

Haitian Epistemology

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By

Paul C. Mocombe

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*This work, as with everything I pen, is done in the name of the ancestors,
Iwa yo, Erzulie, my grandparents (Saul and Eugenia Mocombe), sons
(Isaiah and Daniel), and my wife (Tiara S. Mocombe)*

Paul C. Mocombe

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INTRODUCTION

Philosophically speaking, epistemology seeks to understand what we know (knowing that) and how we know it (knowing how). It is the theory of knowledge that not only investigates what we know and its limitations, but seeks to constitute methodologies upon which we can distinguish justified belief from opinion. Whereas early, non-Western, philosophical traditions suggested that there were a huge variety of epistemological methods, which suggested that there were several ways to obtain knowledge, the West sought the justification of one. Thus, the Western epistemological tradition was and has been built on the ever-increasing rationalization and critique of various proposed epistemological methods ranging from the school of Foundationalism, established by the Greeks and early Enlightenment scholars (Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, etc.), to Coherentism, Logical Positivism, and American pragmatism. The latter, America's contribution to epistemological methodology. Western science (its division into quantitative and qualitative methodology), ultimately, is presented as the culmination of not only the West's epistemological project, but the universal basis by which humanity comes to know what it knows and how it knows it. My present work on Haitian epistemology, which is the first volume of a four-volume set, in keeping with the scholarship of the Haitian intellectual, Joseph Anténor Firmin, does not fully undermine or seek to decenter the justified true belief claims constituted by the epistemological methodologies of science, but seeks to name and highlight the Haitian/African people's contributions, i.e., Haitian/Vilokan Idealism, phenomenology, materialism, antidialectics, reciprocal justice, and phenomenological structuralism, to that universal process: A hermeneutical phenomenology, which parallels Martin Heidegger's phenomenology; A materialism as expressed through its form of system and social integration, the Lakou system and the Vodou Ethic and the spirit of communism, respectively; antidialectics and dialectics representing the processes by which Haitians, historically, constitute their existence to establish balance and harmony between the phenomenal and Vilokanic (noumenal) worlds; reciprocal justice, the practical normative reason that would emerge out of Vodou metaphysics and Haitian/Vilokan Idealism; and phenomenological structuralism, the theory and method of their idealism and realism, for research upon which we can distinguish

justified belief from opinion in the social sciences as articulated by Paul C. Mocombe (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019).

Introduction

This work explores the nature and origins of Haitian epistemology, Haitian/Vilokan Idealism, the lens through which the majority of African/Haitians consciously and unconsciously come to know, interpret, and make sense of the known and unknown world around them, and its relation to Mocombe's theory and method of phenomenological structuralism. The work posits that Haitian epistemology is a transcendental idealist and realist philosophy/epistemology that developed out of the ever-increasing demystification, demythologization, and rationalization of the African (spiritual) worldview (Vilokan/Vodou) of the majority of the inhabitants of the island, and given the chance to institutionalize itself in the academy is on par or compatible with the scientific project of the West. Hence, Haitian epistemology, Haitian/Vilokan Idealism (Vilokan/Vodou metaphysics), is not completely Afrocentric, i.e., a standpoint theory that posits that African people know that and how differently from their white counterparts and must seek to organize their science around their intellectual standpoint as African people. Instead, the understanding here is that Haitian epistemology emerges out of the scientific (universal) attempt of African people to know and make sense of the world via their Vilokan/Vodou metaphysics; hence its particularism. But it is also a universal project that is compatible and shares certain elements with the scientism of the West. Thus, Haitian Epistemology is a scientific paradigm, which evolved, liked the scientific project of the West, which emerged out of its religiosity, as a result of the demystification, demythologization, and ever-increasing rationalization and institutionalization (enchantment) of the African worldview which the Africans of Haiti were able to institutionalize through Vodou, proverbs, herbal medicine, husbandry, dance, rituals, etc. This demystification, demythologization, rationalization, and institutionalization project share similar epistemological and methodological processes as the Western scientific project and is not in its totality distinct from it. Mocombe simply highlights Haiti's contribution to the process. In the end, the book names, defines, and develops the concept of Haitian epistemology, as a form of transcendental idealism and realism, Haitian/Vilokan Idealism, which ought to serve as the starting point of departure for any academic work and project dealing with Haiti, its Revolution, culture, people, the constitution of the Haitian nation-state, and its science, which would give rise to a

theory and method, what Paul C. Mocombe calls phenomenological structuralism, for distinguishing justified belief from opinion in the natural and social sciences.

