

AIME CÉSAIRE, WRITING THE (NON) HUMAN AND THE ONTOLOGICO-EXISTENTIAL SCANDAL

Tendayi Sithole

Department of Political Science

University of South Africa

sithole.tendayi@unisa.ac.za

ABSTRACT

Aimé Césaire scandalised the question of the human subject by exposing the deceit and hypocrisy of the idea of Europe and its myth of civilisation. The question of the human is foundational and constitutive in Césaire's subjectivity, which originates from the site of the dehumanised and also railing against all forms of dehumanisation that plagued the colonised subject. The human is interrogated here in the light of the distance and proximity to the non-human. It is from the positionality of being non-human that Césaire opposes *faux* humanism, which presents a scandal and it having a tendency of preaching humanism while engaging in dehumanisation. In order for there to be the insurrection of the colonised subject to become human, Césaire's conception of 'the return' is re-engaged from the standpoint of Negritude as decolonial humanism and reconceptualising it in its complexity. This then serves as the launching pad to imagine the possibility of the emergence of another humanity coming into being through the end of the modern colonial world – the decolonised world.

Keywords: civilisation, the colonised subject, *faux* humanism, dehumanisation, idea of Europe, subjection, the political, the return

1. OVERTURE: MEDITATIVE TRAJECTORIES OF THE HUMAN

If the human is the figure of life, it means that the existence of the human is given. The human is part of the world and the world is where the human exists. To exist, in this

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instance, essentially means that the human is the embodiment of life itself. In other words, the existence of the human not only depends on the will to live, but also the preservation of life in the world which offers the ontological and existential possibilities of the right to life. The end of the human is the end of life – that is, death. There is no human in death because life has ended and even the figure of the political cannot be understood in the absence of the human. If then the human is the figure of life – a given existence – then the human is the one who lives in the world. But then, what about the non-human? It seems, for obvious reasons, that the human is not the non-human and in the realm of existence both are absolutely irreconcilable. There cannot be the non-human in existence but rather, the non-human is synonymous with non-existence. The non-human is akin to that which inhabits nothing and cannot exist or be killed. It is to be outside the world, to have no location and life is superfluous. Dehumanisation and its production of the non-human creates what, according to Scharfman (2010), is the ‘scandalous impasse’ – the ontologico-existential abyss where the colonised subjects find themselves – the displacement from humanity itself.

For the non-human, nothing is a given because there is nothing that counts for life. To be exact, the non-human is not the ontological figure that results from the processes of invention, but rather from ontological destruction. This form of destruction does not stem from the natural order of things, but from the dehumanising practices that serve the absolute purpose of creating the human. These practices do not emerge in a vacuum and their source is the non-human. In short, it is the human who creates the non-human, as the latter is not the source of self-creation. For there to be the non-human there must be dehumanisation by the human who is in charge of the very antithesis of life, the end result of dehumanisation being to warrant death with impunity. The ontologico-existential positionality of the non-human is to be a colonised subject, the result of colonial subjection – that is, dehumanisation par excellence. Colonial subjection is informed by what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012) refers to as ‘imperial intention’ with its human eliminationist logic and the racist infrastructure of keeping the ontologico-existential status of the human and non-human intact. It is important to demarcate the human question by understanding the human subject (the human) as the complete subject and the colonised subject (the non-human) as the subject of lack (absence). This distinction is fundamental in accounting for the ontologico-existential question of the human.

If the colonised subject assumes subjectivity as well as the modes of affirming its existence in the narratives incarcerated by colonial subjection, it means that these narratives will be informed by the desire to be liberated. This mode of affirming is not giving an account to the lived experience of being a colonised subject, but to critique dehumanisation that is inaugurated by colonial subjection and the desire to be liberated that is aimed at reconstituting the non-human as a subject. The narratives that stem from subjectivity of the colonised subject take the question of the subject and its relation to the world – existence writ large – seriously. The colonised subject who is expelled from

the fraternity of the human is the one who is in the abyss of dehumanisation. This being the superfluous figure of the non-human, the mode of questioning elicits the upsurge of the politics of insurrection and affirmation of existence.

What is at stake for the figure of the non-human? Even if the answer suggests that it is life itself, there is a lot at stake. In order to account for this question it is essential to turn to Césaire, not that Césaire will give prescriptive answers, but this will provide a form of diagnosis to the question that faces humanity in the colonial contact which is nothing but a scandal. It is from the positionality of being a colonised subject that the human question is brought to bear. In the mode of radical questioning, it is then relevant to ask a fundamental question as posed by Césaire (1972: 32) thus: ‘What fundamentally, is colonisation?’ It is clear that colonisation is the technology of subjection which animated the politics of constantly questioning the humanity of the colonised subjects. For Césaire to pose this question, it does not connote its variant – what is colonialism?—the very mode of questioning that does not account to the systematic, systemic and continuous nature of colonial mutation. Césaire’s effort to add the word ‘fundamentally’ to this question means going beyond the established meaning of colonialism. The question is constituted differently because it is asked by the colonised subject in the clutches of dehumanisation. It is to understand colonisation as an event of the past. This fundamental questioning exposes the devastation, dispossession, anguish, brutality and death of the colonised subject as a result of colonisation.

Essentially, Césaire offers an important perspective of a colonised subject. The non-human thinks about the question of the human through the ontologico-existential positionality of being dehumanised. This, therefore, means that the affirmative sense of the human and the non-human will depart from different genealogies, trajectories and would chart their modes of questioning in different decolonial horizons. Césaire departs from the genealogy of being a colonised subject. Its trajectory is the advocacy of life in the face of dehumanisation. Its decolonial horizons are elements of another world outside *faux* humanism, which is nothing but dehumanisation. In Césaire, a decolonial struggle is conducted in the spirit of taking the new human outside the colonial infrastructure. This will be elaborated by showing how Césaire confronted the idea of Europe, his deployment of a decolonial critique and the ways in which Negritude is charted in the decolonised ethico-political terrain. The fundamental point of emphasis is that Césaire signifies the politics of life—the resurrection of the human from dehumanisation through the creation of a decolonised world. It is in this world that the new being will emerge through the politics of insurrection from the ontologico-existential positionality of dehumanisation.

2. THE IDEA OF EUROPE: THE HUMAN QUESTIONED

The idea of Europe is the construction and expression of difference. Its myth of origins ‘reinforce the formation of adversarial world-view’ (Delantry 1995, 16), and it is based

on nothing but the superior-inferior complex where Europe is at the apex of civilisation and is the bastion of humanity. ‘Furthermore, Europe is the point from which all the other figures must be viewed’ (Pagder 2002, 51). The construction and the expression of difference and exclusion aim to keep the human in purity while persistently creating the non-human through dehumanising practices. This occurs through the idea of Europe as a civilisation and it finding its exteriority through conquest and enslavement under the rhetorical guise of civilisation. Civilisation is a positive outlook. It is a linear progression of the betterment of humanity. A charge with a good cause to humanity and its manner of progression suggest the common good and it being applicable to the whole of humanity. The specific aspect of civilisation is prefaced here by Césaire, who illuminates the European contact with what it dehumanises. The testimony below serves as amplification thus (Césaire 1972, 43):

I am talking about societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, land confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out.

