

# “AM I ‘IN THE CARIBBEAN’ AND (PHILOSOPHICALLY) DOES IT MATTER ANYWAY!?”

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A contentious but not necessarily unfair description of where Caribbean philosophy is, institutionally, at the moment could be ‘that those who “do” Caribbean philosophy are largely doing it outside of the Caribbean, and those doing philosophy in the Caribbean don’t necessarily claim to be doing Caribbean philosophy’. This raises a question: does “in the Caribbean” denote a ‘geography of reason’ that in anyway relates to the physical, social and politically geography of the Caribbean? The fruitful exploitation of and demand to acknowledge the significance of geography in various “post-colonial” disciplines, would seem to suggest that the geographic location “in the Caribbean” must have a philosophical significance and that there are proper ways of attending to it.<sup>1</sup>

This paper argues the notion “in the Caribbean” does have philosophical significance. Properly understood, it delineates a boundary between Caribbean/ non-Caribbean. Where neither Caribbean or non-Caribbean are givens, but are discovered, made visible or present, through interactions which are sited in the gaps between the protagonists of competing ways of making sense of the world. The idea of borders of thought, delineating gaps or chasms between geographies of thought, has been developed by several philosophers.<sup>2</sup> This paper will look at three of these attempts to characterise this “gap” and the possible implications “in the Caribbean” of trying to think in that gap

The three writers in different ways and for different reasons point to the possibility of uncovering the “unthought thought”, that which cannot be thought because it is taken for granted. I want to suggest that philosophy that is earthed or grounded “in the Caribbean” may uncover “unthought thoughts” which are indiscernible apart from the novel vantage point afforded by the Caribbean terrain because the veiled thought is an indistinguishable part of a too familiar intellectual landscape.

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<sup>1</sup> I have only recently arrived in the Caribbean; I began teaching philosophy here three semesters ago. I inherited a curriculum that was very familiar, in fact I could be teaching it in any British or American university. As I have presented these courses I have become felt increasingly ambiguous about two things. Firstly, the validity of presenting these “traditional western courses” as if this is what philosophy is, with perhaps an introductory course in “Caribbean philosophy” tagged on the end. Secondly, the status of what is labelled as Caribbean philosophy, this labelling seems in some way to have been “outsourced” either because it looks to another continent for its inspiration or because those deciding about the labels live in another hemisphere.

The source of my ambiguity is threefold. Firstly, on any heuristic version of a solution to this problem I am unlikely to be someone who can legitimately do philosophy in the Caribbean. Secondly, I instinctively react against “in the Caribbean” being used as an excluding mechanism. Finally, I am conscious that post-colonial thinking has fruitfully exploited “geographies of reason” without necessarily reflexively attending to the impact of an authors “immediate geography” on their own thinking process.

<sup>2</sup> Commenting of Arndt Canovan notes that what keeps people together is not some common nature but “it is the space between (people) that unites them, rather than some quality inside of each of them”. cf M. Canovan “Politics as Culture: Hannah Arndt and the Public Realm” *History of Political Thought* 6 (1985) p. 634 cited in Rudi Visker “Philosophy and Pluralism” *Philosophy Today* Summer 2004.

This is not simply a plea for the addition of a Caribbean perspective to the many other philosophical perspectives that abound. I am not assuming that the philosopher's task is to uncover a universal all encompassing commonality which is currently impoverished and partial because it lacks a Caribbean aspect.<sup>3</sup> But rather to begin to think about what might represent genuine commonalities and what must be acknowledged as authentic irreconcilable differences.

### **Heidegger's "clearing" amidst the philosophical trees**

Part of the reason why I believe "in the Caribbean" must be taken seriously can be seen in Heidegger's twin notions of "clearing" and that which remains always "unthought", because it always withdraws.

