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Philosophy of Modernity and Development in Jamaica

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Novella Z. Keith and Nelson W. Keith,
"Philosophy of Modernity and Development in Jamaica"
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol12/iss2/6>

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Abstract: In their article "Philosophy of Modernity and Development in Jamaica" Novella Z. Keith and Nelson W. Keith postulate that a combined philosophico-practical inquiry is necessary to reduce the systemic asymmetries found in the North-South divide and to promote global interdependence. Proceeding from a deconstruction of European-inflected modernity, Keith and Keith sketch an alternative epistemology of uncertainty and unknowability and illustrate aspects of these epistemologies in theories and practices of modernization and its counter movements, dependency, and underdevelopment while also using them to inquire into the practices of an NGO they created to bridge global divides as experienced in Jamaica. In the process, the poverty of a modernist focus on material wants and exclusive attention to distributive aspects of social justice is revealed. Keith and Keith postulate that moral psychology must be rearticulated within the human dialectic enabling mutual interdependence.

Novella Z. KEITH and Nelson W. KEITH

Philosophy of Modernity and Development in Jamaica

The objective of our study is to deconstruct Western modernity epistemologically in order to provide philosophical foundations for non-oppressive development-oriented work in postcolonial societies. Along with others in the field of postcolonial studies (see, e.g., Scott; Keith and Keith; Keith), we maintain that much international development work contains unhealthy doses of domination through adherence to largely unexamined tenets embedded in the foundations of Western modernity. The alternative we envision connects an epistemology of uncertainty with an evolving practice of development characterized by dialogue, interdependence, and the spirit of partnership. In the emerging epistemological regime contesting Western modernity, guided by the ethical principles of globalism and cosmopolitanism, complementarity and intersubjectivity become appropriate replacements for singular views of progress and univocal grand theoretical syntheses. Globalism is dialogical and multivocal, asserting difference and multiplicity over singular worldviews. Cosmopolitanism, in turn, avoids an ethic that is built on universally valid abstract principles, advocating instead an engagement with global social justice that gives special meanings to human compassion. According to Anthony Kwame Appiah, "a genuinely cosmopolitan response [to global suffering] … begins with caring to try to understand why that [particular] child is dying. Cosmopolitanism is about intelligence and curiosity as well as engagement" (168). In his work in Papua-New Guinea, Robert Foster refashions the concept of modernity via "bargains" and concludes that the emergent interdependence must be routed through contingent social processes and assume unpredictable outcomes. Fixed notions, like certainty and predictability, must give way to shared interpretations. In our own development work in Jamaica, where we have established a non-governmental organization (NGO) promoting educational tourism — (Edu-Tourism <http://www.edu-tourism.org/>) we are experimenting with ways to enact interdependence as socially just relations centering around the elements of recognition (respect, esteem, dignity, and love) that form the basis of our humanity (e.g. see Honneth). Without eschewing one for the other, we see a focus on recognition as a corrective to the priority modernity places on development as the distribution of material goods. Recognition acknowledges the unavoidably intersubjective and interdependent character of human beings and gives pride of place to the human need for empathy and love – recognizing oneself in others and the other as oneself.