It is from this testimonial account that dehumanisation is made visible. These ontologico-existential maladies did not occur in a passing historical phase; they are continued practices of dehumanisation. It is in this configuration that the human is synonymous with Europe and its other is the non-human. It is then self-arrogance and an excessive form of narcissism that the idea of Europe equates with civilising others. ‘Césaire writes at a point when the disenchantment with Europe accelerates’ (Maldonado-Torres 2006, 124). It is from Césaire that Europe is exposed as being indefensible and it having nothing to offer humanity. The idea of Europe as ‘a system of “civilis[ati]onal” values’ masks its very form of barbarity. Delantray (1995, 31) writes: ‘To imagine Europe involves the privileging of a particular discourse over others.’ Not only that, it also means the elimination of others. The elaboration of the idea of Europe is sustained through systematic and continued dehumanisation. European civilisation is a myth that claims to have a deep connection with humanity, whereas it is, in fact, the opposite of its propagation.

Nowhere is civilisation claiming to be particularistic in its departure and arrival—it is all encompassing – the site of humanity *in toto* and yet its self-justification for generality is masked under the auspices of universalism. The positive outlook of civilisation is nothing but the masking of lies and deception. Civilisation is lauded as the making of European modernity. Its spread is propagated as necessary for those who are in need because the idea of Europe seems to suggest that it knows what is good for its *exteriori*. Césaire (1972, 42) unveils the propaganda of civilisation thus: ‘They talk to me about progress, about “achievement”, disease cured, improved standards of living.’ This is indeed the propaganda of the idea of Europe and its civilisation. It postures itself as the civilisation that has something to offer to humanity. It is within this propagation that there is excessive accentuating of what is good for the human – that is,

to be civilised is to rid oneself of barbarism. To be civilised is to be human and thus all humans must be civilised according to the standardisation of the idea of Europe.

If civilisation brings life to the fore, the life in excess of the positive, it has to take the human into account. Indeed it does, but this conception of the human happens at the exclusion of other humans on the basis of their racialisation and having their humanity questioned. To civilise them in rhetoric simultaneously means dehumanising them. The masking of the gravity of ontologico-existential violence faced by the colonised subject who is clutched by the genocidal impulses of European civilisation with its logic of elimination brings Césaire to the conclusion that this is a civilisation of death. It is the destruction of the human and makes the bodily presence of the colonised subject to be a flesh – the superfluous ontological entity. If there is anything that the civilisation of death warrants, it is the dehumanisation of those whom it considers non-human and who, by implication, are the aberration of civilisation. Therefore, the idea of Europe means that civilisation is a pursuit at the expense of the humanity of those whom it marks as different and non-human. For Césaire (1972, 47), the cries of Europe are “kill, kill” and “let’s see some blood.” This comes at the cost of death – that is, to be dehumanised in such a way that there is no possibility of coming to life. Césaire unmasks the rhetoric of civilisation thus (Césaire 1972, 31):

A civilisation that proves incapable of solving the problems it creates is a decadent civili[s]ation.

A civili[s]ation that chooses to close its eyes to its most crucial problems is a stricken civili[s]ation.

A civili[s]ation that uses its principles for trickery and deceit is a dying civili[s]ation.

The indictment of Europe by Césaire assumes the subjectivity of a slave as a judge. To judge Europe as a civilisation that is decadent, stricken and dying suggests that there is nothing to gain from Europe. Césaire (1972, 32) boldly insists that: “What is serious is that ‘Europe’ is morally, spiritually indefensible.” The lies and deceit of European civilisation are subjected to *exposé* because ‘[t]he dossier is indeed overwhelming’ (Césaire 1972, 65). They are foundational and constitutive to the idea of Europe. Césaire confronts the civilisation that justifies colonisation and for him this is a sick civilisation and as such, it is morally diseased. By relying on trickery and deceit it lurches from one form of denialism to another while masking dehumanisation practices. For this civilisation to affirm its existence, it must continue to dehumanise. Its idea is the maintenance of the superiority complex. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012, 423) succinctly notes, ‘[t]he conquerors assumed a superiority complex and assigned inferiority to the colonised.’ This ontologico-existential positionality legitimated all sorts of dehumanising practices. This then sustains what Pagder (2002) argues to be its desire to demonstrate and explain its superiority over its others. The idea of Europe, in its self-image and narcissistic desire, becomes “the house of liberty and true government” (Pagder 2002, 37). It positions itself as a model through which all whom it inferiorises must gravitate

to – that is, the other in the idea of Europe must be civilised, become like Europe, but not become European.

Césaire postulates that there is no such thing as civilisation in the colonial zone. There cannot be civilisation while there is dehumanisation. Colonial subjection does not compel any moral currency because it is justification in itself, and it goes without any limit because what it confronts is nothing but the non-human. That is to say, there is no ethical requirement for that which is non-human and for such a figure to be brought into being, civilisation needs to take place at the absence of this figure. It is not human; it should be acted upon by being civilised, even without its concern. What underwrites civilisation is violence, destruction and death – that is, dehumanisation and yet the discourse of civilisation continues to claim the pedestal of being the higher good for those whom it dehumanises. The rhetoric of civilisation seems to suggest that the human is at the centre. If that is the case, it has been clearly shown that it is not the colonised subject since this subject needs to be civilised (Maldonado-Torres 2006, 130 emphasis original):

Europe itself appears as an evil demon of sorts in Césaire's text. Now, its evil character not only shows in deceit, but also in the propagation of violence and death as well as in the naturalisation of institutions, ideas, and practices that perpetuate social death and colonial violence. Instead of a process of methodic doubt, the *condemned* went through a process of method suffering or their alleged lack of humanity.

It is impossible for a civilisation of death to be a civilisation of humanity. It would need another name and if civilisation is anything to go by, then there is no such thing that will suit its propagation of the positive outlook. Not being in generality of course, those who are at its departure (the human subjects) should not see it in the same light as those who are at its arrival (the colonised subjects). The latter bear the trauma of being dehumanised and having nothing to hold onto as their humanity is systematically, systemically and continuously being called into question.

The conception of the human, if that is the phenomenon of the European man, means that there must be the dehumanised. This is the ontological figure that is outside the politics of life and is confined to death. To be relegated to such an ontological status is to be made something that is not essential. To not be essential is to not be a subject of history. It is to be its aberration, hence the insistent erasure from history. Foucault suggests that history imposes its laws on the analysis of production and analogue structure and it attempts to connect these organic structures. These organic structures which reside in the order of things, Foucault (1989, 237) insists “opened the way to successive identities and differences.” Indeed, the context in which history is engaged by Foucault is not at all the history that deals with the human in the colonised context. The successive identities and differences that Foucault refers to are within the idea of Europe. As such, as Santos (2007, 2) asserts, ‘[b]eyond it, there is only non-existence, invisibility, non-dialectical absence.’ The idea of Europe creates the exclusionary world and those who are in the colonial zones “inhabit the world of superfluous invisibility” (Maldonado-Torres 2006, 125). The history that Foucault is making reference to faces the ontological scandal when the non-human and dehumanisation are introduced. For this

history to be engaged upon there should be the history of consciousness. It is the history that does not deal with those who are ontologically located in the paradigm of regulation and emancipation, but rather the paradigm that is outside universality. The colonised subjects *qua* non-human are located in the paradigm of violence and appropriation. It is this latter paradigm that is littered with the scandal of dehumanisation. That is why its history is distinctive and yet it assumes the history of consciousness.