Background of the Problem: Haitian Identity

Traditional interpretations of the Haitian Revolution, and subsequent to that the constitution of Haitian identity, attempt to understand them, like the constitution of black diasporic and American practical consciousnesses, within the dialectical logic of Hegel's master/slave dialectic (Genovese, 1979; James, 1986; Fick, 1990; Trouillot, 1995; Nicholls, 1979; Du Bois, 2004, 2012; Buck-Morss, 2009; Ramsey, 2014; Mocombe, 2016, 2017, 2018). Concluding that the Haitian Revolution represents a struggle by the enslaved Africans of the island who internalized the liberal norms, values, and rules of their former French masters, for equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution within and using the metaphysical discourse of their former white slavemasters to convict them for not identifying with their norms, rules, and values as recursively (re) organized and reproduced by blacks. Haitian identity/practical consciousness, as such, was and is a simulacrum, of European (French) practical consciousness and identity, which is universalized and presented as the nature of reality as such. This position, predominantly held by white Westerners, is usually juxtaposed against the postmodern, post-structural, and postcolonial approaches of Haitian and other black bourgeois intellectual elites (i.e., Aimé Césaire), which highlight the hybridity, ambivalence, *noirisme*, *négritude*, *syncretism*, and *créolité* of the Revolution and Haitian consciousness (Genovese, 1979; Fick, 1990; Desmangles, 1992; Trouillot, 1995; Bellegarde-Smith and Michel, 2006).

Both interpretations, contrary to the position of Haitian intellectuals such as Jacques Roumain (1940) and Jean-Price Mars (1928), who advised the Haitian intelligentsia class to look to the provinces and the peasant classes to constitute Haitian culture, identity, and nation-state, are problematic in that they are ethnocentric and racist. They both overlook the initial African (indigenous) practical consciousness of the majority of the Africans on the island for either the practical consciousness or discourse and discursive practices of the mulatto and petit-bourgeois black elites, *Affranchis*, looking (because of their interpellation and embourgeoisement) to Europe, Canada, and America for equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution, or for their (*Affranchis*) logic of postmodern, post-structural, and postcolonial theories to undermine that African presence in favor of notions of hybridity, *créolité*, *négritude*,

syncretism, intersectionality, double consciousness, *noirisme*, etc., which in many regards repackage racist understandings of identity constitution.

For me, building on the work of Paul C. Mocombe (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019), two forms of system and social integration would structure the material resource framework of Haiti after independence, the Vodou Ethic and the spirit of communism on the one hand, and the Catholic/Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism on the other. The African majority would be interpellated and subjectified by the enchantment of the world around the former; and their children, young Africans, creole, and free blacks raised or born on the island, although interpellated and subjectified in the former world-view in childhood, many of them would, relationally, marginalize and discriminate against it for the enchantment of the world around the Catholic/Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism of the whites and mulattoes. It is out of the worldview/metaphysics of the former form of system and social integration (the Vodou Ethic and the spirit of communism) a distinct Haitian epistemological position can be said to have emerged and developed as the latter (the Catholic/Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism) simply seeks to replicate the positivists ideas, concepts, and ideals of the West as prescribed by the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other imperial institutions in their approaches. This is not to say that the metaphysics of Vodou did and does not produce science as an epistemological means by which humans come to know and understand the world around them as it has been institutionalized in the West. On the contrary, although the metaphysics of Vodou is just as rational and positivist as the scientism of the West as highlighted by the development of Haitian herbal medicine; in overlooking its demystification, demythologization, and ever-increasing rationalization by its power elites, i.e., priests, priestesses, elders, such as Max Beauvoir, for example, for the adoption of the technical rational science produced in the West to buttress bourgeois capitalist society, we overlook distinct concepts, i.e., hermeneutical phenomenology, Lakouism, antidialectics, reciprocal justice, phenomenological structuralism, etc., which are unique to its evolution and institutionalization. Hence the need for this exercise to outline the epistemological basis of Haitian/African thought as revealed by their Vodou concepts, ideals, and practices.

Haitian Metaphysics: Vodou

Ostensibly, against the positivism of the West and the Haitian bourgeoisie, I posit here that an authentic (national) Haitian epistemology can be deduced from or emerges out of the demystification,

demythologization, and ever-increasing rationalization and institutionalization (enchantment) of the physical world around the spiritual belief system, Vilokan/Vodou, of the African people of Haiti, which parallels the West in certain regards and contradicts it in others. Haitian science and epistemology, in other words, are connected to Haitian/African metaphysics, Vodou.

The Haitian Epistemological position that would emerge out of the metaphysical worldview, Vodou, of the African people of Haiti and their form of system and social integration is a strong form of Kantian transcendental idealism and realism, which would be institutionalized throughout the provinces and mountains of the island by its power elites, i.e., priests, priestesses, herbal doctors, sorcerers, and elders (Desmangles, 1992; Mocombe, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019).