Heidegger presents a history of being that concludes with the emergence of the technological understanding of being. This history acts as an explanatory tale that both exposes and seeks to overcome our dominant way of dealing with things, as objects and resources.<sup>4</sup> It is important to realize<sup>5</sup> that for the early Heidegger Being is neither substance nor process, rather it is "that on the basis of which beings are already understood". In other words, our understanding of Being is to be found in the lifestyle that is made manifest in the way everyday practices are coordinated. It is a culture's understanding of Being that allows people and things to show up as some-particular-thing. It is the shared practices that we are socialised into that afford a background understanding of what counts as a thing, as a human being and therefore what types of behaviour make sense (are acceptable). Such an analysis makes it plausible to ask whether "in the Caribbean" there must inevitably be a specific background influence that guides actions toward people and things.

Heidegger goes on to suggest that this background, this understanding of Being, creates a "clearing" (Lichtung)<sup>6</sup> that exerts an unnoticed control, which both opens up and limits

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<sup>3</sup> For example, Merleau-Ponty's work seems to be founded on a belief that the apparent incompatibility we encounter show not throw us off track because all of these divergent approaches in fact share a common source. See his *Signs* (1964) and *The Visible and the Invisible* (1970).

<sup>4</sup> Martin Heidegger "The End of Philosophy and the task of Thinking" in *Basic Writings* trans David Farrel Krell pp.369-392.

<sup>5</sup> Hubert L. "Dreyfus Being and Power: Heidegger and Foucault" [http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~hdreyfus/html/paper\\_being.html](http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~hdreyfus/html/paper_being.html) See also Hubert L. Dreyfus and Charles Spinoza Highway Bridges and Feasts: Heidegger and Borgman on how to affirm technology" *Man and World* 30 (1997) pp.159-177.

<sup>6</sup> Heidegger describes this point as "that place in which the whole of philosophy's history is gathered in its most extreme possibility". Martin Heidegger "The End of Philosophy and the task of Thinking" in *Basic Writings* trans David Farrel Krell p. 375.

what can show up and what can be done. That is to say, the “clearing” exercises an “unobtrusive control” (Waltens) over the members of any given culture. Crucially then, what remains “unthought”, because taken for granted, is highlighted, precisely because it cannot be taken for granted, in another culture.<sup>7</sup> More specifically, when we consider cultures that originate “in the West” and those which originate “in the Caribbean” we may discover sufficient difference between them that people and things necessarily show up differently.<sup>8</sup>

For Heidegger Being is not static, it is incarnated (partially never fully, it always withdraws, remains unthought)<sup>9</sup> in particular historical social practices, and so the “clearing” is productive, it produces reality through the oppositional interaction of specific groups and individuals. It is possible then that “in the Caribbean” describes a particular set of historical practices that have philosophical significance. The gap<sup>10</sup> demarcated by the difference between ‘Caribbean’ and ‘Western’ may provide an alternative basis on which human beings already understand one another. To use a spatial image, different entry points into the “clearing” govern what people consider to have significance in any experience and consequently shape the interpretation of any and every encounter with others.

The later Heidegger’s analysis of technology perhaps provides a clue as to the specificity of “in the Caribbean”. Heidegger’s ‘discovery’ that it is technology, and not people, that exercises exploitation and control, is the departure point for a post-modern odyssey in which people no longer represent being to themselves. Rather, Heidegger argues, it is

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<sup>7</sup> Hubert L. Dreyfuss op. cit. An example of this might be the critical use to which Hegel and others have put “the master – slave bond “in the West” may not necessarily translate into the Caribbean which has a very specific history of this relationship. It may not be the case that the “wage slave” of the industrial revolution and the “plantation slave” of the colonial era can be easily elided one into the other, not least because the wage slave is implicated in the enslavement of the other.

