Religion, Race, Multiculturalism, and Everyday Life

A Philosophical, Conceptual Examination

By

Christopher A. Williams

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FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book represents the culmination of over a decade of teaching and research at the tertiary level across the humanities and social sciences, and implicating foundational to advanced courses spanning philosophy, sociology, and history. As a result, I have incurred various debts along the way, financial and otherwise. Regardless, any misrepresentation in this offering falls strictly on me.

I will be forever indebted to my past, present, and future students, many of whom were initially leery of my critical approach to those streams of knowledge to which I was attempting to introduce them. Nonetheless, in quick course, they would come to appreciate the sobering enough truth that any knowledge acquisition generated from the relentless, systematic questioning of certain ideas, practices, and understandings deemed unassailable, necessarily involves healthy measures of conflict, discomfort, humiliation, and ultimately, gratification and triumph. It has always been quite fulfilling for me, usually after the fact of the classroom, when many of these students would go on to develop their own social voice, confident, intrepid, learned, and articulate in their egalitarian views. I am here reminded of the words of Denzel Washington in the second installment of the thrilling film franchise *The Equalizer*: *there are two types of pain in this world…pain that hurts and pain that alters*; I am honored to have participated in their "painful" growth as caring, compassionate, and even-handed thinkers.

I wrote most of this book over the course of the global lockdown prompted by COVID-19 in the first half of 2020. Initially convinced that this creative effort would be uncomplicated, let alone an affair in protraction, I commenced consolidating my lecture notes in March of 2020, comfortable in my thinking that it would take me no longer than six months to write my book. Of course, my expectations here were well off the mark, as these things usually are, and six months grew into one year and then almost two years, a development that must not have been at all pleasant for my

immediate family. As such, I am particularly thankful and grateful for my wife's long-suffering nature, especially in those seemingly eternal moments of lockdown when we both had to juggle teaching online classes and caring for our two rambunctiously lovely little boys; her level of sacrifice remains breathtaking to me as our world continued to become a terrifyingly more uncertain place and she stepped in to care for our children while I wrote mostly whenever I wasn't teaching. I am also all the more rounded in my thinking for those few intense moments in which my wife and I were able to honestly discuss our divergent religious views especially.

I would also like to acknowledge two of my colleagues who kept me focused as I wrote this book. Professor Livingston Smith read through portions of my earlier drafts, offering constructive input; our subsequent arguments resonated with me incalculably and I am appreciative of his influence on my contrarian nature, even if he may not be! I am also grateful to Dr. Stephanie Cooper for her words of encouragement and support while I completed this project. Her buoyancy and feel-good nature were most infectious and helped fuel my -at times faltering inspiration.

Final thanks go to you, my prospective readers. This book was written with you in mind, especially those of you who hold unpopularly "righteous" minority social views and have been apprehensive about verbalizing these for fear of ostracization, isolation, or worse. Know that you are not alone...I am indeed you in this regard. Social truth may be considered monolithically by some, but never be ashamed of voicing your divergent truth if that truth is grounded in understandings meant to better humankind by calling out injustice wherever and *whenever* it may reside. In the face of such injustices, as their enablers attempt to silence us by coercion and/or shame, never forget the extent to which some have become unwitting slaves to inherited generational truths grounded in inequity. Ours thus, must be a labor of love – *never* vindictiveness, nor aloofness – as we "labor" to overcome those intractable biases and one-sided moral impositions whose practical and proclaimed effects may well lead to deleterious outcomes; easier said than done, to be sure, but a necessary effort to be committed to in a social world whose intensifying human

fragmentation, it may be said, readily implicates those negative consequences associated with ratcheting anger, strife, and intolerance. Here's to spirited, sincere future discussions!

Christopher A. Williams, 23 January 2022

Introduction
The Gadfly as Social Commentator and Mediator

All definite knowledge…belongs to science; all dogma as to what surpasses definite knowledge belongs to theology. But between theology and science there is a No Man's Land, exposed to attack from both sides; this No Man's Land is philosophy.

Bertrand Russell

Our opening cue is taken from a fascinating novel entitled *Brushstrokes of a Gadfly* (Bucchianeri, 2011). The novel follows the life of idealistic New York debutante Katherine Walsingham. Katherine's father, a well-heeled CEO and businessman, is at once self-assured and sumptuously successful. High society mores dictate that Katherine follow in her father's prosperous footsteps, but try as she might, his world, for her, is too cold and clinical, too distant and cloyingly disingenuous. What is more, her passions lie elsewhere, well outside the expectations of her social standing; well-educated and the recipient of an immense trust fund, Katherine, a talented, trained artist, decides to open her own art gallery (*Ibid*.).

In time, Katherine comes to discover all that is wrong with the world and genteel upper society in particular; of course, this discovery was only possible for her own assertive, often guileless nature hastened by a crushing disillusionment with a hypocritical humanity that professes, with all the muster of big emptiness, to be advocates for equality for all. In the midst of her own cascading failures and tragedies, Katherine approaches the painful realization that she is at odds with high society, although she has immensely benefitted from it. Driven by an unrelenting idealism, Katherine, ever the Socratic gadfly, '…endeavors to make her fellow citizens stop and reflect upon their culture, lambasting the follies of the human race as she sees them with her scathing images questioning

contemporary issues including…genetic modification, religion, absurd holiday customs, the equality of women, [etc.]' (*Ibid.*, blurb).

