

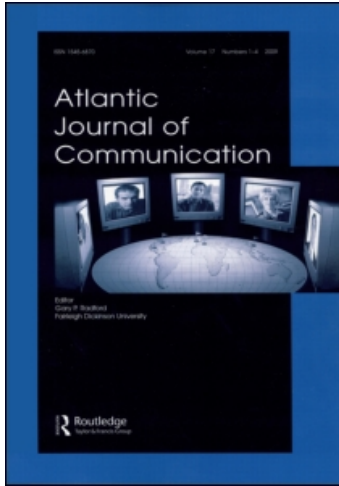
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Response to Contributors

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REPLY

Response to Contributors

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To begin, I would like to thank the editor of the *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, Gary Radford, for devoting this issue to the relevance of my work for the study of communication, and special thanks to the guest editor, Michael Paradiso-Michau, and the writers who have contributed to this issue. To receive such attention brings to the fore the importance of what it means to have *readers* of one's work, by which I mean those who offer careful study of what one is trying to do. I have been fortunate in this regard, and the importance of such an exchange is something I do not take lightly or for granted. I regard intellectual work as part of a collective effort of humanity to reach a little further, to expand symbolic reach, in each epoch. That means a fundamental incompleteness and humility at the heart of paradoxically even the most grandiose intellectual enterprise, for as we reach so high, we realize very quickly how reality continues to exceed us while reminding us of the vast reservoir of creative potential offered by our ability to form and communicate symbols and, in so doing, expand our horizons.

An astute colleague and former student of mine recently encouraged me to read the books and articles I have authored over the years. Because I regard each work as part of a larger project, much of which is guided by themes of humanity, freedom, and the justification of reason, and the question of what is involved in the formation of human sciences and the constraints on knowledge posed by such inquiry, I have often moved on to addressing problems raised by each effort instead of revisiting them. A striking dimension of having careful readers of one's work is what they bring to light. Much of understanding, including one's own work, involves revisiting, remembering, rewriting, rereading. Thank you, contributors, for bringing clarity to my efforts in this regard, and for offering the insights of your own projects.

My work in communication theory is manifold. On one hand, I have argued for the centrality of communication—in fact, communicability—in each of my books. On the other hand, the coextensivity of communicability and sociality serve as important bases for the formation

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of any theoretical enterprise, for what is lost in the collapse of communicative practices is also the possibility of thought itself, without which intellectual work would not be possible. This concern, which I have argued has transcendental resonance, leads also to more radical questions of conditions by which many central considerations with regard to being human in the modern world. Among them is the study of who or what we are, our efforts to be free and at home in the world, and our justificatory practices under conditions that pressure us to cower, close our eyes, and become lost in our own dehumanization. Such imposition often appeals to a reality premised upon conceptions of the human world and broader reality as reductive, closed, and complete, with an exclusive and rigid logic. The question of both-and, of the illuminating and dynamic understanding of contradictions, and of the broader aspects of reason is often elided by such efforts, which include an effort to yoke reflective reason to the forces of instrumental rationality, which I have called the effort to colonize reason. A similar effort is placed upon communication, where the search for a form of logically consistent maximizing of communication leads to a search for norms and forms of communication whose limitations become evident at the realization that being maximally consistent is weighted down by the danger of being unreasonable. As I see it, efforts such as Jürgen Habermas's (1984, 1987) theory of communicative action suffer from a form of cart before the horse: They seek to make reason, the reflective evaluation of our communicative practices, consistent and rational, which undermines its evaluative scope. This is a limitation identified early on by Edmund Husserl, whom theorists of communicative practice often misrepresent with the criticism of a form of outdated egology. Husserl's insight, found in his *Cartesian Meditations* (1960) and *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (1969), among other works, what the legitimacy of how we go about evaluating any object of study requires placing our own practices of evaluation up for critical reflection. That included phenomenology itself. In similar kind, theorists from the African Diaspora, struggling against the abuse of rationality in the service of their dehumanization, realized that the articulation of their humanity and formulation of freedom required a radical questioning of the presumptions by which rationality and reason are advanced (cf. e.g., Henry, 2000). Those theorists in effect identified the possibility that colonization of normative and communicative practices could occur at the seemingly most radical levels, not only at that of what is being communicated but of *how* forms of communication occur. Similar to, and interestingly before Husserl, they (by which I mean thinkers from Amo to Du Bois to Fanon and the many of which I wrote in 2008 in *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy*) realized that even logic itself had to be interrogated. This effort to decolonize even our methodological assumptions is how I understand critical theoretical work and is also what I mean by phenomenology and decolonial thought. I am delighted that the four authors have chosen to address these themes.

