, are rendered “homeless in the present” because they can only exist or “live in the past” (L.R. Gordon, “Theory in” 210). The condition of speechlessness, therefore, leads to geo-epistemic and corporeal erasure that results in bad faith, cultural disaster, and the condition of existential homelessness in the present as the first facts of being black in the life world or Lebenswelt.

For Lewis R. Gordon black speech is cloaked in melancholy, or melancholia, which led to a loss of subjectivity that manifested in the conditions of speechlessness and of facelessness. The conditions of sleeplessness and of facelessness lead to geo-epistemic and corporeal erasure on the one hand and generate conceptions of “speechless or linguistically challenged monsters” on the other (Gordon and Gordon 74). These language-less monsters could be “dazzled by the use of signs and referents” but
ultimately would “remain locked outside worlds of their use” (Gordon and Gordon 74). This dichotomy of speech and speechlessness led to the development of those deemed to be speechless, in this case those born into black human subjectivity, to appear as less than a human subject, or to exist in the realm of animality or beastiality. Markings of the ramifications of this linguistic distinction have appeared in literature throughout the course of human history and one such example can be seen in William Shakespeare’s 1610 play, *The Tempest* through Shakespeare’s portrayal of the character of “Caliban and the world he represented” (Gordon and Gordon 74). Caliban appears in Shakespeare’s play as barely human and is portrayed as having more in common with animality and beastiality than he does with human being. Caliban is alleged to be the son of the witch Sycorax and the devil, and appears to have come straight out of nature when viewed through the eyes of reason or through civilized eyes. Caliban becomes a significant literary figure because he comes to embody and represent those who exist outside of civilization or outside of reason. Caliban’s general nature coupled with his outward appearance cast him as more beastly than human, though Caliban does possess language and also possesses the capacity to feel human emotion. Caliban experiences speechlessness and facelessness through his enslavement to Prospero and is left to reconcile the dialectic of his own being, as it appears to him from the inside out, with an externally imposed subjectivity handed down through the confines of slavery that dictates the very circumstances and conditions of his being in the human world. Such dialectical positioning in the *Lebenswelt* renders Caliban speechless and faceless when viewed through the eyes of reason or through civilized eyes.
Being black in the life world is a multifaceted form of consciousness that is not always or necessarily recognized as such. A “black body” in the Lebenswelt is subjected to a type of “logic” that is “premised upon an identity relation between fact and value” (L.R. Gordon, “Existential Dynamics” 70). Black being is seen as the “inferior Other” and becomes a “fundamental project” that helps to establish conceptualizations of the “Superior Self”, whose very superiority is generated from within its own being or existence (L.R. Gordon, “Existential Dynamics” 70). According to Lewis R. Gordon, this dichotomous and dialectical understanding of inferiority and Superiority and of the Other and the Self take on ontological, existential, and phenomenological significance. From an ontological, existential, and phenomenological perspective, blackness or being black becomes imbued with a different set of meanings and values than being African or being Caribbean. Blackness falls categorically into perception in such a way that one can “see a black before an African American or Afro-Caribbean” (L.R. Gordon, “Existential Dynamics” 71). For Gordon, “blackness transcends Africanness” and carries with it an “aetiological significance” that unfolds in the “drama of purgation”; in other words, blackness aetiologically pollutes whiteness or purity (L.R. Gordon, “Existential Dynamics” 71). The aetiological significance of blackness becomes visible morphologically at the level of appearance and perception. From an aetiological perspective black being in the life world is imbued with a sense of absence, the absence of whiteness or of purity, which sets the conditions for black existence in the Lebenswelt and makes it next to impossible for black being to achieve totality in the life world. Gordon locates the crucial point of such a “presence-absence dichotomy” in the body, more specifically in the black body, wherein the body as a “material standpoint of
inquiry” is unable to surpass itself (L.R. Gordon, “Existential Dynamics” 71). From an ontological, existential, and phenomenological perspective, this notion of unsurpassability is quite problematic, particularly for black bodies, because the human corpus (the body) is understood to contain “every possibility from perspective to freedom to meaning” (L.R. Gordon, “Existential Dynamics” 71). The human body serves as each being’s individual point of “perspective in the world” and each individual perspective contains three dimensions, namely, the dimension of “seeing”, the dimension of “being seen”, and the dimensions of “being conscious of being seen by others” (L.R. Gordon, “Existential Dynamics” 71). Black bodies, because of the very blackness of the body, undergoes a form of ontological, existential, and phenomenological exclusion that prohibits it from attaining totality in the Lebenswelt. Blackness is seen as a form of melancholia or of impurity which inhibits black beings from participating and constituting their own consciousness in the same way as other beings are able to do in the life world. Blackness is unable to surpass the material conditions of its own existence and as such falls categorically into that of inferiority and of Otherness. Black bodies are ontologically, existentially, and phenomenologically excluded from the life world because they are often seen, understood, and interpreted categorically rather than from the totalized, autonomous, and liminal perspective that Superior selves enjoy in the life world.

The ontological, existential, and phenomenological implications of the dialectics of the inferiority of Otherness and the Superiority of the Self manifest in the realm of human being in the forms and conditions of namelessness and anonymity. Namelessness, for Lewis R. Gordon, is a “mundane feature” of the way in which human beings “each
move through the social world” (L.R. Gordon, *Her Majesty’s* 36). If one is nameless or suffers the condition of namelessness, other human beings move by those who are nameless in the life world without ever really seeing or attending to the individual subjectivity of the nameless being. To be nameless requires the existence of individual human subjectivity—“the cashier handing us our change, the student hurrying to class, the unfortunate stranger whose hat was blown off on a cold, windy, day, the attractive man or woman who gave us a smile”, our “ancestors and descendants”, and our “predecessors and successors”—all exist and possess an “inner life-world of mystery” and all oftentimes we pass by as nameless in the life world (L.R. Gordon, *Her Majesty’s* 36). Anonymity, according to Gordon, is a condition of namelessness and does not necessarily require concrete existence in the life world. Anonymity belongs to one’s “ancestors and descendants” as well as to one’s “predecessors and successors” in that we never fully know or come to contact with their existence in the life world (L.R. Gordon, *Her Majesty’s* 36). In the case of our ancestors and predecessors we know that they existed in the Lebenswelt at a point in time removed from our present moment so that we know of their existence but never fully come into contact with their being. We find remnants of their existence in the form of “dusty letters in the attic” that offer a glimpse into a past life or into a moment different from ours that passed by long ago (L.R. Gordon, *Her Majesty’s* 36). In the case of our descendants and successors, existence is not guaranteed but rather we imagine that others in our familial blood lines might exist one day and wonder what their existence will be like in the Lebenswelt. We never fully come in contact with the potentiality of their existence and the conditions of their very existence rests in potentiality and possibility alike— their existence is not a concrete
manifestation in the life world as ours is. Though these forms of namelessness and anonymity pass by the individual subjectivity of human beings in the life world they do not erase nor displace human subjectivity in the Lebenswelt. Lewis R. Gordon, by way of and in line with Frantz Fanon, warns of the dangers of “perverse forms of anonymity” which take shape in the form of a set of “social relations” that are mired in and by “bad faith” (L.R. Gordon, *Her Majesty’s* 37). Perverse forms of anonymity, driven by bad faith, things in the life world “become what they are based on what they are not” and things in the life world “become what they are not based on what they are” (L.R. Gordon, *Her Majesty’s* 37). Gordon states that in this schema black human beings are “invisible” because of how the “black is ‘seen’”; not heard because of how the “black is ‘heard’”; not felt because of how the “black ‘feels’”; the result of which manifests in the “perversity of ‘seen invisibility’” or in the form of “‘absent presence’” (L.R. Gordon, *Her Majesty’s* 37). This form of seen invisibility becomes a possible phenomenon of human existence in the life world through the condition of bad faith which breeds perverse anonymity. For Gordon, bad faith “manifests itself in convincing ourselves of the nonhumanity of others and ourselves” (L.R. Gordon, *Her Majesty’s* 37). When encountering another human being in the Lebenswelt there is always more “about the human other that each of us could learn” however, in “antiblack encounters” there is always a “presumption of transphenomenal experience” wherein there is always more “about the human other that each of us could learn” and the condition of “blackness” is seen or understood as a “function of its supposed worthlessness” (L.R. Gordon, *Her Majesty’s* 37). Perverse anonymity, as a form and manifestation of bad faith, therefore, leads to the loss of individual human subjectivity and to geo-epistemic erasure from the narrative of human
history in the life world. Perverse anonymity is a form of bad faith that brings to being the conditions of namelessness, speechlessness, and facelessness in the Lebenswelt.

Lewis R. Gordon extends discussion of the ontological, existential, and phenomenological implications of anonymity in the life world in his 2000 text, *Existentia Africana: Understanding Africana Existential Thought*. In *Existentia Africana* Gordon understands the condition of “anonymity” to generate a “point of epistemic limitation that affords certain levels of generalization” (L.R. Gordon, *Existentia Africana* 161). Epistemic limitation prevents the ontological, existential, and phenomenological shift from “a type” into an “unique individual” and oftentimes results in geo-epistemic erasure and the spatiotemporal displacement of otherwise aptly spatiotemporally situated human beings and groups of human beings (L.R. Gordon, *Existentia Africana* 161). It is in this schema that a civilized human being, one possessive of reason, might conclude that indigenous peoples “should not have been here to begin with” and find their emergence or appearance to be one of “questioned or problematic existence” (L.R. Gordon, *Existentia Africana* 161). The concept of borders for indigenous peoples are understood temporally and are imposed geographically. Indigenous peoples, for Gordon, are people who are “trying to cross the past into the present” historical moment in hopes of finding and securing a “place for the future” (L.R. Gordon, *Existentia Africana* 161). It is for this very reason, the temporality of human existence and potential struggle to attain it, that most Native American “iconography” is “nearly always spiritual: they are ghosts in their native land” (L.R. Gordon, *Existentia Africana* 161). Gordon sees a similarity in the struggle to attain and maintain individual and collective human subjectivity between “indigenous people” and “black people” (L.R. Gordon, *Existentia Africana* 161). For
Gordon, indigenous Americans represent the “reality of conquest and unjust acquisition of land” whereas black Americans represent the “nadir world of racial dilution”—in other words, one particular human subjectivity is “white to the extent that one is not black”, a condition of being which “enables whiteness to reemerge” from many other “mixtures,” but “rarely ever with blackness” (L.R. Gordon, *Existentia Africana* 161). The human condition of being black serves as a “primary racial marker” and has “categorical implications” as the condition of blackness carries with it a “threat of reproductive potency” and, resultantly, the potentiality for the “prodigious presence” of black human subjects in the life world which brings into being a “form of anonymity that is complete and thus leads, paradoxically, to blacks as a form of absence” (L.R. Gordon, *Existentia Africana* 161). Gordon states that the more “present a black is qua a black” the more absent black human subjects becomes as a “point of epistemic limitation and assertion of agency” (L.R. Gordon, *Existentia Africana* 161-162). Put more succinctly, Gordon finds that one does not “ask” a black being about his or her individual human subjectivity, but rather, one “concludes” about the particular subjectivity of black beings in the life world (L.R. Gordon, *Existentia Africana* 162). This model of assumed or perhaps more aptly put, imposed subjectivity results in the conception that “one black is always superfluous, is always one black too many” (L.R. Gordon, *Existentia Africana* 162). The “modern” conceptualization of blackness or of the “black” was “born at the birth of the Americas” and is “indigenous to ‘America’ and other New World formations”—the real irony in this constructed reality rests in the fact that the “very institutions that created the black are also those that detest the black” (L.R. Gordon, *Existentia Africana* 162). The threat of reproductive potency, in Gordon’s model, becomes inherent or indigenous to the
condition of being black in the life world. Black human subjectivity becomes dangerous and is viewed as a threat because of the potential for its quantity to explode and perhaps overtake those who have deemed black beings to be on the outside of human subjectivity in the life world.

In his 2006 book chapter titled, “Is the Human a Teleological Suspension of Man? Phenomenological Exploration of Sylvia Wynter’s Fanonian and Biodicean Reflections”, Lewis R. Gordon details his understanding of what exactly it means to be human in the life world. Gordon does not note a distinction between humans and animals at the “behavioural level” but notes that at the “actional level” human beings locate the “proliferation of meanings that constitute the social world” (L.R. Gordon, “Is the” 249). In the human social world Gordon finds it “important” that meaning and “meanings” must be “understood, negotiated through, and not simply asserted, but asserted as meant”, the doing of which results in the act and action of “intentionality” (L.R. Gordon, “Is the” 249). Gordon locates the concept of intentionality in the realm of phenomenology wherein intentionality serves as a referent of the “structure of consciousness marked by the preposition of” such that “consciousness is always consciousness of something” (L.R. Gordon, “Is the” 249). Any activity in the human life world that involves consciousness involves consciousness of something, or intentionality; as such, lived human experience, “for example, is always experience of something” (L.R. Gordon, “Is the” 249). For Gordon, the “structure” of such intentions also contains “their reflective apprehension” meaning that they are, “in other words, lived” because the “virtue of all intentions” is a “here-there relation” (L.R. Gordon, “Is the” 249). A human being must intend “from somewhere” or from an “originary point” which in the case of human being is “the body”
because this is where consciousness resides or is embodied (L.R. Gordon, “Is the” 249). Gordon states that if consciousness “were not embodied” it would not be locatable “somewhere”, rather, it would be “nowhere” or “everywhere”—to be “everywhere” is problematic because it “eliminates a point of view, the effect of which is to be nowhere” (L.R. Gordon, “Is the” 249). Human beings, according to Gordon, are also “animals” and the human body “amounts to the expression consciousness in the flesh” (L.R. Gordon, “Is the” 249). As flesh or as body, then, human beings are locatable within the spatiotemporal circumstances that condition the particularities of their situatedness in the Lebenswelt. Such locatability, or the possibility of being found or located serves as a source of “anxiety” for some human beings—the resultant attempt to be “unlocatable” by convincing the self that one is a “form of disembodied consciousness” results in having to both assert one’s “perspective on the world not only as the only perspective, but also not as a perspective at all” (L.R. Gordon, “Is the” 250). A self “constituted without others”, on the other hand, would suffer a similar contradiction of perspectives in that such a self would have to claim that one is “not only locatable” but being incapable of “locating others renders us as points without perspectives” or leaves us with the problem of “having a perspective that denies our perspective” as a marker of lived human experience in the Lebenswelt (L.R. Gordon, “Is the” 250). Human beings do not exist in isolation, rather they exist in relation of, to, and with, one another and the material conditions that constitute the surrounding life world.

Lewis R. Gordon expands his discussion of consciousness to double consciousness in his 2006 co-edited book (with Jane Anna Gordon), Not Only the Master’s Tools: African-American Studies in Theory and Practice. From a
phenomenological perspective consciousness “in its intentional form” always has to be “of something” (Gordon, “African-American Philosophy” 10). Double consciousness, for Gordon, is on the one hand the “consciousness of how mainstream America sees itself (dominant ‘reality’),” and on the other, the “consciousness of its contradictions (black reality)” (L.R. Gordon, “African-American Philosophy” 10-11). To see both versions of consciousness or of reality is to see the “dialectical relationship constitutive of truth” wherein “the first” reality, in the case of this example mainstream America or dominant reality, “by itself must manifest a consciousness that hides itself” and, because of the very act of so doing, “stands as a form of bad faith” (L.R. Gordon, “African-American Philosophy” 11). Gordon indicates that there could also be a “third form” of reality or consciousness wherein individual human subjects have “consciousness of both” the first (dominant) and second (black) reality so that the third reality denies “itself in a reaffirmed unity of the first” reality—such a denial of reality or of consciousness is also a form of “bad faith” (L.R. Gordon, “African-American Philosophy” 11). The result of a dominant reality coming into contact with an Other reality leads to societal and cultural domination and oppression that undergird “discursive practices of knowledge and power” within a given collectivity of human beings whose spatiotemporal circumstances happen to be in alignment (L.R. Gordon, “African-American Philosophy” 11). From an ontological, existential, and phenomenological standpoint, domination of one reality or consciousness and the oppression of another reality or consciousnesses sets the conditions for geo-epistemic erasure from the narrative chronicle of human history. Denial of knowledge and power often comes into being through linguistic domination and oppression which, in its denial of human subjectivity and resultant lack of access to
any form of geo-epistemic structure, first leads to speechlessness followed by facelessness and which ultimately results in the denial of or erasure from geo-epistemological development and advancement on the one hand, and the narrative course of recorded human history on the other.

*Introducing Philosophy of Communicative Experience*

For the purposes of this investigation and study Kenneth Burke’s rhetorical prowess has been and will continue to be framed through his notion of language as representative of symbolic action and through his corporeal understanding of the human animal’s linguistic capacities. In his 1961 text, *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology*, Burke examines humankind through a symbolic and literal conception of order. Burke locates the heart of his concept of order at the point at which “narrative” and “logical forms merge (or begin to diverge!)”—the point at which there is either “differentiation” between “purely temporal” and “purely logical” principles of “priority” or there is an “overlap” in the “shifts between God as logical ground of all moral sanctions” and “God as originator of the natural, temporal order” (Burke, *The Rhetoric* 3-4). Burke’s conception of order is portrayed through the “paradigm of ways” wherein “interlocking motivational principles” are transformed or “translated” into “terms of an irreversible narrative sequence” such that the “sacrificial principle” becomes “intrinsic” component of the very “idea of Order” (Burke, *The Rhetoric* 4). Such an understanding of the concept of order can lead to the development of an attitude of fear, particularly in the “contemporary world” wherein for Burke humankind “must doubly fear the cyclical compulsions of Empire” that emerge as “two mighty world orders” come face to face and “confront each other”—such a confrontation leads not only to the
development of an attitude of fear but also to one of “anxiety” (Burke, *The Rhetoric* 4).

The sacrificial principle of order leads to and perhaps allows for the “‘curative’ role of
victimage” to emerge as each side is in “acute need of blaming all its many troubles on
the other” and is convinced that if the other side and “its tendencies were but eliminated”
that all of the “Disorder that goes with Order” would be “eliminated” (Burke, *The
Rhetoric* 4). In other words:

Here are the steps
In the Iron Law of History
That welds Order and Sacrifice:

Order leads to Guilt
(for who can keep commandments!)
Guilt needs Redemption
(for who would not be cleansed!)
Redemption needs Redeemer
(which is to say, a Victim!).

