Eleanor Craig and An Yountae

Introduction

Challenging Modernity/Coloniality in Philosophy of Religion

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DOES *PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION* name a genre of thought or a delimited tradition? Can it be more broadly conceived to encompass modes of critical theorizing that have not heretofore been considered part of the field? This volume is an intervention, but it is also an experiment. It represents our belief, for lack of a better word, that it is possible and valuable to apply the categorical designation *philosophy of religion* to decolonial and anticolonial projects that rearrange the epistemological assumptions of much of the work carried out under that heading. The project at hand requires accounting for the dual forms of violence that define Euro-descended Christianity by its others while paradoxically claiming to represent and speak to humanity in its totality. This claim, today as in centuries past, is coherent only if the non-European and non-Christian are understood as less than human. The highest and lowest levels of evaluation are thus directly connected: those said to do philosophy are those who (really) count as human.

Introductory textbooks on philosophy of religion usually introduce the field as a series of inquiries into the nature and existence of God. It is common to see chapters devoted to categories of argument—cosmological, teleological, ontological—including debates over their articulation and validity. Defined as an inquiry into the rationality of theism, philosophy

of religion deploys a familiar lineup of thinkers: Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, and Immanuel Kant are constants; occasionally William James is included to discuss religious experience, or William Paley for argument from design.[1] Logical grapplings with morality and evil, especially (but by no means limited to) their exploration through theodicy, are rehearsed in fairly consistent ways across such texts. One might begin with Spinoza or with Job and put varied emphasis on the work of Irenaeus or Augustine, but the outlines of the problem are the same: one must reckon, rationally if not necessarily confessionally, with God's goodness and power in the face of evil.

Philosophy of religion is thus presented to beginning students as an analytic project with known and agreed-upon starting points, even as the answers offered to foundational questions vary to some extent. Students receive a chronology and classification of argument that sets down implicit and explicit ideas about what philosophy of religion *is.* Their participation in the discourse is invited with the (again, explicit or implicit) understanding that they too will start at the beginning, undertaking these old (timeless) questions of widespread (universal) significance.

We can neither ignore nor fully respond to the discourses and histories contained in the tradition of thought just described. Despite the limitations of its methodological patterns and recurringly foregrounded questions, this tradition must be acknowledged to contain curiosity, variation, creativity, and valuable modes of questioning. While the present collection is not determined to assert itself as *analytic* philosophy of religion, we remain interested in how some of the philosophy's thinkers and their various entanglements might be repurposed to understand the development of race and coloniality, as well as the ongoing reformulation of philosophy and religion themselves.

Despite these dynamic processes, the repetition and reproduction of the same thinkers and ideas across volumes reinstates with each publication the putative foundations of the field. These introductory texts performatively solidify which issues, thinkers, and methods are valid and important for philosophy of religion. They regard and present themselves as merely restating what is already known, while in fact continuously reconstituting boundaries and exclusions. We are interested in how this consensus was formulated and why it persists—what elisions, even violence, must be enacted to legitimate canonical decisions and declare them settled.

The present volume, however, is as eager to pursue neglected trajectories of thought as to reveal their absence or suppression. Critical theorizing

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about humanity and morality has never been the exclusive domain of European thinkers, just as European thought has never truly addressed the condition of all humanity. That so much philosophy of religion proceeds as if this were not the case is, on the one hand, our starting observation and, on the other, a critical lens that we hope those invested in the field as it stands would try on through engagement with the writings collected here. Put differently, we aim to reconfigure what philosophy of religion is understood to mean such that European Man is put in proper perspective as, in Sylvia Wynter's words, a "local culture's" definition of the human.[2]

Our work, too, takes place in a context that must be accounted for. Precisely because we see ourselves working with and sometimes within the field as it stands, we are calling for a reexamination of assumptions about its origins and boundaries and for a critique of the historical processes through which these assumptions came to be. More important, we find it imperative to probe the ways in which such normative philosophical inquiry into religion has reinforced the inscription of coloniality into the global epistemic framework. Questions of method, universality, and historical context thus arise from multiple directions at once.

The religious turn in French philosophy, concepts of pluralism and secularity, and comparative studies that displace the universality of Christian thought have garnered significant attention in philosophy of religion over the past two decades. Its relevance for addressing issues of ecology, social inequality, democratic theory, and religion's place in politics is argued as both a defense of and challenge to the field's accumulated ways of producing knowledge.[3] These important initiatives rework the sedimented habits of thought and argument that would tightly guard the label philosophy of religion. Yet the basic canon of thinkers and texts is left relatively untouched as scholars work to determine how it might be applied or revised in present contexts. These various calls for revision may be spurred by many of the same forces as the present collection, yet they continue to affirm a core or lineage that we would emphasize is only one possible center among others.

Race, Coloniality, Modernity

THE TERM *coloniality* as used in recent scholarship indicates the epistemic dominance of western and Eurocentric modernity, including its suppression of methodological critiques and alternate modes of thought. Coloniality is the universalization and normalization of matrices of power

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that historically enacted colonization itself and the presumption of superiority that these forces collectively grant to discourses articulated from colonizing and western perspectives. The notion of modernity/coloniality advanced by Aníbal Quijano, Enrique Dussel, María Lugones, and Walter Mignolo gave rise to a critical scholarship that, under the banner of "decolonial thinking" or the "decolonial turn," situates the inception of modernity (and therefore the beginning of post/decolonial thought and movements) in the Spanish colonial encounter of 1492. *Coloniality* names the regime of power that outlasts formal colonial governance, sustained in neocolonial power relations that reaffirm and reproduce Eurocentrism, as well as the construction of ideas of Europe and whiteness over and against colonized, racialized others.

Decolonial thought indexes colonial relations as a complex web of power that weaves together political-material relations and epistemic production. That is, the rise of the modern western episteme is intimately linked to the material conditions that colonial encounter facilitates. Conversely, the encounter with, or rather the invention of, the colonial other feeds the modern western episteme and constructions of its own subjecthood. Wynter refers to this ideal subjecthood—or, better, mode of being—with its common self-designation, *Man*. She designates with *Man* the hegemonic installation of a particular understanding of the human based in the norms of western modernity: secular, rational, bourgeois, and of course white.

The overrepresentation of Man as the universal or universalizable category of the human depends for its claims to attainment and coherence on the (invention of the) racial/colonial other. It figures indigeneity, then Blackness, as the materialization of ontological lack, the antithesis of Man that defines it by contrast.[4] Wynter's analysis parallels the observations of other decolonial thinkers who also view modernity and coloniality as inseparable. Numerous voices articulating anticolonial visions and alternative modes of thought in the Americas have existed since the beginning of colonization, though their presence in the western academy is more recent. The discourses on which this collection builds are rooted not first or only in what is commonly labeled philosophy of religion but in long genealogies of radical and revolutionary Indigenous, antiracist, Black, and mestizo/creole philosophies.