The history of consciousness is informed by what Marriot (2012) characterises the political act of questioning. What is brought into question of course is the actualised colonial imaginary of dehumanisation. These questions mean the reconfiguration of history, and to be located in the subjectivity of history of consciousness essentially means colonised subjects writing their own historical narratives. This is the historical narrative that gives an account of the dehumanisation, and also the invention of the historical problem from the colonised subject that re-imagines the ontologico-existential questions outside the idea of Europe. For Marriot, the history of consciousness frees the colonised subject and it allows the breaking of the path of the human and the creation of other historical codes which call for epistemic shifts. The affirmation of the history of consciousness is not only epistemic critique of colonialism, but it is ‘contesting colonialism in a more general description of its language of time’ (Marriot 2012, 53). Marriot continues (2012, 46):

The leap beyond history, and first of all, that very separation between history and invention, is not simply to counter the ways in which history has been used to justify supremacists’ claims and effects, but to escape the normal teleological form of writing, and so refigure life as event. Everything that imprisons the capacity for infinite reali[s]ation, everything that presents the past as criterion, as is the case with “historical” judgement, is felt to be incommensurable with that leap, not akin to the ceaseless work of invention.

The history of consciousness is not that of incarcerated subjectivity which is steeped in the empiricism of the human. The history of consciousness means the unsettling of the meta-narratives of history that writes off the colonised subject. The idea of Europe with its human subject sees history in its epoch breaks that are steeped in teleology. The colonised subject is not a historical empirical subject or the obsessively postcolonial temporal subject. Therefore, the ontological and existential standpoint of the colonised subject –the non-human – and that of history is irreconcilable; the writing of history is without the consciousness of the colonised subject. The history of consciousness in Césaire is foregrounded in political commitment. This commitment means thinking and writing the colonised subject to emerge as a human subject in history among many other histories. It is to make the colonised subject understand that thinking and writing the history of consciousness is to face the ontologico-existential struggle of being colonised.

Where there is violence and appropriation, Santos (2007) argues, there is a specific social territory – the colonial zone – the placelessness of the non-human. The form of law that governs the colonial zone is the law of things – that is, the law that legitimates dehumanisation and its destructive practices. It is the law that explicitly denotes that the

colonised subjects are illegal by virtue of being things. Their existence is an aberration from the law. This clearly means that the colonised subjects fall outside the paradigm of human rights because they are things. They have no rights and essentially, there are no human rights for non-humans.

The idea of Europe justifies colonial subjection but in a guise by distancing itself from dehumanisation. The mask of civilisation is used to claim the moral high order. For Césaire (1972, 40), ‘colonisation: badge head in a campaign to civili[s]e barbarism, from which there may emerge at any moment the negation of civili[s]ation, pure and simple.’ The ontological status that is granted by Europe to those whom it dehumanises is that of the non-human. It automatically implies that dehumanisation does not produce a human, but the dehumanised – the colonised subject. What does it mean to be a colonised subject under the idea of Europe and its logic of dehumanisation? The idea of Europe is the actualised colonial fantasy. It is what Césaire refers to as ‘barbarous faith’ – the paradigm of war (Maldonado-Torres 2008) that is infused with genocidal impulses of dehumanisation. It is, as Césaire (1972, 76) charges, ‘[v]iolence, excess, waste, mercantilism, bluff, conformism, vulgarity, disorder.’

More radically still, what is it that ails “modern civilisation” inasmuch as it is European? Not that it suffers from a particular fault or from a particular form of blindness. Rather, why does it suffer from ignorance of its history, from a failure to assume its responsibility, that is, the memory of its history *as* history of responsibility? (Derrida 1995, 4)

Being the decadent civilisation that it is, Europe will not engage in the history of responsibility because there is nothing to account for in its *exteriori*. Its history of dehumanisation is self-justified in the sense that the human is that which deserves responsibility while the case is the opposite for the non-human. The acts of dehumanisation cannot be seen as a particular form of blindness as Derrida suggests, nor can they be seen as suffering from ignorance. It should be clear that Césaire’s indictment of Europe does not stem from the misconception that it was ignorant, absent-minded or as Irele (1992, 201) argues, ‘lost in a similar attitude of nonchalance’ – it was, in more fundamental ways “an act of calculated aggression.” Irele even insists that these acts were not metaphorical but they were of literal significance. The idea of Europe and its civilisation ‘wrought such devastation as to have turned the stomach of decent humanity everywhere’ (Irele 1992, 202). The refusal to see the ontologico-existential destruction of the European other is located in its civilising machine which is always righteous, even in the face of its heinous acts. If Europe is confronted with the facts of its brutality towards its other, it will still insist on its self-justificatory practices because the other is not human and nothing can be accounted for. Derrida (1995, 70) writes: ‘I am responsible to anyone (that is to say to any other) only by failing in my responsibilities to all the others; to the ethical and political generality.’ It is important to highlight that the other that Derrida is referring to belongs to the domain of the human, that is, the ontologico-existential entity which has relations with the world. Therefore, there is no such thing as the history

of responsibility, and the one that Derrida suggest, if there is any, applies to Europe only and not its colonial subjects. This then negates Derrida's conception of European complicity being a fault, ignorance and failure. The implications of this trio suggest that the European deeds of dehumanisation occur because of some historic error which then is still a form of atonement only if responsibility of history is taken into account. Césaire (1972, 45) truthfully notes that 'Europe is responsible before the human community for the highest heap of corpses in history.' The responsibility that Europe has, is itself, and has nothing to do with the colonial subject. The manner in which responsibility is constructed is something that cannot be negotiated in the domain of those who are regarded as non-human.

Whether Europe acknowledges its history of responsibility or not, this does not alter the existential precariousness that befalls the colonised subject. Dehumanisation practices that are the embodiment of civilisation thrive on the ontological destruction informed by genocidal impulses. The European deeds of dehumanising the colonised subject come into being even through the propagation of morality. But for the mere fact that the dehumanised are not human beings, there is no moral caveat that haunts Europe in that its dehumanisation is justified on the basis of acting against that which is not human. For this is the case; there is no history of responsibility that pertains to the colonised subjects. The issue at stake is that there is only a history of responsibility in so far as it extends to the treaties between human subjects. To have humans engaged in the ontological contraventions is to call the aftermath and the latter accounting for its historicity. In other words, the deeds of violations of humans (which are not dehumanisation of course) call for the rectification of historical wrongs. Even if humans fail to reach an agreement or fail to rectify their historical wrongs, those who are affected will still remain human. What is essential to put forth is the fact that there was no act of dehumanisation; the ontological equation was that of human *qua* human. In the idea of Europe, humans are bound by the ethical responsibility towards each other as they make civilisation *a priori*. For humans as subjects of civilisation is to propagate the notion of the ethical life. The essence of the life world of the human subject in the idea of Europe is the ontological triad of liberty, justice and equality.

Of course, this is the ontological privilege that can be enjoyed by human subjects at the exclusion of the colonial subjects who are deceived into believing that these ontological privileges are extended to them while they are actually not. The colonial subjects are those who fall on the outside and the ontological scope of history is filled with distortion, erasures and inferiorisation of the colonial subjects. The latter do not feature in the historical catalogues as subjects of history, but as its objects. In the colonial imaginary of the idea of Europe, there is nothing that was done to non-humans because they do not exist, and no history of responsibility can be extended to them. Therefore, there is no historical accounting for that which is not human. They are not human and as such, their existential precariousness is the fault that they brought upon themselves. For, if they had been civilised proper or had not been trapped in their backward and barbaric

ways, as this colonial imaginary purports, they would not be in any form of existential mystery.