Order
Through Guilt
To Victimage
(hence: Cult of the Kill). . . . (Burke, *The Rhetoric* 4-5)

Burke notes in his conception of order that order leads to guilt which leaves room for the
notion of redemption and in so doing also leaves space for one who needs to be
redeemed, or a redeemer. The redeemer fulfills the sacrificial principle of order and
becomes a victim which allows order, as it moves through guilt to victimage, to function
as a self-feeding cycle that is simultaneously fueled by that which makes it strong and
that which serves as its own demise. Burke’s notion of order, when viewed in light of the
human animal, ultimately produces and continues to reproduce an uninterruptable cycle
that is made strong by its need for differentiation and for sacrifice—one society or culture
is made strong at the cost of the atrophy and erasure of a different, other, society or
culture. Such a division of humankind historically has paved the way for colonialism, coloniality of power, and imperialism to take the reigns and has resulted in the production of a cycle of power and destruction that generates and maintains its strength through the imposition of order, sacrifice, and human victimage.

Burke’s understanding of the concept of order takes on corporeal resonance when viewed through the lens of the symbol-using animal. Humankind, as a collective or as a series of collectives of symbol-using animals linguistically and communicatively engage the self and one another through the use of language as a form or representation of symbolic action. The use of language as a form or representation of symbolic action highlights the dialectical relationship between the semantic and poetic ideal. From a semantic perspective, language as a form or representation of symbolic action highlights the very objective or material qualities of the surrounding Lebenswelt or life world. According to Burke, though semantic meaning can be “considered as a partial aspect of poetic meaning”, it tends to become the “opposite of poetic meaning” because it dwells in objectivity and materiality rather than in affectivity and corporeality (Burke, *On Symbols* 86-87). Poetic meaning, on the other hand, rests more squarely in the realm of affectivity and corporeality where concepts such as meaning and attitude hold within them “an implicit program of action” and are related to one another through a process of “progressive encompassment” (Burke, *On Symbols* 90). Poetic meaning manifests through Burke’s notion of progressive encompassment like a “set of concentric circles” that are related to one another in “scope” wherein circles (or meanings) of “wider diameter do not categorically eliminate those of narrower diameter” (Burke, *On Symbols* 90). To demonstrate the poetic ideal or poetic meaning Burke offers the statement ““man
is a vegetable” (Burke, *On Symbols* 90). According to Burke there is “much soundness” in this statement because humankind possesses and demonstrates a “vegetative level of human response” and it is possible for one to “find out much about” such a level of response (Burke, *On Symbols* 90). One could also demonstrate the poetic ideal or poetic meaning in saying that “‘man is an ant’” because such a statement does not “‘refute’ the vegetational metaphor”, rather it adds to it because the ant can be understood as “‘vegetation-plus,’ since it too vegetates” (Burke, *On Symbols* 91). Going one step further, or drawing a larger concentric circle, one could say that “‘man is a communicant’” to demonstrate the poetic ideal or poetic meaning, and expressing such a statement makes poetic meaning even “more comprehensive still” because it includes the “other metaphors” rather than “abolishing them” (Burke, *On Symbols* 91). For Burke, poetically and as a demonstration of progressive encompassment, man is a vegetable, an ant, and a communicant, in the sense that all three meanings are related, share aspects of on another, and perhaps also build off of one another, but not of the three, in any combination, excludes, overshadows, or takes away from any of the others forms of poetic meaning.

In examination or analysis of poetic meaning Burke advocates for the author to focus on context and imagery in the portrayal and resultant development of meaning. Burke encourages the analysis of the “context of imagery and ideas in which an image takes its place” as well as the “kinds of evaluations surrounding the image of a crossing” that allow one to determine how the “crossing” will behave, what “subsidiary imagery accompanies it”, what kind of “event it grows out of” or “grows out of it”, and what “altered rhythmic and tonal effects characterize it” that allow one to grasp “its
significance as motivation” (Burke, *The Philosophy* 267). Burke notes that there is “no essential motive offered here” because the “motive of the work” is equal to the structure of the “interrelationships within the work itself” (Burke, *The Philosophy* 267). As a poet, the symbol-using (or misusing) animal—humankind—is “‘synthetic’” and puts things “together by symbolic mergers” while at the same time taps into the critical or “‘analytical’” side of human being which allows one to spectate and reassemble in a “new way” that which has been “taken apart” (Burke, *Attitudes Toward* 214). The “perspective” of humankind in the life world is antithetical or dialectical in that it is comprised of equal parts poet and equal parts critic (Burke, *Attitudes Toward* 214). According to Burke, human beings, as symbol-using or misusing animals, develop “poetic symbols and critical formulations” that equip humans to analyze and examine the “important factors of reality” that condition the circumstances of individual situatedness in the surrounding *Lebenswelt* and also allow humans to develop and “adopt workable attitudes” toward these factors as ways in which to react and respond to the circumstances that comprise everyday life (Burke, *Attitudes Toward* 214). In other words, humankind and human beings are multifaceted and relational beings which do not exist or come into being in isolation, but rather, in and through relation and connection with the self, with one another, and with the surrounding life world or *Lebenswelt*. As such, the ways in which human beings symbolically create, relate, and communicate meaning do not exist in isolation but also remain multifaceted and firmly rooted within that which is human.

Kenneth Burke’s understanding of language as a form of and as representative of symbolic action tends to be more affectively and corporeally bound and manifests in both poetic and semantic meaning. Burke’s employment of rhetoric through language as a
form or representation of symbolic action therefore, can be understood to manifest and appear corporeally or within and through the human body. The work of Lewis R. Gordon, from a phenomenological perspective, also finds itself corporeally bound, or more aptly, finds its home within the particular spatiotemporal location, circumstances, and situatedness of the human body with and within the surrounding life world or Lebenswelt.

In his 2015 text, *What Fanon Said: A Philosophical Introduction to his Life and Thought*, Lewis R. Gordon discusses the differences between German phenomenology in the tradition of Edmund Husserl and Afro-Caribbean phenomenology of which Gordon’s voice serves as one of the foundations in the field. According to Gordon, Husserl’s greatest contribution to the study and practice of phenomenology was the “‘Transcendental Ego,’” or the “radical move inward” which brought together the concept of transcendence with that of individual Ego (L.R. Gordon, *What Fanon* 73). In the case of Afro-Caribbean phenomenology, and in the case of this example through the thought of Frantz Omar Fanon, performing such a “radical move inward” resulted in “lived experience and the collapse of the symbolic” (L.R. Gordon, *What Fanon* 73). This fundamental difference or departure from Husserl and the Transcendental Ego makes Fanon’s phenomenology “Fanonian phenomenology” (L.R. Gordon, *What Fanon* 73). Fanon’s phenomenology, which contributes to the greater discourse of Afro-Caribbean phenomenology, “issues radical critique at the level of signs and symbols” as well as in the “way he utilized the signs and symbols of his investigation” (L.R. Gordon, *What Fanon* 73). Gordon argues that Fanon, through his text *Black Skin, White Masks*, developed a “new type of text” and a “way of writing” that despite “Fanon’s quips and jibes at the Caribbean, is peculiarly Caribbean” (L.R. Gordon, *What Fanon* 73). Gordon
finds this style of writing to be “a creolized style of writing” because it “addresses problems without presumptions of disciplinary, linguistic, or stylistic allegiance” which tend to emerge in the “contexts of interruption and loss” and in which “continuities are broken” so that individuals must “work with what remains to proceed” (L.R. Gordon, What Fanon 73). Creolization, as a metaphor and as a style of writing, to the explication of which Jane Anna Gordon has greatly contributed, finds that in order for “anything to remain meaningful” it must continuously be “transformed as it is resituated” by “each new generation and circumstance” it comes in contact with (L.R. Gordon, What Fanon 73). Creolization as a style of writing challenges the “purities in theory and practice as different, even opposing, elements of writing are brought together for the sake of reality” (L.R. Gordon, What Fanon 73-74). Creolized writing requires a “willingness to reach beyond one’s limits for new understanding” and engages a process of “writing beyond writing” that results in evoking what Lewis Gordon calls the “underside of thought” (L.R. Gordon, What Fanon 74). Fanon’s contribution to Afro-Caribbean phenomenology can be seen through the development of creolized writing or of writing beyond writing itself in response to the particular spatiotemporal circumstances one finds the self situated within and conditioned by the surrounding Lebenswelt or life world. Afro-Caribbean phenomenology then, as both a discourse and as a tradition, is and always will be peculiarly and specifically Caribbean as it responds to the circumstances and conditions that shape lived experience and its particular spatiotemporal location in the life world.

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15 See Enrique Dussel’s 1996 text, The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation (Humanity Books); Linda Martin Alcoff’s 2000 text, Thinking from the Underside of Modernity: Enrique Dussel’s Philosophy of Liberation (Rowman & Littlefield); Nelson Maldonado-Torres’ 2008 text, Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity (Duke University Press); and Walter D. Mignolo’s 2011 text, The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options (Duke University Press) for a more textured description of the metaphor of “the underside” as a representation of colonial thought or the thought of the Other.
Afro-Caribbean phenomenology, as both a discourse and as a tradition, spatiotemporally situates its blossoms within the ideological and geo-epistemic structuring of the present-day Caribbean while it locates its roots within the Motherland, or the continent of Africa. Phenomenology was not always as receptive to such ideological traditions as Afro-Caribbean phenomenology. One particular phenomenological thinker to not so subtly highlight this point is Georg W.F. Hegel, most specifically in a chapter titled, “Geographical Basis of History” in his 1837 text, The Philosophy of History. In the text Hegel states:

At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it—that is in its northern part—belong to the Asiatic or European World. Carthage displayed there an important transitionary phase of civilization; but, as a Phoenician colony, it belongs to Asia. Egypt will be considered in reference to the passage of the human mind from its Eastern to its Western phase, but it does not belong to the African Spirit. What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World’s History. Having eliminated this introductory element, we find ourselves for the first time on the real theatre of History. It now only remains for us to give a prefatory sketch of the Geographical basis of the Asiatic and the European world. Asia is, characteristically, the Orient quarter of the globe—the region of origination. It is indeed a Western world for America; but as Europe presents on the whole, the centre and end of the old world, and is absolutely the West—so Asia is absolutely the East. In Asia arose the Light of Spirit, and therefore the history of the World (Hegel 99).

This passage is an example of historical erasure and of a denial of mind, spirit, and human being. In two hundred and twenty-eight words G.W.F. Hegel drains the life blood right out of Africa and all it has accomplished and achieved historically, and, at the same time, steals Carthage (present day Tunisia) to Asia and Egypt is spatiotemporally dislocated in such a way that results in geo-epistemic erasure. Lewis R. Gordon discusses this historical and geo-epistemic erasure as a “dialectic between the binary of the rational
and the irrational” (L.R. Gordon, “African Philosophy” 101). Such a treatment of human history results in the “racist occlusion of human presence from Western conceptions of the African continent” because the dialectic or binary “situates Reason, rationality, self, ‘here’ (meaning of Western kind)” in opposition to “‘nature,’ ‘irrationality,’ and supposedly ‘other’— ‘there’ (meaning not of Western kind)” (L.R. Gordon, “African Philosophy” 102). The end result of such dialectical or binary thinking results not in the presence of the “European’s other that is located in Africa” but rather in the presence of “no-one” and “nothing” being located in Africa (L.R. Gordon, “African Philosophy” 102). Such an existential, ontological, and phenomenological denial of human being at the hands of Reason in the European tradition caused the “two most influential questions at the heart of Africana (existential reality)” philosophy and phenomenology to emerge, namely, the “teleological and the ontological questions” (L.R. Gordon, “African Philosophy” 103). According to Gordon the teleological question “focuses on the purpose of African philosophy” while the ontological question “emerges from the identity question” (L.R. Gordon, “African Philosophy” 103). African philosophy and phenomenology, as a predecessor of Afro-Caribbean phenomenology, splits its focus between issues of purpose (teleology) and identity (ontology) in response to its spatiotemporal location in the life world. As phenomenological thinkers like G.W.F. Hegel painfully point out, world history could be and was written without any care or concern for the continent of Africa, its peoples, or the many accomplishments, achievements, and contributions that Africans have made and continue to make throughout the narrative course of world history.
The dialectical positioning of the European and the African historically fixed a hierarchical positioning of human being in the life world that ascribed power to being based on the lightness or darkness of one’s skin. The positioning of European being as the center of Reason and African being as the center of nature does not highlight the commonality that each group shares in being human but rather works to bring to light the vast differences between “whites in Europe” and “blacks in Africa” (L.R. Gordon, *Disciplinary Decadence* 70). Some European thinkers, such as Thomas Paine, have argued that the differences “were superficial enough not to warrant slavery” whereas other European thinkers, including David Hume and Immanuel Kant, have argued that the differences were “substantial enough not to take seriously the status of blacks as human beings” (L.R. Gordon, *Disciplinary Decadence* 70). G.W.F. Hegel made his feelings on these differences famously known in his text *The Philosophy of History* in relating that history did not “even pay a courtesy visit to the black peoples of Africa” and that Africans could not participate in religion because they did not have spirit or consciousness and therefore were “capable only of sorcery and the primitivism of magic” (L.R. Gordon, *Disciplinary Decadence* 70). Gordon finds that the impact of Hegel’s view of Africa and of Africans becomes most acute when the “question of philosophy is raised in the African context” because for Hegel, the “movement of History” is also the “unfolding realization of Reason” (L.R. Gordon, *Disciplinary Decadence* 70). In other words, looking or searching for the “practice of reason” in the very place that “exemplified the antipode of reason” was, for Hegel and many others, a “contradiction of terms” and philosophy was and has been “rejected by Europeans as existing in Africa” solely on the basis and idea that “it could not exist there by virtue of its indigenous
people” (L.R. Gordon, Disciplinary Decadence 70). One of the longest lasting impacts of Hegel’s exclusion of Africa and of Africans from the narrative of world history was the “ignoring” of African thought and the complex intellectual history of various African nations well into the mid-twentieth century” if not right up into the present historical moment (L.R. Gordon, Disciplinary Decadence 70). Such a denial or an erasure of human being led to the African or those of African decent to be understood as other or to belong to the underside of history and thought. This spatiotemporal positioning as other placed the African as well as African geo-epistemic structures well outside or beyond the realm of consciousness or of thought.

African philosophy and phenomenology developed in spite of and perhaps also because of the views of Hegel and his contemporaries. According to Lewis R. Gordon, one of the main premises of African philosophy and phenomenology is that “there is an incompleteness at the heart of all self-evaluating” and that “reason, as the exemplar of this incompleteness, is broader than rationality” (L.R. Gordon, An Introduction 142). Gordon continues in stating that the “effort to make rationality govern reason” is an effort to “take the human (incompleteness) out of human phenomena” and to “construct a kind of anti-human world of completely law-governed things” (L.R. Gordon, An Introduction 142). Incompleteness is one of the first facts of human life and as such makes the problems of human life, in the case of African human life “the problems of bondage and colonization”, not only “external but also internal” to the point that they require “closing off the options available for meaningful ways of life” (L.R. Gordon, An Introduction 143). One such form of closure, for Gordon, takes place in the form of “erasure” or as “epistemic closure” wherein knowledge functions as a “colonizing force” (L.R. Gordon,
An Introduction 143). African philosophy and phenomenology are comprised of teleological, epistemological, ontological, and existential components. The ontological component of African philosophy and phenomenology reaffirms the significance and “importance of reality” as a fact, if not one of the first facts, of human life (L.R. Gordon, An Introduction 143). The ontological component, as discussed by Lewis R. Gordon, of African philosophy and phenomenology is a vital component of being human because it grounds lived experience in squarely within that which is real. Paget Henry finds the ontological component of African philosophy and phenomenology to be crucial to the continued study and development of both discourses and traditions because it works to rescue Africa and the African from “its history of invisibility” (Henry 80). Such a rescue is accomplished culturally and by dwelling firmly in reality or within that which is real. Focusing on reality imbues “certainty” in “self-reflective knowledge” which has helped to move African philosophy and phenomenology out of invisibility and into the major philosophical and phenomenological conversations guiding each discourse and tradition (Henry 80). African philosophy and phenomenology is grounded in lived experience and draws meaning from the teleological, epistemological, ontological, and existential circumstances that condition everyday life within the Lebenswelt. African philosophy and phenomenology today finds its great strength as a result of the very conditions which sought to destroy and deny it. Historically African philosophy and phenomenology has been cast aside, denied its very existence, and worked fervently against to erase its existence and contributions from the narrative course of human history. In spite of all these attempts to deny and erase the existence of any ideological or geo-epistemic structure originating from Africa, today African philosophy and phenomenology is
perhaps strongest and most firmly rooted because its reality has always been one of survival or of necessity rather than one of power by circumstance.
Chapter Four — Cahier d’un retour au pays natal and Raw Human Subjectivity:

Aimé Césaire and 1939 in Context

The First Publication of Cahier d’un retour au pays natal

Gregson Davis finds Césaire’s academic success to have culminated as a result of his “intellectual versatility” and as a result of the “peculiar combination of cultural ideals he has forged in distinct, though overlapping, phases of his career as an artist” (Davis, Non-Vicious Circle 5). For Davis, the first major formative impact on Césaire’s thought and values occurred during “his student days in pre-war Paris” where Césaire performed as a “brilliant and intense scholarship student” who had “successfully assimilated” a significant amount of “European intellectual history” as well as “Western (not merely French) literature” (Davis, Non-Vicious Circle 5). Césaire’s drive to develop an “authentic definition of his own cultural identity” resulted from his experiences in Paris and would eventually come to light through the form of Négritude” (Davis, Non-Vicious Circle 5). Césaire was a driven and talented student both in Martinique and in France. Césaire’s educational experience in Paris was complimented by his introduction to and the resultant friendship that emerged with Léopold Sédar Senghor. Senghor is largely credited for providing Césaire with knowledge of “African traditions and values that had not only been lost to New World blacks but also often intentionally obliterated by slave owners and colonizers” (Pallister xvii-xviii). Césaire’s friendship with Senghor played an instrumental role in the formation of Césaire’s identity and led Césaire, in tandem with Senghor and Damas, to create a “forum for interaction between blacks of the Antilles and those of Africa” (Pallister xviii). The result of these conversations that took place in Paris
and in this forum in particular served to have a formative impact on the development and implementation of the concept of Négritude.