Normally referred to as “animism,” “fetishism,” “paganism,” “heathenism,” and “black magic” in the Western academic literature, Vodou (spelled Vodun, Voodoo, Vodou, Vaudou, or Vodoun) is the oldest monotheistic religion in the world. Commonly interpreted as “Spirits” or “introspection into the unknown,” Vodou is the science and structuring structure of the Fon people of Dahomey and other tribes of the continent who would arrive on the island of Ayiti as named by the Taino natives (Métraux, 1958; Deren, 1972; Rigaud, 1985; Desmangles, 1992; Bellegarde-Smith and Michel, 2006). Unlike German Idealism whose intellectual development from Kant to Schopenhauer, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger, and the Frankfurt school produced the dialectic, Marxist materialism, Nietzschean antidialectics, phenomenology, and deontological ethics; Vodou metaphysics gives rise to its epistemology, Haitian/Vilokan Idealism, which produces a hermeneutical phenomenology, materialism, and an antidialectical process to history enframed by a reciprocal justice as its normative ethics. This normative ethic of reciprocal justice is constantly being invoked by individual social actors to dialectically reconcile the noumenal (sacred—ideational/objective) and phenomenal (profane—material) subjective world in order to maintain balance and harmony between the two so that the human actor can live freely and happy with all of being without distinctions or masters. As such, Haitian epistemology as a form of transcendental realism and idealism is phenomenological, in the Heideggerian sense (i.e., hermeneutical), material in the Marxist sense, and antidialectical. It refutes Hegel’s claims for the importance of historical formations and other people to the development of self-consciousness. Instead, Haitian/Vilokan idealism emphasizes the things in the consciousness (lwa or concepts, ideas, ideals) of the individual as they

stem from the noumenal/Vilokanic world, and get bastardized (via the act of interpretation) according to their level of learning, development, capacity for knowledge, methods, and modality, i.e., the way they know more profoundly—kinesthetically, visually, etc., as they antidialectically seek to reproduce them in the phenomenal world as their practical consciousness against other interpretive formations of these same concepts in the material world by other people.

In other words, within the Haitian metaphysical worldview, Vilokan/Vodou, the world is a unitary (energy) material world created out of Bondye. The world is a creation of a good God, Bondye Bon, which created the world and humanity out of itself composed of two intersecting spheres or parallel universes or worlds, the profane (the phenomenal world) and sacred (noumenal/Vilokanic, mirrored world of the profane). Embedded in that pantheistic material world are concepts, *lwa yo* in Haitian metaphysics, from the parallel mirrored (Vilokanic) world, that humanity can ascertain via experience and the structure of its being, form of understanding and sensibility (dreams, reason and rationality, extrasensory perceptions), to help make sense of their experience and live in the world, which is Bondye, and therefore sacred, as they seek perfection and reunification (reintegration) with God, the energy force/source, after sixteen reincarnated life-cycles.

That is to say, it, Bondye, provided humanity with objects, concepts, ideas, ideals, and practices, i.e., *lwa* of Vodou, proverbs, rituals, dance, geometry, knowledge of herbal medicine, trades, and skills, by which they ought to know, interpret, and make sense of the external (phenomenal profane) world and live in it comfortably (See Table 1). These transcendently real objects, concepts, ideas, ideals, and practices as they are constituted in the world of forms or Vilokan can either be known through dreams, divinations, experience or rationality, and becomes the structure (once reified and institutionalized as proverbs, husbandry, dance, rituals, institutions, etc.) through which humanity comes to know, hold beliefs and truth-claims in the phenomenal world. So Bondye, a powerful energy force that always existed created the world and humanity out of itself using four hundred and one transcendently real concepts (God and four-hundred *lwa*), ideas, and ideals (geometric principles, mathematics, etc.). Humanity and the world around it is an aggregation of Bondye's material energy, the energy of God, which constitutes its existence. In humanity this existence is composed of three distinct aggregation of energy (*ti bon anj*; *gwo bon anj*; *ko*, the body), all of which are material stuff, which constitute our nanm (souls) where personality, truth-claims, knowledge, and beliefs are deposited from the Vilokanic world, via

dreams, revelations, extrasensory perceptions, divinations, experience, reason, the energy source of a God as manifested via a lwa, and can be examined and explored as the synthetic *a priori* form of the understanding of the human agent.

For humanity to constitute its existence and be in the world according to the will of God or Bondye, in other words, transcendently real concepts stemming from God's will (the mirrored world of the profane, Vilokan) are embedded in the material and Vilokanic worlds, which are God, and can be ascertain and embodied by humanity via their constituted being as a material being with extrasensory perceptions, reason and rationality, and or through experience. As these transcendently real concepts are ascertain, they are constituted and institutionalized, and passed on through humanity via priests and early ancestors who institutionalized (reify)/ institutionalize them in the natural world via religious ceremonies, dance, rituals, herbal medicine, trades, concepts, and proverbs. These trades, ideals, proverbs, and or concepts are truisms, mechanisms to ascertain and constitute knowledge, which although they are deduced from the constituted make-up (i.e., consciousness) of the human being, in Haitian metaphysics they are attributed to God and the ancestors who institutionalized (reified) them in order to be applied in the material world so that their descendants can live freely in the world, satisfy their needs, be happy, and achieve perfection in order to reunite with God after their sixteen life cycles (Beauvoir, 2006).