Naming a few key thinkers can, then, establish helpful points of reference without declaring these to be necessary or exclusive starting points. Dussel's philosophy of liberation intervenes with questions of power,

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violence, and geopolitics in philosophical discussions usually guided and dominated by Eurocentric views. Influenced by Emmanuel Levinas's critique of metaphysics, Dussel views European modernity as a totalitarian myth. Deconstructing the myth of modernity's universality involves situating it within the global matrix of power that invented the original inhabitants of the Americas as the other. In the spirit of Karl Marx, the necessary task of philosophy for Dussel is to transform both the material and epistemic conditions that classify, subjugate, and violate the colonial other of Eurocentric modernity. Both dominant and suppressed forms of thought in the post-1492 worldview are entangled in the global matrix of power that reinforces its attendant universals at the expense of the other. What does it mean to do philosophy and philosophy of religion when, as Wynter and Dussel demonstrate, the act of thinking about the cogito and the world is already conditioned by such power relations? We argue that the central materials for this work cannot be reduced to theological concepts or segregated from the problems of power that shape political life. The contributors to *Beyond Man* demonstrate that radical thinkers' quests to interrogate and dismantle the apparatus of systemic violence offer challenges, vocabularies, and epistemic alternatives for doing philosophy of religion.

Questions of philosophy, race, and power are poignantly articulated in the work of the Martinican revolutionary Frantz Fanon, whose influence on this volume is evident. Like Wynter, Fanon analyzes how racial-colonial ideology shapes the symbolic register grounding philosophical signification. He thus challenges the prevalent apolitical readings of dominant philosophical concepts and frameworks. The modern western subject—and the definition of the human it presupposes—is projected as an ideal that necessarily contrasts with what its colonized, racialized others (supposedly) embody. The universal subject signifies the ontological norm, while its other embodies the antithesis of being.

Fanon's take on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's corporeal schema, for instance, demonstrates the ways in which critical studies of race and colonialism can reconfigure philosophical conversations. For Merleau-Ponty, the body schema refers to the knowledge of one's body and orientation as the expression of one's "manner of being in the world."[5] For Fanon, what informs the orientation of racialized/colonized beings is not a body schema but a racial epidermal schema.[6] With this, Fanon develops his notion of sociogeny, a concept that Wynter takes up in turn, which challenges the dominant ontogenetic definition of the human. Our corporeal,

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embodied existence is not only given and determined biologically. Rather, sociogeny suggests that our existence is also created socially. Fanon thus locates inescapable racialization at the beginning of human life while denouncing the stark dualisms of whiteness and Blackness, colonizer and colonized, that constitute the world of signification into which social beings are born. The phenomenological perception of our own selves and of the world cannot transcend social relations. In ways that foreshadow later theories of racial formation, Fanon claims that racialized existence is an ongoing invention.[7]

While Fanon has made invaluable contributions to conversations about philosophy, race, and coloniality, the implications of his thought for thinking about religion have yet to be thoroughly explored. In his influential work "Necropolitics," Achille Mbembe engages Fanon through the terms of political theology as sharpened by Giorgio Agamben's discussion of sovereignty, exclusion, and violence.[8] The situation of colonial occupation and governance described by Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* represents, for Mbembe, the mechanism through which the coloniality of necropower operates. The theologico-political problem at hand revolves around the sovereign, who represents "the capacity to define who matters and who does not, *who* is disposable and who is not."[9]

In another compelling theological vein, Lewis Gordon has suggested reading Fanon through the lens of theodicy. Fanon denounces colonial metaphysics for being Manichaean (dualistic), its bipartite view dividing the world into species of absolute good and absolute evil. According to Gordon, Fanon denounces this worldview as a secularized form of theodicy, a theological rationalization of a dualistic division of humanity into insiders and outsiders.[10] While Gordon leaves the religious implications of this reading unexplored, he opens one door to possible dialogue between Fanon and the study of religion—a line of thought both An Yountae and Joseph R. Winters explore in this volume.

Religion's role in coloniality, underexplored in the work of Fanon, is a major (though still underappreciated) focus for Wynter, another guiding figure in this collection. Wynter understands religion to be constitutive of the modern colonial world order and traces the role of religion—and its refraction through the secular—in the reproduction of the colonial order of knowing/being. Against the secularist narrative of the triumph of reason over religion, Wynter probes ways in which the old theological logic operates within and erects the modern western scientific worldview. The transition from religious cosmovision to secular worldview took place

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alongside the sacralization of secular rationality as the absolute parameter of truth—a process that required relegating religion to the sphere of non-reason, associated with the enchanted worldview of the colonial other. The relationship between the theological and the political, and the corresponding problem of the secular, thus cannot be understood as an isolated European construct. Wynter demonstrates that the modern western secular subject is informed and haunted by a theology that takes shape in and through the colony and slavery.[11] Religion in its more explicit forms retained more influence than Wynter directly accounts for, but she demonstrates that the secular and its racializing outcomes have an inescapable theological shape.

The gendered status of Man, noted but not extensively pursued in Wynter's work, cannot be overlooked. What Lugones calls the coloniality of gender, through which "the modern hierarchical dichotomous distinction between men and women became known as characteristically human and a mark of civilization," also plays a key role in these developments.[12] Non-European and non-Christian arrangements of gender were taken as marks of unredeemed bestiality and primitiveness, and the need to instill European frameworks of gender and kinship was used as a key justification for colonial domination and brutality.[13] These dynamics are evident in Eleanor Craig's analysis of the Laws of Burgos, which attempt to manipulate and alter Taíno understandings of gender. They also come to the fore in Vincent Lloyd's depiction of the ways C. L. R. James internalized certain colonialist class and gender norms. As readers of Fanon are also aware, via Fanon's complicated understanding of gender and masculinity, the coloniality of gender is both crucial to colonizing strategy and insidiously extant in much anticolonial and decolonial thinking.

Religion, Eurocentrism, and Racial Order

Thanks be to nature, therefore, for the incompatibility, for the spiteful competitive vanity, for the insatiable desire to possess or even to dominate! For without them, the excellent natural predispositions in humanity would eternally slumber undeveloped.—Immanuel Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim"

PURUSHOTTAMA BILIMORIA AND ANDREW IRVINE'S edited volume *Postcolonial Philosophy of Religion* poses the decolonization of philosophy of religion as a necessarily comparative project. Several crucial insights

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emerge in this work, including a critical awareness that both colonialist and postcolonial theory tend to be written by cultural elites and the recognition of the need to engage seriously and relationally with non-Christian traditions in any reassessment of philosophy of religion's meaning and potential. *Beyond Man* seeks to reckon in a sustained way with Christian coloniality and to simultaneously problematize the notion that starkly and essentially distinct traditions simply exist to be compared.[14] One of its key limitations is the centrifugal force still arguably granted to Christian thought and history. Yet as Mayra Rivera points out (chapter 2), Christianity itself is a tricky and perhaps limited label when applied to the traditions of the colonized and formerly colonized. Vincent Lloyd notes that Christian theology can exert force on thinkers who have explicitly renounced it, suggesting that it might be better to name these influences than to take their denial at face value (chapter 4). In short, it is no simple thing to say what Christianity is, what it does, to whom it belongs, or whose actions it shapes.