The articles at hand bring to the fore my insistence on the relationship between humanization and communication. It is not that human beings are the sole creatures capable of communicating but that *human communication* is a peculiar phenomenon whose impact permeates what could be understood as the human sciences and the normative challenges faced by human beings. Although they do not discuss it here, these considerations pertain also to my work in philosophy of culture, to which I allude in my commentary. Finally, the authors make contextual and concrete others' and my ongoing concerns about the forms of bad faith manifested by neoliberalism, including its disruption and compression of temporality. With that said, I would like to make remarks pertaining to each article.

Erik Garrett's "The Rhetoric of Antiracism: Lewis R. Gordon's Radical Phenomenology of Embodiment" is a general introductory article focusing on the rhetorics of antiracism, particularly in the recent context of appeals to "postracialism" in the United States after the success of the Obama campaign for the presidency. Pointing to *Disciplinary Decadence* (2006), Garrett focuses on my claim, similar to what I have introduced in this response, of what happens when a theorist attempts to squeeze a people into her or his discipline instead of adjusting the methodology to the people. The study of race is such an instance. Its historic and political significance in the New Worlds (North and South America and Australia) is premised upon practices of denial with the naïve view that one could simply apply disciplines, intact, to the study of people who were never the normative bases of the construction of such disciplinary frameworks. This problem, however, stems beyond specifically the case of subordinated or subaltern peoples. My claim is that many of the disciplines in the human sciences are already premised upon problematic conceptions of the human subject on which they rest. The recalcitrance of human subjectivity often led to forms of disciplinary arrogance, where the absolute validity of the discipline is defended at the expense of reality. I call that disciplinary decadence, which each of the authors discusses, and to which I later say more. For now, I want simply to indicate that Garrett rightly points out that one logical response to the limits of a single discipline's scope is to bring together other disciplines and make the effort in interdisciplinary terms. I should like to add, however, that I am also critical of interdisciplinarity where it involves treating each discipline as a hermetically sealed reality. What I ask practitioners to consider in the face of disciplinary limitation is disciplinary humility and a form of reaching out to the wider possibilities of an attuned epistemological relationship with human and other forms of reality. Because this argument is in effect for the *communication* of disciplines, the term I often proffer is *transdisciplinarity*, an expression taken up by Reiland Rabaka in his effort to develop an Africana critical theory (see his *Africana Critical Theory* [2009] and *Forms of Fanonism* [2010]). The problem with some forms of interdisciplinary practices is that they are more like proverbial ships passing in the night. They are simply disciplinarily decadent models of disciplines assembled but not actually meeting. For the latter to occur, communication is necessary, but that would by definition require the disciplines transcending themselves. I call this *teleological suspensions of disciplinarity*. This involves disciplinary practitioners being willing to go beyond their disciplines for the sake of reality. There is, however, a paradox. Doing so sometimes leads to the formation of new disciplines and other times leads also to the strengthening of a discipline through the production of new knowledge. For Garrett's purposes, what is crucial is that it offers a question to communication and other forms of communication studies, which is for them to be self-reflective about the communicative assumptions at work. This question is more markedly stated in Jacqueline M. Martinez's article, to which I soon turn.

Garrett also articulates the postcolonial dimensions of phenomenology. I have already outlined some of the argument in my introductory remarks, but to summarize: Postcolonial phenomenology calls for phenomenology to be attuned to decolonial critique at each moment of its methodological movements. Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2008) called this a "decolonial reduction" in his powerful book *Against War*. I have argued in *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man* (1995b), however, that this is exactly what is demanded by transcendental phenomenological critique. That phenomenology must radically question the legitimacy even of phenomenology makes it also a decolonial practice in search of a genuine postcolonial relation even to itself. I return to this consideration when I address Marilyn Nissim-Sabat's article.