Development agendas fashioned according to modernist principles in an enlightened age spoke in egalitarian and universal terms but fell short because of inherent limitations. Modernity's epistemological foundation is a singular definition of truth fashioned along calculative (material, rational, and empirical) criteria. Thus, generally speaking, modernity would not countenance any real qualitative distinctions between humankind, even if separated by distance. Hierarchies are not widely accepted as intrinsic to modernity's epistemological calculations. If they appear, the expectation is that they will be eliminated by the predictably corrective forces of progress, existing as a rational, scientific agenda. Furthermore, progress itself is conceived an appetite-driven regime that conceptualizes reality predominantly in material terms. Modernity could not really speak the language of interdependence, co-definition, or intersubjectivity; likewise, it could not provide a moral psychology befitting our humanity. In the immediately postcolonial age, the inherent contradictions between ideology and oppressive hierarchy-laden theory began to come to a head. On the surface, asymmetries could not be denied. In response, many first world scholars simply identified postcolonial "failure" as the consequence of not properly following guidelines. Among the most prominent postcolonial sins of omission were the failure to adopt rationalist economic developmental "stages of growth" (see Rostow), avoiding key psychological transformations (see McClelland), and the failure to apply rational approaches to the major engines of socio-economic development (see Hoselitz). But asymmetries were systemic and there was a systemic dichotomy where progress, hardly egalitarian, became controlled by a zero-sum game. As underdevelopment theory would further reinforce, without the complainants' ongoing status as the proverbial hosts, the parasite dies. So, for the "first world" to attain self-sustaining socio-economic development, the complainants must be kept dependent and

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inferior, via ideology ("developmentalism" for example) or other subterfuges. Ultimately, there was no partnership between the "first world" and the "third world." Contrary to various ideologies of modernity, postcolonial societies do not see the shadow of the metropolitan world as a reflection of what they will become. In postcolonial settings like Jamaica and its Latin American neighbors, where the fight against domination was, initially, perceived in neo-Marxist economic terms, the assault upon modernity was initiated most notably by ex-colonial scholars and their supporters (see, e.g., Amin; Munroe; Girvan; Beneria; Hartsock). The common message was that the search for equality within the prevailing system was an exercise in frustration: one's best hope was to negotiate the conditions of dependency. Domination was aligned to systemic parasitism, masquerading as "coevalness."

The development agenda of modernity and its critique were nonetheless both flawed. We can intuit the main lineaments of the problem by returning to a haunting question that Greek philosopher Protagoras asked of Socrates: what is the measure of man? (Plato). The human subject is not the proverbial island "entire of itself" and cannot be "a calculating sociopath with a gambling addiction" (Wood 73): our understanding of truth must be humanity-driven and not driven by calculability, mathematical reasoning, and purely materialistic and appetitive understandings of who we are. As much as rationality fails him/her, it fails itself. The alternative we propose is an epistemology of radical uncertainty, unknowability, and intersubjectivity. The latter hints at a moral psychology, to be re-articulated within the human dialectic, enabling interdependence and inherent co-definition and co-constitution among all human beings to begin at the very source — the level of subject formation, and sharing a commonality in the sources of one's humanity, whether Jamaican, English, Ghanaian, or Russian. To add to this important finding, beginning particularly in the early works of Hegel, the human self must therefore be composite, constitutive, and fragmentary. One vital consequence is that the epistemological field it traverses must be varied, taking into reckoning all interpretive impulses from the varieties of interacting peoples. Self-awareness is the awareness of unavoidable social connectivity at all substantive levels. Complementarity and interpretive participation, not atomism or singularity, constitute what allows the development of human society and institutions in our global age.

Thus we postulate that a new epistemological mindset is necessary because as long as the main tenets of modernity hold sway, societies like Jamaica will remain mired in dependency. Taking shape is a non-certainty-oriented epistemology, which allows indigenous forms drawn from societies like Jamaica to be validated as capable of orchestrating a legitimate *modus vivendi*. To be sure, the appetites of these people are always on edge, often on account of systemic hunger, but the edifice of their lives is not constructed purely upon these sensations. In known cases, although needy, they will not work, if disrespected, or when offered employment by one who is widely viewed as trampling their dignity and self-respect. Ideas of this sort are usually dismissed from shaping human society and institutions on account of their alleged "irrationality" or "non-rationality." They lead with their emotions, not with reason! On the injunction of Descartes, modernity rejects their "sensuousness." Nothing moral should properly be expected from these sources; morality is useless without being rational. The senses, for Descartes, are too fickle and he dismissed any notion of morality, until mathematics provided one. How do we help to distinguish a Cartesian epistemology of rules derived *ab extra*, from one deriving meanings from the primacy of human behavior? If Cartesianism favors such concepts as "analysis" and "knowledge" — both derivable from mathematical calculation — the alternative epistemology opts for "interpretation" and "understanding." These latter concepts are epistemologically significant as they are not favored by modernity for they lack the precision which truth must display. "Knowledge" relates to machinist and technical precision. According to the alternative perspective, as the products of history, human beings must derive meanings through "interpretation." If life can only be determined from a variety of historical and experiential perspectives, none of which can be privileged, then human beings "understand" as the necessity forced upon them through the collectivity of experiences. These contrasts provide the methodologico-conceptual distinctions between the epistemology of certainty and the epistemology of radical uncertainty and unknowability. For the latter, a knowing subject must be a rational subject, and our historical grounding and nature forbid it (see Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic*); furthermore, our human equipment intensifies this condition, for language and thought are inescapably unpredictable (Toulmin