Haitian Epistemology: Kantian and Haitian/Vilokan Transcendental Idealism

Based on this metaphysical reading of Vodou, it is clear that Haitian epistemology, Haitian/Vilokan idealism, is a strong form of realism and Kantian transcendental idealism. Kantian transcendental idealism “attempts to combine empirical realism, preserving the ordinary independence and reality of objects of the world, with transcendental idealism, which allows that in some sense the objects have their ordinary properties (their causal powers, and their spatial and temporal position) only because our minds are so structured that these are the categories we impose upon the manifold of experience” (Blackburn, 2008, pg. 356). Haitian epistemological transcendental idealism, Haitian Idealism or Vilokan Idealism, is a form of transcendental idealism in the Kantian sense in that it attempts to synthesize empiricism and idealism (rationalism) via synthetic *a priori* concepts/ideals the Haitians believe can be applied not only to the phenomenal but also the noumenal (Vilokanic) world in order

to ascertain the latter's transcendentally real absolute knowledges they call, *lwa*, gods/goddesses (401 concepts, ideas, and ideals represented as gods/goddesses), of Vilokan/Vodou. So like Kant, Haitian epistemological transcendental idealism and realism, holds on to analytic truths, truths of reasons or definitions, as outlined in their proverbs (*pwoveb*); a posteriori truth, truths of experience or experiments, also embedded in their proverbs, geometry (*veves*), rituals, magic, sorcery, and herbal medicine; and synthetic *a priori* concepts (categories in Kantian epistemology supplemented with trances, dream-states, extrasensory perceptions), truths stemming from the form of the understanding and sensibility of the mind and apparatuses of experience embedded not only in their proverbs and Vodou rituals, beliefs, and magic, but also their understanding of trances, dream-states, and extrasensory perceptions as categories of the mind applicable to the noumenal or Vilokanic realm where transcendental real concepts, *lwa yo*, exist which they must ascertain in order to live life happily in the phenomenal world by recursively (re) organizing and reproducing these concepts as their praxis or practical consciousness. The latter (trances, dream-states, extrasensory perceptions) they believe, in other words, can be applied to the noumenal or Vilokanic world in order to know gods/goddesses, *lwa yo*, which are immutable/absolute concepts, ideas, and ideals God has created and imposed upon in the material world, from the mirrored world of the earth (Vilokan), which the people, who embody these concepts, ideas, and ideals, should utilize to recursively reorganize and reproduce their being-in-and-as-the-world in order to achieve perfection over sixteen life cycles (Desmangles, 1992; Beauvoir, 2006; Mocombe, 2016, 2017, 2018). Hence, unlike Kantian transcendental idealism, which removes God out of the equation via the categories, which imposes the order we see in the phenomenal world, Haitian epistemological transcendental idealism and realism, Haitian/Vilokan Idealism, holds on to the concept of God, supernatural, and the paranormal to continue to make sense of the plural tensions between the natural (material) world, i.e., the world of phenomenon, and the world as such, ideational, noumena, i.e., the supernatural and paranormal worlds, transcendental real world, which is knowable as truth-claims, knowledge, and beliefs, through dreams, divinations, revelations, experience, reason and rationality, and the synthetic *a priori*, for pure (development of science, i.e., herbal medicine, etc.) and practical reason (i.e., morals and values). Thus Haitian/Vilokan Idealism, unlike Kantian Transcendental Idealism, implies that the objects, concepts, ideals, ideas, etc., of the (ideational) noumenal world, Vilokan, are transcendentally real and the form of sensibilities and understandings, which include dream states,

trances, and extrasensory perceptions are other categories of the mind, which can be applied beyond the phenomenal world, where the objects are really subjective ideas, in order to ascertain the nature of the absolute concepts of the Vilokanic/noumenal world in order to achieve balance and harmony with it in the phenomenal.

Within this pantheistic (Spinozian) conception of the multiverse and material world, knowledge, truth-claims, and beliefs arise from transcendently real ideational concepts (*lwa yo*) of Bondye/God as embedded in the earth's mirrored world (Vilokan) and gets deposited in our *nanm* (souls) intuitively, in dreams, revelations, divinations, extrasensory perceptions, reason, rituals, and or experiences which in turn constitutes and structures the form of the understanding of our minds and bodies (senses) so that we can experience the material world according to our developmental track over sixteen reincarnated life cycles (Beauvoir, 2006; Mocombe, 2016, 2017, 2018). Human beings recursively (re) organize and reproduce these (Platonic) transcendently real ideational concepts as their practical consciousness in the phenomenal material world not always in its absolute form as defined noumenally (the sacred mirrored world of Vilokan), but according to their level of learning, development, capacity for knowledge, methods, and modality, i.e., the way they know more profoundly—kinesthetically, visually, etc. See *Figure 1*.