One aspect of Garrett's discussion to which I should like to offer some clarification is the discussion of transcendence and the transcendental. I have already mentioned some of my views about transcendence, including the demand of teleological suspensions, which require going beyond notions of disciplinary absolutism or what I also call disciplinary deontology. The transcendental, however, pertains to the conditions through which concepts, or in this case, the practice of communication is possible. Much of modern thought since Immanuel Kant has been premised upon these kinds of questions, including those by many of the avowedly antitranscendental thinkers. Even poststructuralists and many postmodernists try to show what concepts presuppose or depend upon various other forms of knowledge or performances. The error is to confuse anti-essentialism with the erasure of meaning. Meaning requires thematization, which requires the sustaining of an understanding of a phenomenon over a period of time or the experience of duration. Philosophers of culture such as Ernst Cassirer (e.g., 1962), Peter Caws (e.g., 1988), Michelle Moody-Adams, and Kwasi Wiredu are among many who recognize the intimate relationship between communication and culture (if by virtue of the fact that culture is also *learned*) and the philosophical anthropology of communication that maintains it: no culture would have emerged without the human ability to communicate with each other.

Garrett reminds us in his article that there is no one American race, by which he means that the appeal to the absence of racial identities or racial identities becoming aberrations of the past often has the insidious consequence of sneaking in a particular race through the back door—namely, the normative one, which, in the United States, is white. Building his critique on my discussion of bad faith as an effort to evade social reality and the norms of evidence that follow, he points to postracial ideology as a form of effort to believe (for many Americans) a pleasing falsehood against a displeasing truth—namely, that racism, and the radical inequalities connected to it, continues to dominate much of American society. The situation is akin to the achievement of Nelson Mandela as the first indigenous African president of South Africa and its subsequent effects. There are bright moments here and there (such as the recent reprieve during the World Cup), but racism persists in South Africa as the miserable realities of black life (with the exception of a very small number of wealthy blacks under neoliberal policies) attest. The logic is straightforward: One can love Obama while hating black people. That is because as a human phenomenon, racism strives for a completeness it cannot attain. It will always have exceptions. The logic of such exceptions is the relation they have to the rule. In prosaic language: In an antiblack society, black success is an exception not a rule; white (and preferred minorities') failure is an exception instead of the rule. That means a neurotic situation: An African American fails as a black but succeeds as postracial or, simply, an American; a white American succeeds as white but fails *as an individual*. In the first formulation, black people fail but an individual succeeds; in the second, white people succeed but failure is never identified as white failure. I can go on, but the main point of Garrett's analysis strikes me as sound: The declaration of postracism is more a projection of fantasy than reality. I have more to say on this matter, but the space afforded here is limited, so I encourage the reader to consult chapter 4 of Jane Anna Gordon and my *Of Divine Warning: Reading Disaster in the Modern Age* (2009) for a more detailed account.

Finally, I'm delighted that Garrett focuses on my discussion of embodiment, its place in a transcendental understanding of the social world, and the body in bad faith (Gordon, 1995a) as an attempted erasure of sociality and its communicative dimension. In all of my writings, I have argued for the understanding of communication as an embodied activity and for cultural communicative world as materiality made symbolic.

Jacqueline M. Martinez's article, "Lewis Gordon's Contribution to the Study of Communication: Beyond Disciplinary Decadence," is a rich and sophisticated discussion of my critique of naturalistic reductionism and its role in the pervading decay in disciplinary practices. She also offers discussion of my treatment of human irreducibility. Although the concern here is with the argument I offer, I recommend also Hagi Kenaan's (2005) *The Present Personal: Philosophy and the Hidden Face of Language* for an additional voice on this question of human singularity, with also a conception of communication and speech in stream with what I have been arguing. Kenaan argues, as well, in that and other writings that the face of being is the image, appearance. The complicated matter, of course, is that communication appears also through comprehension and understanding. It is, as Kenaan and I have been arguing over the years, through our conception of phenomenology, the disclosure of reality even to the self. I say more shortly. I should like first to address a criticism that isn't posed here but to which I would like to respond because of its relevance to the argument at hand. The historical relativist may object to this talk of human irreducibility by appealing to the specificity of the human as a subject of study from the Renaissance and one that is later refined and produced through the disciplinary practices of the human sciences. As a *constructed reality*, the human could then, as the objection goes, be transcended and eventually fade away. This kind of criticism is, however, premised upon an important fallacy—namely, the notion that the ontological status or reality of an identity requires its being perennial. The human being would have to have been before humanity emerged; the concept would have to precede its realization. The problem is that this objection could be waged against nearly every concept, as all concepts are realized as a production of discourse. I think instead of the transcending of the human being, there may be *other dimensions* of the kinds of beings we are that await realization. Our becoming human, for instance, has not eradicated our also being animals. Being human is, in other words, only part of our story but a very important part. What complicates matters, however, is that the emergence of culture has led to an ever-expanding horizon of meanings through which the human being lives without a sense of human limit. Culture, in other words, has now permeated even the mysterious interstices of human communicative practices and is becoming the transcendental condition of any meaningful sense of human communication. I cannot spell out the details of why this does not entail a relativism here, but I encourage the reader to examine Wiredu's (1996) *Cultural Universals and Particulars* and Michelle Moody-Adams's (1997) *Fieldwork in Familiar Places* in concert with the arguments I have posed in *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man* and *Existential Africana* (2000) to see why the cultural turn does not support the cultural relativist argument.