Césaire’s experiences in Paris largely contributed to the identity crisis he would experience in the later part of the 1930s. Gary Wilder describes the atmosphere of imperial Paris as a difficult “place to be colonial students” as it was rife with poor living conditions coupled by the “stress of being colonial exceptions in the racially marginalizing metropole” (Wilder 154). The result of these living conditions typically caused one’s being to experience severe “social and psychological consequences” (Wilder 154). Wilder indicates that colonial exceptions were often very poor and found themselves working a multiplicity of jobs in efforts to make ends meet and to be able to continue their academic pursuits. The result of this poverty often led many colonial exceptions to experience “personal financial crisis, chronic ill health, and a struggle with depression” (Wilder 154). Césaire’s time in Paris as a colonial exception led him to experience a “psychological breakdown” in 1936 that rendered him unable to perform scholarship at an university level (Wilder 155). Césaire’s psychological breakdown impacted him both physically and morally and led to the development and projection of Négritude as a linguistic rejection of both his and the experience of being a colonial exception amidst the backdrop of imperialist Paris. Césaire unleashed Négritude in rejection of the exclusive and subjugating atmosphere of imperial Paris and in hopes of creating a space for his and the condition of being black to stand absent the confines and restrictions of colonial and imperialist thought as well as attitudes of subjugation, oppression, and repression often ascribed to black beings in the life world.
In a 1989 interview with Charles H. Rowell, Césaire indicates that he was “twenty-five years old” and was “still sitting on the benches of Normale Supérieure” when he composed the lines that would constitute the first published edition of his palimpsestic epic poem, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (Rowell 49). For Césaire, the first published edition of *Cahier*, the 1939 edition, is, “in spite of its being short, the fundamental book”; it is from this “book that all the rest came” (Rowell 49). Césaire finds this edition of *Cahier* to be most impactful in terms of conveying the full weight of *la Négritude* as an assertion and legitimization of his blackness and therefore of his own being in the life world on the one hand, and, on the other, as a philosophy of communicative experience that derives its rhetorical and existential, ontological, and phenomenological prowess from the account of human subjectivity portrayed by the protagonist throughout the development of the poem. For Césaire, this version of *Cahier* was born as a symbolic and phenomenological linguistic representation of the “life of an eighteen-year-old man of color”, of a “young Negro isolated in Paris” who knew little to nothing of “the vast world” he suddenly found himself surrounded by and immersed within (Rowell 49). During his time in Paris pursuing his university studies at *L’École Normal Supérieure* Aimé Césaire met and befriended future president of Sénégal, Léopold Sédar Senghor. This meeting was significant because it offered Césaire his very “first insights into his African heritage” and immediately served to establish points of connection between himself and “other blacks of the literary world” (Frutkin 16). Césaire commenced the formal writing of the 1939 edition of *Cahier* during a school holiday wherein he returned to Zagreb, Yugoslavia (known as Croatia since 1991) with friend and classmate Petar Guberina (Frutkin 16). While visiting Guberina’s “Dalmatian coast
home” Césaire happened to gaze out the window of the room he was staying in and spotted the small island of Martiniska, which reminded him of and made him long for his native Martinique (Frutkin 16). It is for this reason, the long for a return, that the account of human subjectivity portrayed by the protagonist in the 1939 version of *Cahier* is the most raw in terms of its symbolic account of existential, ontological, and phenomenological experience in the life world. The 1939 version of *Cahier* is extremely emotionally charged and is rife with “extravagant imagery and symbolism” throughout the poem (Frutkin 16). The form of Césaire’s linguistic and poetic presence in this version of *Cahier* takes shape through an “ostentatious display of French vocabulary” and is above all a “powerful revolutionary appeal to the black man to assert himself”; these linguistic tools allow his 1939 publication of *Cahier* to poetically and symbolically serve as the “supreme and original statement of négritude” (Frutkin 16). Césaire’s 1939 publication of *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* offers the most raw form of human subjectivity and in its choice of and demonstrated mastery of linguistic tools that, by the very auspices of reason and rationality alike, should not be accessible let alone mastered to and by someone like Aimé Césaire, who, through the Imperialistic and Eurocentric eyes of Modern Paris, would have appeared as a colonial exception in a foreign land.

The raw linguistic and poetic call for a return to Césaire’s native Martinique as exhibited symbolically and phenomenologically throughout the lines of 1939 *Cahier* functions as an assertion and legitimization of Césaire’s blackness, and therefore also of his very own being, *la Négritude*, in short. Césaire’s symbolic and phenomenological portrayal of human subjectivity throughout the lines of 1939 *Cahier* allows the text to function as a philosophy of communicative experience through its search and quest for
recognition and authenticity in being human in the life world. Lilian Pestre de Almeida understands this version of Cahier as a unity of contraries of sorts:

Le texte se projette déjà à la fois achevé et inachevé, clos et ouvert. Le retour pourrait même aboutir à un nouveau départ ou à une nouvelle quête. D’autre part, si le lecteur se rappelle que le poète a commencé à écrire ce Cahier d’un retour devant une fenêtre qui ouvrait sur une autre île, Martinisk[a], sous un autre soleil, sur une autre mer, il comprend que ce texte fonctionne, dans une large mesure, comme dans un miroir. Miroir de la mémoire individuelle, familiale, collective et ancestrale. Le miroir est un lieu de prospection, le lieu où l’on se mire. Le miroir, en tant que surface réfléchissante, est le support d’un symbolisme extrêmement riche dans l’ordre de la connaissance. Le Cahier est tout d’abord un poème de l’ordre de la connaissance. (Pestre de Almeida 55)

The text becomes already and at the same time finished and unfinished, closed and open. The return could simultaneously lead to a new departure or to a new quest. On the other hand, if the reader remembers that the poet began writing Cahier in front of a window that opened to another island, Martiniska, under another sun, on another sea, one understands that the text functions in large part, like a mirror. A mirror of individual, familial, collective, and ancestral memory. The mirror is a place of prospecting, the place where one gazes at one’s reflection. The mirror, as a reflecting surface, is the support of an extremely rich symbol in the order of knowledge. Cahier is above all a poem about the order of knowledge.16 (Pestre de Almeida 55)

Pestre de Almeida analyzes the unity of contraries she sees throughout the course of Césaire’s Cahier through the metaphor of a mirror, which for Césaire very much brought the full weight of his being to the forefront of his attention for the first time in his life, the result of which can be symbolically and phenomenologically analyzed throughout the course of his palimpsestic epic poem, Cahier d’un retour au pays natal. Césaire penned Cahier as a result of a “compelling inner necessity” which caused him to poetically exteriorize all the “inner drama” of his newly discovered “collective history” in conjunction with his own “personal experience” in the life world, both of which “ravaged his mind” (Irele, Aimé xxviii). According to Léopold Sédar Senghor, Césaire’s friend and

16 This is my own, independently formulated translation from the original French into the English language.
classmate at É.N.S. and who also bore personal “witness to the circumstances under which the poem was composed”, the composition of Cahier served a great “therapeutic function” for Césaire as he sought to grapple with the full ramifications of his newly and fully discovered black human subjectivity in the life world (Irele, Aïmé xxviii). The 1939 edition of Césaire’s Cahier linguistically and poetically portrays the most raw version of human subjectivity in all four published versions of Cahier as a result of the circumstances within and through which Césaire had to survive. Cahier and la Négritude emerged from this period of Césaire’s life in his attempt to come to terms with the full weight and implications of his being black and being human in an ideological vacuum whose Imperialistic and Eurocentric conceptualizations of reason and rationality would not acknowledge or recognize Césaire’s being in the life world as human.

A Rhetorical and Phenomenological Analysis of Raw Human Subjectivity

F. Abiola Irele points to Césaire’s Cahier in discussion of the crisis of pigmentation that emerged as a result of Césaire’s experience as a Martiniquain intellectual in imperial Paris. In his 2011 text, The Négritude Moment: Explorations in Francophone, African, and Caribbean Thought, Irele highlights the “existential discomfort” Césaire and his contemporaries experienced in Paris as a result of being a pigmented few in a largely non-pigmented metropolitan population (Irele, The Négritude Moment 166). Irele finds Césaire’s poetry to contain a “catalogue of maladies and afflictions” that offers a “graphic representation of the mal de vivre which darkens his vision” (Irele, The Négritude Moment 166). Césaire displays his discontent poetically through projection of a “more definite phenomenon”, that of the “complex of the Black subject” who is “disturbed in his relationship with his own body” (Irele, The Négritude
Moment 167). As a result of this disruption the subject then begins to develop the “sense of a discontinuity between himself and his environment” and experiences “a separation from his own essential being” (Irele, The Négritude Moment 167). Irele’s discussion of the phenomenon of the complex of the Black subject breaks down Césaire’s conception of Négritude in terms of its physiological and psychological inspirations that emerged in rejection of his experiences in 1930s Paris as an Antillean, or more specifically, Martiniquain, intellectual. Négritude ultimately offered Césaire the space to reclaim the totality of his pigmentation and worked in rejection of imperialist and colonial cultural attitudes that actively denied the totality of being present in pigmentation.

Kenneth Burke discusses his thought on the poet in his 1931 text, Counter-Statement. In the text Burke finds that as the “poet steps forth” his [or her] first act is to translate his [or her] “original mood into a symbol” (Burke, Counter-Statement 56). In making this move Burke locates the poet within the poem in the sense that the raw, lived human experience of the poet is symbolically translated and reborn into a linguistic attitude that symbolically allows the poet to convert his [or her] “mood into a relationship” (Burke, Counter-Statement 56). According to Burke, the poet is able to translate his [or her] own inner material into a poem because of language’s relationship with and at times “conscious” and at others “unconscious” adherence to and “observance of a technical form” (Burke, Counter-Statement 56). The poet symbolizes his [or her] own lived experience in the lines of a poem and is able to translate moods, attitudes, and experiences through relationship with a broad public readership. Césaire accomplished this very move in all four editions of his palimpsestic epic poem, Cahier d’un retour au pays natal, most notably and particularly in the 1939 edition which contains the most
raw, vitriolic presentation of human subjectivity within the lines that compose its verse. Burke’s location of the poet within the poem through the symbolic relationship shared between language and lived experience, on the one hand, allows poetry to become a vastly accessible vehicle through which to communicate lived experience, and on the other hand, allows poets such as Césaire to linguistically and symbolically release attitudes such as la Négritude as a philosophy of communicative experience whose very assertion screams for acknowledgement and the legitimization of being a black human subject.

Kenneth Burke offers his thought on the relationship between rhetoric and human beings in his 1950 text, *A Rhetoric of Motives*. In the text, Burke finds that rhetoric shares a relationship with human being because it is “rooted in an essential function of language itself” (Burke, *A Rhetoric* 43). The function of rhetoric, for Burke, is “wholly realistic,” and is “continually born anew” through the use of “language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols” (Burke, *A Rhetoric* 43). Burke finds there to be an “intrinsically rhetorical motive” which is firmly “situated in the persuasive use of language” (Burke, *A Rhetoric* 43). The use of language, which by definition is the use of symbols, as a communicative tool with other beings that also respond to and communicate with symbols, is inherently rhetorical or persuasive. Burke’s understanding of the relationship between language and symbols as tools through which to, perhaps linguistically or poetically, communicate lived experience inherently contains a rhetorical or persuasive component. It is perhaps this symbolic rhetorical or persuasive component that allows poetry, such as Césaire’s *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*, to extend its message outward toward all the literate masses that happen to come in contact
with the entirety of the text. Burke’s understanding of rhetoric, in this passage, allows Césaire to symbolically and rhetorically assert his own blackness poetically throughout the lines of *Cahier* in such a way as to, on the one hand, exteriorize the interior struggles his own particular human subjectivity had encountered in the life world, and, on the other hand, to assert and legitimize both his individual and the collective blackness of black human subjects found throughout the life world. Césaire symbolically and rhetorically presents black human subjectivity in *Cahier* in such a way that allows *la Négritude* to function as a philosophy of communicative experience as it linguistically lays particular and general claim to its own authenticity in being human.

Lewis R. Gordon discusses the “presence-absence dichotomy” as a dichotomy that is constituted by a “particular way of existing” (Gordon, “Existential Dynamics” 71). Gordon understands the presence-absence dichotomy of being and existence to possess three primary dimensions of consciousness, firstly, the “dimension of seeing”, secondly, the “dimension of being seen”, and thirdly, the “dimension of being conscious of being seen by others” (Gordon, “Existential Dynamics” 71). For Gordon human beings are not only subjects nor only objects but instead are ambiguous in the sense that ambiguity is “an expression of the human being as a meaningful, multifaceted way of being” (Gordon, Existential Dynamics” 72). According to Gordon, human beings are phenomenologically responsible to draw “out a hermeneutic of this ambiguity”; in other words, the ambiguity of being human as such provides an unique hermeneutic opening when one human being comes in contact with another. Gordon prescribes ambiguity as a solution to the presence-absence dichotomy of being and existence that emerged as a result of the colonial situation. This hermeneutic of ambiguity allows conceptualizations of humanism or of
human being to begin at a point of commonality in the condition of being human when engaging the other rather than beginning at a point of fragmentation that has emerged from the colonial situation in the modern historical moment.

The call for a shift and/or decentralization in the geography of reason arose in response to the many problems that emerged from the colonial situation. For Gordon, one of the “obvious problem[s]” that emerged was the “exclusion of blacks” which signified a “de facto failure of universality” and created an “artificial structuring of one branch of humanity into a species above another” (Gordon, *Her Majesty’s Other Children* 144). This circumstance devolved into an “inhuman relationship” that placed certain individuals “below the realm of humanity” and exalted other individuals “‘above’ humanity”—ultimately creating a cosmological world of “gods and animals” (Gordon, *Her Majesty’s Other Children* 144). This ultimate culmination of the colonial situation—in raw form as a cosmological world of gods and animals—can be seen throughout the work of Aimé Césaire, most notably in all four published versions of his palimpsestic epic poem, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*.

*Philosophy of Communicative Experience: 1939 Cahier, la Négritude, and Humanism*

A. James Arnold points to the idea of “pseudomorphosis” in his discussion of Césaire’s experiences in Paris during the 1930s. The term “pseudomorph” originally derives from crystallography and is typically used to describe a “crystal consisting of one mineral but having the form of another which it has replaced” (McKean 1366). Oswald Spengler adopted the term and applied it metaphorically under the guise of history, or of what Spengler calls “‘historical pseudomorphosis’” (Spengler 268). For Spengler, “‘historical pseudomorphosis’” designates
those cases in which an older alien Culture lies so massively over the land that a young Culture cannot get its breath and fails not only to achieve pure and specific expression-forms, but even to develop fully its own self-consciousness. All that wells up from the depths of the young soul is cast in the old moulds, young feelings stiffen in senile practices, and instead of expanding its own creative power, it can only hate the distant power with a hate that grows to be monstrous. (Spengler 268)

A. James Arnold indicates that Spengler’s text, *Decline of the West* (published in two volumes in 1926 and in 1928), “was much discussed between the two world wars” (Arnold, “Introduction” xv). Spengler introduced the idea of historical pseudomorphosis in 1928 but his thought and ideology were quickly dismissed after 1945 when Spengler was “denounced as a forerunner of Nazi ideology” (Arnold, “Introduction” xv). Arnold states that Césaire makes use of the “technical term” pseudomorphosis toward the “end of the third sequence of his long poem”, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*. Arnold finds Césaire’s inclusion of this term to be particularly significant because through his decision to use the term Césaire also “named the process by which the speaker and his island society had come to be physically ill, morally prostrate, and ideologically deluded” (Arnold, “Introduction” xv). Césaire felt that colonial society had been “impeded from developing its own original forms and institutions by the imposition of French cultural norms on a population transported from Africa” (Arnold, “Introduction” xv). Césaire develops a poetic mode of resistance in the form of *la Négritude*, which he unleashes in *Cahier* as the “ideal result of a dramatic transformative process that must overthrow the old behaviors (la vieille négritude) so that a new black humanity (negritude in its positive sense) could emerge” (Arnold, “Introduction” xv-xvi). *La Négritude* came to be in a moment of incredible oppression, repression, and subjugation, from cultural attitudes dominated by
imperialism and colonialism, and worked to create a space for the total and autonomous recognition of black human being on its own terms, in its natural state, and absent the confines of Western ideological shackles.

Césaire symbolically, rhetorically, and phenomenologically unleashes *la Négritude* as a philosophy of communicative experience in the 1939 edition of *Cahier* in rejection of the ideal of “*pseudo-humanism*” (Ciccariello-Maher 146). Pseudo-humanism locates its home and ideological roots in “Europe” and refuses to recognize or acknowledge the “universalizing implications” of its “privileged position” as the fastidiously self-appointed center of human society, reason, and rationality (Ciccariello-Maher 146). According to George Ciccariello-Maher, the result of Europe’s refusal to recognize and acknowledge its ideological position within the colonial machine was an attempt to “issue a universal dismissal of humanism” (Ciccariello-Maher 146). Césaire finds this European or Western “notion of the universal” to be “ill-fitting for a humanity defined by particulars”; Césaire envisions a universal form or conception of humanism that is made “rich with all that is particular, rich with all the particulars there are, the deepening of each particular, the coexistence of them all” (Ciccariello-Maher 146). Césaire’s vision of humanism supports his linguistic projection of *Négritude* as a philosophy of communicative experience through its assertion, legitimization, and inclusion of all human beings. Césaire’s vision of humanism linguistically assists his *Négritude* project through its echoed call for the creation and preservation of a liminal space that allows for the assertion, recognition, acknowledgement, and legitimization of all being as human. Césaire’s vision of humanism takes one step further down the pathway toward a more inclusive future for humankind in its recognition, reification, and
encouragement of the significance of each and every particular form of human
subjectivity that exists in the life world.