From hindsight, both ours and the great Greek philosopher, Plato's, it seemed inevitable that the physically and hygienically unspectacular Socrates, ancient Athens' foremost philosopher, would, like Katherine, eventually fall from grace with the potentates of that polity. Given that Socrates wrote nothing and that any important assessment of his ideas is entirely second hand, it is difficult, if not impossible, to confirm whether he lived at all (Russell, 2005, 89-98); if he did live, he traveled throughout his city state besieging any of its citizens who would entertain his relentless, potentially offensive questioning. Armed with his namesake interrogative method – also known as the *elenchus* – Socrates became an enamored figure among the Athenian youth, primarily, it is suspected, because of his paradoxically fearless, disillusioned, and idealistic disposition: he was not afraid to ask questions deemed iconoclastic of *anyone*, especially of those of societal repute (Denyer, 2019); and if that was not enough, his questions on the nature of morality, courage, piety, truth, *inter alia*, only seemed to become more probative and prying every time an answer was supplied; as if to say, here were shallow, superficial replies, by Socrates' reckoning, that were never adequate enough, always prompting a follow-up question aimed at guiding the discussion towards the ultimate truth behind which hid the competing *why's* of our human nature – *why* do we think and act the way we do? Socrates' mediated statement, 'the unexamined life is not worth living', indeed provided the philosopher's practical modus operandi its energizing muse (Fowler, 1966, 38).

A natural gadfly, Socrates' approach to truth was really meant to get to the bottom of our understanding about our place within a flawed, ubiquitously imperfect existence, in addition to satisfying Socrates' own philosophical outlook that as humans we can never really know anything but should always strive to know the "right" things. It was Socrates himself who said in so many words, "I know nothing," mindful of his social and philosophical obligation to provide moral cues for the honest pursuer of truth, together with his unwavering imperative to hold his pious fellow Athenians to account given that they thought they knew everything, but whose ignorance everywhere loomed lustrously (*Ibid.,* 23). Needless to say,

Socrates could no longer be abided by the reigning cabal of his day and was found guilty of the suspicious charge of impiety and corruption of the Athenian youth. A refreshing aberration in an otherwise intensely religious, normatively unequal society, Socrates was to become the ultimate scapegoat for all that was wrong with his polity, from natural disasters to embarrassing military defeat, to the increasingly bold, "iconoclastic" rebellion against so-called sacred knowledge. Allegedly sentenced to death in 399 BC, Socrates, in what was to be his final insult, was forced to imbibe the executioner's poisoned hemlock brew. Yet if it achieved nothing else, the ultimate gadfly's death, whether he lived or not, beckoned extensive attention to his driving philosophical motivation via his final lesson to humankind in the mediated *Allegory of the Cave*. Here was an apt Socratic tale in which a manacled group of cave dwellers who had never before seen the light of day decided it wise to execute the only one in their midst brave enough to venture outside before returning to inform the others that the reality of that limited, sterile cave, in light of the vast complex world outside it, could not *at all* be deemed reality (Jowett, 2019).

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The present offering represents an attempt to analyze the social features, effects, and practices of religion, race, and multiculturalism in the Socratic *gadfly* philosophical tradition. Utilizing arguments grounded in philosophy, history, sociology, and cultural anthropology, this book's overall objective rests on its author's motivation to ask of civil society what may well be construed as uncomfortable existential questions for some. Questions of this nature, in their so-called contrarian impulse, have been known to encourage, at worst, the querier's blacklisting, or at the very least, render her an annoyance for those who would, for whatever the reason, rather not earnestly address such canvassing. Such questions are all the more jarring for some because not only are they sometimes provocatively posed in any articulation and corroborating descriptions of them, but within these very questions are also couched inevitable cues to the flawed, if otherwise commendably progressive nature of our development as human beings. Where many pundits of the human condition are likely to conclude that life has improved dramatically for virtually all of us, quickly discerned through the various indices of positive human development, the

author would likely agree (*e.g.*, Pinker, 2011; Putnam, 2020; Rosling, *et al.*, 2019; Harari, 2015). However, any strenuous disagreement with some of these very pundits, the author contends, demands a spirited conceptualist look back into the history of our development with a view to exploring the ways in which a discursively inadequate punditry of human equality continues to lock in pervasive inequality, and in light of the prosperous present, assuredly dismisses the perpetual ignorance emanating from certain of those so-called sacrosanct parts of our human past (*viz.,* Graeber & Wengrow, 2021).

From religion to race, to multiculturalism, this book's motivation is in no way indebted to consilience, in which is enshrined the largely scientific effort to reconcile the humanities and the hard sciences towards honest, sensory truth (Wilson, 1999; Beakbane, 2021). Neither is the author interested, outside of *social meaning*, to 'unlock the deepest mysteries of space and time…to understand the meaning of our lives [via string theory]' (Kaku, 2021, blurb). Regarded as 'one of the most brilliant, controversial and unprovable ideas in all of physics', string theory represents '…the thread of an idea that runs through physics for centuries, that at some fundamental level, all the different forces, particles, interactions and manifestations of reality are tied together as part of the same framework' (Siegel, 2017). What happens, thus, when consilience and/or string theory *cannot* be enough, when, for instance, as chapter one explores, there is no real reasonable hope of reconciling the creationist truth of a metaphysical creation myth with a systematic scientific theory confirmative of the process of evolution? It is true that certain theologians, archaeologists, and scientists remain invested in the idea that creationism is the metaphorical outworking of evolution (*e.g.*, Garner, 2009; Richards, 2011; Axe, 2016).Yet this is a collaboration that falls utterly apart when creationists refuse, for instance, to accept the sacrilege of evolution, *apes and all*, while evolutionists ridicule their creationist counterparts who believe that the earth is anywhere between 5,000 and 10,000 years old, hardly enough time for the processes of evolution to take hold (*cf. Ibid.*). The Kalam cosmological argument for the logical existence of a creator, *humanoid* god captures the inherent dilemma undergirding any harmony between the naturally *inharmonious* relationship shared by certain creationists and evolutionists: confidently identifying god as the natural cause of every *natural* effect,