This, of course, has something to do with the constitution of religion as a modern concept and of Christianity as one (albeit exalted) subheading. That there are mutually constitutive histories of race and religion—as concepts and categories—is broadly recognized, even when this fact's significance for philosophy of religion is not fully elaborated. J. Kameron Carter persuasively argues that western Christian attempts to disown Christianity's Jewish roots made possible modern racial imaginaries. In *Race: A Theological Account*, he traces the connections between Kant's anthropology and his eschatological political vision. Carter observes that Kant places "the Jews as the sole negative racial other" and that this negation inflects his other racial classifications.[15] Race and religion are imbricated not only with each other but with the modern, and crucially Christian, nation-state that they justify and enable.[16] Tomoko Masuzawa elaborates how nineteenth-century classificatory categories that dealt with religion consolidated a narrative in which "those nations of Aryans—whether Greece, Persia, or India—had shown in various epochs of their history the capacity to transcend their national particularities, hence their propensity for universality." She claims that Christian universalism is thus secondary to and derivative from Aryan universality.[17] In Theodore Vial's account, "because [race and religion] share a mutual genealogy, the category of religion is always a racialized category, even when race is not explicitly under discussion." This remains true in contemporary studies of comparative religion that unwittingly reproduce "the same hierarchies of Kant, Herder,

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Schleiermacher, and Müller."[18] Vial aims to draw the gaze fixed on the Enlightenment forward in time, arguing that modern race and religion are still taking shape in post-Enlightenment German thought.

Our historicizing approach follows the decolonial strategy of beginning with the so-called long sixteenth century, or what Wynter refers to as the 1492 worldview. We insist that while significant shifts of course did occur in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, race and religion are more accurately understood when viewed as the trajectories of European colonial projects that began in the age of discovery. This is not to fixate on a debate about origins, or whether or not early modern ideas are equivalent to later ones. It is as much an orientation as a truth claim, a methodology that asks how the stories of race and religion might be told differently if the starting point is 1492 rather than Kant. It is also a method for interrogating the ways in which, as Carter states in this volume, western conceptions of sovereignty—from subjectivity to the state—are "never not colonial."

Nelson Maldonado-Torres observes that the invention of the universalizing category of religion "opened up a universe of signification" that naturalized a racial ontological hierarchy.[19] The "discovery" of nonreligious subjects, meaning the decidedly Christian assessment that Indigenous people had nothing that qualified as religion, initiated the possibility of anthropological thinking that classified some beings as "ontologically limited" and inhuman. It was this division of humanity into those who did and did not qualify as human beings that Maldonado-Torres sees as "opening the doors of modernity."[20] This is not to say that hierarchies were somehow determined and settled in that moment: Indigenous people were nonetheless, in paradoxical ways, conceived of as possible subjects of the Catholic church. Colonial thinking denied this status to enslaved African people, seen as property (nonbeing) but also associated with "Moors," who were "in defiance of the Christian order."[21]

Joint hierarchies of race and religion thus have a long lineage that transforms but endures with the emergence of secularism. While for nineteenth-century European scholars, "having religion no longer provides the ultimate or definitive concession of full humanity," the anthropological assumptions put in place under that logic remain. Colonized people's religion was recognizable for European scholars and publics through demonstrations of its proximity or similarity to Christianity, and religion itself was deemed less qualifying than "the capacity to think

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beyond religion and to organize their society rationally."[22] Masuzawa connects this pattern to the narrative of secularization that holds the liberation of political, economic, and civil life from church authority as a sign of societal maturation. The colonized or "primitive" were seen as "thoroughly in the grip of religion," atavistically subscribing to "prelogical" modes of thought and belief.[23] Religion thus went from qualifying peoples as human to being a potential liability that could, through excess or irrationality, evince cultural inferiority and backwardness.

Philosophy of religion's relationship to race and coloniality is also tightly connected to European understandings of the term *philosophy* from the eighteenth century on. The dominant understanding and definition of philosophy has a particular genealogy that was born out of the modern imaginary of the west. It is an endless reproduction of self-referentiality in which "the narrative returns the west to itself despite its various transformations."[24] Philosophy becomes a homogenizing discourse, a reiteration of sameness, as its particular trajectory is transformed into a universality. That trajectory cites as its initial articulation a reified and exclusively European origin.

The claim of philosophy's Greek roots intentionally portrays Europe as the first and greatest agent of critical and rational thinking while relegating non-western traditions of philosophical thinking to culture and religion. Greek thought is then taken as the forebear of universal norms and ideals of science, medicine, aesthetics, ethics, and politics (democracy), all of which reflect the universal progress of history, while non-western traditions are identified as lacking rational rigor, critical perspective, and universal relevance.

This narrative of lineage relies on a number of distortions, oversimplifications, and erasures. In his recent book, *Isonomia and the Origins of Philosophy*, Kojin Karatani displaces western metaphysics' and political philosophy's age-old claims of Greek origin by identifying their source in Ionia, an ancient Greek colony in Anatolia. The reduction of philosophy's root to a single European origin also underestimates the long and persisting influence that Arabic-Islamic thought had on western philosophy during the Middle Ages. The thirteenth-century Arabic-Latin translation movement had a significant impact on the formation of European disciplines of science and humanities, particularly in natural philosophy, metaphysics, logic, and ethics. Indeed, it was Ibn Rushd's (Averroes) original reading of Aristotle that reintroduced Aristotle to Europe. Ibn Rushd's influence persists widely through the western philosophical tradition,

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most notably in the work of Spinoza—however, this history is always underplayed within the intellectual genealogy.

Before the eighteenth century, philosophers often attributed philosophy's origin to places outside of Europe, such as India, Egypt, China, and Persia.[25] According to Robert Bernasconi, the eighteenth-century reinvention of philosophy as a western tradition was due to a specific question that needed to be addressed: the existence of what seemed like philosophy in China.[26] Around this time, historians of ideas began to deny the existence of philosophy in Africa and Asia. While religion had previously been a marker of civilization, it became a category used to distinguish non-European spiritual cosmologies from the rational operations of philosophy.[27]

This period coincides with both Enlightenment philosophies of rational humanity and the surge in scientific theories of race. Europe's self-referential identification of philosophy's origin cannot be examined outside of the history of colonial encounters and the development of scientific racism. It is against this backdrop that Kant's well-known racist anthropology and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's exclusion of Africa from world history must be understood. Kant's preoccupation with anthropology and geography (he offered more courses on those subjects than on logic or metaphysics) is indicative of their critical place in his philosophical thinking. If what constitutes the human in its fully realized capacity is the ability to think and will, it is the white European who materializes, or can materialize, this ideal. Unlike Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who postulates the ideal human nature as a hypothetical concept, the Kantian cosmopolitan vision of moral reason does not shy away from indicating the specific racial group that embodies—or is destined to eventually embody—the ideal of critical reason.[28] Kant's racist anthropology is inseparable from his moral philosophy.