A. James Arnold characterizes Césaire’s conception of Négritude as a “negation
of a negation” that Césaire was forced to forge with “weapons out of the adversary’s own arsenal” (Arnold, Negritude and Modernism 70). Arnold finds that pure positivity was
presumed to “exist in an idealized African past” and understands “Modern Europe” to
represent the “negation of that ideal” (Arnold, Negritude and Modernism 70). Arnold
finds the French rationalist tradition to be representative of the “spiritual homelessness of
the descendants of enslaved Africans” (Arnold, Negritude and Modernism 70). Modernist
culture became the “principle source” of Césaire’s “inspiration” and “techniques” in
presenting the concept of Négritude poetically (Arnold, Negritude and Modernism 70).
Césaire was uniquely situated in terms of his ethnic orientations because he stood both
“inside and outside the culture of France and of Europe” (Arnold, Negritude and
Modernism 70). Césaire found this particular orientation to be especially “painful” and
“problematical” because when he was “attacking modern Europe he was at the same time
attacking a part of himself” (Arnold, Negritude and Modernism 70). Césaire’s
presentation of the concept of Négritude was particularly difficult because Césaire had to
attack part of his own psyche in order to create a space for the totality of his particular
being in the life world. Césaire’s presentation of la Négritude with “weapons out of the
enemy’s own arsenal” is therefore, as much an attack on himself as it is on the imperialist
culture of France and also of modern Europe (Arnold, Negritude and Modernism 70).
Césaire found himself uniquely situated amidst the circuit triangulaire (triangular
circuit; Africa—Europe—the Caribbean) and presented the particularities of his situation
poetically through *la Négritude* as he transformed the contents of history and tradition into a prosaic presentation of the experience of being pigmented in a world largely dominated by its opposite.

Césaire discusses his understanding of the poetic capacity to linguistically embody and portray human experience in an article titled “Poetry and Knowledge”. For Césaire, the poet approaches the “poem not just with his whole soul but with his whole being” (Césaire, “Poetry and Knowledge” 138). Césaire understands “experience as a whole” to preside over the poem—in the poem he sees “all the weight of the body, all the weight of the mind”; everything that “has been lived; [and] everything that is possible” (Césaire, “Poetry and Knowledge” 138). For Césaire a poem forms around the “precious whirlwind” of the “ego” and represents the tension between “self and world”; the poem contains “the strangest combinations, [of] every past, [of] every future” (Césaire, “Poetry and Knowledge” 138). In poetry the “body is no longer deaf or blind” and everything has the right to life”—the “individual whole is stirred up once more by poetic inspiration” (Césaire, “Poetry and Knowledge” 139). Césaire finds poetry to contain “the cosmic whole” and understands it to “contain within it the original relationships that unite us with nature” (Césaire, “Poetry and Knowledge” 139). For Césaire, “true poetry” appeals to “the unconscious” in such a way that man of “every age is within us”, in fact, the entire “universe” is within us (Césaire, “Poetry and Knowledge” 139). Césaire’s decision to present *Négritude* poetically underscores his emphasis on the human element of being in the world. Césaire enacts the linguistic capacity of poetry to present the tension between the self and the world in his discussion of *Négritude* and in so doing provides room to
situate himself and the particularity of his life experience as the poetic subject in his epic poem, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*.

The choice to use poetry and poetics to rhetorically and phenomenologically assert and legitimate his own being in the life world allowed Césaire to translate his lived experience attitudinally into prose which simultaneously allowed him to symbolically enter into relationship with a broad literate public. The use of poetics, according to Kenneth Burke, involves the “motivational dimension” found through the “sheer exercise of ‘symbolicity’ (or ‘symbolic action’) for its own sake” (Burke, *Language* 29). The use of symbols to communicate experience with other symbol-using beings allows humankind to find points of connection in language, most particularly through “aesthetic activities” like poetry (Burke, *Language* 29). When this symbolic, representational capacity of language is analyzed in light of the phenomenology of human experience, most particularly and in this instance in light of black human experience, the author is able to locate himself or [herself] within the lines of the text in such a way as to enter into an anonymous symbolic relationship with the readership. Such symbolic and phenomenological presentation of black human subjectivity allows poets such as Césaire to poetically and symbolically articulate one’s own subjectivity, a form of subjectivity that, according to Lewis R. Gordon, lives in “conscious realization of denied insides” and experiences a “reductionism” in being human solely “premised upon surfaces” and outward appearance, in the lines of texts such as his palimpsestic epic poem, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (Gordon, *Existentialia* 48). Such a symbolic, rhetorical, and phenomenological textual assertion allows Césaire to conceptually communicate to the particularities of his own lived experience to a large public through philosophical
vehicles of communicative experience such as his conceptualization and symbolic presentation of *la Négritude* throughout all four versions of *Cahier*, in particular, and throughout the continued development of the entire corpus of his thought and writings on the subject spanning from the 1930s and well very near to the conclusion of the twentieth century.
Chapter Five — Aimé Césaire and Caribbean Surrealism:

the 1947 editions of Cahier d’un retour au pays natal

The Second and Third Publications of Cahier d’un retour au pays natal

The second version of Aimé Césaire’s palimpsestic epic poem Cahier d’un retour au pays natal was published in January 1947 in New York City by the publishing house Brentano’s. This version of Cahier is significant because it is the first bilingual edition of the text (it was published in French and English), the foreword was written by André Breton (largely known as the founder of the international surrealist movement), and it is steeped with surrealistic metaphors that are representative of the diversity and complexity of the particularities of Caribbean human experience in the lived world. The third version of Cahier appeared in Paris and was published by Bordas publishing house in March 1947. The third version of Cahier appears in the French language only and includes Breton’s preface titled, “Un grand poète noir” (Arnold and Eshleman, “Chronology” 71). Though both 1947 publications of Cahier include Breton’s preface, each 1947 publication of Cahier is “substantially different” and may have been written as many as four years apart, according to two leading scholars in the effort to analyzing the significance of Aimé Césaire’s life, work, and thought, namely, Albert James Arnold and Clayton Eshleman (Arnold and Eshleman, “Chronology” 71). Arnold and Eshleman’s analysis of both of Césaire’s 1947 publications of Cahier work to further analyze the palimpsestic layers of particular human subjectivity that Césaire portrays in the continued development of his poem. Césaire’s palimpsestic approach to the development and progression of Cahier allows the protagonist in the poem to continue to evolve and change as does the lived experience of its author in the life world.
Arnold continues his archeological exploration of Césaire’s palimpsestic development and representation of human subjectivity in the lines of both published editions of 1947 Cahier by turning his attention to André Breton’s preface, “Un grand poète noir”, or “A Great Black Poet”. Arnold finds that two of Césaire’s schoolmates from L’École Normale Supérieure, Lionel Abel and Yvan Goll, translated “Breton’s preface ‘A Great Negro Poet’” and first published the translation in the fall of 1943 in “Goll’s New York magazine Hémisphères” and later reprinted this translation in the revolutionary Caribbean and surrealistic periodical, Tropiques, of which Aimé Césaire was one of the founders (Arnold, “Introduction” xvii). Arnold’s analysis of the publication of both 1947 editions of Cahier revealed that Césaire likely worked on the Bordas publication as late as 1946, the same year in which “his first poetry collection Les Armes miraculeuses (The Miraculous Weapons) neared publication” (Arnold, “Introduction” xvii). Arnold notes one of the biggest differences between the 1939 edition of Cahier and both 1947 publications was the inclusion of “surrealist metaphor” which was, on the one hand, largely influenced by the intellectual friendship shared between Aimé Césaire and André Breton, and on the other, projected a distinctly Caribbean understanding of surrealism that was largely influenced by and perhaps also representative of Césaire’s own particular lived experiences as a black Caribbean human subject (Arnold, “Introduction” xvii). Arnold indicates that Césaire “wrote in Tropiques that to”:

‘Maintain Poetry’ one had to: ‘defend oneself against social concerns by creating a zone of incandescence, on the near side of which, within which there flowers in terrible security the unheard blossom of the ‘I’; to strip all material existence in silence and in the high glacial fires of humor; whether by the creation of a zone of fire or by the creation of a zone of frozen silence; to conquer through revolt the free part where one may summon one’s self intact, such are the exigencies which
Césaire’s “statement of poetic purpose”, especially as far both published 1947 editions or Cahier are concerned, moves forward “toward the infinite” by way “of the image” (Arnold, “Introduction” xviii). It is important to note that Césaire finished composing the first 1947 publication of Cahier, the Brentano’s publication of the text, when the “outcome of World War II was still in doubt” and as a result, as indicated by A. James Arnold, this version of 1947 Cahier “became the most searingly surrealist version of Césaire’s poem” (Arnold, “Introduction” xviii). Césaire also finished publishing the Brentano’s version of Cahier very soon after meeting and exchanging ideas, most particularly in regard to surrealism, with one of the founding fathers of the surrealist movement, André Breton.

André Breton travelled to Martinique in 1941 to avoid political persecution in France and made the acquaintance of Aimé Césaire during his time on the island and prior to his departure for New York City where the second edition of Aimé Césaire’s Cahier d’un retour au pays natal would later be published; appearing with a preface to the text for the first time which was written by none other than André Breton. Breton, as father and founder of the surrealist movement in Europe, is largely credited for ideologically and conceptually introducing Césaire to surrealism. According to Breton, surrealism locates at its core “the relationship between the human mind and the sensory world” (Breton 303). Surrealism involves humankind seeking “to understand nature through ourselves and not ourselves through nature” (Breton 303). Breton is careful to caution that though Surrealism ideologically advocates for a connection between humankind and the natural world, it does not, share “in any way the opinion that man
enjoys absolute superiority over all other beings” or that “main is the world’s crowning achievement” (Breton 303). Instead, Breton indicates that Surrealism offers humankind the concept of “poetic” intuition, which conceptually allows him to humble himself in efforts to understand other “creatures whose desires and sufferings he is less and less capable of appreciating” (Breton 304). Surrealism allows for the release of poetic intuition as it “seeks not only to assimilate all known forms but also boldly to create new forms”; in other words, Surrealism allows humankind to be in or to place itself in a “position to embrace all the structures of the world” as forms of “knowledge” (Breton 304). Breton’s understanding of surrealism as a concept through which humankind gains access to linguistic form and structure through knowledge allows poetry to function as the ultimate representation of the translation of the poet’s attitude in a text in conjunction with the anonymous relationship shared between the poet and his [or her] readership. Césaire came to understand Breton’s surrealist project very well during the time they spent together on the island of Martinique in the 1940s. It is of little to no surprise, then, that the symbolic portrayals and linguistic representations of human subjectivity in both the 1947 Brentano’s and Bordas’ publications of Cahier are heavily and inescapably steeped in Surrealism, most particularly in Caribbean Surrealism, whose roots and ideological dependencies rest in the particularities of Caribbean human subjectivity that stem from the particular location of its geo-epistemological situatedness in the life world.

Janis Pallister finds both 1947 publications of Césaire’s Cahier d’un retour au pays natal to contain “surrealist techniques” in the composition of the “poem” and, in addition, as symbolic and linguistic attempt to “explore and define negritude” (Pallister 17). Pallister finds both the Brentano’s and the Bordas publication of Césaire’s Cahier in
1947 to contain a “wave of words and metaphors” which, “spilling, like lava,” exhibits elements of surrealism in and through the form of “literary revolt it represents” as well as the type of “servitude it repudiates, namely [that of] Western rationalism” (Pallister 17). Pallister considers both of Césaire’s 1947 publications of Cahier to be “child[ren] of the surrealist movement” and are most certainly “influenced by Breton” as here forward any and all of Césaire’s “other poetic works would be” (Pallister 17). F. Abiola Irele also recognizes Surrealism in both 1947 publications of Aimé Césaire’s Cahier d’un retour au pays natal. According to Irele both versions of the poem demonstrate a “direct connection between text and world” which is a key feature of the Surrealist movement as conceptualized of and founded by André Breton (Irele 47). Surrealism seeks to reify the connection between human beings and the natural world both symbolically and phenomenologically through lived human experience in the life world. Césaire symbolically and surrealistically represents his palimpsestic epic poem in such a way that it is able to function as a “revolutionary work” that is “furthered rather than hindered by its aesthetic attributes” as acknowledged by both André Breton and Jean-Paul Sartre (Irele 47). Césaire’s symbolic and linguistic representation of Surrealism in both published editions of his 1947 Cahier demonstrate layering in the development of the protagonist and textual movement and growth away from the raw human subjectivity he so vitriolically portrayed in the 1939 edition and toward a more surrealististic understanding of human subjectivity both in the poem and in Césaire’s own particular lived experience.

* A Rhetorical and Phenomenological Examination of Surrealism and Caribbean Human Subjectivity
In his 1950 text, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Kenneth Burke discusses poetry in terms of its modes of expression including the symbolic, the imaginary, and the surreal. According to Burke, the images used in a poem are “sensory images [that] could be said to embody ideas that transcend” the senses (Burke, *A Rhetoric* 88). Burke continues on to draw a distinction between imagery, or of a “cluster or interrelated images” and ideology, or of a “structure of interrelated ideas”, ultimately finding that though the term “ideology” originally meant the “study of ideas in themselves”, it currently typically refers to a “system of political or social ideas” that is “framed and propounded for an ulterior purpose” as a form or kind of “rhetoric” (Burke, *A Rhetoric* 88). Ideology as a form of rhetoric, for Burke, involves ideas that are so “related” they contain within them, “either explicitly or implicitly,” some kind of “inducement” toward “social and political choices rather than others” (Burke, *A Rhetoric* 88). It is in this sense, according to Burke, that “rhetorical ideology thus comes to be contrasted with poetic imagery” in such a way that caused Jeremy Bentham to warn “us to look for the images that, overtly or covertly, serve as models for ideas” (Burke, *A Rhetoric* 88). Burke’s notion of the rhetorical capacity of poetic imagery, or of symbols, assist Césaire in highlighting poetic images that serve as models for ideas, such as Césaire’s conceptualization and linguistic portrayal of *la Négritude* throughout each of the published versions of his palimpsestic epic poem, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*. Césaire poetically and rhetorically engages the imagination through his use of symbols and imagery in the lines of *Cahier* in such a way that allows *la Négritude* to linguistically assert and legitimize the very particularities of his own human being in conjunction with the particularity of all human being in the life world.
Though Burke works from the Western philosophical tradition some parallels can be seen between his work and that of Césaire’s when the work of each is examined in terms of its linguistic capacities. For Burke, man is a “specifically symbol-using animal” that “introduce[s] a symbolic ingredient into every experience” (“Postscripts on the Negative” 209). According to Burke, “sheer ‘animality’ is not possible to the sensory experiences of a symbol-using animal” because “every experience will be imbued with negativity” (“Postscripts on the Negative” 209). In other words, man can never experience true “animality” because his symbol-using nature does not allow him to engage sensation on its own terms—the symbol-using animal “introduce[s] a symbolic ingredient into every experience” (Burke, “Postscripts on the Negative” 209). In a 1985 article titled “Dramatism and Logology” Burke indicates that “[s]ymbolic action in general involves its use for persuasion” (“Dramatism and Logology” 93). Burke continues stating that “symbolic action” can also be used for “first principles”, “the spread of information”, “love of art”, or, as “the exercise of symbolic action for its own sake (poetics)” (Dramatism and Logology” 93). According to Burke, the use of “symbolic action” for persuasion, or the “practice of rhetoric can lead to new knowledge because the doing or experiencing of anything can lead to new knowledge” (“Dramatism and Logology” 93). Burke’s understanding of man as the symbol-using animal and symbolic action provides man with a critical tool set from which to begin interpreting Césaire’s Cahier. If man as the “symbol-using” animal introduces a “new symbolic ingredient” into every experience his being has, and if “symbolic action” generally is “use[d] for persuasion”, then man as the “symbol-using” animal introduces a new persuasive ingredient into every experience he has (“Dramatism and Logology” 93).
When Burke’s understanding of man and symbolic action are examined in this light, the reader is provided with linguistic tools to open Césaire’s *Cahier* in a way that allows the reader to grasp the full complexity of the being(s) depicted within Césaire’s prose.

Lewis R. Gordon lends an existential, ontological, and phenomenological element to the analysis of Césaire’s linguistic representation of black human subjectivity in the lines of all four published versions of *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*. According to Gordon, one can analyze black human subjectivity in the life world through either “ontogenic”, “phylogenetic”, or “sociogenic” approaches (L.R. Gordon *What Fanon* 22). According to Gordon ontogenic approaches “address the individual organism”, whereas phylogenetic approaches “address the species”, and sociogenic approaches “pertains to what emerges from the social world” including the “intersubjective world of culture, history, language, and economics” (L.R. Gordon, *What Fanon* 22). In the sociogenic model of human being, which is comprised of both ontogenic and phylogenetic models of being human, the “dehumanizing bridge between individual and structure” renders black human subjectivity “anonymous” in such a “perverse way” that it “enables ‘the black’ to collapse into ‘blacks’” (L.R. Gordon, *What Fanon* 22). Gordon finds that the social collapse of the particularity of individual black human subjectivity into the generality of all black human subjectivity as a whole creates space for the total erasure of black human subjectivity, which renders black human being as anonymous in the life world leaving it so that it can exist only in “‘a zone of nonbeing’” (L.R. Gordon, *What Fanon* 22). The total erasure of black human subjectivity can also be understood as a form of both antiblack racism and of bad faith principally because it is an “effort to evade facing human beings in their ambiguity or, as we prefer, in the flesh” (L.R. Gordon, *Bad Faith*
According to Gordon, bad faith, understood categorically generates ontological significance in the form of antiblack racism. Césaire—both Aimé and his wife Suzanne—deal with themes of ontology in their writing, particularly in writing they penned throughout the 1940s after their return from Paris to Martinique. Both Césaire’s published in the revolutionary, radical, and surrealistic Caribbean periodical titled *Tropiques*; both Aimé and Suzanne Césaire sat on the editorial board of this revolutionary Caribbean periodical and remnants of its surrealistic tone and content can be seen in a great deal of their writing during this period. Suzanne’s writing, in particular, demonstrated an extreme ontological commitment in its examination of what it means to be Martiniquain.