<sup>8</sup> See Rex Nettleford’s work on creolisation for example “The Melody of Europe, the Rhythm of Africa” in *Mirror, Mirror: Identity, Race and Protest in Jamaica* (William Collins & Sangster [Jamaica Ltd] 1972 ) or “Cultural Pluralism and National Identity” in *Caribbean Cultural Identity* (Los Angeles, Calif., Center for Afro-American Studies 1978 ) see also Wilson Harris “Creoleness: the crossroads of civilisation.” in *Selected Essays of Wilson Harris: The Unfinished Genesis of Imagination* (ed) Andrew Bundy (London, Routledge, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> “Beyond what is, not away from it but before it, there is still something else that happens. In the midst of beings as a whole an open place occurs. There is a clearing, a lighting ... This open centre is not surrounded by what is; rather, the lighting centre itself encircles all that is .. Only this clearing grants and guarantees to human beings the passage to those entities that we ourselves are not, and access to the being that we ourselves are”. (PLT 53, G 5 39-40).

<sup>10</sup> Derrida speaks of ‘blanks’, ‘voids’, ‘margins’ Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans Alan Bass (Chicago, University of Chicago Press) 1982. Rudi Visker suggests that Derrida’s point is influenced by Heidegger’s notorious remarks about the “nihilation of nothing” in his 1929 inaugural Freiberg Lecture “What is Metaphysics”. Heidegger’s idea that the nothing has a verbal character (das Nichts nichtet) implies that one should not understand it as privative absence of *something* present. It is, to the contrary, *what* allows for appearance and it thus points to ontological difference (Being/beings). “Philosophy and Pluralism” *Philosophy Today* 2004 fn 10 p.125.

technology's goal of ever increasing flexibility and efficiency simply for its own sake that forms/informs our current understanding of Being. Heidegger reaches this conclusion based on the discovery that information is endlessly transformable. Where once creation displaced Being and saw order brought out of the primal chaos by the creator, and subsequently modernity saw 'man' usurp the creator, now there is ordering but no orderer.

The suggestion is that everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it standing in reserve (Bestand i.e. resources).

Technology, therefore, reveals itself as tending towards total ordering, Heidegger calls it "total mobilization" a disposition that seeks progressively to embrace all aspects of life and in doing so eliminate those practices which might form the basis for the disclosure of new worlds. In their absence we are condemned to 'more of the same' and as Heidegger says "the waste land" grows. This growth is unchecked because the essential action of human beings, that is to be disclosers of a series of total worlds, in and through their encounter in the "clearing", becomes defunct.

The Caribbean has been peripheral<sup>11</sup> to this exercise of technological force. Whilst the centripetal force of technology has been felt, it has not been able to exert an all-pervasive influence in the Caribbean. Arguably the full force of technology's normalising power has not been brought to bear. Consequently, there may be evidence of what the later Heidegger described as the gathering of local practices. Which, at least temporarily, act as self-enclosed local worlds that are resistant to the technological understanding of Being with its emphasis on flexible and efficient ordering. As such, these local practices continue to allow for the essential task of disclosing new worlds, thereby potentially undermining the totalising and dispersing effects of technology<sup>12</sup>.

If there is evidence of the existence/persistence of such local practices in the Caribbean they would afford the possibility of reconfiguring the practices that have closed the "clearing" to us. The effect of bringing marginal practices to the centre is that the apparently central practices are marginalized – and crucially uncovers the status of these central practices as mere interpretation rather than inevitable necessity is unveiled.

### **Harris and the cross cultural imagination**

Wilson Harris poses difficult questions for those seeking to do philosophy in the Caribbean. He cautions that great care needs to be taken if we are to avoid categories that

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<sup>11</sup> See Enrique Dussel on the relationship of centre and periphery *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricouer, Rorty and Taylor and the Philosophy of Liberation* trans Eduardo Mendieta (Humanity Books, New York, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> Hubert L. Dreyfuss and Charles Spinoza Highway Bridges and Feasts: Heidegger and Borgman on how to affirm technology" *Man and World* 30 (1997) pp.159-177.