Kant's "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim" is thus significant not only for what it represents about his own ideas but also—perhaps even more so—for the many strands of philosophical and theological thought consolidated therein. From a contemporary standpoint, "it is as if this essay were a crucible in which Kant sought to synthesize the purified and transformed views of his predecessors, condensing them into a comprehensive political and cultural history with a philosophical moral. It is itself an instance of the integration of history and philosophical reflection that it heralds."[29] This historical and philosophical integration is possible because of Kant's undergirding teleology, which is evident in the

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fact that universal history is an idea that emerges for Kant in spite of what one can observe of human action. A philosopher observing fellow human beings would be unable to "presuppose any rational *aim of theirs*."[30] And if one took a more collective view, it would appear that "everything in the large is woven together out of folly, childish vanity, often also out of childish malice and the rage to destruction."[31] For Kant, however, it is also necessary and observable that everything in nature is constructed to fully realize its development. One must take this species-level view of "rational beings who all die" to detect nature's purposiveness with respect to immortal humanity. Within Kant's teleological narrative, (western) European states have traveled only a short way toward their ultimate destiny. Yet they are ahead of other places and peoples and "will probably someday give laws to all the others."[32]

Hegel's view of world history is structured by a similarly teleological progression in which "the History of the world travels from East to West."[33] Asia represents the childlike stage of the Spirit, whereas Christian Europe is the consummation. The first Man of reason arose, remarks Hegel, among the ancient Greeks, who understood freedom to be the essence of human being but who nonetheless engaged in slavery. Christian German nations "were the first to attain the consciousness, that man, is free: that it is the freedom of Spirit which constitutes its essence."[34] He excludes Africa from the global cartography of reason in which the Spirit's movements are registered. Africa is associated with backwardness and immaturity: "the land of childhood, which lying beyond the day of history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night."[35] He claims that Africa is "no historical part of the world; it has no movement or development to exhibit."[36]

The entanglement of Hegel's philosophy and colonial history nonetheless takes place in unexpected sites. Susan Buck-Morss's important work *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* argues that Hegel's master-slave (lordship-bondage) dialectic was inspired by the Haitian slave revolt, rather than the French Revolution as is commonly claimed by intellectual historians. Buck-Morss's work shows how the historical event that likely inspired Hegel's lordship-bondage dialectic is muted in his own work as well as in historical and theoretical interpretations of his ideas. Intellectual histories and Hegelian historiography continually affirm the assumption of Europe as self-generating; the evident connection between Europe and its colony is viewed as material and external, at most. The constitution of Europe's self-knowledge occurs internally, thus maintaining the Hegelian

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thesis of universal history that in its temporal progression moves from the archaic periphery to its consummation, namely, Europe.

Revising these genealogies is a matter not simply of exposing the racist moments tainting an intellectual history but of understanding the extent to which philosophical claims are inseparable from questions of narrative, context, and power. The discipline of philosophy's reluctance to critically engage race, gender, class, and sexuality continues to produce (with some exceptions) universalizing philosophical knowledge that neglects history, context, and power. Despite its unparalleled influence on a wide range of critical theories, the field of philosophy as commonly recognized remains relatively immune to the various challenges emerging from global geographies of power and knowledge. A similar tendency prevails in radical philosophical (neo-Marxist and postmodern) critiques of modernity and capitalist globalization when Europe remains the sole agent and referent of knowledge production.

Some have, in search of an alternative to rationalism, turned to Spinoza's monism or to existential-phenomenological sources such as Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jacques Derrida. These thinkers are often presented as correctives to the limits of western thought, as offering an autocritical lens. They point to matters of contingency and contradiction that attend western metaphysics characterized by the problems of ontotheology, Platonic dualism, Aristotelian substance metaphysics, and the suppression of difference. The twentieth-century tradition of phenomenology signals a turn to the structure of experience and the way the subject's consciousness is constituted by the other and the surrounding world. By suspending presence (the presence of truth), phenomenology seeks to displace the sovereign subject: the self-possessed subject of modern metaphysics yields to alterity. Inspired by the phenomenological tradition inflected by Levinas, Derrida's later writings on ethics and religion signal for many a defining critique of the impasse of western metaphysics.

Deconstruction and phenomenology's contributions to analyzing the limitations and potential of western philosophy cannot be underestimated. What calls our attention, however, is that they are often viewed as solutions to the problems of and epistemic violence done by western metaphysics (especially when the reception of these works is devoid of analytics of power). The phenomenological constitution of the self and the world does not take place in a power vacuum, nor is the self who is "in the world" (à la Heidegger) interrogating the meaning of Being

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unaffected by the social relations of power that condition them. Fanon's phenomenological analysis of racialized subjectivity shows how the approach to the question of meaning and existence always unfolds in the matrix of power relations conditioning the individual's existence. The questions of the self's existence/formation in relation to the other and the world cannot be reduced to the philosophical categories of abstract universals. Rather, Fanon shows how the self is always already given to the world, a world constituted by myriad others whose participation in the constitution of the subject's consciousness as well as its body schema is conditioned by power.

A related elision takes place when European feminist philosophy is treated as decisively addressing gender—in subjectivity or for philosophical writing. In the existential-phenomenological tradition, Simone de Beauvoir demonstrated women's assigned place of otherness in relation to men.[37] Common to Beauvoir's and Fanon's analyses is the centrality of otherness (negation) in the constitution of the subject. A close examination of the rational-universal western subject reveals what it hides: those whose exclusion makes the being-there of the subject (the Euro-Christian Man) possible. Yet it is an entirely more complex task to weave together an understanding of how race *and* gender operate in these constructions of being and in the aspirations they engender in those thereby excluded.

An emerging body of literature brings race and coloniality to the forefront of philosophical discourse. Linda Alcoff, Robert Bernasconi, Lewis Gordon, María Lugones, Achille Mbembe, Eduardo Mendieta, Charles Mills, Lucius Outlaw, Shannon Sullivan, and George Yancy have been offering in recent years (and in many works already cited here) theoretical frameworks and directions for the philosophical study of race and coloniality. Nelson Maldonado-Torres, in particular, has elaborated the ways in which these issues intersect with studies and definitions of religion.

Discourse on political theology has undertaken a parallel and related critical turn. Inspired to varying degrees by the question of the theologico-political (and still, for some, the Schmittian notion of the sovereign), some strands of the debate retain an emphasis on continental philosophers invested in questions of law, sovereignty, and violence (such as Derrida, Agamben, and Slavoj Žižek). These conversations examine the dominant political system's sanction of violence under the name of the sovereign, as well as the justification and delivery of violence through more intricate modes of biopolitics. A more recently emerging group of voices also contests political theology's Eurocentric orientation, its historical embed-

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dedness in Euro-Christian analytics, and its neglect of nonwhite and non-western interlocutors. The works of Shawn Copeland, Gil Anidjar, J. Kameron Carter, Hussein Ali Agrama, Santiago Slabodsky, Vincent Lloyd, Houria Bouteldja, An Yountae, and Devin Singh—several of whom appear in this volume—are among those who analyze the problems of political theology in conversation with non-western, nonwhite, and non-Christian interlocutors. These thinkers would not univocally classify their work as political theology. Yet they are cumulatively reworking the ways that relationships among politics, theology, and other social processes are imagined.