As defined, Haitian epistemology is an epistemological transcendental idealism and realism, Haitian Idealism or Vilokan Idealism, that posits that both phenomena (the profane world) and noumena (its mirror image where wisdom, ideals, and ancestors reside) are knowable through experience and the form of human sensibility and understanding (the categories of Kantian epistemology supplemented with, dreams, divinations, extrasensory perceptions, and trance states), which stems from the energy force of a God, and used to recursively organize and reproduce their being-in-and-as-the-world. So on top of the twelve Kantian schematized categories of the understanding, divided into four groups of three (1. The axioms of intuition, i.e., unity, plurality, and totality; 2. The anticipations of perception, i.e., reality, limitation, and negation; 3. The postulates of empirical thought, i.e., necessary, actual, and possible; 4. The analogies, i.e., substance, cause, and reciprocity), necessary for experience by making objective space and time possible, Vilokanic/Haitian idealism adds dream states, trances, and extrasensory perceptions as a fifth group of three to make known the concepts, *lwa*, of the Vilokanic world knowable so that human actors can achieve balance between the phenomenal world and the former (Vilokanic/noumenal).

Hence for Kant experience requires both the senses, the *a priori* forms of sensibility, i.e., space and time, and the understanding, i.e. the twelve categories. A unified consciousness (not a self or the Cartesian “I”), which is a structural feature of experience necessary to provide the unity to our experience, what Kant calls, “the transcendental unity of apperception,” rule-governed and connected by the categories, experiences real objects that we perceive and exist independently of our perception of them. Thus, the spatio-temporal objects are necessarily relative to and subject to the *a priori* forms of experience, i.e., forms of sensibility and the understanding. In this sense, Kant does away with the noumenal world of absolutes, which is unknowable as the independent objects are phenomenal, relative to the *a priori* forms of experience. Unlike Kant, however, Haitian/Vilokan Idealism posits that the *nanm*, which provides unity to our experiences is a material thing, a Cartesian I composed of three distinct entities (sometimes more as Haitian metaphysics suggests that a fourth entity, *lwa met tet*, may constitute the *nanm* of serviteurs in order to guide them in their decision-making) that are also tied to the natural world and can be manipulated in life as well as death. On top of its *a priori* forms of sensibility and Kantian categories are dream-states, trances, and extrasensory perceptions, which allows the *nanm* to have access to the world of Vilokan/noumenal world where we can perceive the things that are phenomenal, relative to our *a priori* forms of experience, as they are in-themselves in order to achieve balance between the world as it appears to us and how it ought to be so that we can live abundantly.

Hence, Haitian epistemological transcendental idealism/realism (Haitian Idealism, Vilokanism, Vodouism, or Vilokan Idealism) is not only natural, but supernatural and paranormal to the extent that it supplements the synthetic *a priori* concepts Kant attributes to the categories of the mind with divinations, revelations, dream states, and extrasensory perceptions in order to ascertain the absolute (transcendentally real) concepts, ideals, ideas, etc., (*lwa*) of God as embedded in the noumenal (Vilokanic) world. (See Figure 1). Moreover, it posits that these absolute *lwa yo*, transcendentally real concepts, ideas, ideals, etc., are part of the noumenal world (sacred world of Vilokan), which is not a plural world as plurality belongs to the world of phenomenon, and can eventually be known by extrasensory perceptions, human reason, understanding, and experience. However, in the human sphere the world of phenomenon and its plurality is a result of the emergence of the different levels of development (reason, experience, capacity, and modality) of the human subjects (not all humans develop their form of sensibilities and understanding at the same rate or in the

same life cycle). Albeit humanity is reincarnated until they have ascertained all of the true concepts of the unitary world, which can be done so through experience and a priori, and will seize to exist (will seize to experience reincarnation) once they do so.

Haitian/Vilokan Idealism as such indicates a condition of transcendently real absolutes on the one hand as it pertains to the Vilokanic or noumenal world; and relativity in our notions of objects and reality on the other as it pertains to the transcendently ideal phenomenal (profane) world. In terms of the latter, the phenomenal world, in other words, is simply the world of plurality constituted by imperfect beings, anti-dialectically (constantly fighting against the praxis of others for their own understanding and meaning of Truth as revealed in and by the noumenal/Vilokanic world), living through their aggregated material bodies and imperfections. This is why, epistemologically speaking, the phenomenal world in Haiti, resembles an epistemological anarchic (libertarian) world where everyone exists for their own liberty and existence according to their own developmental track, capacities, modalities, methods, and belief systems governed by an eye for an eye normative worldview, which prevents others from encroaching on an individual's (regardless of their level of development) right to exist. Out of this phenomenal world of plurality enframed by the noumenal, the concepts of liberty and equality would arise, drive the Haitian Revolution, and constitute Haitian identity and society via the lakou system and the Vodou Ethic and the spirit of communism.

