Return to the Kingdom of Childhood

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NOTES

Introduction

2. Césaire, Nègre je suis, Nègre, je resterai (A Negro, I am. A Negro, I will remain), 23.
10. West, Race Matters.

Chapter 1

2. Towa, Négritude ou Servitude.
4. Senghor, Anthologie, 1. All translations of Senghor’s texts are mine.
5. Ibid.
6. Senghor, Liberté 1, 316; Liberté 3, 69; Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, 112–113.
10. Ibid., 15.
11. Ibid., 16.
12. Ibid., 23.
13. “Minor literature” is used here in the sense that Deleuze and Guattari give to the term at the page 6 of *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, that is, a literature founded on the deterritorialization of a major language through a literature written in the major language from a marginalized perspective.

My translation.
32. Ibid.
35. Ibid., 68–69.
36. Ibid., 73.
41. Diagne, *L’art africain comme philosophie*, 5. All translations of Diagne’s text are mine.
42. Ibid., 9.
43. Ibid., 9–10.
45. Ibid., 134.
46. Ibid., 136.
50. Sartre, “Orphée Noir,” 18
Chapter 2

7. As implies Senghor’s paper entitled “The Revolution of 1889 and Leo Frobenius,” delivered in 1982 at a conference in Frankfurt, the Senegalese thinker was sympathetic to what D. A. Masolo calls “[t]he pre-World War II European philosophical movements of neo-Marxism, phenomenology, existentialism, and surrealism, with their general revolt against Hegelian transcendental objectivism and ‘system’ [which] turned toward a type of irrationalism emphasizing the spontaneity of man’s bare existence as constituting the search for meanings or essences.” Senghor also frequently praises thinkers such as Nietzsche, Rimbaud, and Frobenius, who question the primacy of intellectual reason and theorize the importance of emotion.

Nietzsche, for the Negritude thinker, challenges Descartes’ interpretation of Aristotle’s “esprit” (*noûs*), in *l’Ethique à Nicomaque*. While for Descartes the *noûs* is similar to discursive reason, Nietzsche interprets it as composed of discursive reason (*dianoïa*) and intuitive reason (*pro-aïsthésis* ou *théôria*), Senghor states, before he concludes: (“Nietzsche attempted to bury the old and decadent values [. . . ] to reclaim new values based on free will. The latter are rooted in the symbiosis of sensibility and intuition, discursion and will.”) *Ethiopiques*. *Revue socialiste de culture négro-africaine*, n° 30, 1982

Senghor also praises Rimbaud’s reasoned derangement of all senses and agrees with Leo Frobenius, who shows him the way to reach emotion. He declares:

> It is only this sensibility, this faculty to be emotional, and therefore, to be a visionary, which Frobenius calls Gemüt, that can lead us to intuition, that is, an in-depth vision of true reality: à la Tiefenschaup.

17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., 27
20. Ibid., 28.
21. Ibid., 29.
22. Ibid., 30.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., 31.
25. Ibid., 146.
28. Ibid., 219.
31. Ibid.
32. Senghor, *Liberté* 2, 32.
35. Senghor *Liberté* 1, 24.
36. D’Arboussier, “Une dangereuse mystification, la théorie de la négritude,” 44.
37. Towa, Tagne, “A l’écoute de Marcien Towa. Un entretien avec Marcien Towa, professeur et philosophe.”
45. Ibid., 180.
47. Senghor, *Liberté* 3, 70.
49. Ibid., ix.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid., x–xi.
53. Ibid., 7.
54. It is important to note, however, that Senghor’s critique of colonial reason is only one aspect of his theory. His philosophy is also, and most importantly, a positive rather than a reactionary illustration of Negro-cultural values. As such, it differs from Bergson’s despite the resemblances between their philosophies.
55. This reading of Negritude is limited to Senghor’s critique of colonial reason. As will be shown, the ontology and the epistemology proposed by the Senegalese scholar, is equally indebted to African cultural practices and differ, in many ways, from Bergson’s *Lebensphilosophie*.
56. As quoted in Diagne, *L’art africain comme philosophie*, 84.
58. Ibid.
60. Senghor, *œuvres poétiques*, 372.
61. Senghor, *Liberté* 1, 141.
64. Senghor, *Pour une relecture africaine de Marx et d’Engels*.
66. Ibid., 147.
67. Ibid., 139.
68. Ibid., 138.
69. Ibid., 144.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid., 129.
72. Ibid., 138–139.
73. Ibid., 142.
74. Ibid., 141.
75. Ibid., 132–133.
76. Ibid., 133.
80. Ibid., 69–70.
81. The *kim njoms* are, at the same time, poems, songs, treaties of ethics, and history lessons.
82. Senghor, *Ce Que Je Crois*, 123.
83. Ibid., 18.
86. Senghor, *Liberté* 3, 90.
87. Ibid., 92.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid., 25.
93. For the Ham people, for example, the sun is the manifestation of God if not God Himself (Kato 1975, 30–34); the Galla people of Ethiopia believe the sun to be God’s eye, the Balaese people of Congo consider it His right eye, while, for the Ilia people of Zambia, it represents His eternity (Mbiti 47, 52).
94. Ibid., 56–57.
96. Ibid., 92.
98. Ibid., 23.
99. Ibid.
Chapter 3