more so a god morally motivated by an influential religion likely of humanity's making, the Kalam cosmological argument amounts to nothing more than an unproven conclusion itself couched in a self-assured, comforting, one-sided logic (*e.g.,* Craig, 2000; Siegel, 2021); as if to further say that many of us have become hyper-invested in saturating our lives with transcendental meaning seemingly based on an unproven, biased conclusion compatible enough, for some, with science, but really gathering its legitimacy through the *proven* processes of sociality. Have we perhaps thus created metaphysics in our own image and according to our own stubborn, self-centered spiritual, theological motivations (*cf.* Comte, 1988)?

Accordingly, this book was primarily written with serious students of philosophy, sociology, the humanities, and history in mind, be they advanced undergraduates, postgraduates, or else anyone with a penchant for philosophy and its abiding social underpinnings, interrogatives, and intellectual inspirations. In the philosophical tradition of Jean-Paul Sartre (2003) and the later Ludwig Wittgenstein (2009), as critically tempered by Auguste Comte (1988) and Emile Durkheim's pioneering sociological methodologies (2014), the author is of the view that human interaction – which underpins sociality – together with its subsequent linguistic formations and conceptual etymologies, is ultimately responsible for those meaningful, indeed *valuably* subjective truths and beliefs that we so take for granted. It is the concept of meaning that the author attempts both to unravel and interrogate against fleeting humanity's often solipsistic, metaphysical, mythological confidence in *its* various truths that, should we care to admit it, only became truths because human development itself became inexorably wedded to social interaction (*cf.* Durkheim, 1995).

Posing relentless questions, while offering detailed responses and descriptions meant to encourage intense reflection, the author is keen to interrogate the discursive, sentimental, and practical ways in which the inadequate past with its sometimes-irrational streams of thought, continues to impinge upon the *improving* present. The ground traveled throughout this book has oft been traversed. Religion, race, and multiculturalism have been written about *ad nauseum*, and from a variety of academic, discipline-specific perspectives (*e.g.,* Bowker, 2021; Partridge, 2018; Smith, 2009; Golash-Boza, 2017; Anievas, *et al.*, 2014; Ekelund, 2019;

Murdoch-Kitt & Emans, 2020). Nonetheless, this offering represents the unique attempt, from the vantage point of intensive interrogation, to systematically analyze three discrete yet interrelated social issues-cum-features that are aggregately label the *existential triptych*; individually or collectively, these constituents of religion, race, and multiculturalism remain ever relevant to any sincere bid to understand those inegalitarian aspects of society in which they prominently or furtively figure. The result, it is anticipated, is a body of work that convincingly, succinctly, but challengingly captures the historical development behind these topical issues, thereafter questioning the largely overlooked or ignored conceptual challenges and impasses still silently lurking within them; only to conclude that it is painfully possible – emphasis on *painfully* – to overcome these conceptual and destructively pragmatic cleavages through a rational, compassionate approach in the end untainted by cynicism – emphasis on *untainted* (*cf.* Andrews, 2021; Pinker, 2021). The approach employed throughout this work is indebted somewhat to the late anthropologist, author, and creative activist David Graeber. Graeber dared to reimagine and reinterpret the inequitable past in a bid to shatter the underlying notion, born of contingency, that our present social reality is precisely normatively unequal because our tried and true historiography itself has always been indebted to a western mindset primed to dismiss any development outside of its orbit as useless and thus inferior. Until his untimely death in 2020, and despite being roundly dismissed in certain intellectual and social circles as a contrarian anarchist, Graeber remained hopeful that true human equality and equity, away from their useless abstract moorings, could indeed be achieved, quite expressive in his entreaty that those of us convinced of rampant inequity and its historical precedents ought to stand up in "righteous" protest and live out "our truth" to its *enlightened* consequence (2018; 2021).

To this end, this book, which is the first volume of an anticipated three-volume series, is written in a deliberately challenging way; over the author's more than ten years of teaching at the tertiary level, it was discovered that serious students of philosophy, history, and sociology were likelier to develop a powerful sense of accomplishment only after having earnestly and uncomfortably wrestled with the complex philosophical ideas to which they were introduced. The challenge factor of this offering

unfolds along the author's own tried and tested pedagogic method: mindful of the effectiveness of writing creatively portrayed, the tendency throughout this work is to begin analyses either with fictive analogies primed to contextualize a specific train of thought or else with carefully worded questions appended to detailed enough historiographical accounts meant to arouse provocation, suspicion, or *worse*. The insights offered thus unfold along a counter-balancing effort: the descriptive and historiographic modes are reveled in as a way to compel readership and spur interest, only to transition to analyses of more modern justificatory intonations to which new, more relevant questions are affixed, ultimately allowing for the reader to consider the ideological continuities and discontinuities inherent in the subject at hand. The shift from history to the present, to the existential questions meant to uneasily fuse them, foregrounds the very questions that the curious among us have always pined over in abject, lonely, *honest* silence, but have simply been too afraid to ask in those public, rapidly *canceling* spaces of our genteel surroundings, whose predominating denizens appear to be reflexively prone to the swift condemnation of anything they consider too taboo or perverse.