The indictment of Europe from the colonial subject is different from that of the European subjects, the latter of whom engage the idea of Europe from the positionality of being human *qua* human. What remains an ontologico-existential scandal is the fact that the colonised subjects confront the idea of Europe outside the grammar of the human. Not only is Césaire offering a damning critique of the idea of Europe and its decadent civilisation, he also charts a way through which the colonised subject can be the judges of Europe. In amplification to Césaire, Heller (1992, 15) writes: ‘All great promises of the 18th century – the progress of knowledge, technology, and freedom – now appear as so many sources of dangers and decay and manifestations of decadence.’ There is no-one who anchors the idea of Europe in the ethical sense, more so from the colonised subjects, like Césaire. The terrain chartered by European civilisation is what Heller (1992, 17) calls “the victorious power of accumulation”, which occurred at the expense of humanity as it is informed by the destruction of humanity. This is the route of ontologico-existential destruction, which means, for Europe to live, its civilisation must destroy. This means there is nothing redeemable and the idea of Europe is a self-created mythology—the decadent civilisation as Césaire argues – a civilisation of death. In the eulogy form, Heller (1992, 22) writes: ‘Europe, the mighty, the leader of the world, no longer exists; Europe, the source of inspiration for all higher cultures, has been exhausted. May her soul rest in peace.’

It should be noted that Heller’s locus of enunciation is the critique of Europe from within, and from the positionality of the human subject. The damning of Europe as being decadent is nothing but the expression of disillusionment and disappointment. This is far from Césaire’s criticism which is different in the sense that Europe is engaged from its underside and from the positionality of the colonised subject – the non-human. Thus, it is also important to note that for Césaire, Europe had nothing to offer; it was not, as Heller argues, a source of inspiration for humanity at large. To be specific, there is nothing inspirational about Europe from the receiving end of the colonised subjects. The colonial subjection that has plagued Césaire’s ontologico-existential milieu triggered him to engage in the ontological critique and to confront Europe as nothing but a scandal. Therefore, Europe is not dead as Heller eulogises; on the contrary, it still exists and its dehumanising practices are still accelerated. Indeed, Césaire is not asking Europe to redeem itself. There is no moral appeal in his critique since this will fail to recognise the masked dehumanisation practices that are still systematically and continuously applied in mutating forms.

3.1 Contra *faux* humanism

From the idea of Europe, humanism is a totalising phenomenon in that the posture of Europe is that of giving a sense of humanism to the humanity at large. Europe cannot

offer anything to humanity while claiming the ethical stature of humanism. If Europe is the epitome of humanism, its reach is within itself. Humanism does not extend to those whom Europe puts their humanity into question, or to say the least, those whom it considers to be its other. The colonised subjects, even the gestures of humanism, are extended towards them; this is nothing but assimilation. They are given a false sense of being human because they are still dehumanised. From Césaire, it has been demonstrated how his stance towards Europe has been that of indictment. If there is nothing indefensible with regard to Europe, then its assertion of humanism towards those whom it dehumanises, clearly suggests that there cannot be humanism in the colonial condition. This condition is nothing but dehumanisation.

The idea of Europe and its propagation of humanism borders on narcissistic self-presentation and it is a spell to hook those who are less sceptical of it, but it is in Césaire's poeticism that the scandal of Europe is coming out into the open. As the metropole which creates colonies and creates itself as a bastion of civilisation, it is the very idea of Europe and its scandal of dehumanisation that Césaire is turning his back on. The question of the human subject in humanism does not raise the ontologico-existential scandal. Humanism is there to give to humanity and to affirm the politics of life. These are the politics that are propagated in the absence of the colonised subject since there is no existence to speak of in so far as the colonised subject is concerned. The systematic, systemic and continual erasure of the colonised subject in the face of humanity deprives humanism of the grammar to articulate this socio-political-historical account. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013, 263) charges thus: "Western humanism informed by coloniality is in crisis." But due to the imperial arrogance of Cartesian subjectivity and its perversity of bounded reason even in the face of unreasonableness, humanism will still be forcibly propagated as if it is inclusive to the fraternity of humanity at large. Even if there is undeniable truth from the side of the colonised subjects that humanism is irrelevant to them still, humanism will even be blind to the complicity of the colonial subjection and dehumanisation.

It is important to register that the conception of the human *à la* the idea of Europe is the Cartesian subject. The human as crafted in the idea of Europe as the one who is in relation to the world. For this world to be inhabitable in the ethico-political sense, humanism is the spirit of ontologico-existential relation. In short, the world should be civilised and for it to be such, humanism needs to be foundational. Mouffe (1993, 12) argues that humanism 'does not imply the rejection of modernity but only the crisis of a particular project within modernity, the Enlightenment project of self-foundation.' Clearly, humanism critique within modernity itself has nothing to offer nor can it be expected to be of any service to humanity at large. When Mouffe mentions the achievement of equality and freedom for all, there are those who are written outside this register – the colonised subjects. This is humanism that has nothing to offer to humanity because it is constitutive and foundational to the idea of Europe, let alone the fact that there is no mention of the colonial question by Mouffe – that is, the colonised

subject is absent from this theorisation of humanism. To extend such humanism to all humanity while it is exclusionary in practice and intent, is to be oblivious to the fact that humanism means the idea of Europe. The antidote that Mouffe offers as radical democracy also has nothing to do with the colonial question.

Mouffe brings to the fore the figure of the political which is at stake and which faces the possibility of elimination. The concern that Mouffe highlights with the elimination of the political is the gains of the democratic revolution. This existential struggle that Mouffe seeks to wage is not the ontological burden that plagues the colonised subject. For the latter, what is at stake is elimination of life itself, the very thing that humanism does not cater for. It is, therefore, important to ask: What is at stake for the colonial subject in Césaire's thought? Indeed, for Mouffe, what is fundamental is the democratic revolution, and it is a clear testimony that there is nothing ontological and existential at stake. And if this is itself something that is at stake, that becomes evident to Césaire.

For Mouffe (1993, 3), the political is 'a dimension that is inherent to every human society and that determines our very ontological conditions.' The ontologico-existential condition of the colonised subject faces dehumanisation. The concept of the political is the ontologico-existential positionality of the human subject and not the colonised subject. There are no gains of democratic revolution to speak of in terms of the colonised subject. Therefore, the political in Mouffe's formulation is the human subject. And it must be stressed that Mouffe's subjectivity is that of the idea of Europe as the universal construction. In other words, from the vantage point of Europe humanity is viewed in a totalising form. The political becomes a nameless subject in its form of totality. If Césaire's subjectivity is brought in confrontation with Mouffe's conception of the political, what emerges is the need to account for the ontologico-existential conception of the political. This accounting would mean naming the political – that is, Mouffe being specific that she is only referring to the human subject. To be sure, the human is a given to Mouffe and yet the struggle of Césaire is not the return of the political because there has never been such in the dungeon of dehumanisation. For the struggle that is necessary for Césaire, what is fundamental is not to defend any gains because there have been none in so far as the colonised subjects are concerned. The struggle for the colonised subject is to become human. What is at stake is life itself, and death is a concern. In short, the democratic revolution, its gains included, is not worth fighting for if there is no life at all.