3. Ibid.
8. In his famous book, *Poétique IV: Traité du tout-monde*, Glissant defines “le Tout-Monde” as the constantly evolving world in which we live. This world, as opposed to the traditional understanding of globalization, does not have any center and includes every human culture in its constantly mixing and becoming present.
10. Carolus Linnaeus, for example, the father of modern taxonomy and the pioneer of the subdivision of mankind into races, determines a “physico-biological notion of race foundationalist status in the classification of the human species.” He claims, as early as 1735, that racial particularity is based on innate physical difference, temperaments, and geographical origins, presents races as ontologically immutable, and divides humanity from this perspective. For Linnaeus, mankind can be divided into four different groups: Africanus, Americanus, Asiaticus, Europeanus. Americans, he argues, are red, stubborn, and short-tempered, while Africans are black, peaceful, and careless; Asians are yellow, rapacious, and easily distracted, and Europeans white, reasonable, and imaginative. Although he does not explicitly present the white European as the ideal of humanity, his descriptive representation of their temperament and his later understanding of their beauty, as opposed to the relative ugliness of all other races, speaks of itself. Race, for Linnaeus, is a biological concept that has a determinative impact on human groups’ particular intellectual, moral, and spiritual natures.

Following Linnaeus’ footsteps, Johann Blumenbach claims, in his doctoral dissertation, entitled “De generis humani varietate nativa liber” (On the Natural Variety of Mankind), that there are four different human races, namely, the Caucasian, the Mongolian, the American, and the Negroid. Six years later, in the revised version of his dissertation, he adds a fifth race to his subdivision of humanity: the Malayan. The difference between human races, for Blumenbach is, as for Linnaeus, based on biological particularities. Yet, while the latter insists on color, geographical origins, temperament, and spiritual and moral particularities, Blumenbach focuses on craniometry even though he acknowledges the importance of color in the manifestation of race. Yet, the essentialization of the biological manifestations of race does not entail, in Blumenbach’s text, a theory of the immutability of races. On the contrary, races, for him, are naturally perfect-
ible even if some of them may be less developed than others. He declares, for example, in regard to the Negro:

God’s image he too. . . . Although made out of Ebony . . . I am acquainted with no single distinctive bodily character which is at once peculiar to the negro, and which cannot be found to exist in many other and distant nations. . . .

Despite his seemingly egalitarian conception of race, however, Blumenbach’s claim that even “savage” races ought to develop to the level of Western “civilized” ones, denotes his hierarchical understanding of race, understood as a group of human beings with distinct physical and intellectual particularities. Although Blumenbach and Linnaeus have radically opposed interpretations of its manifestations and possible developments, they both have a biological and hierarchical understanding of race.

In the same vein as Carolus Linnaeus and Johann Blumenbach, Arthur Gobineau published in 1853 an equally central book in race theory: The Essay on the Inequality of Races. In this book, he argues that biology—specifically skeletal formation, physical beauty, muscular strength, and intellectual ability—determines the particularity of races and sets the condition for racial differences. Inferior races, he claims, are unable to thrive to the cultural level of superior races because races define culture, but not the contrary. Gobineau considers the “Aryan race,” symbol of beauty, intelligence, and culture, to be a center of purity, rationality, and perfection. From this postulation, he develops a theory of race and a definition of the “other” races according to their resemblances and differences with the white race. Although he believes that races became mostly mixed in history, Gobineau, like the major theoreticians of race in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, conceives races as originally pure. For the father of modern racial demography, racial mixture, the consequence of the meetings of different races, resulted in the degeneration of the white race and would ultimately cause the collapse of humanity, because purity is the essence of races and mixture is a step towards death.