In other words, the phenomenal (profane) world is pluralistic given the interpretive capacities of individual human actors to phenomenologically know and recursively reorganize and reproduce the concepts stemming from the noumenal (sacred) world, Vilokan, as their practical consciousness against the interpretive practical consciousnesses of the others they exist with. However, it is also noumenal given that the concepts are real and have one True meaning by which they ought to be recursively (re) organized and reproduced, which can truly be known by not only scientists and their methods, but also priests, priestesses, herbal doctors, elders, sorcerers, psychics, etc., and their methods. Hence, in Haitian epistemology, methodology is not only limited to reason/rationality and empiricism as found in their science of herbal medicine, but the supernatural as found in their metaphysics and religious practices. For the categories of dream states, trances, and extrasensory perceptions privileges spiritual leaders, elders, savants, etc., just as much as the scientists as Truth-knowers in order to provide understanding to the phenomenal world as it relates to the noumenal. The problem in the

Haitian context, unlike the West, is that its metaphysics is overly developed at the expense of its science. Thus, the plethora of soothsayers who dominate the Haitian context or social space. As I see it, there is a need to develop its metaphysics via the science of physics to be on par with its science of herbal medicine and the other sciences of the West. In order to do so, the underlining tenets of Haitian epistemology must be outlined, developed, and instituted in the academy like the West without undergoing the West's compartmentalization between science and religion. This work is the first step in that process.

Conclusion

In sum, it is the unitary and universal knowledge of the noumenal world as constituted in the metaphysics of Vilokan/Vodou, which gave rise to the science of the African Haitians of Haiti and allows for the creation of the phenomenal world of plurality wherein everyone is entitled to their own interpretative ethos and methods given their level of learning, development, capacity, methods, and modality, which would, antidialectically, give rise to the Haitian concepts of liberty and equality that would enframe the Haitian Revolution and subsequently Haitian culture via the Vodou Ethic and the spirit of communism and the Lakou system. The latter concepts as defined by the Africans who would commence the Haitian Revolution at Bois Caiman calls (As practice in the noumenal world of Vilokan) for total liberty and equality for all, without distinctions and or masters, so that they can live free, happy, and equal to all in the society. God, and the human being as god embodied, is the only master of (their) being's existence. Hence in the phenomenal world everyone is entitled to recursively (re) organize and reproduce their existence without encroachment from another. Which means, in the phenomenal world, the human actor is always antidialectically fighting against imposition from another, including the nation-state, which is viewed as with everything in the phenomenal world as having subjective interests, within an enframing normative ethic of reciprocal justice. Haiti's developmental problem is twofold: first, the epistemological anarchic phenomenal world as constituted via the lakou system has been its modus operandi since the revolution amidst the attempt to constitute the world around, not the transcendently real (ideational) noumenal world, i.e., the science of the latter, but the technical rationality of bourgeois science and work, which (treating humans as means to an end) alienates the human being from the material holism of the universe, fosters inequality, servitude, disharmony, and imbalance (the legacies of slavery

and colonialism recursively organized and reproduced by the mulatto elites and petit-bourgeois blacks seeking equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution with their former white masters); second, instead of following the ever-increasing rationalization and disenchantment of the world as the West did thereby making science the dominant method of society, Haitians, in keeping with the material holism of Vodou metaphysics, privilege all methods without distinctions. Hence an astrologist, psychic, tarot card reader, etc., has the same privileges as the scientist, which seeks to ascertain the truth of the noumenal world. The same noumenal world of Vodou out of which, *Antidialectics* and *reciprocal justice* would come to govern the historicity and ethical worldview of the human social actors, which led to the Haitian Revolution and the call for total freedom and equality by its revolutionary leaders. As I see it, what needs to happen is that institutions grounded in the practical reason (reciprocal justice and anti-dialectics) and absolute ideals of the (sacred) noumenal (Vilokanic) world ought to be deduced and established in order to enframe and direct the phenomenal world of plurality towards the noumenal Truism embedded in Vodou concepts, ideas, ideals, the proverbs, husbandry, etc., via the theory and methodology of Haitian/Vilokan idealism, i.e., what Paul C. Mocombe calls, phenomenological structuralism. This should be the job of academics (not everyone as found in the current Haitian context) who must seek to codify these concepts, ideas, ideals, and modalities through understanding the form of the understanding and sensibility of the human being (the Kantian categories coupled with extrasensory perceptions); the institutionalization of proverbs as the legal and moral law of the land; and trade and medical schools to explore all of the material world for all of beings well-being via the linguistic system of Kreyol. In other words, institutions should be put in place along the lines of concepts, ideas, ideals, and practices of the noumenal world in order to facilitate the manifold of experience aiming for eternal perfection and reunification with the noumena as highlighted by the Haitian worldview of Vilokan/Vodou, while (Antidialectically) fighting against inequality and subjugation. This work is the first attempt at developing the tenets of Haitian epistemology, i.e., Haitian/Vilokan Idealism, its philosophical principles, i.e., antidialectics, hermeneutical phenomenology, methodology, i.e., phenomenological structuralism, and practical reason, i.e., reciprocal justice, in order to commence the aforementioned projects.