Martinez's article touches on a dimension of these concerns, which served as the impetuses for my work in philosophy of culture—namely, the limits of cultural critique. Much of cultural critique in the academy today (not only as she has outlined in communications studies) suffers from an undertheorizing of *culture* and *critique*. She is correct to identify the false disciplinary problem advanced in the dichotomy of the humanities and the social sciences (my work, and I would suggest hers as well, doesn't neatly fit into either but in fact transcends both because of our concern for the reality faced by our intellectual foci). The reductive conceptions of experience by which many scholars in the humanities began to defend their location are exemplars of a failure to understand the both-and logic of which I earlier wrote. The reason for my insistence on existential *and* transcendental dimensions pertains to this very issue: Dominated groups abrogate responsibility for the theoretical models by which their experience is understood at their peril. It welcomes epistemic dependency and colonization of experiential

life. Martinez recognizes, however, that the self-critical claims about bad faith, and about what I call metacritique of reason, calls for identifying the value of truth within as a condition of truth without. This is another way of saying that when we assess our beliefs *critically*, we have already located ourselves as an Other in relation to the self. The communicability of that relationship makes sense only through a posited world in which the self alone is insufficient for appearance or the publicity of knowledge. Her discussion thus correctly points to problems of social reality through which communication and the social world emerge as *achievements*. She correctly describes this as my “insistence that we must in every case understand our own human presence as essentially social, and that a commitment to the human project requires a commitment to engaging our own experience and thinking as it is socially imbued” (p. 25). She correctly identifies, further, this argument about sociality as also an argument about evidence, that to be evident, something must appear to others, even to the self *as other*. The core reality of evidence, then, is its communicability. Noncommunicable evidence is a contradiction of terms.

In stream with Nissim-Sabat’s article, to which I now turn, Martinez addresses the bad faith exemplified by neoliberalism, especially with regard to its impact on temporality. The argument is summarized well by Martinez and dealt with in some detail by Nissim-Sabat, but I should simply like to say that the enemy of capitalism (and the neoliberal and neoconservative defenses of it) is history. History, as Hans Blumenburg (1985) and others have shown, emerged out of a peculiar marriage of West Asian and East African conceptions of linear movements of time and a noncyclical cosmology and Greco-Latin cyclical, eternal conceptions of reason. The effort to wed the two in a *logos* led to eschatology, and the effort to figure it out from the times of St. Augustine through to modern times in the discipline we know as history. But in this movement, in its modern form, is the understanding of history as the struggle to overcome many of the contradictions of culture (my addition)—namely, to see a human world in every direction one looks requires an extraordinary amount of labor. Throughout the millennia of the construction of human worlds, this has always meant the use of enslaved or nearly enslaved peoples, the subjugation of women (as the same), and the ever-increasing effort to overcome this alienation that renders whole groups of people homeless in the only world in which they could possibly make sense. This movement of freedom requires, then, that any moment being considered as one of possibility instead of a closed conclusion of prior practices. Thus, along with triumphant capitalism as the conclusion of history is also the compression of time as the world around us collapses in an effort at cultural coherence. This claim is exacerbated by neoliberal globalism, which has, with accelerated technological development, the correlative collapse of space. The result is a compression of space and time, the result of which is the shrinking of the globe and the speeding up of time. I leave it to the reader to consider the empirical exemplars of this analysis.

Marilyn Nissim-Sabat’s poignant “Radical Theory and Theory of Communication: Lewis Gordon’s Phenomenological Critique of the New World Consciousness” brings flesh to the previous claims through an analysis of the penultimate chapter of *Existential Africana*. The undisputed, culturally hegemonic society in this moment of geo-temporal compression of which I wrote is the United States. This means, whether other nations like it or not, much of the normative structures and repressed terms of American society will increasingly become global, or at least that’s what I argued in 1999, when that piece was written. Now, at the end of the first decade of the new millennium, evidence supporting that claim abounds. My concern then, however, was about the tendencies of reading race against class and against other terms of race as though one was in an epiphenomenal relation to the other. As Garrett points out in

his article, I argued that race is in the air of the United States as class is in Europe, to the point that it often functions as invisible because of a presumed natural order of things. The globalization of American norms promises some adaptations of this thesis.