Beyond Man assumes, but also strives to demonstrate, the inseparability of colonialism and anti-Blackness in philosophy and theology. We hope that it also contributes to discourses that are bringing multiple strands of liberatory thought into collaborative conversation. Willie James Jennings's work provides repeated reminders that the influence of coloniality on Christian theology has been both chosen and contingent. Jennings exercises a materialist, historicizing orientation that the authors in this collection mirror. For Jennings, economic and social arrangements are fundamentally relational—between humans but also between humans and the land.[38] These arrangements come about over time, through processes of transformation and (conscious and unconscious) decision-making. We share this preoccupation with examining how religious thinking *takes shape*, a method that emphasizes that both punctual moments of crisis and embedded, seemingly intractable situations of exploitation are continually created. This approach calls attention to the historical situatedness of any form of philosophy.[39] Our authors engage Black radical traditions and others in the typically conceived decolonial circle (U.S. Latinx philosophy, Latin American/Caribbean philosophy, and Indigenous philosophies) without supposing that there are clear, necessary boundaries between these categories. Our contributors are in conversation with both "traditional" modes of philosophical scholarship and the many crucial endeavors that have already initiated the work of thinking critically and constructively about race, coloniality, and philosophy of religion.

Decolonizing Philosophical Trajectories

If you do not embody Kant's and Foucault's local history, memory, language, and "embodied" experience, what shall you do? Buy a pair of Kant and Foucault's shoes; or, look around you and think about what has to be done in the same way

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that Kant and Foucault looked around themselves and thought about what had to be done?—Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*

The most profound ethical relation in the zone of nonbeing is not that of the master with another master, but that of a slave with another slave. At the end, it is not only the master who can start a relation.—Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Race, Religion, and Ethics in the Modern/Colonial World"

QUESTIONING THE NORMATIVE STATUS of the term *philosophy* as well as attempting to reclaim and decolonize the term itself certainly involve deconstructing the racist history haunting the archive of philosophical canons. Underlying this problem, however, is the epistemic edifice that sanctions exclusion and hierarchy, which is inseparable from the colonial ideology driven by Europe's imperialist desires and racializing (racist) worldviews. Exposing the complex entanglement of knowledge and power underneath philosophy and philosophy of religion's disciplinary designations clarifies the stakes and politics of categorization and canonization. Just as the notion of religion cannot be detached from the long history of European imperialism in which it played an instrumental role in denying the humanity of non-Europeans, the normative category of philosophy was crucial for reason's imperial design. In its imaginary of the modern world, Europe is the sole possessor and producer of philosophical knowledge, while non-Europe is the receptacle of ancient wisdom and art. Similarly, Christianity is constructed as a religion compatible with the secular-liberal values of rationality and democracy, while nonwestern religions are constructed as overly mystical and outdated.

This is why rethinking the term *philosophy* is important. Philosophy has placed itself at the center of knowledge (as the queen of science). Its rigid normative parameters delineate which methods, texts, sites, and modalities of thinking are properly part of its domain, the voices of these judgments uttered "by an authority who adjudicates what we will and will not count as legitimate knowledge. These are voiced by one who seems to know, who acts with the full assurance of knowledge."[40] Reflecting on her academic journey within and outside of the disciplinary boundary of philosophy, U.S. philosopher Judith Butler remarks that "philosophy has become another to itself."[41] As a feminist philosopher teaching in the Department of Rhetoric, she finds herself being labeled as a "theorist." She notes that many important philosophers who are working with gender and race are housed outside of philosophy departments.[42] It is no coincidence that important philosophical thinkers from outside the traditional

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European canon are often labeled as theorists, critics, artists, writers, or poets—or vaguely, thinkers. Philosophy as a concept and field maintains self-segregation from analytics of power, key tools of analysis considered highly important and relevant in almost every discipline of humanities and social sciences.

We understand the endeavor of reclaiming philosophy of religion as working to push the normative boundaries that calcify the discipline rather than prescribing another normative orientation that would rectify the field. The genealogies of the thinkers in whose work our contributors locate alternative possibilities are, generally speaking, found in contexts of struggle (anticolonial, antiracist, antipatriarchal). Its members are often grounded in, or at least in close contact with, emancipatory political movements—inspiring them, challenging them, and strategizing their ways forward. Such work has sparsely and sporadically made its way into the field of religious studies, in ways this volume aims to deepen and expand.

Two concepts from Juliet Hooker's *Theorizing Race in the Americas* helpfully frame the collective work of this project. The first is a hemispheric approach that connects struggle in and theory about the United States or North America with Caribbean and Latin American histories and discourses. For Hooker, an "intellectual hemispheric genealogy" allows one to trace U.S. and Latin American thought about race in ways that are attuned to contextual specificity and useful for understanding the evolution of present-day racial ideology.[43] The present collection aims for hemispheric relationality, albeit always with an eye to transatlantic histories and relations. Its engagements with Black studies, alongside Caribbean and Latin American history and philosophy, suggest important overlaps and points of convergence for the study of (de)coloniality.

While hemispheric thinking is not Hooker's invention, we adopt that approach in a spirit framed by the second concept we borrow from her work: that of "juxtaposition as a methodological alternative to comparison."[44] As much as colonialism and coloniality are patterned modes of universalization and domination, they play out in disparate ways across time and space and target differently positioned others. The theories and tactics of those who contest these forces are likewise impossible to unify. Yet it would be disingenuous and undesirable to render these contexts distinct and comparable—because much of Caribbean thought is also Black studies, because many U.S. racial dynamics were incubated in Caribbean contexts, and because Latin American thinking on race is

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formatively connected to how other parts of the hemisphere are *imagined* to be. Rather than "assuming prior difference" in order to compare discrete contexts and approaches, we set these efforts side by side. We urge readers in turn to resist comparison, which can elide "the boundaries between traditions as contingent products of political power," and to notice "the resonances and/or discontinuities between traditions of thought" as they appear in this work.[45] The contributors to this volume share many notes of common purpose but are not univocal. Rather than smooth over controversies among us, we welcome notes of tension and discord as marking sites for the continuation of this work.

IN "DECOLONIAL OPTIONS FOR A FRAGILE SECULAR," Devin Singh probes the complex connection between modernity and secularity, which is often underexplored or muted in the mainstream conversation headed by figures such as Charles Taylor and José Casanova. If decolonial theorists complicate widespread accounts of modernity and secularity by exposing their coconstitutive role in colonial history, Singh troubles them further by tracing their connection with the evolution of a capitalist economic system and the ensuing material conditions. He looks at secularization's influence on the inception of capitalism, in which the evolving economic systems of production, accumulation, and exchange served the needs of colonial enterprises. Against the myth of the secular (secular modernity as the edifice of western civilization), Singh probes the undying power of religion in the secular public realm by demonstrating how changing conceptions of economy in western social life are always imbricated with religious ideas, whether in explicit theological language (premodern time) or secular terms (during and after modernity). Despite the collusive tie between secularity and modernity/coloniality, Singh does not want to reject the contributions of the secular altogether. Rather, he is interested in preserving important contributions and the potential of the secular space for protecting difference in a way that takes a decolonial vantage point and breaks with the account provided by European modernity.