To begin this analysis, chapter one historically constructs the constitution of Haitian identity. Suggesting that the constitution of Haitian practical consciousness/identity must be understood predominantly as the

struggle between two distinct forms of system and social integration, what Paul C. Mocombe (2016, 2017, 2018) calls the Vodou Ethic and the spirit of communism of the African masses against the Catholic/Protestant Ethic and capitalist racial-class divisions, social relations of production, and ideological apparatuses of the two bourgeoisies of the Affranchis class as constituted by the global capitalist world-system under American hegemony. Be that as it may, chapter two posits that it is amongst the metaphysics of the social actors of the former social class, agents of the Vodou Ethic, that an authentic Haitian epistemological school, Haitian/Vilokan Idealism, can be deduced. Hence chapter three outlines the Vodou metaphysical outlook of the aforementioned social class language game. Chapter four constructs the metaphysic's epistemological roots and traditions as representing a form of transcendental idealism and realism, which posits that the noumenal world is transcendently real and its objects are absolute and can be deduced from other transcendently ideal categories such as divinations, revelations, dream states, and extrasensory perceptions. Out of this idealist and realist epistemological worldview I argue that Haitian/Vilokan Idealism is an antihumanist phenomenology that produces four philosophies: A hermeneutical phenomenology, materialism, antidialectics, and a normative ethic of reciprocal justice. Chapters five and six outlines the phenomenology and materialism (the Vodou Ethic and the spirit of communism via the Lakou system) of Haitian/Vilokan idealism, respectively. Chapter seven highlights the practical reason and approach, antidialectics, to practical life using the Haitian Revolution as an example to demonstrate the normative ethic and practical consciousness of Haitian/Vilokan Idealism. The chapter concludes that a feminist movement as occurred in the Western world never developed out of Haitian/Vilokan Idealism given its libertarian call for total liberty and equality for all without distinctions. Chapter eight outlines the relationship between Haitian/Vilokan Idealism and Aesthetics, which I argue is connected to the noumenal world of Vilokan and as such is tied to morality and spirituality. Chapter nine concludes the work by deducing the theory and methodology, phenomenological structuralism, which Paul C. Mocombe deduces out of the philosophies of Haitian/Vilokan Idealism and tie it to the (social) scientific enterprise of the West in the attempt to resolve the structure/agency problematic of the social sciences.

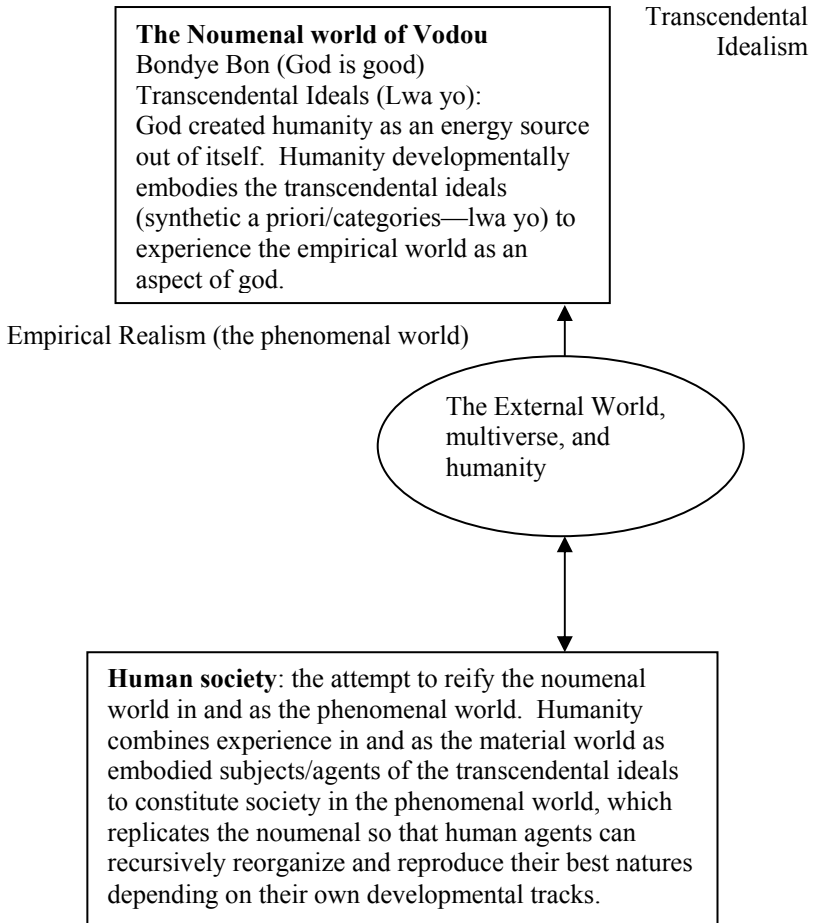


Figure 1. *Haitian Epistemological Transcendental Idealism.*

Table 1. *Major Lwa yo in Haitian Vodou and their concepts*

Lwa (Loas)	Concept
1. Legba	Key to the spiritual world – Communication
2. Dambalah Wedo (Snake): The father of all Loas. The sun.	Animus – Masculinity- Paternal love and Medicine
3. Azaka Mede	Agriculture – Hard working
4. Kouzen Zaka (Brother of Azaka)(Peasant)	Agriculture – Peasant life –
5. Ayida Wèdo (femal counterpart of Dambalah): The moon.	Rainbow – Anima – Femininity
6. Erzilie Dantò	Maternal love– mistrust – Androgyny - lesbianism
7. Erzili Freda Dahome (rival of Dantor)	Love - Polygamy - Ideal dreams- Hope and aspiration
8. Ogou Feray	Political Warrior
9. Ogou Badagri	Scholar lwa. Prophecy.
10. Baron	Death
11. Gede (Offsprings of Baron Samdi and Grande Brigitte)	Spirits of the ancestors – The crossing from life to death.
12. Kalfou (Gede Mercure, the bad side of Legba)	Bad and good principle. Misfortune – Destruction – Injustice
13. Simbi	Water and cure for supernatural illness
14. Marassa (Twins)	Fertility – Androgyny- Jealousy – Capricious- Powerful healers.