15. Edward W. Blyden, the prominent pioneer of pan-Negristm, for example, refutes the theory of the inferiority of the Negro, claims the necessity to vindicate the Negro race, and yet, reiterates the traditional paradigm. Like the Du Bois of “the conservation of races,” Blyden, the first theoretician of “African personality,” founds his philosophy on the idea that each race has its own distinctive character (African Life and Customs, 136–37). This essentialization of races leads him to despise miscegenation and to present Africans who live on the coast and who, therefore, had extensive contacts with other cultures as weak and corrupt, while those from the interior who have supposedly kept their purity.

[A]re growing up gradually and normally to take their place in the great family of nations—a distinct but integral part of the great human body, who will neither be spurious Europeans, bastard Americans, nor savage Africans, but men developed upon the base of their own idiosyncrasies. . . . (Blyden, West Africa Before Europe, 131–134)

Blyden’s Pan-Negrist theory was all the more essentialist in that he gives a spiritual explanation of the “essence of races.” He declares:
Every race . . . has a soul, and the soul of a race finds expression in its institutions, and to kill those institutions is to kill the soul—a terrible homicide . . . in the great types of man, in the various races of the world, as distinct in character as in work, in the great divisions of character, we see the will and character and consciousness of God disclosed to us. . . . (Blyden, *West Africa Before Europe*, 140)

Edward Wilmot Blyden, is a good example of major African thinkers who, despite a radical and energetic critique of Western scientific racism, repeat the paradigm set by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century racialist thinkers. And he is not alone. The specter of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries’ paradigmatic relation to race hangs over the entire history of race theory. Pan-African thinkers such as Marcus Garvey, for example, repeat Gobineau’s hierarchical definition of race even though they present Africa as superior to the West. For the Jamaican thinker, for instance, the “pure black race . . . should now set out to create a race type and standard of [its] own, which could not . . . be stigmatized as bastardly” (Garvey, *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, 37).

The dichotomous imperialist and anti-imperialist conceptions of race have resulted in the above-mentioned thinkers of African descent’s imagination and invention of a “new” Negro race, opposed to the European and rooted in a mythical Africa that existed before the imperialist era.

25. Ibid.
30. Ibid., 39.
31. Ibid., 92.
34. Senghor, *Liberté* 1, 139.
35. Anyidoho, “Kingdom of Childhood,” 763.
36. Ibid., 764.
37. Ibid.
39. This section was radically improved after a thought provoking discussion with Professor Olefumi Taiwo from Seattle University.
42. The Sine is both the name of the Sereer country and the river that crosses it. The Seine is the Sine of Paris.
43. Senghor, *Liberté* 3, 63.
49. Diagne, *L’art africain comme philosophie*, 152. Diagne adds in the footnote of this citation: “Senghor says, in a letter to Janet Vaillant [. . . ] ‘Negritude is not an essence but rather a phenomenon,’ in the sense, he adds, that Teilhard de Chardin uses the term, or, he insists, if you prefer, in the sense that Sartre uses the word, that of an existence.”
50. Nude woman, black woman
   Clothed in your color which is life, your form which is beauty
   I grew in your shadow, the sweetness of your hands bandaged my eyes
   And here in the heart of summer and of Midi,
   I discover you, Promised Land, from the height of a burnt mount
   And your beauty strikes my heart, like the lightning of an eagle

Nude woman, dark woman
Ripe fruit of the dark flesh, somber ecstasies of black wine, mouth that makes my mouth lyrical
Savanna of pure horizons, savanna trembling under the fervent caresses of the East wind
Carved tom-tom, tense tom-tom, grumbling under the fingers of the conqueror
Your low contralto voice is the spiritual song of the loved woman

Nude woman, dark woman
Oil unwrinkled by winds, smooth oil on the athlete’s flanks, on the flanks of the princes of Mali
Gazelle with celestial bridles, pearls become stars on the night of your skin
Delight of spiritual games, the glints of red gold eat your flaming skin away
In the shadow of your hair, my anguish is enlightened by the nearby suns of your eyes

Nude woman, black woman
I sing your passing beauty, fixing your form in eternity
Before the jealous fate turns you to ashes to feed the roots of life.
51. Senghor, *Chants d’Ombre*.
52. Ben Slimane, “‘Femme Noire’ De L. S. Senghor.”
53. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*.
56. Senghor, *Liberté* 1, 41.
57. Ibid.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

58. Senghor, Liberté 5, 13.
59. Evolué: colonized subject who “succeeds” in assimilating French culture and, in consequence, evolves from a situation of despicable Negro to the one of “refined” “respected” French citizen.
60. Agrégation: One of the most prestigious degrees in the French education system.
61. Senghor, Liberté 1, 11.
62. Senghor, “Le français langue de culture,” 837. Senghor declares, in relation to this 1937 text: “It was a successful scandal, more, by the way, for Africans than for Europeans. “Now that he has learnt Latin and Greek, the former whispered, he wants to take us back to Wolof.”
63. Senghor, Poèmes, 36.64.
64. Glissant, Traité, 30, 78.