Césaire's criticism of European civilisation is indicative of the fact that there is no humanism, but only *faux* humanism. What is hidden is colonial violence that is coupled with sadistic acts of dehumanisation. It is this humanism that masks the desire of domination and its actualisation. It is the idealism which is always a distant horizon to those whom are removed from the ontological status of the human. *Faux* humanism is, as Césaire (1972, 31) notes, 'the crowing of barbarism that sums up all daily barbarisms.' To really show that this is a scandal, those who propagate this *faux* humanism 'pride themselves on abuses eliminated' (Césaire 1972, 43), and in their cause, they propagate

transcendence while not attending to the real ontologico-existential concerns that have to do with complicities of colonial subjection and its dehumanisation practices. In the claim of seeing nothing but the human, this eliminationist perceptive justifies the dehumanisation of the colonised subjects. Césaire (1972, 43) writes:

They talk to me about local tyrants brought to reason; but I note that in general the old tyrants get on very well with the new ones, and that there has been established between them, to the detriment of the people, a circuit of mutual services and complicity.

Césaire turned his back on Europe and he writes (1970, 63):

As I leave Europe
 The irritation of its own cries
 the silent currents of despair
 as I leave Europe
 timid in its recovery and boast
 I wish for that egoism which is beautiful
 Which runs risks
 And my ploughing reminds me of a ship's relentless prow.

In leaving Europe, there is no way that a damning testimony cannot be made. Having to witness dehumanisation through *faux* humanism Césaire brought to bear its deceit and lies which are embedded in Europe's propagation of civilisation. Césaire (1970, 64) writes: 'My memory is surrounded by blood. My memory has its belts of corpses.' Having witnessed the barbarity of Europe towards the colonised subjects, it is right for Césaire to give a poetic testimony, a damning account and unmasking the egotistic boast of European humanism and its narcissistic irritations. To leave Europe is to embark on the re-affirmation of the human –that is, the ontological figure that will be created, but not through *faux* humanism because the latter does not have the colonised subject in mind. Fanon's exposé to *faux* humanism is telling (Fanon 1990, 251):

Let us waste no time in sterile litanies and nauseating mimicry. Leave the Europe where they are never done talking about Man, yet they murder man everywhere they find them, at the corner of every one of their streets, in all the corners of the globe. For centuries they have stifled almost the whole humanity in the name of a so-called spiritual experience.

Faux humanism is opposed by Césaire in that it is not a gift to humanity as it claims to be. If then, Europe does not grant anything to humanity, it takes away from humanity by leaving them empty of their ontological content. There is nothing but an empty gesture in the politics of the gift. The colonised subjects are dispossessed and there is

no gift in dispossession. ‘Europe pretends to ‘give’ generously to the coloni[s]ed but that which it gives is inessential’ (Maldonado-Torres 2006, 133). It is inessential in so far as it is nothing. To give nothing is not giving at all. Not only is this deprivation, it is also dispossession – that is, on top of being dehumanised, this is not an event, but a continued lived reality. Dispossession *qua* dehumanisation is what lies in this *faux* humanism. In other words, *faux* humanism does not give humanity; it takes everything from humanity. *Faux* humanism is what Maldonado-Torres (2006, 133) refers to as ‘the European imperial gift... which takes away from the coloni[s]ed the very possibility of giving: that which the coloni[s]ed could give has been taken “away from them”’.

The colonised subject who is locked in the status of being non-human cannot be made human by the human subject. The colonised subjects do not need humanism as advanced by the European human subject. The latter propagates humanism in the name of all humanity while knowing that its non-human other is nothing human and will not even be allowed to become part of the human fraternity. There is nothing to reach, but only a distant horizon for the colonial subject, leaving the latter in an existential abyss and not having any sense of locatedness. What *faux* humanism offers as a gift to the colonised subject is assimilation. The colonised subjects will be given a false sense of being human, while they are dehumanised. For assimilation to succeed, the colonised subject must believe in the lies and deceit of *faux* humanism which are packaged in the idea of Europe. The fate of those who gravitate to this *faux* humanism, is to be left in the neurotic economy of obsession and desire to be human, or thinking that they are human while they are not. They will claim to be human while they constantly witness their daily dehumanisation, stoically suppressed through bad faith.

To be assimilated is to feel the devastating weight of dehumanisation. It is, to a large extent, to feel the essence of being human violated and vanquished, yet ignoring this scandal of dehumanisation. To be assimilated is as good as being elevated to nothing, but still being a non-human (Marriot 2012, 52 emphasis original):

What racial history produces, or threatens to do, is an organi[s]ation of power that, ceasing entirely to be a humanism, has become violence itself: a system of control that can be all-encompassing because it cannot be compassed in turn by *subjects*.

The assimilationist trait of *faux* humanism is evident in Césaire’s critique and this proves to be decadence par excellence. ‘If assimilation exploits the logic of a promise by perpetually maintaining it as *no more than such*, then colonialism must obviously produce a subject who is dirempted, who is as much frustration as hopefulness’ (Marriot 2012, 68 emphasis original). To the colonised subject to be invited to humanity still means the absence of invitation as the possibility of becoming human is not realised. With its masked gestures, assimilation is informed by the absolute inhalation of the colonised subjects. As Scharfman (2010) notes, assimilation takes the colonised subject away from itself.

Scharfman (2010) argues that Césaire is a humanist who is informed by the utopian vision of liberation. For Garraway (2010, 83), ‘Césaire’s Negritude is predicated on an attitude of continuous solidarity, openness, and engagement with all others as its condition of possibility.’ This was expressed, as Rabaka (2010) notes, as a site of subjectivity that is informed by nothing but liberatory subjectivity. This is the Negritude that does not take the human as a given, but that which is involved in ontologico-existential emergence and continued invention. This is not Negritude that is concerned with reaching the mythical past, but the assertion of humanity yet to be found. It is the Negritude that is foundational to the human question and its version of humanism is not foregrounded in the idea of Europe. It is, so to speak, decolonial humanism. Césairean Negritude poetically articulated thus (Césaire 1970, 75):

my negritude is not a stone,
nor deafness flung out against the clamour of the day
my negritude is not a white speck of dead water
on the dead eye of the earth
my negritude is neither tower nor cathedral

it plunges into the red flesh of the soil
it plunges into the blazing flesh of the sky
my negritude riddles with holes
the dense affliction of its worthy patience.

Césaire charts the terrain towards the ontologico-existential position that Negritude affirms – that is, the spirit of decolonial humanism. Rabaka (2010) argues that this positionality is not that of universality, but specificity, which is focused on becoming human from the standpoint of the colonised subject and its subjectivity to be such. It is also indicative of the manner in which the colonised subjects claim their humanity in the world. But it is important to register the fact that this claim and assertion to humanity is made in the belly of the civilisation of death. However, this does not mean that decolonial humanism is a state of utopian arrival where the colonised subject is the human *qua* human. There is no ontologico-existential standardisation that is pursued while plagued by the idea of Europe with its claim of the human as the totality of being. Rather, the struggle of decolonial humanism is not a derivative of *faux* humanism with its logos of civilisation of death, but a coming into being of a new subject which clearly emanates from Césaire’s politics of life and also its affirmation. The affirmation of the politics of life would not have existed if there was not dehumanisation taking place. The

politics of life in Césaire's outreach of decolonial humanism point out at the ontologico-existential horizon that the idea of Europe and its *faux* humanism insistently resist just because for it to live, it finds its justification in dehumanisation.

This is the Negritude which is distant from the romanticist poeticism, assimilation, ethno-philosophy, history by nostalgic comparison, and derivative discourses. To be exact, it is the Negritude that is concerned with the predicament of being dehumanised in the world. It engages in a constant exposé of the lies and deceit of civilisation concocted by the idea of Europe. To bring the question of dehumanisation to the fore in Negritude is to stretch Césaire further and to the ontologico-existential location of the colonised subject in the matrix of dehumanisation. It rightly indicates the source of colonial subjection as the maker of Patterson's (1982) conception of 'social death' since the latter points acutely to the matrix of dehumanisation. It is clear that in Negritude as decolonial humanism, colonial subjection is not an event which needed the anti-colonial struggle for there to be antagonism. This is only reasonable or actualised after the end of the modern colonial world. To emphasise, the world as it is has to come to an end in that it creates those who are human and non-human through the logic and organising principle of race. It is this logic that justifies dehumanisation.