CHAPTER I

THE CONSTITUTION OF HAITIAN IDENTITIES

When the Haitian Revolution commences in 1791, there are three distinct groups vying for control of the island of Saint-Domingue, the whites (*blancs*); free people of color and mulattoes (*Affranchis*); and the enslaved and escaped (maroon) Africans of the island. The latter, over sixty-seven percent of the population, were not a structurally differentiated other (Du Bois, 2004, 2012). They had their own practical consciousness, what Paul C. Mocombe (2016, 2017, 2018) calls the “Vodou Ethic and the spirit of communism,” by which they went about recursively (re)organizing and reproducing the material resource framework via the lakou system (Lakouism). The former two, free blacks and *gens de couleur* (*Affranchis*), were interpellated, embourgeoisied, and differentiated by the language, communicative discourse, mode of production, ideology, and ideological apparatuses of the West and shared the same European practical consciousness, the Catholic/Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism social class language game, as the whites. The latter social class language game stood against the Vodou Ethic and the spirit of communism social class language game of the majority of the Africans who were interpellated and ounganified/manboified by the language, communicative discourse, mode of production, ideology, and ideological apparatuses of *oungan yo* (*priests*), *manbo yo* (*priestesses*), *gangan yo* (*sorcerers*), and *granmoun yo* (*elders*), the power elites of Vodou (James, 1986; Fick, 1990; Du Bois, 2004, 2012; Ramsey, 2014; Mocombe, 2016, 2017, 2018).¹

The whites, were divided between large plantation owners, *grand blanc*, and *petit-blancs*, i.e., managers, slave drivers, artisans, merchants, and teachers. The former, *grand blanc*, were independent-minded, and like the American colonists wanted political and economic independence from their mother-country, France, where their rights and economic interests were not represented in the National Assembly. The *petit-blancs* were more racist and feared the alliance between the larger landowners and the *Affranchis*. The *Affranchis* were free people of color and mulatto, *gens de*

couleur, property and slave owners on the island who shared the religion, culture, language, and ideology of their white counterparts and wanted then Saint-Domingue to remain a French colony. Although internal antagonism based on race (color) and class existed between the free (creole) blacks and *gens de couleur*, I group them together under the nomenclature, *Affranchis*, to highlight the fact that their interpellation and embourgeoisement via the ideological apparatuses of the West rendered their practical consciousnesses identical even though there were racial/color/class (based on phenotype, not ideology) tensions between them (racial/color/class tensions, which still plaques Haiti today). Unlike the majority of white large plantation owners, however, the *Affranchis*, like Vincent Ogé, André Rigaud, Alexandre Pétion, Pierre Pinchinat, Toussaint Louverture, for examples, did not want independence from France. In the case of the mulattoes, who after independence would come to be referred to as the children of Alexandre Pétion, the first (mulatto) president of the Haitian Republic, they simply wanted their social, political, and economic rights recognized by France within the colony, not an independent nation-state or the end to slavery. In regards, to the children of Dessalines/Toussaint, creole slave drivers and free blacks, they sought equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution vis-à-vis the whites and mulattoes. The enslaved and escaped Africans, metaphorically the children of Sans Souci (the Congolese-born revolutionary leader of the Revolution), of the island were divided between field slaves, domestic slaves, and maroons. The domestic slaves, like their African-American counterparts, “house slaves,” more so identified with their slavemasters. However, for the most part, the field slaves and maroons, because of their relative isolation from whites, domestic slaves, *gens de couleur*, and free blacks, were interpellated and ounganified/manboified by the modes of production, language, ideology, ideological apparatuses, and communicative discourse of the Vodou Ethic and the spirit of communism, and many sought to reproduce their African ways of life in a national position of their own. In the end, the Revolution would come down to a struggle between the *Affranchis* and the enslaved and maroon Africans of the island, the latter of whom commenced the Haitian Revolution on August 14th, 1791 at Bois Caiman and other congresses (Genovesi, 1979; James, 1986; Fick, 1990; Du Bois, 2004, 2012; Mocombe, 2016).

Following the Revolution, between 1804 and 1806, the purposive-rationality of the enslaved and maroon Africans would become a part of the *modus operandi* of the Haitian nation-state until October 17, 1806 when Jean-Jacques Dessalines was assassinated by Alexandre Pétion and