Suzanne Césaire, wife of Aimé Césaire, published an essay in 1942 in the radical Caribbean periodical, *Tropiques* titled “Malaise d’une civilisation” or, “The Malaise of a Civilization”. In this essay Suzanne symbolically, surrealistically, and ontologically analyzes exactly that which it means to be a Martiniquain. Suzanne Césaire states:

Qu’est-ce que le Martiniquais?
—L’homme plante.
Indépendant (indépendance, autonomie de la plante). Abandon à soi, aux saisons, à la lune, au jours plus ou moins long. Cueillette. Et toujours et partout, dans les moindres representations, primat de la plante, la plante piétinée mais vivace, morte, mais renaissante, la plante libre, siliencieuse et fière.
Ouvrez les yeux—Un enfant naît. À quell dieu le confier? Au dieu Arbre.Coctier ou Bananier, parmi les racines duquel on enterre le placenta.
Ouvrez les Oreilles. Un des contes populaires du folklore martiniquais: l’herbe qui pousse sur la tombe est la vivante chevelure de la morte, qui proteste contre la
mort. Toujours le même symbole: la plante. Sentiment vif d’une communauté vie-
mort. Bref, sentiment éthopien de la vie.
Donc le Martiniquais est typiquement éthopien. Dans les profondeurs de sa
conscience il est l’homme-plante, et s’identifiant à la plante, son désir est de
s’abandonner au rythme de la vie.
Cette attitude suffit-elle à expliquer son échec dans le monde?
Non—le Martiniquais a échoué parce que, méconnaissant sa nature profonde, il
essaie de vivre d’une vie qui ne lui est pas propre. Gigantesque phénomène de
mensonge collectif, de «pseudomorphose». Et l’état actuel de la civilisation aux
Antilles nous livre les conséquences de cette erreur.
Refoulement, souffrances, stérilité. (S. Césaire, Le grand camouflage (70-72).

What is the Martinican?
—A plant-human.
Like a plant, he abandons himself to the rhythm of universal life. There is not the
slightest effort to dominate nature. Mediocre farmer. Perhaps. I am not saying that
he makes the plant grow: I am saying that he grows, he lives in a plant-like
manner. His indolence? that of the vegetal. Do not say ‘he is lazy,’ say ‘he
vegetates,’ and you will speak the truth for two reasons. His favorite phrase: ‘Let
it go.’ By that, understand that he lets himself be carried along by life, docile,
light, un-insistent, non-rebellious—in a friendly way, lovingly. Obstinate
moreover as only a plant can be. Independent (independence, autonomy of the
plant). Surrender to self, to the seasons, to the moon, to the more-or-less long day.
Fruit harvest. And always and everywhere in the slightest manifestations, the
primacy of the plant, the plant trampled underfoot but still alive, dead but
reviving, the plant free, silent, and proud.
Open your eyes—a child is born. To which god should it be entrusted? To the
Tree god. Coconut tree or Banana tree, among whose roots the placenta is buried.
Open your ears. According to popular Martinican folklore, the grass that grows on
a grave is the living hair of the dead female buried beneath, who is protesting
against death. The symbol is always the same: a plant. It is a vital feeling of a life-
death community. In short, it is the Ethiopian sentiment of life.
Consequently the Martinican is typically Ethiopian. In the depths of his
consciousness he is the plant-human, and while identifying oneself with the plant,
the desire is to abandon oneself to the rhythm of life.
Is this attitude enough to explain his failure in the world?
No—the Martinican has failed because, unaware of his real nature, he tries to lead
a life that is not his own. The gigantic phenomenon of a collective lie, of
‘pseudomorphosis.’ And the current state of civilization in the West Indies reveals
to us the consequences of this mistake.

Suzanne’s linguistic analysis of that which it means to be a Martiniquain begins with a
question of ontological significance and responds with surrealistic symbolism. Suzanne
paints the surreal picture of the Martiniquain as a plant human, or as a form of being that is lost in the rhythm of universal life. The plant human has no desire to dominate nature and simply wishes to be a part of it—this sentiment in particular carries distinctly surreal sentiments in its communicative and symbolic expression. Suzanne finds the plant human to be composed of opposites or as brought together by a unity of contraries in finding the plant human to be easy going and laid back on the one hand, and obstinate and independent, on the other hand. The plant human surrenders rather than trying to dominate and is resilient in the face of all obstacles. For Suzanne the symbol of the Martiniquain is always that of a plant but of a plant that has fallen under the spell of a collective lie of pseudomorphosis, a disease that has erased the Martiniquain’s sense of identity and attempted to replace it with that of its own making. Pseudomorphosis results in repression, suffering, and sterility of the Martiniquain. Suzanne paints a very surrealistic picture of the Martiniquain that is made rich by the particularity of its symbolic use of language as well as its attention to the ontological aspects and capacities of Martiniquain being in the life world.

*Philosophy of Communicative Experience: 1947 Cahiers, la Négritude, and Humanism*

Césaire enacted *la Négritude* as a philosophy of communicative experience in both publications of his 1947 palimpsestic epic poem, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*. Césairean *Négritude* utilized both the “tradition of protest within European culture” and “surrealism as the current poetic method” in its assertion and legitimization of the particularity of Césaire’s own human subjectivity and also simultaneously of the generality of all human subjects in the life world (Popeau 132). Césaire, similar to the “surrealists” set out to discover a “method that would undermine the oppressive forms in
French culture” when he wrote “poetry” (Popeau 132). Césaire’s goal in writing poetry, in symbolically and phenomenologically giving linguistic life to an attitude or a feeling, was “nothing less than the explosion of the French language” and surrealism served as an “agent of detonation in the search for the integrity of the Negro” (Popeau 132). Césaire used surrealism as a “weapon that exploded the French language”, a language that he, as a black Caribbean human subject should not have access to and much less mastery of, as set forth by stringent colonial, imperial, and Euro-centric ideological structures (Popeau 132). Surrealism became an important tool for poetry and therefore also for the poet it served as a linguistic vehicle through which one could “present the Other” with one’s own authentic self, in this case of Césaire and his compatriots one’s own “authentic Black self” rather than the “caricature which had been created by the Other over centuries” (Popeau 132). In an interview with Jacqueline Leiner Césaire states his goal with poetry and with la Négritude has always been the “reconstruction of the French language in order to render himself in the language” (Popeau 132). Césaire states:

*mon effort a été d’infléchir le français, de le transformer pour exprimer, disons: ‘ce moi, ce moi-nègre. ce moi-créole, ce moi-martiniquais, ce-moi antillais.’ C’est pour cela que je me suis beaucoup plus intéressé à la poésie qu’à la prose, et ce dans la mesure où c’est le poète qui fait son langage. Alors que, en general, le prosateur se sert du langage. (. . . my effort has been to bend the French language, to transform it in order to express, let us say, ‘this self, this black self that I am, creole, Martinican, Antillean self.’ That’s why I am much more interested in poetry than in prose, precisely to the extent that it is the poet who creates his language. Whereas on the other hand and in general the writer of prose uses language.)* (Popeau 132).

Césaire’s desire to explode and reconstruct the French language results from his exclusion from the realm of human beings that have access to the language, and therefore its images and ideas; put another way, these desires to redesign the French language stem from Césaire’s situatedness within what Lewis R. Gordon (by way of Frantz Fanon)
would call the zone of nonbeing wherein Césaire and his compatriots inhabit the world anonymously. Césaire finds that surrealism affords the “Black poet using French” an “unique advantage” because he [or she] can say:

‘Je refais une langue qui n’est pas le français. Que les Français s’y retrouvent, ça, c’est leur affaire!’ (I re-create a language that is not French. Whether the French understand it or not, it’s their business!’) (Popeau 132-133)

Surrealism functions as a linguistic tool for poets like Césaire and allows them to write themselves into the language and in so doing simultaneously allows them to write themselves into the liminal category of total and autonomous human being in the life world. Surrealism allowed Césaire to engage the symbolic capacities of poetry and of the poem as philosophical vehicles with which he could communicate, assert, and legitimize his own particular black Caribbean human subjectivity in the life world but also that of his compatriots both in Martinique and throughout the world.

Césaire first published the essay “Poetry and Knowledge” in *Tropiques* in 1944 and understands poetic knowledge largely through aesthetics. Poetic knowledge, for Césaire, can be understood as a “process of aesthetic understanding” that can transcend oppositions between “form and content, thought and action, art and politics, universalism and particularism, freedom and necessity, [and] subjective will and objective constraints” (Wilder 22). Césaire penned “Poetry and Knowledge” in reaction to and rejection of the many challenges that emerged from “colonialism, decolonization, and independence” as well as “globalization, population shifts, exile, and immigration” (Walker 762). For Césaire “[p]oetic knowledge is born in the great silence of scientific knowledge” and relies upon “reflection, observation, and experience” as pivotal markers that allow human beings to “finally dominate the facts that bewilder him [or her]” (A. Césaire, “Poetry and
Poetic knowledge allows humankind to overcome the perplexing facts of life and assists and instructs humanity on how to navigate “the forest of phenomena” and on how to “use the world” (A. Césaire, “Poetry and Knowledge” 134). Though poetic knowledge allows human beings to make sense of and come to terms with their embeddedness within the natural world, Césaire is careful to warn his readers that poetic knowledge does not give humankind license to comport the self as if it were “king [or queen] of the world” (A. Césaire, “Poetry and Knowledge” 134). Césaire understands the poet to approach the poem “not just with his whole soul but with his whole being” and privileges lived “experience as a whole” over “the most lucid intelligence, the sharpest sensibility, [and] the subtlest feelings” (A. Césaire, “Poetry and Knowledge” 138-139). For Césaire, poetry and poetic knowledge contain “[e]verything that has been lived” and “everything that is possible”—the poem contains the “precious whirlwind” of “ego, self and the world” including “every past” and “every future” (A. Césaire, “Poetry and Knowledge” 139). Poetic knowledge allows the human body to actualize and moves it out of the shadows through lived “experience as a whole”—through reflection and observation of every lover, every desire, and every dream; through the full “weight of the body” and “all the weight of the mind”; through everything that has ever lived and “everything that is possible” (A. Césaire, “Poetry and Knowledge” 138-139). Poetry and poetic knowledge gives everything the “right to life” and stirs up both the individual and cosmic whole of the universe—“true poetry” appeals to the unconscious and “contains within it the original relationships that unite us with nature” (A. Césaire, “Poetry and Knowledge” 139). Poetry and poetic knowledge positions the poet as “universe” (A. Césaire, “Poetry and Knowledge” 139). Césaire understands all of human life—all of the
cosmos and all of the universe, all that ever was and all that ever will be—to be wrapped up in poetic knowledge and privileges reflection, observation, and experience as geoepistemic markers of human existence.

Césaire turns to poetry and poetic knowledge to reclaim and transcend the distance between “things” and human beings. According to Césaire, “[t]rue [human] civilizations are poetic shocks” and include the “shock of the stars, of the sun, the plant, the animal, the shock of the round globe, of the rain, of the light, of numbers, the shock of life, [and] the shock of death” (A. Césaire, “Calling the Magician” 119-120). These discoveries of the natural world, or “poetic shocks”, as Césaire calls them, have existed since the “sun temple, since the mask, since the Indian, [and] since the African man” (A. Césaire, “Calling the Magician” 120). Poetry and poetic knowledge here encompass the whole of human history as reflected through actual lived experience rather than imposing, universalizing, and privileging the lived experience of a certain type of human being, in this case the colonizer, as representative of the lived experience of all of humankind. Poetry, as a form of linguistic expression, allows the poet (and thus also the poem) to become “complete and valid to the extent that [the poet] is fully aware of the past” (Ménil, “The Situation of Poetry” 130). It is this totalized understanding of the narrative of history that provides the poet with his or her particular spatiotemporal situation and also serves as a fount of linguistic liberation. Poetic knowledge pivots off of reflection, observation, and experience, and for Césaire reflects a distinctly Caribbean understanding of the poetic. Césaire infuses poetry and poetic knowledge with a distinctly Caribbean form of surrealism, which “assigns itself the goal of exploring and expressing systematically the forbidden zones of the human mind in order to neutralize them” (S.
Césaire, *The Great* 34-35). Caribbean surrealism offers humankind the ability to break through or transcend the “‘impassable barrier between the inner world and the outer world’” and concerns its self both aesthetically and in lived human experience with the cause of “freedom” (S. Césaire, *The Great* 35). Caribbean surrealism’s “most urgent task” is to “free the mind from the shackles of absurd logic and so-called Western reason” and it seeks to enlighten the world by making freedom itself “flesh and blood, and toward that end, [it] must be reflected in language” down to the very level of “the word” (S. Césaire, *The Great* 35). Caribbean surrealism does not worry about whether its poetics pleases the outside world (the West) because a “literature is taking shape” which, in the particular case of Martinique and through the words of René Ménil and several of Césaire’s compatriots who contributed to *Tropiques* between 1941 and 1945, indicate that “Martinican poetry will be cannibalistic. Or it will not be” (Ménil, “Let Poetry Go” 56).

Perhaps one of Césaire’s most poignant contributions to poetry and poetic knowledge took shape in the form of his *Négritude* project. Césairean *Négritude* makes “many different developments” and “deviations” possible as it seeks to reconcile the rift between “identity” and “universality” (Rowell 65). Césairean *Négritude* seeks to achieve clear recognition of the particular in order to reconcile with or reach the universal. For Césaire, “‘the blacker we are’, the more *universal* we’ll become” (Rowell 65). *Négritude* allowed Césaire to retain his own identity in the face of struggle—*Négritude* is, for Césaire, “my way of relating (this is paradoxical) to this land, the tiniest township in the universe, this speck of an island that is, for me, *the world*” (Rowell 65). *Négritude* is “above all a concrete rather than an abstract coming to consciousness” (Depestre and Césaire 91). In a 1972 interview with Réne Depestre Césaire states that Martinique and
the Caribbean that he lived in were characterized by an “atmosphere of rejection” which caused he and his compatriots to “develop an inferiority complex” while striving to achieve individual identity or autonomous subjectivity in the life world (Depestre and Césaire 91). *Négritude* allowed Césaire and his compatriots to come to terms with and accept the

first fact of our lives: that we are black; that we are black and have a history, a history that contains certain cultural elements of great value; and that Negroes were not, as you put it, born yesterday, because there have been beautiful and important black civilizations. (Depestre and Césaire 91-92)

As is also made painfully clear in Hegel’s *Philosophy of History*, Césaire indicates that at the time he and his compatriots “began to write, people could write a history of world civilization without devoting a single chapter to Africa, as if Africa had made no contributions to the world” (Depestre and Césaire 92). *Négritude* allowed Césaire and his compatriots to poetically affirm that we were Negroes and that we were proud of it, and that we thought that Africa was not some sort of blank page in the history of humanity; in sum, we asserted that our Negro heritage was worthy of respect and that this heritage was not relegated to the past, that its values were values that could still make an important contribution to the world. (Depestre and Césaire 92)

In terms of poetic knowledge and geo-epistemic production, *Négritude* permitted Césaire and his compatriots to utilize reflection, observation, and experience to generate a liminal space wherein all human subjects and their contributions could be included in the narrative of world history. *Négritude* also allowed Césaire and his compatriots to construct and project identity from the inside out—through a process of moving from interiorization to exteriorization—rather than having an identity imposed upon the self from the outside in, or from the vantage point of the colonizer.
Césairean Négritude contributes to geo-epistemic production through the recognition of all lived experience and seeks to resituate or perhaps reconnect humankind within its natural environment. In a 1987 lecture titled “Discourse on Négritude”, Césaire states that “Négritude is not essentially biological in nature” but rather makes reference to something more profound, most exactly, to a sum of lived experiences that have come to define and characterize one of the forms of human destiny such as history has made it: it is one of the historic forms of the condition made to man. (A. Césaire, “Le discours sur la Négritude” 80-81)

Césairean Négritude seeks to poetically situate the colonized Other within the geo-epistemic conditions that have come to shape and determine those beings who are to be counted and included in the narrative of world history. For Césaire Négritude became a way of living history within history: the history of a community whose experience appears, true to say, singular with its deportations of populations, the transfer of men from one continent to the other, the memories of distant beliefs, [and] the debris of assassinated cultures. (A. Césaire, Le discours sur la Négritude 82)

Césaire’s poetic use of Négritude brings under scrutiny and into question the very categories which have historically defined what it means to be recognized as a human subject and subsequently included or excluded from the narrative of world history. Négritude, as a form of poetic knowledge foregrounds observation, reflection, and experience as it strives to create a liminal space to allow for the autonomous development of all human subjects in the life world. Césaire’s conception of Négritude strives to poetically shift the geography of reason in such a way as to expand definitions of what it

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17 This is my own independently formulated translation of Césaire’s writing which was originally penned in the French language.
18 This is my own independently formulated translation of Césaire’s writing which was originally penned in the French language.
19 This is my own independently formulated translation of Césaire’s writing which was originally penned in the French language.
means to be a human being in the life world so that all human subjects are able to be recognized as such on the one hand, and are empowered to participate in and contribute to the geo-epistemic conditions that shape and characterize everyday life, on the other. Césairean Négritude works linguistically from the inside out to create a space for all human beings to “become aware of their self-consciousness”\textsuperscript{20} and focuses attention on the beauty, goodness, and legitimacy of being black or of being marginalized as a colonized Other (A. Césaire, “Nègreries” 1298-1299). Césaire’s conception of Négritude seeks to resituate attention on the human or on humanism at a point in history when the “West has never been further from being able to live a true humanism—a humanism made to the measure of the world” (A. Césaire, Discourse 73). Césaire’s understanding of poetic knowledge coupled with his poetic use of Négritude pushes against the accepted narrative of world history and seeks to create a liminal space for the autonomous development of all human subjects. As such and in conclusion, Césairean Négritude works poetically and linguistically from the inside out to expand the categories that have historically defined the condition of being human and in so doing also spatiotemporally resituates the colonized or marginalized Other squarely within and as a contributing factor toward the continued development of geo-epistemic production in the life world.