Understanding U.S. racism, then, will prepare us better for what is to come. I argued that U.S. racism was not only antiblack but also anti-indigenous (among other kinds indexed in terms of both). Antiblack racism is concerned, among other things, with the quantity of blacks around. Blacks function in this regard as exponential; there are often *too many* blacks around, reflected in anxieties and popular cultural complaints and stereotypes of black people having too many children (in spite of simultaneous figures of blacks having the highest mortality rates in most countries). Anti-indigenous racism is also concerned with presence but it temporalizes it as past. Thus, the legitimate state of affairs is the location of indigenous people in the past, which, in effect, makes their contemporary presence a kind of *haunting* of the present. Worse, even at the time of initial encounters in the past, their presence was articulated as an absence that facilitated conquest on grounds of *terra nullius* (empty land), as Carol Pateman (2007) also recently demonstrated. Thus, even the indigenous past is pushed into a more distant past, even though they were always, in a way, present. This past, collapsed into primordial past, is also an aspect of primitivism, which, too, has the ghostlike character of haunting the present because the primitive, after all, belongs in the past and is thus a creature out of its proper time. This circumstance leads to what Frantz Fanon (1967c) called, in “Racism and Culture,” the mummification of culture. In addition to Nissim-Sabat’s excellent summary of my version of the argument here, I encourage the reader to see also the recent exploration in chapter 5 *Of Divine Warning* (J. A. Gordon & Gordon, 2009). The violence wrought by such acts of temporal displacement also leads to forms of national shame, where, in the hope of recovery, there is the effort to cover over, through the construction of dominated groups grateful for their subordination, in a bad faith quest for a preferable national *imago* (see, e.g., Ahmed, 2004; J. A. Gordon & Gordon, 2009; Nissim-Sabat, 2009).

Nissim-Sabat’s understanding of this discussion as a critique of New World or New West or New Occidental consciousness as also New Word or New West *attitude* is on point because she also identifies it as form of bad faith, and as we know, bad faith involves an attitude of consciousness to itself. This is about, in other words, global self-perception. I am delighted that Nissim-Sabat makes clear the influence of Marx on these ideas but also how I don’t regard any of what I do to be a mere application of any thinker’s thought. Husserl, Du Bois, and Fanon are brought in, among others, because of their insight into what I call the metacritique of reason. All this comes to bear on the philosophical anthropology of what results from such compressions in the modern world—namely, the construction of problem people. I of course could not have premised my thought in *Existential Africana* on Phil Graham’s (2006) *Hypercapitalism: New Media, Language, and Social Perceptions of Value* for the mere fact that those were ideas I formulated in the 1990s. Those ideas grew, however, out of my work that attempted to integrate Marxism, existentialism, phenomenology, and Africana philosophy into a cohesive thematic of critical questions of philosophical anthropology, liberation struggles, and the radical forms of reflection by which any knowledge claim can be legitimately advanced with integrity. That meant not only interrogations of the standards of knowledge and praxis but also the very meaning of such claims across the human sciences, including the global historical reality by which infrastructures for knowledge were advanced. Among the contemporary dehumanizing practices with which to deal as one pursues the production of knowledge is the now market

effort to become maximally consistent with the forms of instrumental, colonizing rationality of which I wrote at the beginning of this response. It is clear that global struggles are now about the market colonization of freedom, which calls for the articulation of alternative global futures, indeed, beyond the disciplinary decadence of history, the genuinely *historical* understanding of human possibility.