The *Other* Triptych: A Brief Literature Review, Chapter Outline, and Instinctive Rationale

Religion

There are many publications too numerous to mention that explore Christianity according to the guiding principles of apologetics (*e.g.*, Cabal, 2007; Ferrer, 2019; Comfort, 2019). Michael J. Kruger's *Surviving Religion 101* (2021), for instance, serves as a rhetorical coping mechanism against the persuasive onslaught of secular intellectualism in the university setting. Kruger's primary reason for writing this book seems, in his own words, to hinge on averting the 'frequency with which college students head off to college and return (often in a short time) with a substantially different worldview than when they left [home]'(12). He blames this psychological transformation on the young Christian adult's lack of intellectual preparation to confidently and cogently respond to one-sided, if 'eminently reasoned' secular claims meant to shatter the integrity of Christianity (*Ibid*.). Yet like so many other published exercises in apologetics, Kruger's

ideas have left some ultimately dissatisfied given his tendency to argue from an impossible, inevitable *a priori* position; Kruger has already made up his mind that Christianity is the only true unassailable religion and any so-called evidence that he subsequently collates is meant, understandably, to fit, not contest this stance.

The late Ravi Zacharias was perhaps one of Christianity's best-known apologists until his cancer-related death in 2020 (*cf*. Wright, 2018; Hunter, 2014; Lewis, 2015). Zacharias was known, sometimes unflatteringly, for his circuitous reasoning in the defense of Christianity, consolidating logical argumentation and step-by-step analysis to present what many considered to be brilliantly rounded intellectual defenses of the faith. However, anyone not generally convinced with Christian apologetics has often been left with the impression that Zacharias was doing nothing more than committing to misleading, deflecting, if heartfelt arguments for the sake of fortifying Christianity against antitheism. One may argue that Zacharias' argumentation hinged on a bulwark enabled by subjective philosophical and theological language disguised as objectivity and confirmative of antitheism as providing '…every reason to be immoral and [further] bereft of any objective point of reference with which to condemn any choice' (2004, 32). 'Any antitheist who lives a moral life', Zacharias continues, ostensibly unaware of his own *inevitably* subjective elevation of a particular worldview and its accompanying ways of life, 'merely lives better than his or her philosophy warrants. All denunciation implies a moral doctrine of some kind, and the antitheist is forever engaged in undermining his own mines' (*Ibid*.).

Elsewhere, Zacharias appears to uncritically privilege certain parts of pre-Enlightenment western history during which the integrity of Christianity was never at stake, only to go on to impressionistically declare that the Enlightenment period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries represented man's 'humiliating turn from God', in turn confirming, arbitrarily and unconvincingly, the enlightenment as a false historical movement (*Ibid*., 142). To cite another example, Zacharias (2002) professes that Christianity is ultimately unassailable on the already specious grounds that other comparative religions lack the properties necessary to guarantee man's personal relationship with the capital Christian *god*. Yet this is

ultimately a hollow, patently counter-intuitive assertion, as Zacharias makes no meaningful attempt, for instance, to systematically and objectively compare and contrast the universally splintered use of, and associated connotations with, the word "god" outside of the foundational thrust of Christianity (*e.g.,* Bowker, 2021); instead, he relies on shallow, selective ideas about this or that religion that he is able to philosophically manipulate to "prove" their lack of authentic godly authority. What, then, is the questioning soul to make of the following description of Zacharias's *Jesus Among Other Gods* (2002, blurb): 'In the name of "tolerance," our postmodern culture embraces everything from Eastern mysticism to New Age spirituality. But as Ravi Zacharias points out, such unquestioning acceptance of all things spiritual is absurd. All religions, plainly and simply, cannot be true'. One can generally expect from Christian apologists, then, eloquent, superficially logical argumentation for the capital god's existence based on limited, partial sources, from which nothing of significance outside of loyal religious investment can ever be gleaned. In essence, the apologist is "preaching to the choir."

The present author is by no means a religious apologist broadly understood, although no one more will fight unceasingly for anyone's right to practice whatever religion she chooses to follow. Yet this fight must be further qualified: With Bertrand Russell (1967) as this book's ultimate muse, if not in accordance with the British philosopher's full-on, rhetorically portrayed atheism, the position taken relative to the exploration of religion extends the view, borne in part of personal experience, that dogmatic religious beliefs are deleterious to human relations and become beckoning chains of control contemptuously applied by those who in this vein would attempt to forcefully and obnoxiously impose their beliefs and associated lifestyles on others. While Russell was generally dismissive of religion through his keen philosophical, mathematical gaze, the present author is very much interested in mapping, analyzing, and legitimizing the *social* relevance of religion beyond a generally dismissive scientism (viz., de Botton, 2012; Dawkins, 2011; Hitchens, 2007). As a tolerant agnostic thinker inclined to provocative stances meant to draw attention to suppressed controversial ideas deserving of consideration, the social import of religion, *any* religion, is never lost on the author in his effort to highlight and lay bare those

existential, theistic ideological tensions on which the function of *religious legitimacy* generally depends and thrives. Religion has been often described as the *Marxian* opiate of the masses, indeed amounting to a drug *necessarily* sanctioned only after centuries of socialization – keeping in mind that there remain many illegal drugs with their ineluctably addicted disciples and enthusiasts. As with the eventual approved use of marijuana in certain parts of the world, the practice of many, if not most religions originated from a place of putatively perceived illegitimacy (*cf.* Raines, 2002; Noss & Grangaard, 2017).