\textsuperscript{20} This is my own independently formulated translation of Césaire’s writing which was originally penned in the French language.
Chapter Six — From Raw Human Subjectivity to Africa and the Socio-Political:

Aimé Césaire and the 1956 Edition of Cahier d’un retour au pays natal

The Fourth and Final Publication of Cahier d’un retour au pays natal

The fourth, and what is largely considered to be the definitive version of Cahier, was published in Paris by Présence Africaine in June of 1956. This text differs from its predecessors in that it is infused with socio-political metaphors that closely mirror Césaire’s political life and, for the first time, Césaire’s palimpsestic epic poem, Cahier d’un retour au pays natal, becomes a “clearly African poem” (Arnold and Eshleman “Chronology” 71). In June of 1956 Césaire published the definitive edition of Cahier and a revised edition of his Discours sur le colonialisme (Discourse on Colonialism) shortly thereafter. In September 1956 Césaire traveled to Paris to present the essay “Culture et colonisation” at the Sorbonne during the First Congress of Negro Writers and Artists and in October of that same year Césaire formally and openly resigned his ties with the Communist Party in his “Lettre à Maurice Thorez”, who at the time was the First Secretary of the Communist Party of France (Arnold and Eshleman, “Chronology” 71-72). All this to say that by 1956 Césaire found himself firmly entrenched in the political aspect of his own particular human subjectivity and his concerns with the life world now demonstrated a distinctly sociopolitical tone. Césaire translated this sociopolitical attitude into the lines of Cahier in the form of a “sociopolitical” drama that “calls for decolonization and the democratization of economic institutions” (Arnold, “Introduction” xix). The 1956 edition of Cahier moves away from linguistically and symbolically presenting a “network of metaphors that undergird a drama of personal sacrifice” and instead toward the representation of concerns that were sociopolitically and economically
driven (Arnold, “Introduction” xix). The 1956 edition of Cahier linguistically and symbolically portrays a form of human subjectivity through the development of the protagonist that, in this writing of the text, is firmly entrenched with sociopolitical and economic concerns which ultimately turn the protagonist’s gaze back toward another native land, Mother Africa. It is in this way, most notably, that the 1956 edition of Cahier, published 17 and 9 years after its predecessors differs from other versions of the text.

F. Abiola Irele finds the fourth and final published edition of Césaire’s Cahier to be drenched in experience with an aim of uncovering the hidden essence of things. For Irele it is the “transcendental quality of language in Cahier” that allows the poem to appear as “nothing less than the recuperation of an ancestral inheritance” that simultaneously serves as both a “revelation of his [Césaire] being” and as a “privileged mode of access to the profound truth of the universe” (Irele, “Introduction” lxvii). Aimé Césaire’s Cahier d’un retour au pays natal is both linguistically and metaphysically, perhaps better stated, symbolically, is full of “local reference” and “historical significance” in its efforts to speak to any and all facets of “humanity” that have had the “experience of historical suffering” on the one hand, and more broadly put, has a “meaning for all peoples” on the other (Irele, “Introduction” lxix). The lines of Césaire’s Cahier, particularly the 1956 edition are most rich because they oscillate most freely and perhaps also most apparently between the dialectic of the general and the particular. Irele finds great strength in Césaire’s Cahier because he understands it to function as an “oral conception of poetry” that operates in the life world as a “charged utterance,” as “narrative,” “contemplative,” “incantatory,” “prophetic,” and above all else, as an
“expression whose mode of existence restores the immediacies of the imaginative impulse as it moves the poet (Irele, “Introduction” 68). Irele also notes that Césaire’s deliberate choice to present his palimpsestic epic poem, Cahier, as an oral conception of poetry, could possibly be read as a call back to another native land for Césaire, one which he would first encounter most notably when he met Léopold Sédar Senghor in Paris decades earlier, the call for Mother Africa. Césaire’s use of orality and poetry gives his poetry, in this case Cahier, a transcendental quality which allows its verse, both linguistically and metaphysically, to oscillate or move back and forth between different zones of being, different times of being, and different ways of being human in the life world. This transcendental quality of Cahier makes Césaire’s message uniquely relatable and accessible to a large readership, literate or otherwise if one of the poem’s readers is also willing to lend it his or her voice to so as to project its message into the life world once again.

N. Gregson Davis finds the 1956 edition of Césaire’s Cahier to be steeped in Césaire’s conception of la Négritude on the one hand, and as an effort at asserting and legitimizing the humanity of one’s own being, on the other. Davis reads Césaire’s Cahier as a “process of self-exploration and recuperation” (Davis 60). Davis’ analysis of Césaire’s Cahier, in this case the 1956 edition, focuses on the metaphor of a black hole that Césaire presents within the lines of the poem. The image of the black hole, when taken into consideration with the version of la Négritude presented within the lines of the 1956 Cahier, works initially as an “activity of excavation” wherein the poet and protagonist of the poem engage in an “internal cross-reference” while probing the very “depths of a plural black identity” (Davis 60). Carrying analysis of the metaphor farther
into Césaire’s verse Davis finds the notion of “‘fishing’” in the black hole to be indicative of the “never-quite-concluded quest for an authentic self”, or of a search for one’s own authentic self that is unable to exist without the “danger of ‘drowning’ in a vast sea of racial consciousness” (Davis 60). The 1956 edition of Cahier seeks a form of “liberation” that allows both the poet and the protagonist to “examine” and come face to face with “ready-made identities—fragmentary models of the self” in such a way that allows them to mine through these exteriorized and imposed forms of identity, and instead to fully realize and then present an interiorized vision of one’s own identity in the life world, in short to project a sense of self into a world that continues to find itself unable and perhaps also unwilling to receive, accept, and acknowledge the totality of being human in the life world regardless of what form one’s own identity takes (Davis 60). It is in this sense that Césaire’s Négritude project functions as a form of humanism that envisions and strives to realize a world that is made rich by the presence, development, and deepening of each and every instance of human subjectivity in the life world. Césaire’s plea for wholeness begins and remains firmly entrenched within black human subjectivity throughout the course of his life, throughout the continued development of his thinking on la Négritude, and, most notably, throughout the lines of all four published versions of his palimpsestic epic poem, Cahier d’un retour au pays natal.

A Rhetorical and Phenomenological Examination of Africa and the Socio-Political

Burke further examines the notion of language as representative of symbolic action in chapter four of Language as Symbolic Action. Burke points to his definition of man as “the symbol-using animal” and states that motives can be derived from his “animality”, “symbolicity”, or “from mixtures of the two” (Language as Symbolic Action
63). Burke draws a distinction between the way man treats other beings and the way he treats objects or things. In consideration of symbolic action, or action that is embodied by language, Burke calls for a distinction between the symbolic action of a “person” and that of “a mere thing” (Language as Symbolic Action 63). Burke’s distinction between the action of a person and that of a thing highlight man’s innate capacity to engage in thinking, willing, and acting. Human beings can will themselves into action and will other beings or objects (things) into action as well. Things, on the other hand, can be moved to action, but cannot do so at their own hand, as the nature of being an object in the world leaves things devoid the capacity to engage independent thought. This distinction between human symbolic action and the symbolic action of a thing is important because it reinforces the significance of man’s capacity to think, will, and act on both a biologic and symbolic level.

Burke continues his discussion of symbolic action in his 1989 text On Symbols and Society by turning his attention toward the language of poetry. For Burke, “poetry, or any verbal act, is to be considered as ‘symbolic action’” (On Symbols and Society 78). Burke states that poetry should be used for “the adopting of various strategies for the encompassing of situations” (On Symbols and Society 77). Burke finds “strategies” to be useful because they can examine “situations” and determine their “structure and outstanding ingredients” (On Symbols and Society 77). This information, in turn, assists man in naming “situations” in a manner that demonstrates “an attitude toward them” (On Symbols and Society 77). Burke indicates that the “situations” are universal because they are real—they contain “public content” and “overlap from individual to individual” and “from one historical period to another” (On Symbols and Society 77). When an attitude
toward a particular situation meets symbolic action, the poem serves as a forum through which the “whole body may finally become involved” (On Symbols and Society 79). In *Permanence and Change* Burke discusses a close link between “the devices of poetry” and “the spontaneous genius of man” (66). This linkage between poetry and man points to the notion of “poetic standards” that are “‘biologically’ grounded” (*Permanence and Change* 66). The link between poetry and man gives poetry a certain “authority” that is not offered “as revelation” but is instead “based upon pragmatic demands” (*Permanence and Change* 66). Burke indicates that this is an important fact because poetry must lay claim to symbolic authority in the very authority or authoritative structure it seeks to displace.

Lewis R. Gordon takes a phenomenological approach in his efforts to understand the condition of being human in the life world. Gordon analyzes the human process of speech, and its capacity to make and generate meaning, from both a linguistic and a phenomenological perspective. According to Gordon, the speech act is “crucial for social appearance” and is corporeally expressed through the “complex set of bones, nerves (including the eyes), muscles, teeth, and skin” that make up the human face and is oftentimes accompanied and complemented by the “gesturing force of the hands” (L.R. Gordon, “Theory” 209). In order for the speech act to be successful as a mode of communication, then, requires not only a face, but the recognition and acceptance of the face of the Other. Black human subjectivity, relegated to what Gordon by way of Frantz Omar Fanon has called the zone of nonbeing, fights against “unreason in the modern world” that poses as “reason”; in other words, the situation of black human subjectivity in the life world is one of having to “fight an unreasoning reason reasonably” (Gordon,
“Theory” 210). This effort to fight an unreasoning reason reasonably causes black human subjectivity to collapse into melancholia or melancholy as a consequence of the “loss born of our subjectivity”, a consequence that dissolves into “facelessness” for black human subjects in the life world (Gordon, “Theory” 210). The phenomenological condition of facelessness leads to the development and proliferation of affective modes of being in the life world including ambiguity and anonymity. It is against the consequences of these extreme forms of being, perhaps more accurately put, it is against the consequences of these extreme forms of nonbeing, that encouraged Césaire to initially pen his palimpsestic epic poem, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*, and to develop his *la Négritude* project. For Césaire *la Négritude* was above all about reclaiming and asserting the condition of being human on the one hand, and of being a black human subject, on the other, in a world that to this day refuses to acknowledge and accept the existence and totality of black human subjectivity in the life world.

At the time that Césaire was immersed in the development of his *Négritude* project and the continued rewriting of his palimpsestic epic poem, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*, it was possible, and perhaps more succinctly put, commonplace to conceptualize of world history without a single reference to African human subjects or to the African continent as a whole. This reality makes the lines of Césaire’s 1956 *Cahier* that much more poignant as it is in the 1956 version of the poem that Césaire issues his first call toward Africa as part of the process of asserting and legitimizing his own black human subjectivity through *la Négritude*. Lewis R. Gordon points out that Georg Wilhelm Friederich Hegel’s account of “world-history” is composed without making any notable reference or accreditation toward “‘black Africa’” (L. R. Gordon, “African
Philosophy’s” 100). The following passage from Hegel’s *Philosophy of History* most horrifically illustrates this point:

At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it—that is in its northern part—belong to the Asiatic or European World. Carthage displayed there an important transitionary phase of civilization; but, as a Phœnician colony, it belongs to Asia. Egypt will be considered in reference to the passage of the human mind from its Eastern to its Western phase, but it does not belong to the African Spirit. What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World’s History. Having eliminated this introductory phase, we find ourselves for the first time on the real theatre of History. It now only remains for us to give a prefatory sketch of the Geographical basis of the Asiatic and the European world. Asia is, characteristically, the Orient quarter of the globe—the region of origination. It is indeed a Western world for America; but as Europe presents on the whole, the centre and end of the old world, and is absolutely the West—so Asia is absolutely the East. In Asia arose the Light of Spirit, and therefore the history of the World. (Hegel 99)

Hegel’s ahistorical situating of Africa and of Africans represents just such an attempt to write and simultaneously erase the contributions and accomplishments that comprise the history of an entire continent of human beings. It is also worth noting that the very accomplishments and achievements Hegel effectively strips Africa and Africans of are in actuality central to the geo-epistemic production that created a space for the very conditions that serve Modern man to appear. Hegel finds Africa to remain in the “conditions of mere nature” and as such possesses an “Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit” that rests only “on the threshold of the World’s History”—in the next sentence Hegel effectively erases and “eliminate[s] this introductory element” so that his reader can find him- or her-self “for the first time on the real theatre of History” (Hegel 99). It is this type of dominance and perhaps also arrogance that set the conditions for Modernity and for any subsequent forms of geo-epistemic production. As of the present historical moment, a
moment over 500 years in the making that has been dominated by a bifurcated branch of world history, Modern man has yet to squarely address the rupture in the conceptualization of world history as worldly that emerged as a result of Modernity nor has Modern man overcome the very conditions that continue to imprison all conceptualizations and subsequent categorizations of human being throughout the world. Gordon sites the “problem” in Hegel’s thought and presentation of history in this passage as one that is already “situated by the racist occlusion of human presence from Western conceptions of the African continent” and finds that the “vestiges” and ramifications of such a problem “continue to this day” (L.R. Gordon, “African Philosophy’s” 102). Hegel’s presentation of world history as worldly generates a binary, or perhaps more aptly put, a dialectic wherein any and all conceptualizations of “Reason, rationality, self, ‘here’” refer to “Western kind” and any and all conceptualizations of “‘nature,’ ‘irrationality,’ and supposedly ‘other’—‘there’” make reference to any human subjects that are “not of Western kind” (L.R. Gordon, “African Philosophy’s” 102). Gordon finds Hegel’s presentation of world history absent African contributions to be especially problematic because such a viewpoint does not suggest that Europe, the self-appointed center of Reason and Rationality in the life world and therefore self-appointed center of the generation, creation, and preservation of human being, does not view Africa as the “European’s other”, rather, it finds “no-one” and “nothing” present (L. R. Gordon, “African Philosophy’s” 102). This understanding of African identity is particularly problematic because it denies Africa and all Africans access to the very essence of the human condition, the act and condition of being human, and instead collapses Africa and African being into a zone of nonbeing. Gordon notes that Césaire’s Négritude project
operated on a “basic tenet” that sought to “affirm being black and being proud of it” and also sought to articulate what could be considered an “uniquely African personality” (Gordon, An Introduction 166). Such thought and ideology was inflammatory and revolutionary because Césaire publically and very vocally expressed “pride instead of shame in his appearance” and sought to generate a form of “positive black identification with Africa” as well as an “aesthetics that subverted the notion of white Eurocentric/white superiority over the African/black” (L.R. Gordon, An Introduction 166). It is against this form of humanity that Césaire initially begins to pen his palimpsestic epic poem, Cahier d’un retour au pays natal, and out of which his Négritude project most necessarily emerges in its efforts to reclaim any and all conceptualizations of being human in the life world. Césaire linguistically and symbolically unleashed la Négritude as a rhetorical and phenomenological tool that on the one hand allowed him to philosophically communicate the particularities of his own black human subjectivity, and on the other hand, allowed him to issue a philosophical call toward all black human subjectivity in an effort to assert and legitimize black human being in the life world.

Césaire rails against the colonial situation and colonized human subjectivity in Discours (as well as Cahier and a number of his other works) and instead envisions a universalized conception of humanism that is rich in the particularity of each individual human subject. Césaire looks to culture as a source of inspiration and hope in the face of the colonial machine and as an incredibly resilient force that is unable to be trampled or extinguished from colonized subjectivity in spite of the incredible violence, destruction, and devastation that characterized the colonial situation. Césaire linguistically enacts
Négritude as a linguistic tool to preserve the autonomy of Caribbean human subjectivity. Césaire turns to language as a source of liberation and salvation perhaps because he sees the poet as “someone who saves humanity” as “someone who restores it to universal harmony”, and as “someone who marries a human florescence to universal florescence” (Césaire, “Poetry and Knowledge” 139). Césaire looks to the poet as liberator because the poet possesses the power to employ literature as a liberatory form of technology that is accessible to the masses. For Césaire the poet restores universal harmony by marrying an individual human subject with the universal pool of all human subjectivity—a move that is made linguistically, and through the use of language and words becomes accessible to all—Césaire turns to the poetic verse because it possesses the capacity to merge individual human experience with that of the universal. In this way, the poetic functions as a form of linguistic empowerment that permits Césaire’s Discours to operate as a literary manifesto and therefore as a literary technology of liberation.

Césaire’s Discours operates as a literary technology of liberation because it symbolically weaves together Caribbean human experience as it comes face to face with the colonial situation. Robin D. G. Kelley thinks “Aimé Césaire’s Discourse on Colonialism might be best described as a declaration of war” (Kelley 7). In Discours Césaire places the “colonial question front and center” and works to demonstrate how “colonialism works to ‘decivilize’ the colonizer” (Kelley 8). Césaire literarily represents Caribbean human subjectivity as it has come into contact with “colonialism” and symbolically represents the impact that the colonial situation had upon “the colonized”, upon “culture”, upon “history, upon the “very concept of civilization itself” and, “most importantly”, upon “the colonizer” (Kelley 8). Césaire linguistically rails against the
“abyss of barbarism” that the European, “master class” continued to fall “deeper and
deeper into” as a result of the colonial situation. The end result of colonialism is the
“degradation of Europe itself” (Kelley 9). Césaire’s *Discours* is a manifesto that rails
against the colonial situation and simultaneously serves as a literary technology of
liberation through its discussion and portrayal of culture as a source of hope and
inspiration that would not be trampled or extinguished by the colonial machine. Césaire
unleashes *Négritude* linguistically as a literary and liberatory force that finds strength and
resilience through its preservation and continued regeneration of culture in spite of
colonization. Césaire’s use of discourse allows *Négritude* to operate as a literary
technology of liberation as it works to create a linguistic face for the recognition and
preservation of a universal human subjectivity that is rich with the particularity of each
and every individual human subject. *Négritude*, as a discursive strategy, offers literary
liberation as it strives to create a liminal space for the recognition and preservation of the
individual human subject on its own terms and as it presents itself to the world. For
Césaire it is this blending of being, of ideas, of values, of civilizations, of culture, and of
worldviews that will save humanity. Césaire’s conception of humanism requires social
and cultural heterogeneity in lieu of the atrophy characteristic of homogenized
civilizations. Césaire ultimately finds beauty and strength in difference and uses
discourse/*Discours sur le colonialisme* (as well as *Cahier* and many of his other works)
as a literary technology of liberation which calls for and creates a universalized
conception of humanism—a humanism that is made rich by the very difference that
constitutes its particularity.

*Philosophy of Communicative Experience: 1956 Cahier, la Négritude, and Humanism*
Césaire founded the Négritude movement in tandem with Léon Gontran Damas and Léopold Sédar Senghor in 1930s imperialistic Paris. The three studied together in Paris at L’École Normale Supérieure where the “colonial student life took its greatest emotional toll on Césaire” (Wilder 154). This emotional toll ultimately led Césaire to experience a psychotic episode that resulted in his development of Négritude as both a word and a concept in the 1930s. Césaire first used Négritude as a word in his 1935 article, “Conscience Raciale et Révolution Sociale” which was published in the radical French periodical L’Étudiant Noir, and later introduced it conceptually in the 1939 publication of his epic poem, Cahier d’un retour au pays natal (Filostrat 120, 123-128).