Finally, I come to Wandia Njoya's splendid and welcomingly critical essay, "Just Act, Don't Think! Religion, Education, and Disciplinary Decadence." Njoya draws upon the Du Boisian (Du Bois, 1898, 1903, 2000) and Fanonian (Fanon, 1963, 1967) theme of the construction of problem people and connects it to the argument in *Disciplinary Decadence*, which, among the aforementioned considerations of methodological absolutism, also examines the disciplinary production of such subjects and the assault on thinking and political life that ensues. A comparison here could be to the recipe model of cooking. Some cooks never diverge from recipes and, as a result, fail to learn the principles on which the recipes are based. Thus, if some ingredients are missing, such cooks cannot prepare the dish. A chef or at least an excellent cook, however, is someone who understands the principles of cooking and can prepare the dish by substituting other items for those missing or in some cases even making a sufficient dish with missing additions. A similar analogy could be made for musicians, and a variety of other performances. Remarkable to many, for instance, there are musicians who could simply meet with no music and, through their collective communication, produce a musical performance *while collectively composing it*. For those who rigidly stick to the blueprint or recipe or score, however, these other versions are outside the scope of reality. They, in effect, commit an act of idolatry with regard to the task at hand by confusing it with the method, rigidly and singularly understood, as the way to do it. These infelicities, these outside, supposedly illegitimate exemplars, however, take on theological significance. This tendency is something I have returned to in all my books, and I thank Njoya for devoting such attention to it, namely, the problem of theodicy.

Theodicy is the accounting for the goodness of a god with the presence of evil or injustice. The classical responses are to render the god, presumed omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent, to be such that his or her intentions are beyond human comprehension or to interpret the deity's benevolence as confirmed through the gift of free will to humankind. Either formulation exonerates the god through the articulation of human limitation and culpability. The emergence of secular instead of theological rationalizations of reality has pushed the god outside of the system while maintaining his or her grammatical function. The result has been a variety of institutions, systems, and actors filling the lacuna. Once achieved, the grammatical return of theodicy leads to systemic rationalization. Thus, where the system or conception of knowledge has filled the void, an idolatrous account emerges, in which human suffering and injustices are accounted for as *external* exemplifications of those maledictions. The construction of problem people is such an instance. Such people, as we saw with Nissim-Sabat's discussion, are rationalized as not properly belonging to the system, whose consistency is being maximized as valid. An additional problem, however, is that they were produced by such a system, which means, as with black people in modern life, they are homeless in the world that produced them.

The relevance of this analysis to communication studies is with regard to the rhetoric of legitimation practices and the forms of bad faith exemplified in notions of persuasive and nonpersuasive evidence. The previous three articles come together in Njoya's exploration of the exploitation and colonization of the infrastructure or conditions by which a properly critical

public sphere is undermined. In bad faith, the performance of presenting evidence substitutes for the advancement of actual evidence. This leads to a return of the earlier discussed subversion of exceptions and rules. In the academy, for instance, whose practitioners are responsible for the evidence-based production of knowledge, hiring practices suggests a form of flight of reason by those majority white when black scholars enter the door. Nothing about the demographics even in cases of fields who produce blacks with PhDs but in some countries lack any teaching in those fields in spite of their publication records and international reputation compels those custodians of the academy to admit racism is at work. That racism is at work raises the question of whether the modes of intellectual production also work within the rhetoric of bad faith. Given the analysis of theodicy, Njoya examines these dynamics, and their impact on the rhetoric of religion and critical discourses in Africa, in religious studies and theology. Crucial, however, is the conflict between contemporary missionary studies and liberation theology. Njoya notices that even some African philosophers, drawing upon resources of archaeological poststructuralism, join the fray against liberation discourses. Postmodern and poststructural attacks on black liberation discourses abound in some of the most influential, establishment-oriented recent work in the academy. Njoya takes me to task for offering a generous reading of V. Y. Mudimbe's (1988) *The Invention of Africa*, which she, along with Oyèrónké Oyewùmí's (1997) *The Invention of Women*, regards as one of the more egregious examples of this theodicean practice of establishment rationalization. I find Njoya's argument persuasive. It was not my goal to defend Mudimbe. Instead, it was my goal to examine the legitimate dimensions of invention as offered by his thesis—for example, the extent to which discovery also involves practices of invention; as well as the tendency, among nearly all African philosophers, even the most analytically oriented ones, to engage problems of history. As Nissim-Sabat showed so well, the modern world has many incentives to attempt to cover its eyes to history, not as a rummaging of the past but as a challenge for the future. The people whose identities were produced by the modern world also face agonal and melancholic dilemmas regarding their historical comportment. They must fight to communicate their humanity in a world premised upon resources for its evasion. This unreason is wrought with irony, because addressing it requires a form of reasoning with reason. In this contemporary study of the rhetoric of theodicy in the African context, what is revealed, then, is the challenge of the normative foundational grammars of communicative praxis and the role of power, articulated in the other three articles, in its realization.

I could go on, but this is already a long response. These articles speak well for themselves. Although avowedly to engage my thought, I am grateful for the extent to which they also engaged their own teleological suspension of it and, in so doing, paradoxically affirm its living relevance.

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