While Singh argues the need to preserve a version of secularity, Mayra Rivera highlights the multiplicity of valences that religion can have for political resistance. In "Embodied Counterpoetics: Sylvia Wynter on Religion and Race," Rivera explores the various roles that religion plays in Wynter's work. Wynter elaborates both the ways that Christianity gave

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systematic shape and justification to coloniality and the ways that an anticolonial spirit was nurtured in Caribbean religious practice, Christian and otherwise. Religion in the latter vein can work as counterpoetics, incubating "states of feeling" that play a key role in the reinventions of the human to which Wynter aspires. The importance of African cultural inheritance in Wynter's treatment of ritual challenges both secular humanist condescension and European hegemony; it requires letting go of aspirations to align with or become that which was "never meant to foster our well-being." Religion itself is neither good nor bad. The question is what ways of life, religious and otherwise, will nurture "the states of feeling needed to counter dehumanization"—embodied counterpoetics that can resist both coloniality and capitalism.

In a chapter examining the Laws of Burgos (Leyes de Burgos) of 1512–13, Eleanor Craig argues that these "Royal Ordinances for the Good Government and Treatment of the Indians" constitute a moral philosophical document that consolidates emerging justifications for colonial intervention and expansion. Craig reads the laws as simultaneously continuing and diverging from preceding European thought on salvation, culture, and conquest. While the Laws were a document of governance, they were never executed to any extent that resembled their prescriptions. They also were composed in a context in which Spanish colonizers were having to engage directly (with likely intentional and unintentional forms of misunderstanding) with Indigenous moralities and epistemologies. Craig argues that at stake in the Laws are colonialist self-justifications that, while intended to lessen outright brutality, were primarily concerned with reconciling colonial violence with eternal salvation. This chapter asserts that the Laws' frequent invocation as an early human rights document deserves further attention, since it points to tendencies to elevate the morality of dominating groups that endure to this day. It also argues that the Laws ought to be included in genealogies of race that are often construed as having their roots in the Enlightenment.

In "The Puritan Atheism of C. L. R. James," Vincent Lloyd grapples with the complex legacy of James's work and person. James defines activity as fundamentally collective, referring to practices that resist systems of racial and capitalist domination; activity is what performs and creates the new society in the midst of the old. In James's thought, workers possess wisdom derived from everyday confrontations with domination and the creative resources needed to shape an alternative world order. The revolutionary intellectual or agitator inhabits a set of tense contradictions,

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elaborating a theory that fundamentally questions the need for their contributions. Middle-class intellectuals, by James's own account, are far less accountable to social collectivities than are members of the working class. Lloyd presents James's late confession to having committed sexual assault at the age of sixteen in order to raise questions about this founder of Black revolutionary theory's understanding of power and domination. He identifies a steady undercurrent of violence beneath middle-class respectability, depicting James in a puritan stance of alienation from his own desires and from the recognition of women as human. The bourgeois revolutionary more generally, Lloyd observes, is in a stance of constant complicity: "For the middle class broadly—for whites, for men, for those in the Global North, for those without disability—there is no redemption." Neither violence nor its confession comes as a surprise, even when they contradict one's stated commitments to follow others' (women's or the working class's) desires. This chapter raises crucial and unsettling questions about who can truly desire, or fully participate in, struggles for liberation.

Ellen Armour is concerned with another form of complicity. Her chapter on decolonizing engagements with photographic objects and media advocates contemplative attention—not just to what the photograph might represent but also to how its constitution, like the viewer's own, is immersed in biodisciplinary power. Against the conventional assumption that the photographic image represents the truth before one's eyes (seeing is believing), she suggests, following Errol Morris, that we see in photographs what we already believe to be true (believing is seeing). Armour invokes Ariella Azoulay's exploration of photography's potential to activate a resisting gaze, termed the *civil gaze*. While the civil gaze offers a compelling account of photography's role in cultivating a transformative political imagination, Armour finds it insufficient for decolonizing spectatorship as it tends to assume a sovereign subjectivity. Perhaps, Armour suggests, a careful inquiry into Christianity's entanglement in the condition of seeing and believing might shed light on decolonizing spectatorship, as the mediation between belief and visual image has occupied a central place in Christian history.

Sovereign subjectivity is, moreover, a fundamentally racial ideal that is part of what J. Kameron Carter portrays as the cannibalistic ritual of colonialism. Carter's reading of Aimé Césaire observes that the coconstruction of the political and the theological, or "racial capitalism and colonialism as theological discourse," undergirds both humanist Man and its

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attendant versions of sovereignty and transcendence. The metabolization of Indigenous and Black life and labor for capitalist profit is a consumption of flesh and blood, a eucharistic practice in which the racial capitalist liturgy organizes "matter into a violent and restricted economy of value." Césaire portrays the bodies and comments of legislators in the French National Assembly as they promote murderously violent responses to the 1946–47 anticolonial revolts in Madagascar. He observes how, in this ritual repetition of coloniality, the politicians' discourse transfigures the bodies of the colonized into both blood sacrifice and something to be eaten—consumed, then excreted. These are the movements that ceremonially produce the Christian community, the nation-state, and the idea of western civilization. They rehearse, moreover, a "violent metaphysics of matter" that has justified various forms of classed, raced, and gendered extraction and exploitation since the Middle Ages.

Blackness as "anticolonial antisacrament" refuses consumption and digestion and lodges itself in the colonial machinery as *remains.* It testifies to the failed totality of race and is itself a site of seemingly impossible possibility, a secreted "erotic reserve" that bears fugitive relation to western Christian capitalist discourse and governance. Négritude, Carter argues, rearranges sacrality and teleology through a poetics that operates in excess of this sacrificial political theology. In a mode that Carter terms *fecopoetics*, Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* interrupts the incorporative "self-corpsing" by which the colonized participate in their own consumption. Carter with Césaire pursues an alternate sacrality marked by desire and multiplicity, a recoding of language and fugitive reimagining of materiality and self.

An Yountae also challenges Christian notions of sacrifice that rely on and inscribe colonialist ideology. An reads Fanon's controversial notion of violence through the lens of theodicy by juxtaposing Fanon with Job. Fanon views the problem of colonialism as a metaphysical problem reified by a Manichaean division, a theodicean ontology that separates good (the white colonizer) from evil (the Black/Native colonized). An observes that colonial theodicy offers a simple answer to the question of divine justice: redemption through violence and sacrifice. Fanon's intervention, for An, is a critique of the redemptive violence that demands sacrifice. Fanon rearticulates violence by breaking from an instrumentalist understanding that sets up the binary of violence/nonviolence. Many of the critiques directed at Fanon's notion of violence, such as Hannah Arendt's, emanate from the instrumentalist framework, which views violence as pure means.

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An argues that Arendt's position on violence—and the liberal discourse of nonviolence—denounces certain forms of violence while legitimizing others. To explicate Fanon's notion of violence, An juxtaposes Fanonian absolute violence with Walter Benjamin's notion of divine violence. Like Benjamin's divine violence, Fanon's absolute violence is irreducible to particular moments and actions. Rather, it is always in excess and elsewhere. It does not aim at replacing the social order but at terminating it entirely. Fanon's critique of colonial metaphysics is further refined by An as a critique of colonial theology and sovereignty via Delores Williams and Achille Mbembe. Against the colonial theodicy that demands sacrifice, Fanon urges the end of theodicy and the abolition of the world and the theology that give birth to such a theodicy.