act as repetitive vestiges of an old, and by definition non-Caribbean, order; or worse to allow these categories to function as oppositions that wear the mask of the revolutionary but are in fact impotent because they are ill equipped to address the ontological crisis at hand. Harris sees these barren categories as ‘limiting’, ‘atrophying’, ‘a tautology of models’. These death-dealing modes of thought – not only do not carry life within them, but inhibit, or prevent, ways of thinking that could be fruitful.<sup>13</sup> We do not need to fully accept Harris’ diagnosis, a partial acceptance will permit us to recognise the legitimacy of his concerns. In fact, as we shall see later, the partiality of any position is something that Harris puts a good deal of store by. Harris’ juxtaposition of intellectualism (which he disparages) with imagination; with its attendant critique of any understanding of rationality which privileges the ‘reasonable’ over the ‘intuitive’ raise important questions for how philosophy can be done in the Caribbean.

Speaking in 1970 Harris expresses the concern that “no philosophy of history exists in regard to the Third World”.<sup>14</sup>

In a society which has been shot through by diverse inter-racial features and inter-continental thresholds, we need a philosophy of history which is original to us and yet capable of universal application.<sup>15</sup>

Harris was not bemoaning the lack of any discourse in the area of third world (sic) philosophy of history. It was the nature of that discourse that concerned him

One has the sense that a plea is mounted on behalf of the black man and the deprivation that he has suffered. A plea which invests in deterministic horizons with the past, present and future. Once, again, therefore, it seems to me the *native consciousness* is being overlooked within deterministic projections, and criteria are invalidated which might probe into unpredictable perspectives, latent spaces we need to unravel in our age.<sup>16</sup>

The deterministic horizons that prevent *native consciousness* articulating itself ultimately serve those vested interests that seek to embalm the “fact” of exploitation as somehow natural. The dilemma, therefore, is that unless it can sufficiently distance itself from the ‘old heritage’ the structure of intellectual moral protest<sup>17</sup> will continue to adopt

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<sup>13</sup> Harris’s views may be contentious but they are far from unique. For example, Sylvia Wynter writes of the bankruptcy of the various “historical projects” pursued in the Caribbean, which inevitably fail because they don’t incorporate a new model of what it is to be human. See for example “1492: a new world” in *Race, Discourse and the Origin of the Americas* (eds) Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Rex Nettleford and “The Ceremony Must Be Found” *Boundary 2* 12 (1984).

<sup>14</sup> Wilson Harris “Continuity and Discontinuity” in *Selected Essays of Wilson Harris: The Unfinished Genesis of Imagination* (ed) Andrew Bundy (London, Routledge, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> Op cit p.180.

<sup>16</sup> Op cit p.180-181.

<sup>17</sup> This thrust was spearheaded Elsa Goveia, C. L. R. James amongst others.

embalmed postures. It seems that if philosophy in the Caribbean does not find ways of attending to this “native consciousness” it risks remaining ensnared in dialectic of protest unable to free itself to take on the responsibility of a civilization making process. In Harris’ opinion nothing short of ‘immense new disciplines (a new anthropology ...)’ will suffice to effect the disentanglement from the ‘old heritage’ and enable the dismantling of the ‘adamant and inflexible psychological fortress’.<sup>18</sup> The pursuit of philosophy in the Caribbean, therefore, must contribute, in some way, to the unravelling of just such a new anthropology.

In contrast to, and possibly as an antidote for, the ‘dialectic of protest’ Harris seeks to engage the ‘cross cultural imagination’ that is first and foremost a process of intuition rather than of reason. Intuition is privileged because of the immense difficulty unaided rationality has in detecting the vestiges of the ‘old heritage’.