As they amassed wider support and patronage spurred by shifting mentalities, forbidden religions and their accompanying practices would eventually undergo a sort of social sanitization. Here was a historical process that, in the midst of inevitable human conflict, inhered a search for so-called transcendental truth, at the heart of which usually rested *first principles*, the proponents of which continue to attempt to locate "sound" metaphysical reasons and arguments for the nonmaterial creation of any- and everything. This is why some might find it suspicious at best that Zacharias, *et al.* would label every religion besides Christianity as erroneous; as if to say, the sum total of the world's *spiritual* progress rests exclusively on the laurels of Christianity, in the process rendering every other *socially legitimate* religio-cultural experience, save Judaism, altogether *illegitimate*. Thankfully, some would opine, this way of thinking together with its moralistic impositions is on the precipitous decline across the normatively monotheistic west (*cf.* Jacoby, 2005). Even so, one remains mindful that just because someone publicly eschews the espousal of religious bigotry in no way means that, as a Protestant atheist, he is still not being silently or clamorously guided by a cultural chauvinism through which he views his lifeways, in their totality, as "essentially" better than all other incoming *equivalents*. Regardless, the continued relevance of such dogmatic streams amounts to a stubborn, unyielding religious mindset, whose adherents are eager to deprive and delegitimize their religious opponents by essentializing the former's own truth, which, through the gaze of human social development, is just as *subjectively important* as those religious truths they consider to be specious.

Given Christianity's utilization by westerners as they proceeded to reshape the rest of the world in their image, the author aims to question-by-illustration whether we should be striving to understand religion's so-called metaphysical origins as either absolutely indebted to social earthly developments or else to the supernatural disruption of worldly, natural life, whereby religious thought was *literally* thrown down to benighted, inchoate human beings from the heavens. As demonstrated in chapter one, if we are satisfied to explain the origins of any religion according to exclusively supernatural tropes, then we run the risk of effacing the indispensable social foundations and functions of religious development and motivation; this might well leave us with nowhere firm to stand ideologically but on the general unverifiability of the metaphysical, itself powered, it will be argued, by the evolving human capacity to understand, explain, and then persuasively *represent* our existence and its nebulous first principles in epic, immortal, *metaphorical* terms (*cf.* Franz, 2001).

Where chapter one interrogates the likely ideational and social origins of religious creation myths, chapter two explores and questions those social and historical conditions that led to the creation, entrenchment, and subsequent propulsion of orthodox Christianity. The intention here is twofold: in the first place, the author is keen to juxtapose the neat social aspects of evolving fundamentalist-slash-conservative Christianity against those more troubling incompatible ideas that, should they be *earnestly* considered, would pose an existential challenge to Christianity's deistic unassailability (*cf.* Price, 2015). This effort involves the acknowledgment of human intervention in crafting and sustaining a religious movement that, despite its noticeable enough relegation in the European place by the eighteenth century, still remains the world's major religion, boasting at present over two billion followers; keen to illustrate Christianity's loosening hold on European affairs relative to this book's guiding thesis, it is not the author's intention to pore over those extensive Catholic-Protestant, Protestant-Protestant religious conflicts that unfolded over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (*viz.*, Friedman, 2021). The second intention, which continues into chapter three, is concerned with mapping the social circumstances and ideological movements that led, not so much to the collapse of Christianity, but to its relegation in western global affairs due to the emergence of science, technology, and economics

– due, in a word, to modernity. Here was a *triumvirate of truth* grounded in sensory reality and possessive of the abilities to transform *European* lives for the "better" in just about every possible, measurable way. Yet if anything, the relegation of Christianity in Europe, as further explored below relative to our second intention, in no way diminished that religion's global appeal, importance, outsize influence, and authority

This book's contribution to the existing literature builds on the works of HyeRan Kim-Cragg (2021) and Jonathan Haidt (2012), who, to varying degrees, attempt to encourage open dialogue between Christianity and the secular-cum-religiously diverse world in which many of its adherents (*i.e.*, Christians) grudgingly yet complicitly reside. In taking a more critically provocative approach, the author hopes to philosophically challenge the apologetic's civilizational flawlessness of Christianity both beneath the destructive-cum-creational forces of imperialism in the Caribbean and in more general, quotidian, contemporary contexts. Any ultimate overarching objective, then, extends to *othering* Christianity by demonstrating that it was/is just as prone to the so-called sin of revisionism usually reserved for lesser religions. It is certainly worth considering that the all-consuming nature of western global power meant that Christianity would escape its own constructed sin of revisionism because of its general compatibility with an emerging transformative scientific method, much of which Christianity's most stalwart defenders nonetheless stood in principled opposition to, to be fully explored in chapter three. In devoting the final chapter on religion to this paradoxical paradigm, the author is indebted to the groundbreaking, balanced works of Larry Witham's *Marketplace of the Gods* (2010) and *The Marketplace of Christianity* by Robert Ekelund Jr., *et al.* (2006). Away from the emotional pull of apologetics, these authors dispassionately demonstrate how evolving secular western economic positions were initially enabled by Christian sensibilities and vice versa.