Filipe Maia's "Alter-Carnations: Notes on Cannibalism and Coloniality in the Brazilian Context" recounts "the life and swallowing" of the first episcopal priest in Brazil, Bishop Pero Fernandes Sardinha (1495–1556), who was captured and devoured by a Caeté warrior. This chapter analyzes the anthropophagic ritual in the Tupi philosophical context as a mode of deterrence and vengeance that was also an honorable mode of death, one that recognized the bravery and strength of the rival so eaten. It reads Oswald de Andrade's "Cannibalist Manifesto" for the ways that the text playfully deconstructs Brazilian origins and "ontological nationalism," drawing attention to abjected and secreted dimensions of both Portuguese and Brazilian mythologies. For Maia, the eating of Bishop Sardinha is a eucharistic encounter that presents "a pathway to theorize cannibalism as a mode of relation that resists coloniality precisely by incorporating it." While a Freudian interpretation of originary incorporation would indicate the installment of patriarchal laws and civilizing logics, Andrade instead envisions it as an act of embracing the totem. Maia delivers a theological reflection on anthropophagy as sacrament—as a regenerative, digestive act in which coloniality might be disintegrated and transformed. This incorporative process, a kind of communion, has the potential to bring about "a new social-material-subjective reality" and thus new incarnations.

Joseph R. Winters reads the notion of the sacred, one of the key conceptual notions in the modern study of religion, as it inscribes an ontological distinction separating the pure from the impure, order from chaos, and being from nonbeing. By juxtaposing the sacred in the work of the historian of religion Mircea Eliade and in the works of Sylvia Wynter and Frantz Fanon, Winters unravels the particular understanding of the

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sacred undergirding the colonial imaginary. According to Eliade, the sacred provides the ontological ground for participating in being. But his vision of the sacred corroborates the racial/colonial imaginary of the west, as he refers to occupation of foreign land as participation in the sacred. Eliade's sacred, Winters observes, is posited *contra* opacity and darkness so that whiteness is associated with the sacred while Blackness represents profanity. The connection between the ontological distinction and racial/colonial demarcation is further clarified by Wynter, who views the emergence of European Man in opposition to its others as a transference of the Christian distinction between spirit and fallen flesh. Man, according to this framework, consecrates the world by expansion and by subjugation of darkness and nonbeing. Winters finds in Fanon's poetics potential for reconfiguring the sacred. Fanon's final prayer, directed to his body, suggests an alternative sense of the sacred, the sacred gone astray that remains faithful to the ungrounding and unsettling nature of the flesh.

Carter traces Césaire's "shamanic poet journeys" into their experimental remaking of political and narrative logics; these projects play with and disorient the "totemic or racial masks and scripts" that structure anti-Black theopolitics. Maia notes a totemic embrace in the alternative sacrament that cannibalizes and incorporates the colonizer. Amy Hollywood picks up on these multivalent, multidirectional circulations of the totem in her response to this volume. She affirms that passionate attachments to whiteness and westernness are inextricable from coloniality and capitalism. These passions belie philosophy's rational self-image, itself an object of affective investment. But they can also distract from the epistemic dimensions of contemporary social and ecological crises. Hollywood locates in Sigmund Freud's *Totem and Taboo* an ambivalence over colonization on the part of the colonizers and posits mourning and melancholia as key structural elements of colonialist, racial, and capitalist thinking. Just as the Laws of Burgos anxiously attempt to formalize colonizing ethics, the law of the father incorporated in the totem meal reproduces the violence to which it responds. "European savagery is displaced, continuously, onto those whose land and resources and bodies it exploits." It repeats and reconstitutes itself in every attempt to deny that it is driven by desire, belief, or other nonsecular forces. Disparate readings of cannibalism and colonial metabolism each rely, Hollywood notes, on the subjective positionings from which they depart; mourning and melancholia occur differently for colonizers and colonized. For writers in this volume who straddle categories of privilege and subjection (race, gender, sexuality, and

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class, to name but a few), philosophy necessarily takes forms of "analysis, critique, and self-exposure" that register loss differently in each instance.

ALL OF THE CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS VOLUME are situated in the United States two decades into the twenty-first century. When writing about thinkers in other times and places, we are nonetheless writing toward questions posed by our respective positions and (particular and collective) histories in relation to this location. Such questions include, What is to be done with liberal ideals that, though faulty and even disingenuous, sometimes provide recognizable language to protest some of the worst forms of inequality and injustice? Under what conditions, and for whom, does hope for large-scale social change hold out against a world that seems thoroughly subsumed by racial capitalist logics? What must be learned from histories of Black radicalism for decolonial thought and practice today—in particular, how does the realization of radical political potential necessitate steady and simultaneous reassessments of class, gender, sexuality, and more?

None of these issues is new, and we do not claim any originality in combining them. Yet it may be that something about the time and place in which we are all living—separately and together—has created our common urge to pursue these questions in relation to philosophy of religion. It is also important to acknowledge that we are all scholars trained, though critically, in traditions of western Christianity. While each of our chapters challenges religion's homogenizing association with European intellectual trajectories, they collectively emphasize Christianity's broad interactions with diverse forms of political thought. The emphasis on a western, and largely Christian, religious perspective is not meant to reinforce Christian hegemony, though that is of course its risk. It rather reflects our particular focus on the complex connection between the Americas and the modern European imaginary that was mediated by the overwhelming presence of Christianity in the Americas through (post-, neo-, and ongoing) colonial history. This positioning is not intended to erase the cartography of intellectual and political struggle emerging from non-Christian religious communities and texts or to undermine the guiding role that Indigenous epistemologies play in decolonial scholarship. Rather, it acknowledges our focus and limits while aiming to avoid a tokenizing or comparativist approach.

There is a danger that "the epistemic privilege of the first world," which has been central in our training (even when we find ourselves excluded

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by its norms), might cause us to lose sight of the dynamic just described. None of us can imagine that we are fully Man or fully untouched by the biases that have propelled Man's status as the consummate thinker and knower.[46] These writings exhibit that tension and wrestle with it openly in hope that more can be done and addressed when these dynamics are explicitly named. To the extent that philosophies of religion are thoroughly embedded in violent hierarchies, they may seem an unlikely site for launching decolonial and antiracist interventions. Yet, for these same reasons, scholars of religion, and particularly philosophy of religion, may be situated in an especially "useful site to disrupt broader trends of understanding and constructing humanity."[47]