The philosopher in the Caribbean it seems must operate a very precise “hermeneutics of suspicion”. Where others are suspicious of the origins/genealogy of a “line” of thought, the work of the creative imagination is suspicious of too easily separating “our” experience from “theirs”.<sup>19</sup> Harris resists the resistance to “outside” influences, repeatedly asserting that properly understood the particular history and hybrid nature of Caribbean culture and society, characterized as it is by multiple external influences is better equipped than most national or regional actors, perhaps uniquely so, to enable an “art of creative co-existence [that] is of the utmost importance”<sup>20</sup>. Its importance lies in the ability to move beyond the ‘umbrella tolerance’ of multi-culturism to the profound dialogue of the cross cultural imagination.

an incandescent imagination that may so balance shadow and light, age and youth, strength and weakness, poverty and wealth, that it throws a ceaseless bridge across the chasm of worlds.<sup>21</sup>

Suspicion is cast, therefore, on any and every worldview that fails to see, or hides, the profound mutuality between and in-between cultures. This openness to other cultures,

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<sup>18</sup> “Continuity and Discontinuity” in *Selected Essays of Wilson Harris: The Unfinished Genesis of Imagination* (ed) Andrew Bundy (London, Routledge, 1999) pp.180-181.

<sup>19</sup> Asking “This Homi Bhabba is black man?” does not reflect the dispositions that allow for the profound dialogue that Harris invites us to enter into. cf Mark McWatt’s description of the kind of unhelpful attitudes he encountered amongst students who were resistant to any “outside” influence, demanding that theories or critical methodologies be concocted that are indigenous to the Caribbean. “World Texts and Contexts in Wilson Harris’s Critical Writings” in *The Theatre of the Arts* (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2002) p.126.

<sup>20</sup> Wilson Harris “History, Fable and Myth in the Caribbean and the Guianas” in *Selected Essays of Wilson Harris: The Unfinished Genesis of Imagination* (ed) Andrew Bundy (London, Routledge, 1999) p.158.

<sup>21</sup> Wilson Harris “Creoleness, The Crossroads of a Civilisation?” in *Selected Essays of Wilson Harris: The Unfinished Genesis of Imagination* (ed) Andrew Bundy (London, Routledge, 1999) p.247.

however, is not expressed by a simplistic absorption of ideas that “seem to fit”; much less in privileging certain (i.e. American) modes of thought because they are “more advanced”. Rather, it is articulated in the hard work of ‘the mining of the chasm’, the in-between-ness, that allows for the kind of interstitial analysis, an inhabiting of the gaps, that is of the utmost importance to Harris. The failure to adopt this hermeneutic stance risks a premature foreclosing of thought, which throws a veil over

the mystery of one’s peculiar dialogue with the past and [how] it proves or validates what C. G. Jung calls the ‘collective unconscious’ and its eruptions within processes of hard work, concentration and creativity, into the subconscious and conscious.<sup>22</sup>

Harris’ critical analysis of works such as *Intruder in the Dark* and phenomena such as the limbo dance<sup>23</sup> illustrate how the gaps between cultures may disclose hidden truths with a culture.

The limbo dance is understood as a gateway, a limbo state, between old and new world. Far from everything that follows the survival of the Middle Passage being a footnote to an imperial narrative – the limbo gateway leads to a re-birth, producing a resonance with some Christian traditions, which invoke a stage of pain and suffering between heaven and hell. Harris deploys a spatial metaphor of the missing limb to suggest that “the re-assembly of dismembered man or god – possess[ing] archetypal resonances that embrace Egyptian Osiris, the resurrected Christ, and the many-armed deity of India.”<sup>24</sup> Harris argues that Limbo, therefore, simultaneously commemorates the fracturing and dismembering of African tribes whilst seeking through music and exuberant dance to recapture the dancing limb of joy that has been amputated by slavery.

If we consider the phenomenon of the all-inclusive Caribbean holiday, one of the perennial sites for limbo today, it is salutary to reflect on whether the dancers or the tourists can access any of these “limbo meanings” and thereby enter through its gateway. Harris would insist that if dancer and tourist could inhabit the chasm new commonalities would be disclosed. The tourists might discover that their ‘escape’ holiday package is premised on the notion that only the dancers are free to go where they wish? The dancers ‘envy’ of the tourists situation, (possibly) institutionalised in the tradition of emigration, would need to accommodate the apparent un-freedom of the tourists they encounter. To address such questions involves according to Harris, entering the chasm, forcing self to

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<sup>22</sup> Wilson Harris “Profiles of Myth and the New World” in *Selected Essays of Wilson Harris: The Unfinished Genesis of Imagination* (ed) Andrew Bundy (London, Routledge, 1999) p.201.