Decolonial humanism is not a response to colonial subjection, it is its diagnosis, dissection and also its call to come to a total end by the struggle waged by colonial subjects, not some juridical decolonisation where the colonised subjects still remain caught in dehumanisation. Also important to mention is to maintain that colonial subjection is taken seriously in its afterlife, it has hidden and operating in a mutated form. The fact that colonial subjection and its dehumanisation practices are institutionalised, naturalised and normalised, are the very things that Césairean Negritude is concerned about. As Rabaka (2010, 120) attests, Césaire's Negritude is "simultaneously seminal, radical, evocative, and obtrusive." Garraway (2010) correctly notes that Negritude has been reduced to mean nativism, racial essentialism, ideological mystification, unradical, unrevolutionary and ineffectual. Garraway also notes that Césaire's Negritude has more revolutionary emphasis, but that did not spare Césaire from Fanon's criticism. Fanon's (1970) fundamental criticism was that Negritude steeped itself and believed in the racist constructions that the coloniser created. Despite this, it is clear from Césaire's Negritude and Rabaka's (2010) observation that it is committed to bringing the human into being and to end dehumanisation. Indeed, Césaire's Negritude with the leap of decolonial humanism is the condition of the possibility of subjectivity that destroys the edifice of the colonial subjection (Garraway 2010).

What Marriot (2012) brings to light is the danger of celebratory utopian imagination which is steeped in teleological writing – the narratives which advocate the end of juridical colonialism as the end of the history – the danger of ignoring the aftermath of colonial subjection and its devastating effects of dehumanisation. Marriot continues to warn that this celebratory utopian imagination can continue to create the myths of myths and this can lead to the incarceration of meaning. It can be added that the meaning of

humanism will be the rhetoric of *faux* humanism and the form of subjectivity will be the one that informs the subjectivity of the colonised subject. To be steeped in writing the human subject in the teleological form of the end of history is the perpetuation of dehumanisation in that there will be denialism of the continued existence of colonial subjection. Césaire's decolonial humanism and its horizon is against *faux* humanism with its rhetorical dispositive. What remains clear from decolonial humanism is the making of history among many other histories – that is, the very basis of history of consciousness. The combating of dehumanisation is what Césaire's decolonial humanism is all about. To be human is not to have humanism as conferred by the dictates of the idea of Europe. To be human in the way of its own accord, means that decolonial humanism takes a different trajectory which even calls the modern colonial world into question. It is a decolonial humanism which creates the world where humanity is shared. It is the invention that seeks to destroy colonial imagination – a real leap – the birth of the new human being.

3.2. The return towards another human

Césaire's decolonial critique is foregrounded in the positionality of the colonised subject's will to become another human being. Césaire inserts the conception of the human to come, and this form of becoming is outside the confines of the modern colonial world, which must come to an ultimate end for the new humanity to be born. If Césaire's Negritude is anything to go by then "the return" is another decolonial move which has to do with the recovery of the subject, but by means of the subject returning to itself. Rabaka (2010) rightfully argues that Césaire's conception of return cannot be reduced to reclaiming the mythical past, but the recreation of the authentic self. In other words, to return does not mean the nostalgic exercise of romanticising the past and wanting to go back to its myth of purity and essence. As has just been mentioned, the return is not a retrieval of something from the past. Césaire (1972, 52, emphasis added) writes:

For us, the problem is not to make a utopian and sterile attempt to repeat the past, but go beyond it. It is not a dead society that we want to revive. We leave that to those who go in for exoticism. Nor is the present colonial society that we wish to prolong, the most putrid carrion that ever rotted under the sun. It is a new society that we must create *and that is the society of the human*.

Césaire's conception of the return is, as Marriot (2012, 65) accurately notes, 'metaphorics of becoming and transfiguration, to be an invention worthy of the name.' In becoming human, colonial subjects will not become a copy of the human subject in the sense of the idea of Europe; they will become the new human in the absence of the modern colonial world. This will be the invention of the human subject outside colonial subjection and its dehumanising practices.

Césaire's subjectivity is an 'insurrectionary activity', which essentially means that through the conception of the return, the colonised subjects engage in a political activity

that is aimed at bringing fundamental change. Concretely, the return implies ‘the struggle that awaits to recuperate an alienated identity, and a priority[s]ing of personal awareness as the condition of possibility for political action’ (Scharfman 2010, 114). This insurrectionary move from being non-human to being human plays an ‘important role in the task of rethinking the nature and the dynamics of our self-formation process’ (Henry 2000, 275). This form of return is the self-extrication of the colonial subject from the incarceration of dehumanisation. It is the confrontation of dehumanisation where subjectivity is charted on the terrain of creating the human.

For the return to be actualised, dehumanisation practices of colonial subjection need to be exposed. Henry (2000, 278) argues for ‘throw[ing] off these masks and reclaim our humanity.’ The effort to rise to the level of the human subject or to be elevated to such is counterproductive in that dehumanisation is not dealt with. For the colonial subject to become human there must be an end to dehumanisation. The return, as it were, is to return to the politics of life where the colonised subject does not pathologise itself, but stands *for-itself*, *by-itself* and *in-itself*. This means that the return is returning to historicity and in a continued dialectical form. That is, the form of dialectic that does not have a thesis as its *telos*. It is the continued ontologico-existential struggle. Therefore, this return is grounded in the concrete lived experience of life worlds where the past is part of the present cemented in the colonial wound (Rabaka 2010). The return is not the return of the human to be recovered from the past. The return is the effort of creating another human outside the matrix of dehumanisation.

What is important, is for the colonial subject to rediscover itself and this involves ‘a more complex articulation of time and repetition’ (Marriot 2012, 64). The return is not the return to the mythical past and its purist essences, but a return to inventing a new human amid the ontologico-existential incarceration which places the colonial subject in the dungeon of morbid historical fixidity. It is also through the return to the self that the meaning of the colonial subject would then be to be human. This then brings to light the fundamental fact that there is no past to return to because the past is fraught with elisions and absences. The past is that which, simultaneously, *was* and that which *never was*.

The advocacy of the return by Césaire means to offer, as Maldonado-Torres (2006, 119) acutely notes, ‘new grammars to do critique’ and chart the terrain for decolonial futures. It is in this new grammars that the insurrection of the non-human comes into being because the colonised, as a non-human, engaged in the return to the self. These politics of insurrection point to the ways in which the ethical, the political, and the intellectual confront colonial subjection. Césaire’s conception of the return calls for the epistemic project and ontologico-existential practices that require ‘alternative thinking of alternatives’ (Maldonado-Torres 2006, 23). This would mean that, not only the colonial subjects question the alternatives that are offered by the idea of Europe, but the constant critical reflection of their own alternatives. This is profound in what Maldonado-Torres (2006, 114 emphasis added) refers to as the ‘decolonial turn’:

The decolonial turn (different from linguistic or the pragmatic turn) refers to the decisive recognition and propagation of decoloni[s]ation as an ethical, political and epistemic project in the twentieth century *and twenty-first century*. This project reflects changes in historical consciousness, agency, and knowledge, and it also involves a method or series of methods that facilitate the task of decoloni[s]ation at the material and epistemic levels.