According to Césaire:

*En fait, la Négritude n’est pas essentiellement de l’ordre du biologique. De toute évidence, par-delà le biologique immédiat, elle fait référence à quelque chose de plus profond, très exactement à une somme d’expériences vécues qui ont fini par définir et caractériser une des formes de l’humaine destinée telle que l’histoire l’a faite: c’est une des formes historiques de la condition faite à l’homme (Césaire, “Le discours sur la Négritude” 80-81).*

In fact, Négritude is not essentially a biological order. Of all the evidence, beyond the immediate biological evidence, it makes reference to something more profound, most exactly, to a sum of lived experiences that have come to define and characterize one of the forms of human destiny as history has made it: it is one of the historic forms of the condition made to man.21

Négritude is both existential and experiential in nature—it is a mode of being in response to the historic forms of the condition made to man. Négritude is a form of human subjective consciousness that emerged both as a result and in stark rejection of the colonial situation. The beauty of Césairean Négritude can be found in its very composition and substance, the essence of Caribbean human subjectivity and of lived Caribbean experiences in the life world—essences and experiences that emerge from the

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21 This is my own, independently formulated translation.
fusion of European, Asian, African, and Caribbean (including AmerIndians) beings that would otherwise find themselves disconnected throughout the course of human history.

One of the crucial elements of Césairean Négritude is that it offers a particularized universal conception of humanity. In his famous 1956 open letter to Maurice Thorez, Césaire remarks that his “conception of the universal is that of a universal enriched by all that is particular, a universal enriched by every particular: the deepening and coexistence of all particulars” (Césaire, “Letter to Maurice Thorez” 152). The beauty and global applicability of Négritude can be found in its particularized construction of universality, a universality that finds its strength in difference rather than in homogeneity.

The principle strength of civilization and culture, for Césaire, is a blending of worlds, individuals, and ideas. Césaire places emphasis on culture throughout Cahier, Discours, and his Négritude project because he understands it to be both an adaptive and incredibly resilient force. Césaire believes that culture contains “enough strength, enough vitality, [and] enough regenerative power” to adapt “to the conditions of the modern world” (Césaire, “Culture and Colonization” 142). Césaire looks to Caribbean human subjectivity linguistically throughout his Négritude project (most particularly in Cahier and Discours) as a source of inspiration. Césaire understands Caribbean cultures to contain enough “strength”, “vitality”, and “regenerative power” to adapt to the “conditions of the modern world” and as a result sees them to “bring valid and original solutions” to all “political, social, economic, or cultural problems”—solutions that, according to Césaire “will be valid because they are original” (Césaire, “Culture and Colonization” 142). Césaire highlights the strength of culture as a source of resilience and human perseverance that was unable to be stamped down by the machine of the colonial
situation. Culture, particularly the mixture of cultures that exist and continue to thrive in the Caribbean basin, served as a source of inspiration and hope for Caribbean human subjects in the face of the violence, devastation, and destruction that characterized the mechanized progression of the colonial situation and the increasingly distanced relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.

Césaire finds the colonial situation to be one that operates with a certain logic and exacts a particular method. According to Césaire,

*La colonisation a sa logique: les methods ont pu changer dans le temps, mais de toute manière, il s’agissait de faire de l’homme noir, ou un instrument de travail efficace, ou un robot docile, ou un sujet obeissant, ou un citoyen passif. Et quel meilleur moyen d’enlever à un homme tout esprit de résistance, tout esprit d’initiative aussi, si ce n’est pas de le couper de son histoire, de le couper de ses points d’appui traditionnels, de le couper de ses racines, bref, de le couper de lui-même?* (Césaire, “La Martinique” 188)

Colonization has its logic: the methods have changed over time, but in the same manner, it worked to make the black man into a working instrument, or a docile robot, or an obedient subject, or a passive citizen. And what better way to lift a man’s spirit of resistance, all spirit of initiative also, if it is not to cut out his history, to cut out his traditional points of support, to cut out his roots, in short, to cut out his sense of self?

Césaire understands the colonial situation to transform the colonized into a working instrument, into a docile robot, into an obedient and passive subject that is stripped of all humanity. The colonial machine thrives when it strips colonized beings of their history, of their families, of their support systems, of their homelands, and of their roots. What is left as a result of this stripping is a lobotomized human subject that functions mechanistically within the colonial machine. Césaire rails against this outcome of the colonial situation throughout *Discours* (as well as in *Cahier* and many of his other works) and prescribes culture and the blending of ideas, individuals, and of worldviews as a

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22 This is my own, independently formulated translation.
remedy and repellent against this extreme form of psychological dehumanization. Césaire enacts Négritude as a plea for totality and autonomy for all human subjectivity and envisions a universalized conception of humanism that is rich in and because of its particularity. Négritude works linguistically to create just such a particularized universality in the life world.

Césaire underscores the importance of history in description of his conceptualization and intentions with Négritude. According to Césaire, Négritude is “une manière de vivre l’histoire dans l’histoire”, or, “a way of living history within history” (Césaire, “Négritude, Ethnicity, et Cultures” 40; Césaire, “Negritude, Ethnicity, and Afro Cultures” 48). Négritude gave voice to “the history of a community” whose life “experience [wa]s indeed unparalleled” and riddled with the “remains of annihilated cultures” (Césaire, “Negritude, Ethnicity, and Afro Cultures” 48). For Césaire, “la Négritude au premier degré peut se définir d’abord comme prise de conscience de la différence, comme mémoire, comme fidélité, et comme solidarité” (Césaire, “Négritude, Ethnicity, et Cultures” 40). Négritude “in its initial stage can be defined as a sudden awareness of difference, as a collective memory, as loyalty, and lastly, as a form of solidarity” (Césaire, “Negritude, Ethnicity, and Cultures” 49). Négritude attends to the overlooked and neglected state of the assimilated colonial subject and works to counter the oppressive forces responsible for the “unparalleled” life experience of the Antillean subject. Césaire found great value in “all that is buried in the collective memory and even in the collective subconscious” (Césaire, “Negritude, Ethnicity, and Cultures” 48). Césaire unleashed Négritude in an act of rejection against the French and European intellectual and ideological traditions on the one hand, and as a manner of affording
primacy to as well as affirming and heralding the unique contributions of the Antillean subject on the other hand.
Of this: that at the very time when it most often mouths the word, the West has never been further from being able to live a true humanism—a humanism made to the measure of the world. (Césaire, *Discourse* 73)

Chapter Seven — Conclusion: Shifting the Geography of Reason Toward a Future Made Rich by all that is Particular

*The Rhetorical and Phenomenological Implications of Caribbean Human Subjectivity*

One of the greatest tools that offers human beings access to the lived world and also access to know the full depths of one’s own particular human subjectivity as well as the human subjectivity of Other human subjects is the capacity to engage in linguistic expression, to communicate linguistically, or, put more succinctly, to use language as a means through which to enter into relation with and attempt to make sense what one finds in the life world. During the colonial period, access to language largely determined whether or not a particular human subject could be understood to be fully human as such. According to Jane Anna and Lewis R. Gordon, in the “French colonies” that comprised the Caribbean, including Aimé Césaire’s native land of Martinique, it was (and perhaps still is) the “French language” that offered the key to “open [the] barred doors to full recognition” as it demonstrated what “comes of being able to offer technical proof of having fully imbibed a culture with genuine civilization” (Gordon and Gordon 63). Gordon and Gordon are careful to point out that access to language, in this case the French language, operates as a key *if and only if* the speaker of a language can be seen as
fully human; in the case of black human subjects in the Caribbean and throughout the world, “the black speaker is not seen” and instead at best exists in a complex zone of nonbeing that denies such a speaker access to the very essence of that which makes human beings human (Gordon and Gordon 63). Césaire develops *la Négritude* and pens his palimpsestic epic poem *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* intentionally in the French language as a way of demonstrating mastery and control over a language that his own particular human subjectivity—black human subjectivity—should not have access to, much less the ability to master in such a way as to communicate against the full force of reason and rationality through linguistic tools of the colonizer’s own making. Césaire’s decision to write exclusively in French can be analyzed as a deliberate and inflammatory attempt on the one hand to assert and legitimize black human subjectivity in the life world, and on the other, it can be analyzed as the only language through which Europe (France and Paris in particular), would have been able to understand and receive his message—acknowledgment of such a message from a black human subject is far removed from understanding and receipt. Césaire’s decision to develop *la Négritude* and *Cahier* in the French language lends additional significance in terms of its accessibility the world over and as a not so subtle linguistic rejection of the very sociopolitical and economic power structures that actively sought to subjugate and perhaps also eradicate the very human being of Césaire and his compatriots the world over.

Lewis R. Gordon picks up on the significance of language and communication in efforts to be seen and accepted as a human being in his 2006 text, *Disciplinary Decadence*. According to Gordon, the act of “transformation” requires and is reliant upon “self-reflective discursive practices” such as those that Césaire portrays throughout all
four published editions of his palimpsestic epic poem, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*, and throughout the continued development of his *Négritude* project (L.R. Gordon, *Disciplinary* 128). Access to language is important because it also offers access to thought. Césaire’s decision to use the French language allowed him access to areas of geo-epistemic ideological formation that had previously been dominated by “European philosophers” and their ways of thinking, “theorizing”, and conceptualizing knowledge (L. R. Gordon, *Disciplinary* 128). Gordon asks, “Why must Caribbean ideas be cloaked in European clothing to be acceptable in their application to Caribbean problems?” (L.R. Gordon, *Disciplinary* 128). Gordon feels that Caribbean thinkers, like Césaire and his compatriots were and are already aptly equipped to respond to questions like this because their individual lived “experiences” and the “foci of their work have already met an important criterion of relevance to the subject matter” (L.R. Gordon, *Disciplinary* 128).

Césaire’s situatedness in the Caribbean in the lived world coupled with his decision to not only use but master the French language lend additional credence and significant power and rhetorical thrust to his *Négritude* project and to the expression and continued development of the many themes involving black human subjectivity that comprise the lines of all four versions of his palimpsestic epic poem, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*. It is for this reasons that Césairean *Négritude* and *Cahier* are able to scream out their pleas for the legitimization and acceptance of black human subjectivity the world over.

Lewis R. Gordon continues his existential, ontological, and phenomenological research on black human subjectivity in his 2000 text, *Existentia Africana: Understanding Africana Existential Thought*. In this text Gordon fleshes out the Caribbean literary figure of Caliban and situates Caliban’s lived experience in Africa and
in the Caribbean. For Gordon, Caliban demonstrates the African’s ability to engage in “thought” as an “ironic self-reflective, metatheoretical” enterprise (L.R. Gordon, 
*Existencia* 3). Gordon finds the great force in Caliban as an early figure and representation of Caribbean human subjectivity to emerge through the “engagement of writing, including orations brought to inscription” (L.R. Gordon, *Existencia* 3). Gordon finds Caliban’s (and other thinkers of African origin’s) use of “Prospero’s language” to be “infused with forms of magic” because they “represent disruptions and rupture” in terms of an individual human subject’s particular spatio-temporal situatedness in the life world (L.R. Gordon, *Existencia* 3). Gordon then offers the image of Caliban as a “being who had his mother’s knowledge” and could therefore fuse such knowledge with “Prospero’s knowledge” generating a “fusion” that Caribbean thinkers and writers like C.L.R. James have “characterized as ‘creative universality,’ that which, because it always raises *possibility*, constitutes freedom” (L.R. Gordon, *Existencia* 3). Gordon finds writing to be an activity that contains within itself “creative universal potential” as well as a “complex symbiosis of epistemological, historical, and ontological possibilities” (L.R. Gordon, *Existencia* 3). Linda Martin Alcoff echoes Gordon’s presentation of Caliban as a figure who stands in rejection of his Modern and Imperialistic orientation and experience of the life world. According to Alcoff, Caliban is stuck between the “mythic conception of existence” generated by European Modernity and the “imposition of a conception of existence in which life is a project of European imperialism” (Alcoff 161). Caliban’s ability to engage in, understand, and communicate through the language of the Other (the Other in this case being the colonizer, the Modern, Imperial European, those possessing access to human being, and therefore also to Reason and Rationality) allows him to
function and stand as one of the earliest literary figures that rejected the very auspices of coloniality, colonialism modernity, and imperialism from the inside out with and through tools of the colonizers own making.

*Philosophy of Communicative Experience, Césairean Négritude, and Humanism*

Kenneth Burke finds the notion of the symbolic act to be “the dancing of an attitude” (Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* 9). Burke “attitudiniz[es]” the poem so that “the whole body may finally become involved” (Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* 9). For Burke, a “‘symbolic’ act on the part of the body…dances a corresponding state of mind” (Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* 11). Burke’s discussion of the symbolic act demonstrates a direct correlation between the movements of the body and the desires of the mind. This correlation between body and mind tends to manifest literarily in the form of poetry, more specifically, in the form of the poem.

Burke understands the poet to possess a natural tendency to “write about that which most deeply engrosses him—and nothing more deeply engrosses a man than his burdens, including those of a physical nature” (Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* 17).

Symbolic action comes into being through the linguistic exteriorization of inner material, in this case the linguistic exteriorization of burden or of hardship. Burke understands the notion of burden as representative of the poet’s subject. When burden is employed linguistically it becomes the “subject of ‘symbolic action’” because the “poet’s burdens” are symbolically reflected through “his style”; the poet’s style, then, becomes “symbolic of his burdens” (Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* 17). Symbolic action becomes a linguistic representation of the correlation between mind and body. Symbolic action
functions as a linguistic tool that allows the poet to symbolically expose the most corporeal urges of his (or her) corpus as well as the deepest desires of his (or her) psyche.

Burke points to the persuasive power present in language when discussing the notion of rhetoric. According to Burke, rhetoric “is not rooted in any past condition of human society”, but rather it “is rooted in an essential function of language itself” (Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* 43). Burke understands the function of rhetoric to be “wholly realistic” and sees it as “continually born anew” (Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* 43). Rhetoric employs “language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols” (Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* 43). Rhetoric affords language persuasive power and functions as an useful linguistic tool when considering the role of language in light of dissent, or in light of a community of dissent. Burke enacts the symbol, symbolic action, perfection, drama, and rhetoric as linguistic tools that assist human beings in the act of expressing and comprehending lived experience in the world. Césaire’s linguistic portrayal of *Négritude* derives its rhetorical force from his metaphoric and symbolic projection of lived Antillean experience in a world recovering from the subjugation of colonial rule. Césaire depicts *Négritude* as a community of dissent through his linguistic projection of Antillean experience in the life world.

Lewis R. Gordon discusses the “presence-absence dichotomy” as a dichotomy that is constituted by a “particular way of existing” (Gordon, “Existential Dynamics” 71). Gordon understands the presence-absence dichotomy of being and existence to possess three primary dimensions of consciousness, firstly, the “dimension of seeing”, secondly, the “dimension of being seen”, and thirdly, the “dimension of being conscious of being seen by others” (Gordon, “Existential Dynamics” 71). For Gordon human beings are not
only subjects nor only objects but instead are ambiguous in the sense that ambiguity is
“an expression of the human being as a meaningful, multifaceted way of being” (Gordon, Existential Dynamics” 72). According to Gordon, human beings are phenomenologically responsible to draw “out a hermeneutic of this ambiguity”; in other words, the ambiguity of being human as such provides an unique hermeneutic opening when one human being comes in contact with another. Gordon prescribes ambiguity as a solution to the presence-absence dichotomy of being and existence that emerged as a result of the colonial situation. This hermeneutic of ambiguity allows conceptualizations of humanism or of human being to begin at a point of commonality in the condition of being human when engaging the other rather than beginning at a point of fragmentation that has emerged from the colonial situation in the modern historical moment.

The call for a shift and/or decentralization in the geography of reason arose in response to the many problems that emerged from the colonial situation. For Gordon, one of the “obvious problem[s]” that emerged was the “exclusion of blacks” which signified a “de facto failure of universality” and created an “artificial structuring of one branch of humanity into a species above another” (Gordon, Her Majesty’s Other Children 144). This circumstance devolved into an “inhuman relationship” that placed certain individuals “below the realm of humanity” and exalted other individuals “‘above’ humanity”—ultimately creating a cosmological world of “gods and animals” (Gordon, Her Majesty’s Other Children 144). This ultimate culmination of the colonial situation—in raw form as a cosmological world of gods and animals—can be seen throughout the work of Aimé Césaire, most notably in his epic poem, Cahier d’un retour au pays natal and also in his political manifesto, Discours sur le colonialisme. For the purposes of
This paper is primarily concerned with Césaire’s use of discourse as a liberatory technology to relate his thought on culture, colonization, colonialism, and Négritude as portrayed in his literary manifesto, *Discours sur le colonialisme*.

Perhaps one of Césaire’s most poignant contributions to poetry and poetic knowledge took shape in the form of his Négritude project. Césairean Négritude makes “many different developments” and “deviations” possible as it seeks to reconcile the rift between “identity” and “universality” (Rowell 65). Césairean Négritude seeks to achieve clear recognition of the particular in order to reconcile with or reach the universal. For Césaire, “the blacker we are”, the more universal we’ll become” (Rowell 65). Négritude allowed Césaire to retain his own identity in the face of struggle—Négritude is, for Césaire, “my way of relating (this is paradoxical) to this land, the tiniest township in the universe, this speck of an island that is, for me, the world” (Rowell 65). Négritude is “above all a concrete rather than an abstract coming to consciousness” (Depestre and Césaire 91). In a 1972 interview with René Depestre Césaire states that Martinique and the Caribbean that he lived in were characterized by an “atmosphere of rejection” which caused he and his compatriots to “develop an inferiority complex” while striving to achieve individual identity or autonomous subjectivity in the life world (Depestre and Césaire 91). Négritude allowed Césaire and his compatriots to come to terms with and accept the

first fact of our lives: that we are black; that we are black and have a history, a history that contains certain cultural elements of great value; and that Negroes were not, as you put it, born yesterday, because there have been beautiful and important black civilizations. (Depestre and Césaire 91-92)

As is also made painfully clear in Hegel’s *Philosophy of History*, Césaire indicates that at the time he and his compatriots “began to write, people could write a history of world
civilization without devoting a single chapter to Africa, as if Africa had made no contributions to the world” (Depestre and Césaire 92). Négritude allowed Césaire and his compatriots to poetically affirm that

we were Negroes and that we were proud of it, and that we thought that Africa was not some sort of blank page in the history of humanity; in sum, we asserted that our Negro heritage was worthy of respect and that this heritage was not relegated to the past, that its values were values that could still make an important contribution to the world. (Depestre and Césaire 92)

In terms of poetic knowledge and geo-epistemic production, Négritude permitted Césaire and his compatriots to utilize reflection, observation, and experience to generate a liminal space wherein all human subjects and their contributions could be included in the narrative of world history. Négritude also allowed Césaire and his compatriots to construct and project identity from the inside out—through a process of moving from interiorization to exteriorization—rather than having an identity imposed upon the self from the outside in, or from the vantage point of the colonizer.