<sup>23</sup> Wilson Harris “History, Myth and Fable in the Caribbean and the Guianas” in *Selected Essays of Wilson Harris: The Unfinished Genesis of Imagination* (ed) Andrew Bundy (London, Routledge, 1999) pp.157-158.

<sup>24</sup> Wilson Harris “History, Myth and Fable in the Caribbean and the Guianas” in *Selected Essays of Wilson Harris: The Unfinished Genesis of Imagination* (ed) Andrew Bundy (London, Routledge, 1999) pp.158.

be open to the profound commonality of the other, equally we must ask what must be forcibly maintained/denied “in the Caribbean” if chasm is to remain tightly closed, if the current self-perception of tourist and dancer is to remain intact?

### **Bernstein and two fertile metaphors**

Richard Bernstein<sup>25</sup> identifies two metaphors that he has found useful in reflecting upon the current “modern/postmodern situation or predicament. “Constellation”<sup>26</sup> is defined as a “juxtaposed rather than integrated cluster of changing elements that resist reduction to a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle”<sup>27</sup> Bernstein finds this metaphor attractive because he wishes to argue that the “modern/postmodern” situation both defies and resists any attempts of reduction to “a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle”.<sup>28</sup> It is no longer tenable to hold that ultimately all positions can be reconciled, as in the Hegelian master metaphor of *Aufhebung*, but Bernstein insists that it is still legitimate to pursue whatever degree of reconciliation remains possible. This is the promise of rationality. However, we undertake this endeavour fully aware that there will always be ‘unexpected contingent ruptures that disrupt the project of reconciliation’<sup>29</sup> because the awareness of this “new” constellation makes clear the depth of radical instabilities. Doing philosophy in this context is to learn to ‘think and act in the “in-between” interstices of forced reconciliation and radical dispersion’.<sup>30</sup>

We saw earlier that thinking “in the Caribbean” opens up gaps, reveals the fissures, where interstitial thinking can occur. This might suggest that doing philosophy “in the Caribbean” may involve embracing the role of being an “unexpected contingent rupture”. When a thinker “in the Caribbean” finds that specific philosophical modes of expression seem insufficient, inadequate or do violence to the Caribbean reality then there is the possibility of a rupture, the recognition of a genuine irreconcilable difference. The assertion of difference where its recognition is resisted reveals the sort of instability within the philosophical universe that this metaphor helps to disclose.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Richard J. Bernstein *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992).

<sup>26</sup> Bernstein indicates that the notion originates in the writings of Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin.

<sup>27</sup> Martin Jay *Adorno* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984) pp 14-15.

<sup>28</sup> Richard J. Bernstein *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992) p.8.

<sup>29</sup> Richard J. Bernstein *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992) p.8.

<sup>30</sup> Richard J. Bernstein *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992) p.9.

<sup>31</sup> So for example, the issue of gender definition (female and male) has largely been pursued separately in the West, and has tended to be understood initially as two distinct identifies, one (the male) re-aligning itself with the development of the other (the female). Patricia Mohammed suggests that because of the

The second metaphor helps to clarify further the status of “in the Caribbean”. This metaphor: that of force-field (Kraftfeld) is central to Adorno’s thought and is used to depict a “relational interplay of attractions and aversions that constitute the dynamic transmutational structure of a complex phenomenon.”<sup>32</sup> Bernstein suggests that the task of comprehension today demands doing justice to the fragile and unstable balance of such ‘attractions and aversions’. So, for example, Paget Henry’s *Caliban’s Reason* seems to suggest that the two main strands in Caribbean philosophy, historicist and poeticist, simultaneously complement and compete with each.