In her groundbreaking essay "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," Hortense J. Spillers observes that Black femininity is "a meeting ground of investments and privations in the national treasury of rhetorical wealth."[48] Knowledge created by those positioned socially as Black and woman reveals the fantasies, constrictions, and delusions of what passes for rationality in a white supremacist culture. Aisha Beliso-De Jesus observes, however, that to divide modes of thought by identity has proved "a neutralizing system used to manage difference."[49] Much of what has been counted as womanist, queer, and postcolonial theology would call into question basic features and structures of what is widely considered philosophy of religion if it were not categorically contained under these particularizing labels. As Beliso-De Jesus suggests, it is far from benign to add identities adjectivally in this way; to suggest that there may be Black, transnational, queer, or Asian philosophy of religion sets that work apart from philosophy of religion proper.[50] This categorization continues to set "real" thought in implicit contrast to other modes presumed to be "personal quests, marks of belonging, or anecdotes of inclusion." It denies "a relational understanding of power" that would not simply apply the brakes to Eurocentric overgeneralizations but would ask how racial and racially gendered dominance are intrinsic to nonadjectivized philosophy of religion's self-understanding.[51]

We are seeking a philosophy that actively decolonizes thought, always keeping in view the challenge of defining philosophical writing's relationship to action and practice. This problem is not peculiar to decolonial methods and is in fact taken up by thinkers for whom coloniality is not a matter of direct concern. The question of what compels right action is, after all, at the center of Kantian thinking on morality. It is also, in spite of repeated attempts at resolution, a difficulty that continues to haunt

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contemporary normative philosophical discourse that, "epistemically speaking, moral theory does not give us the knowledge it promises, and pragmatically speaking, it does not give us the goodness we need."[52] In this volume's discursive context, this means that certain questions must for the time being remain open: Is there constitutively decolonial thought, or is decoloniality always a matter of the act and effects of specific philosophical interventions? Is the transferability of decolonial operations best determined by analyses of comparison, relation, or something else entirely? Is there a precise or necessary relationship between one's social positioning and the methods or sites one selects for critique?[53]

Through this same understanding of the opportunities and dangers of interdisciplinary categorization, we would insist that the present collection is a work within and about philosophy of religion. To suggest that C. L. R. James, Frantz Fanon, and Sylvia Wynter might participate in philosophy of religion is a purposeful expansion of the term. It is not, however, a request (or even demand) for inclusion but rather a statement of fact. Hegel's notions of religion and Spirit and Kant's historical teleology do not exist without cultural and racial hierarchies. To question those hierarchies, their validity as well as their effects on centuries of scholarship and politics, necessarily intervenes in—*and performs, actually constitutes*—philosophy of religion. We do not aim to secure the comprehensiveness of philosophy of religion by adding to its competencies issues of race and coloniality. Rather, we argue their centrality for reading and interpreting the normative tradition. To read decolonially is to undo certain possibilities of approach, even as one offers others.

We do not take the European philosophical tradition as our necessary primary ground and starting point. In their introduction to *Postcolonial Philosophy of Religion*, Bilimoria and Irvine suggest that philosophy of religion as a form of knowledge must be reconfigured to account for, respond to, and address the experiences of colonized people.[54] However, the relationship between knowledge and experience is precisely what is at issue. Decolonizing philosophy of religion cannot be a straightforward matter of inserting the experiences of colonized and racialized persons to qualify or even determine the content and propositions of philosophical work. A more fundamental and epistemologically oriented examination is needed. We want to ask instead how philosophy of religion is itself a colonialist project and what other options develop among those who not only experience racism and colonization but actively work against their ways of seeing and shaping the world.

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Notes

1 See Gale, "William James"; and Wynn, "William Paley."
2 That local culture, as Wynter also notes, is porous and internally contested; the steadiness of the definition itself signals multiple modes of violence and erasure. Wynter, "Pope," 30.
3 Farneth, *Hegel's Social Ethics*; Hackett and Wallulus, *Philosophy of Religion*; Roberts, *Encountering Religion*; and Schilbrack, *Philosophy and the Study of Religion*.
4 Wynter, "Beyond the Word of Man"; and Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality."
5 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, xli.
6 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 110.
7 The terminology of racial formation was popularized by Michael Omi and Howard Winant in *Racial Formation in the United States*, first published in 1986 and now in its third edition (2015).
8 Mbembe, "Necropolitics"; see also Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.
9 Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 27.
10 Gordon, *Introduction to Africana Philosophy*, 77.
11 Wynter, "Beyond the Word of Man," 641–42.
12 Lugones, "Methodological Notes," 72–73.
13 Lugones, "Colonialidad y género"; see also Silverblatt, *Modern Inquisitions*; and Tortorici, *Sins against Nature*.
14 This is more a difference in emphasis and framing than a disagreement; many of Bilimoria and Irvine's contributors provide key resources for the work we are doing here.
15 Carter, *Race*, 104.
16 Carter, *Race*, 39–40.
17 Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, 205–6.
18 Vial, *Modern Religion, Modern Race*, 1, 10.
19 Maldonado-Torres, "Race, Religion, and Ethics," 703.
20 Maldonado-Torres, "AAR Centennial Roundtable," 651.
21 Maldonado-Torres, "AAR Centennial Roundtable," 657.
22 Maldonado-Torres, "Race, Religion, and Ethics," 708.
23 Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, 16.
24 Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West*, 4.
25 Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, 1.
26 Bernasconi, "Philosophy's Paradoxical Parochialism."
27 Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, 1.
28 Eze, "Color of Reason," 106–18.
29 Rorty and Schmidt, "Introduction," 1.
30 Kant, "Idea for a Universal History," 11.

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31 Kant, “Idea for a Universal History,” 10–11.
32 Kant, “Idea for a Universal History,” 21.
33 Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 195.
34 Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 207.
35 Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 91.
36 Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 99.
37 Beauvoir, *Second Sex*.
38 Jennings, “Disfigurations of Christian Identity,” 69–70.
39 See also Isasi-Díaz and Mendieta, *Decolonizing Epistemologies*. This collection models the kinds of contextual reading and writing of philosophy to which our volume also aspires.
40 Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 233.
41 Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 233.
42 Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 243–44.
43 Hooker, *Theorizing Race*, 5. We are indebted to Christina Davidson for pointing out the applicability of Hooker's work and the concept of juxtapositional analysis (more on this later) to this project.
44 Hooker, *Theorizing Race*, 13.
45 Hooker, *Theorizing Race*, 13.
46 Wynter has coined the term *Man* as a reference to Europe's modern/colonial imaginary and its hegemonic installation of rational-secular subjecthood over against the colonial/racial other.
47 Beliso-De Jesus, “Confounded Identities,” 313.
48 Spillers, “Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe,” 65.
49 Beliso-De Jesus, “Confounded Identities,” 326.
50 Beliso-De Jesus attributes to Spillers the insight that “identity . . . is an obscuring regime that performs a metaphysical operation of separation as a form of governance.” Beliso-De Jesus, “Confounded Identities,” 331.
51 Beliso-De Jesus, “Confounded Identities,” 328.
52 Westphal, “Empty Suitcase,” 48.
53 The editors of this volume, for instance, come from two quite different experiences of being Asian American, yet none of the chapters, including our own, take those identities as their explicit focus. We would not downplay the role our personal lives play in shaping the perspectives from which we write. At the same time, we are invested in relational understandings of race and coloniality that require us to follow other historical and philosophical trajectories.
54 Bilimoria and Irvine, “Introduction,” 4–5.

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