The emphasis of the return in Césaire means the colonised subject is the political in the making; that which is informed by the will to live. The ontologico-existential form of the colonised subject in the state of insurrection would mean the will not to exist as a colonised subject, but as a human. If there is something that ever was, the colonised subject was a human being. But it is clear in Césaire that this is not the positionality to return to as it has nothing to offer. The return of being human does not suggest that the colonised subject was a subject before colonial subjection. Already, the colonised subject is in the ontologico-existential ruin of dehumanisation. The return that is emphasised, is the return to the self-in-decolonial consciousness. The necessity of this return suggests two things. First, the return to the self is a redefinition of being human while being committed to waging the ontologico-existential struggle against all forms of dehumanisation. This struggle is waged within a new form of subjectivity – the self-in-decolonial consciousness – that is, the intentional commitment of breaking the superior-inferior complex of colonial subjection. This redefinition also means not seeing oneself as the extension or the mirror of the idea of Europe. The self returns to the self as human *qua* human. Second, the return to the self means adopting what Maldonado-Torres (2008) refers to as the decolonial attitude informed by the phenomenology of love. It is clear in Césaire that the love for humanity is what informs the return to the self. Phenomenology of love transcends the lies and deceptions that lie at the heart of the idea of Europe. This is the love that projects ethical relationality of the humanity that is about to be born. Fanon (1990, 254) counsels thus: ‘But if we want humanity to advance a step further, if we want to bring it up to a different level than that which Europe has shown it, then we must invent and we must make discoveries.’ Fanon is clearly instructive in calling for the creation of another human in a different world – a decolonised world – a world of liberated humanity.

Uprooting the colonial subjection from the dehumanisation and to engage in the continued search for humanity, Césaire’s conception of the return is rooted in the politics of life. The politics of life are the politics of creation. What is created enables the infusion of the ontologico-existential conception of the non-human into being a human being. The existence of the colonised subject, having been a questioned humanity, not only is the radical desire as Bogue (2006) notes to bring an end to this questioning of humanity—that is, to absolutely eliminate dehumanisation is the necessary task of the return. That is why Césaire’s return is the confrontation of dehumanisation and the elaboration of the politics of life which set the radical desire afoot. The task is much bigger for Césaire to account for the non-human, his very ontological position against the human subject who “reali[s]e themselves as boundary maintaining systems”

(Wynter 1984, 44). They make the colonised subject to be *a thing* that is studied outside itself and rendering it as not its own self.

In no way will the colonised subject be exempted from the preoccupation of the politics of life since it is life itself which is at stake. It is these boundary-maintaining systems that ontologically re-inscribe the asymmetry of the human and the non-human; the orders of the fallacious and mythical propagated as the truthful absolute and what Wynter refers to as the regime of normative definition and its negative stigmatisation. To return to being a human being means the assertion of life and this is nothing that can be bastardised as nothing poetic because in Césaire's poetic there is a radical desire, which is the politics of life. This radical desire is not to be like the human subject in the Cartesian sense, because the human subject is foregrounded in the will to power, whereas the colonised subject's radical desire is the will to live. For there to be such subjectivity on the colonised subject, there must be a return to the self in the ontologico-existential formation of the human being in the decolonised world. If the colonised subject ceases to be non-human, which is the domain of non-existence, the radical desire propels the colonised subject to break ties with the idea of Europe. Césaire's resignation from the French Communist Party in 1956 serves as testimony to this. To be sure, it was clear from Césaire that the French Communist Party did not care about the plight of the colonised subject, and there was no colonial question in the Party. Césaire ([1956] 2010) illustrates clearly how the positionality of the colonised subject is different from that of the worker, around whom the notion of the struggle in the French Communist Party is centred. By privileging the worker, the colonial question is erased and the Party is accused by Césaire of its inveterate assimilation, unconscious chauvinism, fairly simplistic faith and all this "dogmati[s]es in the name of the party" (Césaire [1956] 2010, 149).

It is this resignation where Césaire engaged in attitudinal defiance, and embarked on a return to the self. For Césaire has fallen victim to colonial paternalism of the French Communist Party as an assimilated colonised subject. Césaire was nothing else but a black face of the colonial infrastructure – the French Communist Party – the space where there was no colonial question but assimilation *a priori*. Césaire did not exist as a full subject in the Party; he remained non-human in the impasse of colonial paternalism. It is important to interrogate Césaire's claim in the resignation letter when he writes (Césaire [1956] 2010, 149–150):

I believe I have said enough to make it clear that it is neither Marxism nor communism that I am renouncing, and that it is the usage some have made of Marxism and communism that I condemn. That what I want is that Marxism and communism be placed in the service of black peoples, and not black peoples in the service of Marxism and communism. ()

Césaire is, in a paradoxical way, mistaken in terms of the colonised subject in relation to Marxism and communism. It is not the issue of the colonised subject being served and being in the service of Marxism and communism. These two ideological forces removed the ontologico-existential concern of the colonised subject, and privileged the positionality of the worker. This makes

clear the fact that that there will never be another variant of Marxism and communism since the French Communist Party bestows its duties upon the colonised subjects and then imposes its own distorted ideological version. The French Communist Party, Césaire ([1956] 2010, 150) rightfully asserts, ‘still bears the marks of the colonialism that is fighting.’ The fact that it still reproduces the dehumanisation of the colonised subjects is reason enough to break away from such a political formation. In order to return, Césaire ([1956] 2010, 151) writes:

Suffice it to say that, for our part, we no longer want to remain content with being present while others do politics, while they get nowhere, while they make deals, while they perform makeshift repairs on their consciences and engage in casuistry.

Césaire clearly highlights the ontologico-existential of the colonised subjects being acted upon. This has clearly being indicative under the semantic blasé of comradeship, class struggle, solidarity, and unity of workers against imperialism and so on. Nothing will be mentioned about the colonial question by the French Communist Party and all other Westernised leftist movements since the colonial question creates a scandal. In the subjectivity of the French Communist Party there is no colonial subject but the worker—that is, the human subject who suffers from alienation and exploitation, not the colonial subject who suffers from what Wilderson (2003) calls fungibility, accumulation and death – the very things which testify to the worthless life of the colonised subjects, their very thingification in Césaire’s terms, which is nothing but dehumanisation par excellence. The colonised subject cannot be accounted for, and if the colonial question was to be the fulcrum of the French Communist Party, the latter would have ceased to exist. For, it is the party of the worker who is human *qua* human, and not the colonised subject who is the non-human *qua* thingification. The worker is the embodiment of violence which dehumanises the colonised subject. The mere fact that there was no colonial question in the French Communist Party means that the party was complicit in the dehumanisation of the colonised subject. There was no concern in the party to dismantle colonial subjection since that would mean putting the worker at a disadvantage, the logic being that, for the worker to live, the colonised subject must suffer and at worse, die. The demands of the colonised subjects cannot be elaborated upon by the French Communist Party because they call for the end of the colonial world, the very demand that is absent from the grammar of the worker (Wilderson 2003). It is clear that the demands of the colonised subject cannot be satisfied, and Césaire’s resignation is having to face the fact that in the French Communist Party there was no possibility of the appearance of the human, but only a thing. The very ontologico-existential scandal of thingification still remained, and the ontological status of being a worker was just cosmetic. Having being faced by the necessity of the return, Césaire engaged in the politics of liberated subjectivity and as the colonised subject, he had to know where he stood in the decolonial struggle. Resigning from the French Communist Party is indicative of the fact that as the colonised subject, he took seriously what Gordon (2006) refers to as embodied subjectivity which marks the fact that the enunciation of

the subject is fundamental in the struggle for decolonisation. Embodied subjectivity is elaborated thus:

To intend, one must intend from somewhere. But somewhere for living beings is an originary point of their own unsurpassability; no living creature can, in other words, surpass its own location except as an analogical positing of that location at another point (“there”). This originary point is *the body*. If consciousness were not embodied, it would not be somewhere, and not to be somewhere is to be nowhere. (Gordon 2006, 249 emphasis original)

The return, as Césaire’s resignation shows, including his indictment to the idea of Europe, is the full expression of being an embodied subject. As Bogues (2006, 334) rightfully points out, ‘the expression of [the] radical desire... that would create an epistemic break.’ The epistemic break is not only the discursive formation, it also reconstructs the subject and it then, if taken seriously, translates into the grammar of being. It challenges the colonisation of unreason which masks itself as reason. The epistemic break works in synergy with the shifting of the geography of reason. And both have the major task of confronting the colonisation of knowledge and its dehumanising practices.