What must be the focus of philosophy “in the Caribbean” focus if we are to properly realize the dis-ruptive element of our work. Here again Bernstein is helpful. He draws our attention to the fact that increasingly ethical-political questions have been brought into the foreground of our modern/postmodern horizons.<sup>33</sup> Whereas the earlier works of Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault and Rorty seem to ignore such questions – increasingly they come to the fore in their later works. Bernstein suggests that this is not a coincidence; rather it reflects a gravitational pull, a dialectical consequence of the questions they have been pursuing. Similarly, there are ethical-political questions that force themselves upon philosophy “in the Caribbean”; questions are not easily compartmentalized under political philosophy or applied ethics.

If “in the Caribbean” reflects a globalized modern/postmodern consciousness then the Socratic question “how are we to live together?” will not be easily answered. However, this cannot justify not asking the question. Whilst at this juncture it may only be possible to give partial expression to concerns that arise “in the Caribbean” this does not invalidate or disqualify these concerns. In fact the lack of resources to fully articulate these concerns may be a constitutive element of “in the Caribbean”. Bernard Williams’s reflection on critique seems apposite here:

there are many styles of critique, and the most potent of them rely, as they always have, not so much on philosophical arguments as on showing up those attitudes as resting on myths, falsehoods about what people are like.<sup>34</sup>

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specific struggles both genders have had to undergo there is much more reciprocity and mutuality in the definition and re-definition of gender within the Caribbean. This raises the question then of whether we are witnessing two different processes one specific to the West the other to the Caribbean, or whether the Caribbean experience points to a (historical) misunderstanding of what has been undertaken in the West.

<sup>32</sup> Martin Jay *Adorno* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984) pp 14-15.

<sup>33</sup> See Jean-François Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition*.

<sup>34</sup> Bernard Williams *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1985) p.71, cited in Richard J Bernstein op cit p.318.

Therefore, when a voice “in the Caribbean” says haltingly ‘No we are not like that!’ a philosophical process is instigated that demands attention.

### **A Conclusion?**

We have seen that for different reasons philosophers have argued that in-between-ness is a significant. Whether it be the language of ‘gap and border’, or ‘chasm’ or ‘constellation and forcefield’ the need to identify and inhabit the spaces between particular outlooks recurs. The precise delineation of each gap will remain illusive, however it can disappear where a particular territory remains unremarked, a form of colonisation, such that no self-understanding is possible; the only understanding accessible to me is that of another. Consequently, the need to theorize and thematize the nature of ‘in the Caribbean’ becomes crucial. Perhaps an aspect of the situation ‘in the Caribbean’ that highlights the existence of and power of the “unthought thought” is the suggestion that ‘epistemic sovereignty’<sup>35</sup> is not as yet fully enjoyed in the Caribbean. If I understand the tradition correctly the lack of epistemic sovereignty was/is seen as a negative thing to be overcome. I am suggesting it may also be seen in another, critically more incisive light; where the binary “we enjoy epistemic sovereignty”, “we do not enjoy epistemic sovereignty” gives rise to a re-reading which unveils the emptiness of the notion of ‘epistemic sovereignty’, thereby challenging one of the central premises of the Western Philosophical Tradition.

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<sup>35</sup> As far as I know this notion ‘the lack of epistemic sovereignty’ was first explored amongst the members of the New World Group, it has been a recurring theme in the journalistic writings of Lloyd Best, one of the early members of that group, up until the present day. If I understand the tradition correctly it was/is seen as a negative thing to be overcome. I am suggesting it may be seen in another light where the binary “we enjoy epistemic sovereignty”, “we do not enjoy epistemic sovereignty” gives rise to a re-reading which unveils the emptiness of the notion of ‘epistemic sovereignty’ itself and thereby challenges one of the key ideas the many strands of the Western Philosophical Tradition is premised on.