Césairean Négritude contributes to geo-epistemic production through the recognition of all lived experience and seeks to resituate or perhaps reconnect humankind within its natural environment. In a 1987 lecture titled “Discourse on Négritude”, Césaire states that “Négritude is not essentially biological in nature”23 but rather

makes reference to something more profound, most exactly, to a sum of lived experiences that have come to define and characterize one of the forms of human destiny such as history has made it: it is one of the historic forms of the condition made to man.24 (A. Césaire, “Le discours sur la Négritude” 80-81)

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23 This is my own independently formulated translation of Césaire’s writing which was originally penned in the French language.
24 This is my own independently formulated translation of Césaire’s writing which was originally penned in the French language.
Césairean Négritude seeks to poetically situate the colonized Other within the geo-
epistemic conditions that have come to shape and determine those beings who are to be
counted and included in the narrative of world history. For Césaire Négritude became a
way of

living history within history: the history of a community whose experience
appears, true to say, singular with its deportations of populations, the transfer of
men from one continent to the other, the memories of distant beliefs, [and] the
debris of assassinated cultures.25 (A. Césaire, Le discours sur la Négritude 82)

Césaire’s poetic use of Négritude brings under scrutiny and into question the very
categories which have historically defined what it means to be recognized as a human
subject and subsequently included or excluded from the narrative of world history.
Négritude, as a form of poetic knowledge foregrounds observation, reflection, and
experience as it strives to create a liminal space to allow for the autonomous development
of all human subjects in the life world. Césaire’s conception of Négritude strives to
poetically shift the geography of reason in such a way as to expand definitions of what it
means to be a human being in the life world so that all human subjects are able to be
recognized as such on the one hand, and are empowered to participate in and contribute
to the geo-epistemic conditions that shape and characterize everyday life, on the other.
Césairean Négritude works linguistically from the inside out to create a space for all
human beings to “become aware of their self-consciousness”26 and focuses attention on
the beauty, goodness, and legitimacy of being black or of being marginalized as a
colonized Other (A. Césaire, “Nègreries” 1298-1299). Césaire’s conception of Négritude

25 This is my own independently formulated translation of Césaire’s writing which was originally penned
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26 This is my own independently formulated translation of Césaire’s writing which was originally penned
in the French language.
seeks to resituate attention on the human or on humanism at a point in history when the “West has never been further from being able to live a true humanism—a humanism made to the measure of the world” (A. Césaire, *Discourse* 73). Césaire’s understanding of poetic knowledge coupled with his poetic use of *Négritude* pushes against the accepted narrative of world history and seeks to create a liminal space for the autonomous development of all human subjects. As such and in conclusion, Césairean *Négritude* works poetically and linguistically from the inside out to expand the categories that have historically defined the condition of being human and in so doing also spatiotemporally resituates the colonized or marginalized Other squarely within and as a contributing factor toward the continued development of geo-epistemic production in the life world.

*Implications and Directions for Future Work*

Homi K. Bhabha cautions against the colonial system of power and knowledge in his 1994 text titled, *The Location of Culture*. According to Bhabha, “colonial discourse” functions as an apparatus of power that “turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical differences” (Bhabha 100). The “strategic function” of the colonial system is to create a “space for a ‘subject peoples’” through the “production of knowledges in terms of which surveillance is exercised” and a “complex form of pleasure/unpleasure is incited” (Bhabha 100-1). The main objective of the colonial system and also of “colonial discourse” is to depict the colonized as a “population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin” in an effort to justify “conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction” (Bhabha 101). In his 2006 essay on humanism and Sylvia Wynter, Nelson Maldonado-Torres points out that what the colonizer fears the most is having to “recognize the slave s someone who can give
something to him” [or her] (Maldonado-Torres 204). This very idea of the slave, or of a black human subject as possessing the capacity to contribute something to the colonizer, or to those human subjects who possess access to Reason and Rationality, is terrifying for the European because it challenges the European ideal of itself being the only entity that could function as the “absolute owner and absolute giver” of knowledge, of language, of human being, in short (Maldonado-Torres 204). Maldonado-Torres offers a remedy for this very notion through his call for the “Death of Imperial Man,” whereas for Césaire, such a remedy emerges out of his conceptualization of *la Négritude*, and the continued writing and rewriting of his palimpsestic epic poem, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*. In very different ways both Maldonado-Torres and Césaire call for the end of Imperialism. Césaire harkens his call poetically through *la Négritude* and *Cahier* wherein he linguistically seeks to assert and legitimize the very first aspects of his being, that he is a human subject, that he is a black human subject, and that he, as a black human subject and like so many Other black human subjects who existed before him and who will exist long after him, is indeed more than capable of making valid, genuine, and legitimate contributions to the history of the world that work to deepen and enrich one’s understanding of humanity by focusing on and espousing a conception of humanism that is made rich from the very unique forms of *difference* found and constituted by each and every individual human subject the world over.

Alphonso Lingis speaks to the significance of acknowledgement in terms of conceptualizations and understandings of the condition of being human. Lingis states that it is to “those we have wronged that we must speak”, and not only must we speak to them, we must also “recognize their shame, anger, and suffering” as well as to fully
“acknowledge the injustice, injury, and harm” that we have done to them—then, and only then will it be possible to “make contact with who they are” (Lingis 116). Here, in his 2007 text The First Person Singular, Lingis calls for a turning toward the injustices that colonialism has cast upon the colonized rather than a turning away from or outright refusal to recognize the very being of colonized human subjects in the life world. Césaire fought against this colonial refusal to recognize his own particular human subjectivity through the assertion of his Négritude project and through the continued writing and rewriting of his palimpsestic epic poem, Cahier d’un retour au pays natal. Through la Négritude and in Cahier, Césaire focuses on the “Black condition, on the one hand, and on the possibilities of the era, on the other” in his attempt to simultaneously assert and legitimatize black human subjectivity as a real human subject and as a form of subjectivity that does indeed have the potential to contribute greatly to geo-epistemic production (Mbembe 159). Césaire linguistically launches his blackness as a primal point of departure through which he himself engages the world and in an effort to allow other human subjects, in particular non-black human subjects to begin to get a glimpse of what life is like in the zone of being versus that of the zone of nonbeing. Césaire used la Négritude and Cahier to attempt to answer questions such as “‘Who are we in this white world? What can we hope for, and what should we do?’” (Mbembe 159). Césaire worked fastidiously throughout his life to bring into being a world where the spatiotemporal situatedness of black human subjectivity fell into the land of the living rather than into a zone of nonbeing. Césaire linguistically and poetically unleashed la Négritude and his palimpsestic epic poem, Cahier d’un retour au pays natal as a textual alternative to the
Imperialistic ideology and the colonial machine ontologically excluded and removed Césaire and his compatriots from the very narrative that claims to construct all that is and ever has been known about the human world solely based upon exteriority (in this case, physical appearance)—thus, the colonial problem for Césaire was very much ontologically-driven. The ontological formation of the Western world tends to exclude or overlook affective components of the human condition such as “beauty and possibility”, “love, grace, forgiveness, tenderness, compassion, and mercy” and discourages marginalized beings, in this case colonized Others, from believing in the very possibility of their “own potentiality” (Rodriguez 7). This ontological exclusion impedes the human “ability to forge a new knowledge and, ultimately, a new ethics and politics (axiology)” (Rodriguez 7). The ontological commitments that shape the condition of being human in Césaire’s particular historical moment (and perhaps also in the present day) prevents anything, most particularly knowledge and geo-epistemic production, from being “born anew” and from generating a novel and perhaps more inclusive “conception of what it means to be human” (Rodriguez 7). Modernity has worked to actively displace or dislocate many of the realms of human being including the “realm of the spirit, the soul, and the heart” and instead pours its energies into preserving the realm of the “material, biological,” “physiological”, “historical, cultural, and ecological” so as to mask the “complexity” of the very condition of being human (Rodriguez 8). Modernity insists that human “prosperity resides in epistemology” rather than ontology and thus shapes human beings as “creatures of knowing rather than [as creatures of] believing” (Rodriguez 8).
Césaire works to reconcile this inherently Modern disconnect between ontology and epistemology poetically through *Négritude* and through his conceptualization, understanding, and portrayal of what he calls poetic knowledge in his famous essay, “*Poésie et connaissance*”, or “Poetry and Knowledge”.

**Final Thoughts**

This dissertation project strives to bring together the work of intellectuals such as Kenneth Burke, Lewis R. Gordon, and Aimé Césaire in such a way as to develop a more thorough and fuller account of the particularities of human subjectivity in the *Lebenswelt* or lived world. The dissertation project looks to Kenneth Burke’s rhetorical and metabiological account of the relationship shared between human beings, language, symbolic action, and embodiment. Burke understands human beings to be uniquely situated in the life world through their innate capacity to live within and through language—this capacity separates humankind from nature through the infusion of linguistics; human beings are, after all and for Burke, human animals infused with the capacity to embody language and consequently complex sets of symbol systems and linguistic codes. Lewis R. Gordon’s corporeal approach to the phenomenological, existential, and ontological capacities of being human in the life world adds a very visceral element to the condition of being human in the life world. Such a corporeal phenomenological approach allows the protagonist to appear linguistically on a very visceral level throughout all four published versions of Césaire’s epic palimpsestic poem, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* and allows readers to connect with the text—both the language in the poem and the sub-layer of Césaire’s own lived experience which closely mirrors that of the protagonist through all four published editions of *Cahier*—in a very
real way. Using Burke’s rhetorical thought as a representation of the symbolic, or of the mind, and using Gordon’s phenomenological thought as a representation of the corporeal, or of the body, allows one to fully develop human subjectivity throughout the lines of Césaire’s *Cahier* in such a way that, on the one hand, attends to the fullness of being human in the life world, and on the other hand, attends to the fullness that emerges from the human condition of being linguistically situated in the *Lebenswelt* or surrounding life world.

Kenneth Burke understands human beings as full and complex organisms that are simultaneously composed of both a mind and a body and cannot be reduced to either one or the other. The term Burke uses to describe the fullness and complexity of such a being is “‘Metabiology’”, which refers to a “dialectical concept that transcends these traditional binaries”, in this case the binary relationship of mind and body within a particular human subject (Crable, “Ideology’ 307). Crable, in analysis of Burke’s work, finds “human existence” to be “rooted in biology,” or more particularly, human existence encapsulates “our situation as embodied things” (Crable, “Ideology” 308). In other words, as human beings come into contact with the surrounding *Lebenswelt* or life world, human actions manifest as “patterns of embodiment” which are then externalized and become the “basis for the symbolic patterns” that human beings “enact and reenact” as they strive to make sense of the relationship each particular being shares with the self, Others, and the surrounding *Lebenswelt* (Crable, “Ideology” 308). These patterns of embodiment form and shape the habits of human “social interaction and social life” in such a way that the symbolic realm that is “constituted is not, however, reducible to matters sheerly biological” but rather “creates new demands upon our embodied existence” (Crable,
“Ideology” 308). Metabiology, then, describes a “dialectical reciprocity between embodiment and symbolic action” which is constructed in such a way so that neither of these two “aspects are interrelated” nor is one ever “reducible to the other” (Crable, “Ideology” 308). Metabiology, as originally conceptualized by Burke, involves the necessary recognition of “Nature not only as an organism” but also as an organism that “human beings are related to in a particular way” (Thames, “Nature’s Physician” 20). Burke’s vision of “ultimate being” then, serves as a “projection of human being” or conceptually as all-inclusive wherein “‘Nature […] itself contains the principle of speech’” and human “bodies […] (are genetically endowed with the ability to learn language)” (Thames, “Nature’s Physician” 20). This dialectical relationship between nature and human being functions on a metabiologic level because human beings and nature are interrelated; one is as much a part of the other as the other is a part of it.

Though nature and human being are interrelated one is not reducible to the other, but rather each complements and informs the constitution of the other.

Burkean scholar Richard Thames examines Kenneth Burke’s notion of metabiology in his 2007 essay titled, “The Gordian Knot: Untangling the Motivorum”. Thames states that Burke’s conception of the “relationship between language, mind, body, and reality is informed by” a confluence of “(1) naturalism (or realism)” and “(2) organicism (or biologism)” (Thames, “The Gordian (1)” 8). According to Thames, language serves as the “entelechy of the human organism” and is responsible for “generating mind”, or the “highest (metabiological) level of a body genetically endowed with the ability to learn language” (Thames, “The Gordian (1)” 8). Language then, for Burke, “mirrors biology” and “possesses its own entelechy” (Thames, “The Gordian (1)”
Nature contains within it the very possibility and conditions for language or speech. Such a metabiological understanding of human being in the life world points squarely to the fullness contained within the very being of a given human subject. Human beings are, on the one hand, animals and as such are situated squarely within nature or the surrounding Lebenswelt, yet, on the other hand, are linguistically endowed animals that are separated from nature by and through the use of language. Human beings, for Burke (as well as Crable and Thames), are simultaneously situated within and separated from nature or the surrounding Lebenswelt. It is this very unique dialectical positioning within and outside of the natural world that allows human beings to come into being with and through the use of language, or complex symbol systems in the form of linguistic code.

Bryan Crable extends discussion of Burke’s concept of metabiology and human embodiment in the Lebenswelt by taking the concept and category of race into consideration. Burke touches on the concept and category of race almost exclusively in his 1950 text, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, a text which came to be in tandem with a period of intense friendship shared between Kenneth Burke and Ralph Ellison. According to Crable, the dialectical relationship between mind and body, or between the “symbolic” (symbolic action) and the “nonsymbolic” (nonsymbolic motion), influences the development of an human vocabulary which linguistically and symbolically depicts the condition of human embodiment within the surrounding Lebenswelt, and in so doing, also presents the opportunity to develop a “vocabulary of race” that offers the “best possible account of our situation as embodied—and differently embodied beings” (Crable, “Symbolizing” 134). Crable finds one of the benefits of this approach in the ability to “better reflect upon” accounts of “what is ‘natural’ (race)” and that which is “merely
‘social’ (culture, ethnicity)” and in so doing avoiding a “second determinism” or a “self-imposed prison of inadequate ideas” (Crable, “Symbolizing” 134). For Crable, Burke’s insistence on the use of specific “vocabularies of [human] embodiment” helps humankind to speak and act in such a way as to “minimize the dangers of potentially reductive vocabularies” (Crable, “Symbolizing” 134-5). Crable points to Burke’s strict attention to vocabularies and rhetorics of human embodiment “when the terrain in question is the human body” and the “case of discourse” is that of “race” in an effort to “more reflectively and adequately […] draw the lines between the symbolic and nonsymbolic features of our experience (Crable, “Symbolizing” 134-5). It is for this reason that Burke’s work was chosen to represent the rhetorical aspect of this dissertation project.

The dissertation project seeks to rhetorically and phenomenologically analyze Aimé Césaire’s epic palimpsestic poem, Cahier d’un retour au pays natal. Kenneth Burke’s rhetorical thought works to shed light on the ways in which human beings embody and are embodied within language in the life world and in so doing strives to present a full account of the complex situation of being human in the life world. Burke’s rhetorical thought, when taken in tandem with Lewis R. Gordon’s corporeally-grounded phenomenological thought, together construct both dialectical poles through which the varying forms of subjectivity that Césaire portrays in each edition of Cahier can be analyzed through the lens of human embodiment. Burke supplies the symbolic prowess of language in his rhetorical thought whereas Gordon grounds corporeal conceptions of being in the world through his phenomenological thought. Together, both allow Césaire’s work and thought to present itself on its in terms, in all of its fullness and complexity, and made rich by its own particularity in the life world.
This dissertation project strives to bring together the rhetorical thought of Kenneth Burke, particularly his thought on human embodiment and symbolic action, with that of Lewis R. Gordon’s phenomenological thought in such a way that allows the fullness, richness, and complexity of Aimé Césaire’s thought and conceptualization of *la Négritude* as a philosophy of communicative experience to present itself, most particularly throughout the lines of Césaire’s epic palimpsestic poem, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*. Kenneth Burke’s understanding of symbolic action and human embodiment allows Césaire’s *Cahier* to be analyzed in terms of the metabiologic relationship human beings share with language and the natural world. Reading Césaire’s epic palimpsestic poem in such a way allows the fullness of human subjectivity to emerge completely within the lines of all four published versions of the poem and within and in tandem with Césaire’s own particular lived experience at the point in time when he wrote each version of the poem. Reading Césaire’s *Cahier* alongside and through Gordon’s thought allows the fullness and complexity of the corporeal elements of human being to fully emerge in each edition of the poem as well as within and in tandem with Césaire’s own particular lived experience at the point of composition of each version of the poem. Reading and analyzing Césaire’s *Cahier* in light of Burke’s thought on language, symbolic action, and human embodiment, as well as Gordon’s phenomenological, existential, and ontological thought allows Césaire’s poem to present a textured, layered, and fully human form of subjectivity in both the protagonist’s ascribed life experience in the poem and in Césaire’s own particular lived experience in the surrounding *Lebenswelt*. Such a thorough and multi-faceted analysis of human subjectivity allows individual human subjects to more accurately understand the self and the relationships shared with
and between the self, Others, and the surrounding lived world. This dissertation project intentionally takes a transdisciplinary approach in its analysis of the rhetorical and phenomenological implications of human subjectivity in an effort to contribute a fuller understanding of human embodiment to any discipline that may benefit from such an approach, in general, and to the disciplines of communication studies, rhetorical studies, and phenomenological studies, in particular.
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