Chapter 4

1. Mudimbe, The Invention of Africa, 94.
3. It is important to note however, that even though Negritude is taught in one day or two in most intro level courses, one barely ever encounters a graduate level course on the Negritude movement.
5. Ibid., 278. My emphasis.
It is important to note that these American scholars succeeded in bringing together Negro intellectuals of the world at the five Pan-African congresses organized between 1919 and 1945 in Paris, London, Brussels, Lisbon, New York, and Manchester. Moreover, when Senghor arrived in France, in 1928, Paris was witnessing the golden age of the Neo-Negro movement, rightly referred to as the Negro Revolution. In addition to the importance of African art, praised by eminent cubist and fauvist artists such as Picasso, Derain, and Blamick, Paris danced to the rhythm of Josephine Baker’s high-pitched voice and unwinded to Johnny Hudgins’ witty Vaudeville, while French women adopted the Bak-air Fixe. During this stimulating time, black intellectuals from Africa and the Caribbean were inspired by the poems of Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown, Countee Cullen, Claude Mc Kay, and Jean Toomer, etc. Senghor says:

At the Latin Quarter, in the 1930s, we were touched, more importantly, by the ideas and actions of the Negro Renaissance, the most dynamic representatives of which we met in Paris. As for me, I regularly read the Crisis [. . . .]. But also the Journal of Negro History, which had numerous articles on Africa. But The New Negro was my bedside book. [. . . .] Claude Mac Kay, Jean Toomer, James Weldon Johnson, Stirling Brown and Frank Marshall Davis, were the Negro renaissance poets that influenced us most.

6. Irele, “Negritude or Black Cultural Nationalism.”
7. Negritude is, at times, a reaction to scientific racism as illustrates Senghor’s famous essay: “Ce Que l’homme Noir apporte,” Liberté 1, 22.
11. Ibid., Souls, 8.
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13. Ibid., 7.
15. Ibid., The Negro, 15.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., 19.
18. Ibid.
20. Ibid., 29.
22. Ibid., Souls, 45.
25. Kane, The Ambiguous Adventure, 140.
26. Césaire, Notebook of a Return to the Native Land.
27. Glissant, Caribbean discourse, 8. My emphasis.
28. Ibid., 66. My emphasis.
29. Ibid., 15. My emphasis.
30. Ibid., 26.
31. Bernabé et al., Eloge de la Créolité, 80.
33. Ibid., 2.
34. Ibid., 3.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., 4.
37. Ibid., 24.
39. Ibid., 41–43.
40. Ibid., 48. My emphasis.
41. Ibid., 15. My emphasis.
42. Glissant, Antillean discourse, 61. My emphasis.
44. Ibid., 203; Doyan, “Paul Gilroy’s Slaves, Ships, and Routes,” 9.
45. Ibid., 8.
46. Adéékò, “Bi okó BA RE ’OKUN, TO RE OSA YOO FABO SI EBUTE”: Négritude, Afrocentrism, and Black Atlanticism.”
49. Ibid., 14.
50. Senghor, Liberté 1, 23.
51. Ibid., 40.
52. As opposed to Gilroy and Glissant and in the same tradition as Cheikh Anta Diop’s theory of the pre-colonial unity of African cultures, Molefi Kete Asante claims that the common denominator of Africanness needs to be found in Egypt. Egypt, for the Afrocentric theoretician, is to the African world what Greece is to Europe. This understanding of Africanness denotes, for Asante, that African societies, no matter their locations, have succeeded in keeping their traditions. Contemporary African cultures of the Diaspora are nothing but modern developments of pre-fifteenth century African cultures. Molefi Kete Asante, The Afrocentric Manifesto, 11–15.
Conclusion

4. Ibid.
5. *Black Skin, White Masks*, 90.
8. Lévi-Bruhl, *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures; La mentalité pré-logique*.
10. Senghor, *Liberté* 1, 239.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., 69.
22. Ibid.
27. Sereer popular songs.
32. Senghor, *Liberté* 3, 70.
33. Ibid., 92.