The final two subsections of chapter three extend and critically contextualize the putatively privileged nature of Christianity at present throughout the western hemisphere, notably in the US and the Caribbean. Here the tensions that generally characterize fundamentalist, evangelical Christian views and positions are explored, both unto themselves and, later, relative to the construction of certain interrelated, biased

understandings of COVID-19 and syncretic religions like Obeah, Santeria, and Vodou. The effort is made to demonstrate the emotive nature of such understandings as they are projected as *objective* foundational truths by their proponents, this despite the fact, *inter alia*, that many religions and their corresponding outlooks developed under very similar conflicting social circumstances that marked Christianity's very origins and preliminary development (*cf.* Olmos & Paravisini-Gebert, 2003). By tapping into postcolonial theory, in which is ingrained the understanding that the varied psychological, ideological, and social effects of European civilizational influence remain globally pervasive even centuries after the fact of conventional imperialism, the aim is to draw warranted attention to the so-called fact undergirding why a syncretic religion like Vodou, for instance, continues to be viewed illegitimately for no other reason, it seems, than the widespread belief of its non-western, "evil" insignificance (e.g., Spivak, 1999; Said, 2014; Bhabha, 2004; Gilroy, 2007). The probative overarching question thus becomes, should there not be an equal place at the "inevitable social table" for all religions, or else none at all?

Race

Critical Race Theory [CRT] has become the cynosure for a substantial segment of westernity's contempt (*cf.* Ramkissoon & Engel, 2021; Wood & Gonzalez, 2021; Lesperance, 2020). Rooted in the predating civil rights legal precept that social institutions are undeniably tainted by the lingering and not-so-lingering effects of racism, oppression, and patriarchy, contemporary proponents of CRT maintain, to differing degrees of subtlety, that western society in all of its constitutive components and qualities continues to privilege whites at the expense of all other races (*viz.*, Crenshaw, *et al.*, 1996). As a result, many white westerners especially have not taken kindly to the inference that they are racist simply because the color of their skin affirms it, leading to an angry, loudening backlash against CRT. Yet certain academics, including the present author, believe that any such backlash typically originates from a quick-tempered, emotionally uncritical, uncomfortable place bereft of any real desire on the part of its detractors to at least consider the merits of CRT towards uncovering the often sly destructiveness of racism. Instead, offense is taken at the sometimes heavy-handed ways in which race and its social

considerations and consequences are forced on white adults and their "unsuspecting" children, not for the sake of progress, but what the aggrieved party perceives as punishment for *simply* being white (*e.g.*, Stone, 2021). Investigative journalist, Nikole Hannah-Jones and her *1619 Project* (2021) initiative both demonstrate and contextualize all too well the vast ideological schism that exists between CRT theorists keen, for instance, to uncover the historical, generational, and institutional roles of slavery and racism in the American place and their usually-white detractors who with all the ostensible muster of a dismissive ethnocentric smugness, inveigh against such a position, imperfect as it is, despite its rational, illuminating insights (*e.g.*, Harris, 2020).

Statisticians who attempt (much like Hannah-Jones) to make sense of the various disparities between whites and minorities, including black people, are effective enough in foregrounding a distinct determinism between the downplayed racial present and its racially-motivated past. In the so-called multicultural bastion that is Britain, for instance, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2021) released a report in October of 2020 that 'outlined a worrying picture of racial inequality' in that country in the key areas of employment, education, crime, living standards, and health and care. There is evidence with which to suggest that such disparities began in earnest immediately following World War Two in 1945, around which time Britain grudgingly opened its doors to its "darker" colonial subjects, only to slam these doors resoundingly shut in 1962 after native Britons began to complain about the blight that multiculturalism had wrought on their country (Martin, 2016, chapter fifteen). To use another relevant example of the undeniable presence of the negative perpetual effects of race-think in the western world, let us look to the United States. Despite minority populations accounting for much of that country's population growth in recent years (United States Census Bureau, 2021), 42 percent of Americans registered their conviction in 2021 that race relations had actually worsened in the preceding year; this view provides a loud demographic voice to those other key development areas including employment, healthcare, crime, etc., in which black Americans especially have systematically lagged since their official emancipation in 1865, despite the painful gains made by that group in the one hundred years that followed (Santhanam, 2021). Elsewhere, and despite this country's current multiethnic reality, France's

official colorblind policy in the face of a rapidly diversifying demographic appears to function on the irrational perception that everyone is equal in the eyes of French law, regardless of their ethnicity or race, even in the face of that nation's mounting racially motivated discriminations primed, it may be argued, by the same popular, stubbornly chauvinistic motives that guided colonialism in the first place (*cf. Peabody & Stovall, 2003; Plser*, 2020).

Regardless of these illuminating enough statistics as cogent starting points for any honest, subjective-slash-objective discussion about the roles played by race and racism throughout the western world, CRT has both been decried and described by many academics, intellectuals, politicians, and parents as tantamount to reverse racism odiously linked to wokeness. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the woke adjective, which originally means to be 'well-informed' or 'up-to-date', was expanded in 2017 to now refer to the condition of being 'alert to racial or social discrimination and injustice' (Steinmetz, 2017). This definition, likely conceived by those young, impassioned justice activists responsible for the formation of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2013, is said to have its ideological basis in the American civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s (Crenshaw, *et al.*, 1996). Wokeness now largely refers to a new, somewhat revolutionary rhetorical approach to confronting what many perceive to be the "white-enablement" of racism and other social blights and inequities. Boasting a substantial millennial and zoomer, or Generation Z membership, the "woke mob," as they have been derogatorily labeled by conservative ideologues especially, is keen to see quick condign justice served on *anyone* who at *any time* in his life demonstrated an explicit racist or otherwise inegalitarian intent (*cf.* Edgecliff-Johnson, 2021; Madlangbayan, 2021). This means that if someone especially of note utilized or even implied a divisive inegalitarian worldview many years ago, notably on social media, then that person can expect to be relentlessly hounded and exposed by the woke practitioner, only to eventually lose his job or to be deprived in some other meaningful, "satisfyingly" consequential way. Many have criticized the woke mentality as overly harsh and patently, willfully ignorant of its diverse social, multicultural milieu as its proponents attempt to mercilessly obliterate their opponents (*cf.* Rectenwald, 2020). Elsewhere, many woke practitioners have gone so far as to condemn the very wealthy, many of whom are white, convinced that by the latter's own action or *inaction*, it is