For another human to emerge, the very change of the colonised subjects to become human beings, the episteme of the colonial subjection with its guise of knowledge while it is colonial knowledge should be challenged from its interiority and expression. To colonise knowledge is to militate against the return. The return in this sense would mean ‘cleaning up and restoring the house of knowledge that has been knocked down by the global storm blowing from the paradise of linear thinking’ (Mignolo 2011, 94). This linear thinking has cemented the power of the episteme and then makes dehumanisation seem reasonable through its logical and moral justification while in fact it is unreasonableness. The expression of the radical desire, which is foundational in Césaire’s return, is the removal of domination and its guises, to put it in place, as a matter of necessity, the possibility of the politics of life that militate against all forms of dehumanisation.

It is important, for the conception of return to take effect, to shift the geography of reason. Shifting the geography of reason is necessary for it serves the purpose of accounting for the subjectivity of the colonised subject. The return of the colonised subject means, as Bogues (2006, 325) correctly notes, the ‘human that needs to be brought to the fore out of bondage.’ Not only this, another human being should also be invented, the human who consistently asks the relentless question: what does it mean *to be human*? The answer to this question need not be in the utopian imagination and its teleological end, but the radical desire where the return is something fraught with the politics of uncertainty. Ontologically and existentially, the colonised subject who is dehumanised is said to be, as Malcolm X (1970) articulates, found at the bottom, not being human at all. Therefore, what the colonised subject wants is something that is answered in the affirmative. Malcolm X argues that what the colonised subjects want is to be human beings. There is a need to come to existence. To support Césaire’s thinking,

Malcom X (1970, 86) is on the mark when asserting: ‘We have to make the world see that what we’re confronted with is a problem for humanity.’

As Gordon (2011) correctly points out, there is no move to some end point, but to engage in teleological suspension. It still remains a challenge to account for the conception of the return in that it is important to first account for it being located in the realm of the body and consciousness. Indeed, in the Césairean sense, to return is to free oneself – as the colonised subject – from the clutches of colonial interpellation which keeps the infrastructure of dehumanisation alive. To return is the realisation that the colonised subject did not exist in the ontologico-existential domain of the human, but in that of the non-human. To come to that realisation is to be in the domain of consciousness and to engage in the mental and epistemic return. It is to realise that the bodily return is not sufficient in that the consciousness of that body is not decolonised. The challenge that still remains with the return is whether the colonised subject, as Césaire is, will engage in the decolonial process of bringing the world to an end after having acquired decolonial consciousness.

This is only possible if humanity is outside the configurations of the modern colonial world. This essentially means, therefore, that the modern colonial world should cease to exist. From all of the above mentioned, and Césaire’s critique to be specific, the human question should be understood from the vantage point of the colonised subject, and to pose such a question in confronting colonial subjection and its dehumanising practices. It is, as a matter of fact, to account for the emergence of the human and to render *faux* humanism an ontologico-existential scandal. Césaire’s return cannot be the synthetic moment yet, since this will be reducible to the *telos* – but is the process of invention in the continued struggle to become human in the dehumanising world.

Indeed, Césaire’s articulation of the possibility that authorises the colonised subject is not only utopian and imaginary. It is the radical desire and political responsibility that accentuates the creation of the new human being and accounts for the re-definition of the human and humanism. In addition, this re-definition should eliminate the processes of dehumanisation completely and chart the way for the world to come, the coming of which must be the concerted effort of the colonised subjects. The possibility of another world –the decolonised world where the human is human in relation to other humans – is the responsibility of the colonised subjects in that it is they who must end dehumanisation. Nothing can liberate them but themselves, as everything depends on them.

2.1. Coda: On becoming human through the return

In general, Césaire scandalised the question of the human by exposing the deceit and hypocrisy of the idea of Europe and its civilisation. The question of the human has been taken by Césaire as something that originates from the site of the dehumanised and also railing against the Cartesian human subject. In the ontologico-existential formation

and the constitution of the subject, the Cartesian subject in the dichotomy of self-other relations determined the politics of life and even death which Césaire exposes. The impulses of reason which propel the mastery of the self, the mastery of the world and the mastery of the “other” through the colonial subject legitimise dehumanisation of the colonised subjects.

In essence, for there to be another world, there should be resurrection of the subject and fusion of such a subject with the human content. That is, the human subject *qua* the idea of Europe is not human in its own terms. It is human insofar as it dehumanises what it renders non-human. Even humanism and the civilising values of *faux* humanism failed the test of bringing the human to birth. In so far as the colonial subjection is concerned, there is no human in the genuine sense. In short, there will be no human in the presence of dehumanisation.

At the same time, it is important to eliminate dehumanisation by the colonised subjects through the resurrection of subjectivity and the possibility of giving the world the name that it is worth. Of course, currently, the modern colonial world cannot be named since it must first be exorcised of its dehumanising practices – the absolute end of colonial subjection. In a similar vein, colonial interpellation, which creates Césaire’s thingification, perpetuates the pathological attachment that plagues the colonised subject not to have any form of relationality to the world. It is worthless to authorise the possibility or the presence of another humanity while the modern colonial world still exists. But to heed Césaire’s plea for the possibility of another humanity is to take seriously the task of ending the world as it is. This is the world that is contaminated by the idea of Europe and its civilising project which institutionalised, naturalised and normalised the decadence of humanity. It is also to take seriously the devastating impact of dehumanisation on the life of the colonised subject and to put that life at stake.

Césaire’s subjectivity on the question of the human subject has been challenging, and more specifically, has put it into the equation of colonisation equals thingification. Dehumanisation is what presents a scandal and it is the logic through which the modern colonial world is founded upon. Césaire, however, neglected the critique of the colonised subject in the postcolony reproducing the very sense of dehumanisation in its conception of the return. That is, there is no clear critique of the colonised subjects mutating into colonial subjection. The latter, of course, are those who are in service of the idea of Europe wittingly and unwittingly, and their main role is to stand against decolonial efforts of bringing to birth the new human. To Césaire’s credit and contrary to what most of Césaire’s critique implies to the conception of Negritude, it has been demonstrated here that it is much more radical and it still needs to be taken seriously as a decolonial critique. The diagnostic thinking of Césaire take the question of the human subject to task and the world that it inhabits, which ultimately create the non-human. It is clear from Césaire that another humanity is possible in the world of the human *qua* human – the decolonised world – the world where subjects collapse as agents of being human and non-human.

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