they who are the ultimate gatekeepers of perpetual human inequality (*cf.* Colton, 2021; Flynn, *et al*., 2017). *Inter alia,* this sort of confident emotional declaration has become a general response to what Robin Diangelo has elsewhere described as the white racial frame (2021), through which, arguably, even well-meaning, progressive white anti-racists continue to betray the deeply internalized, cross-generational bias that whiteness in its "indispensable" civilizational makeup is the only "important" avenue out of societal disparity of any and every sort (111-112). It has been convincingly shown elsewhere that whites, to use a compelling example in this instance, are likelier to benefit, generally, from generational wealth transfer than people of color (*viz*., Flynn, *et al*., 2017), but it becomes a very slippery interpretive slope indeed when a white inheritor of relative wealth is exclusively condemned against our recently introduced analytical racial frame – indeed condemned on the joint criteria that both his racial and financial inheritance *absolutely* make him a complicit, *systemic* racist. In rationalizing in this way, many anti-racist pundits seem unwilling to invest in the practical enough distinction between equality and fairness-slash-equity-slash-justice. When we consider resource accessibility, we should all not necessarily, outside of basic human rights and their accompanying contextual needs as these vary from human to human, be striving for equality, since equality suggests that every human being ought to have an equal share of everything, even where some, according to his needs, would need more or less of a particular resource than another. However, it is when someone's access to resources that he clearly needs or is entitled to, is blocked or infringed, that, in John Rawls' conception of equity, a systematic breakdown of the 'division of labor between the basic structure and the rules applying directly to individuals' has occurred (2005, 268–269); in other words, not everyone can be wealthy, but the inevitably socially-engineered structures in which we live ought – through their internal logic regulated by reciprocity, duty, and incentivization – to functionally ensure that everyone has the necessary access to what he needs, and should not have to maliciously fight for, nor be maliciously denied access to a resource whenever and wherever he most needs it. Any critical emphasis on fairness-cum-justice, thus, anticipates that although not all of us can be wealthy, black and white alike, many of us are often unfairly treated and targeted by the law and other public, private, and corporatist institutions and proxies because of the evolutionary, biased, judgmental nature of their

power (*e.g.*, Prieb, 2022). Important to note is that just because someone who happens to be white is wealthier than me does not *automatically* translate to the fact that he is *directly* responsible for *my* unfair treatment and thus an automatic racist, although he may or *may not* have benefited from greater access to resources and resource allocation in a "systemic breakdown" throughout which justice is often disingenuously *accorded* according to meritorious, racial, religious, and/or national affiliation. Such nuances of interrelated, indeed *relatable* understandings and concepts are precisely why a disciplinarily-extended CRT, responsibly utilized and deeply thoughtful is so vital to understanding and critically *predicting* the various ideological trajectories of our development.

While the author remains convinced that CRT responsibly utilized aids both in the initial location and subsequent critical understanding of the very real institutional and emotional effects of evolving racism and social inequality in general, one can appreciate why some would be somewhat dismayed by wokeness. It is one thing to hold anyone with a longstanding, discernably inegalitarian, hateful intent accountable, but sometimes quite another to go out of one's way to "dig up old, long forgotten dirt" on a person with the intention of destroying her in the name of equality; here, paradoxically, is a mentality that appears to revel in the idea that people *do not* change, which in turn prompts one to further question, not unreasonably, whether the woke activist is really in pursuit of universal justice or else in accumulating vengeful moments of pyrrhic victory to a more self-serving end. Consider here through the woke gaze that an ostensibly well-meaning apology for a past bigoted opinion, or *perceived* bigoted opinion, can *never* be an apology at all, but undeniable proof of an obdurate inegalitarian posture. Accordingly, further dismay abounds as to how someone can be quickly demonized and, for instance, branded a racist for no other reason than disagreeing with the hallowed tenets of antiracism, some of which are not arrived at critically but emotionally. For instance, there is the increasingly widespread woke belief that if someone is not an outspokenly trenchant antiracist activist – many of whom continue to hold on to their internalized racial biases, no less (Diangelo, 2021) – then that person's "polite" silence *automatically* signals his tacit investment in the inner workings of racism (*viz.,* Kendi, 2019). Elsewhere, those convinced that *all whites* are to blame for their suffering have proceeded, arbitrarily,

to verbally harass and browbeat the latter without any regard for their personal space and constitutional rights (*e.g.*, Feis, 2020). The woke practitioner is usually quick to take offence at anyone with the "unmitigated gall" to disagree with an otherwise enlightened talking point itself enabled in many cases by a blind faith inkling tethered to selective experiential convictions that racism in particular lies at the heart of *every* human conflict (*Ibid*; Roberts & Brown, 2021). While the author does not subscribe to the view that racism is the fundamental root psychological cause of all of our societal ills, he does believe that as a wedge issue, racism's subtextual quality often makes it difficult to confirm the sometimes *daily* systemic outworking of its deleterious effects; or, as Cornel West put it, '…race matters are an integral part – though not the sole part – of empire matters' (2017, xvii). We are not all white, after all, therefore deleterious racial issues, if historical trajectories are to be trusted, will not affect all of us *integrally*, hence the author's preceding position. It is quickly worth noting at this juncture that there exists a tacitly pro-white sentimentality that is quick to raise its chauvinistic head, especially in the face of couched, invisibly racially-motivated comparisons. Consider, for instance, the garish unfolding of such insidious comparisons between, on the one hand, "civilized, blue-eyed" Ukrainians who are commiserated with in very vocal parts of the white west as the former attempt to flee the bloody conflict unfolding between Russia and Ukraine on Ukrainian soil; on the other hand, however, envisage the severe mistreatment of many of those international students of color in Ukraine also desperate to flee the unfolding violence – picture them, against the harrowing images of their white fleeing counterparts – being angrily targeted by Ukrainian officials, being cruelly kicked off of outbound trains and left to brave the brutal elements for days at a time simply because, it would appear, they do not fit the Ukrainian phenotype (*e.g.*, Howden, 2022; Katju, 2022). This imagery prompts the reasonable "woke" inference that when it *really matters*, "other" lives are perhaps not as valuable as white lives for those invested in such implicitly biased comparisons.

Nonetheless, the woke mentality, uncritically posited, still runs the risk of eating itself into conceptual obsolescence; in one breath, it is commendably, if with frequent garishness, tethered to the principle that hateful divisive public articulations and behaviors should hasten draconian consequences.

Yet in almost no breath at all, such a mentality all too often reveals its proponents' tendency to over-obsess and perhaps over-interpret every detectable, so-called verbal-cum-gesticulatory slight that might not have necessarily been a slight to begin with, but, either; a slight *but* created and sustained in the minds of those doing the accusing (*cf.* Pagoulatos, 2021); or else, a reasonable, honest, vocalized disagreement against the unyielding "take-no-prisoners" approach employed by many woke practitioners. This often off-putting modus operandi has led to the unflattering charge even within the ranks of liberalism that woke progressives are '…glib…and too prone to confuse self-righteous social media chatter with the more nuanced realities of public opinion' (Stanage, 2021). Comportment of this nature points to the likelihood that many woke activists, like many of their detractors, seek comeuppance from a raw, emotional place, keen to paint a broad brushstroke of condemnation on any and every dissenting article of speech, in the process both destroying necessary debate and delegitimizing any empathetic outlook that might have come as result of any such debate.

The author only subscribes to the woke mentality to the extent that it is informed both by a rigorous, critical understanding of the history of human inequality and further motivated by those guiding principles that can be analytically harnessed by its proponents in their systematic demonstration that historical inequities continue to live on in transfiguration in the present, thereafter utilizing this demonstrable proof as a tool through which to articulate rational, practical solutions by which to combat these inequities (*e.g.,* Kay, 2018). This should lead to the sobering enough realization that although people of color, for instance, have come a long way since the debilitating days of chattel slavery, with yet a long way to go, every stubborn racist motivation at present is not necessarily synonymous with the often impulsively arrived-at idea-cum-ideal that *all whites* are to blame for racism (*cf.* Diangelo, 2018; 2021).

Accordingly, the espousals of black academics-cum-apologists like Candace Owens (2020), Voddie Bauchman, Jr. (2021) and Thomas Sowell (2009, 2019), among others (*e.g.,* Beck, 2020; Coulter, 2016; Levin, 2021), can be argued to be deeply unsatisfying and ultimately ineffective in identifying and explicating the very real racial issues that beset us. These apologists have to varying degrees dismissed the systemic presence of

racial discrimination by inveighing against so-called woke movements like Black Lives Matter, the Black Youth Project, the Advancement Project, etc., castigating their strains of supportive CRT as nonsensical, dishonest, and violence-prone. They have then gone on to stress that blacks are largely to blame for their own social problems and delinquencies, and should stop "blaming the white man" for their various disfranchisements (Owens, 2020). Conservative ideologues on race have similarly been known to rely on misleading, ultimately incongruous, manipulative statistical-causal realities, to the extent that they are still relevant, that African Americans in the south derive their touchy, violent, carefree ways from predominating white, poor, "slave-less" rednecks [Sowell, 2009, 1-51]); red herring logic (blacks are likelier than whites to discriminate against other blacks [Sowell, 2019]); falsifiable argumentation (the Democratic party was the party that sanctioned and continues to sanction black slavery [Owens, 2020]); and tropes that automatically reject liberal, "secular" notions of racial and social justice for a Christian alternative in keeping with the bigoted sensibilities of a "biblical age" that simply cannot be universally applied in this day and age (Bauchman, 2021). Through the principle of veritable racial justice for all, it becomes increasingly more difficult not to view Sowell and his ilk as more interested in compiling otherwise breathtaking statistical data-cum-emotionally satisfying arguments for their primarily disgruntled white base, for the sole purpose of proving their woke opponents wrong than they are about forwarding reasonable, compassionate solutions to the latter's, admittedly, at-times heavy-handed approach to racial and social justice. Jerry Large (1995) sums up Sowell in this way: 'Hard work and a positive attitude are good. But there is more to humanity than charts and numbers….Because Sowell never seems to recognize this, the good in his message is drowned by the bad.' Despite Sowell's voluminous scholarship, his cold, "mean" counter-liberal arguments are likely to strike the otherwise hard working, ambitious black soul affected by the bite of institutional racism as tone deaf, offensive, and disingenuous. How, for instance, would we readily square Sowell's statistical argument that black people are really the lynchpins for their own failures with the *statistical certainty*, for instance, that every two in three Canadians – who are predominantly white – remain convinced that racism does pose a systemic problem of some sort in their country (Bricker, 2020; Sowell, 2019)? By Sowell's reckoning, we should look beyond race – regardless of America's