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208). To the extent that it acts rationally in the pursuit of knowing, the human subject cannot remain indifferent to the so-called irrational and non-rational features of its composition, especially if it is inherently fragmented, with the fragments heterogeneous, incommensurable, and given to a kind of civil war. And to the further degree that the subject is fragmented intrinsically, bringing heterogeneity and diversity into the picture, epistemologically the concept "to know" and the cluster of claims of singularity it brings with it give ground to the practice "to interpret," now dependent on a deliberative form of participatory understanding. So, to this point, uncertainty is the norm, anchored to different modes of truth-derivation. Our concept of interpretation is based on a species of reason that relies on practical wisdom — *phronesis,* as Aristotle discusses it in Book VI of *Nicomachean Ethics.* Following Aristotle, Hans-Georg Gadamer makes a convincing case on the question of "social" reason displacing "metrical" reason (see his *Reason in the Age of Science*). Human beings are the products of history and experience; what is essential about them cannot be verified by universally valid axioms, which, by the way, can no longer make that claim. Reason must be applied, but it must be a people-centered reason, such that Aristotle defines and scholars, like Bent Flyvbjerg have begun to develop. There is no single Reason, as modernity would have us believe. Ronald Beiner notes, hinting at the interplay of human capacities more cooperative and intersubjective than hierarchical and rule-driven that "the basic conception is that moral reason consists not in a set of moral principles, apprehended and defined through procedures of detached rationality, but in the concrete embodiment of certain human capacities to be constitutive of a consummately desirable life" (44).

The epistemology of radical uncertainty and unknowability would receive help from the fact that its opposition's much vaunted unassailability has been punctured. Kurt Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem, as one of many discoveries that would put mathematics in crisis, confronts the regime of certainty in terms of the latter's fundamental propositions. No longer pantheistic, mathematics, in the post-Gödel era, "is used as a tool, a language, and a logical framework in some physical sciences and notably in physics, it does not have any meaning by itself" (Omnes 107). These sciences cannot find meanings through mathematics. Other sources, primarily of a historical nature, are now accepted as suggested by Jacques Derrida for example. The pattern is similar in physics. Certainty has been abandoned by contingency, and so by mathematics to boot. This is the largely unchallenged declaration of quantum mechanics. Since the rise of quantum mechanics from the 1930s, classical Newtonian physics, which created this predictable system with the aid of such concepts as causality, realism, determinism, and predictability, is displaced — contingency eclipses determinism and predictability (see, e.g., Deutsch; Herbert; Lindley; Penrose; Whitaker). Quantum mechanics is probabilistic. Our world is now quantum and everything in it occurs randomly, without direct causation. Studies in sociology and management are close behind in their critiques, with the shifts appearing as complexity theory. Adrian Little describes the breakdown of certainty and rationality noting that although "individuals and societies may try to understand phenomena through orderly systems of thought, complexity suggests that all issues contain unsettling, disorderly facets" (26). Daniel Zolo and others speak of a range of factors, often irrational and non-rational in nature, being implicated in the rise of a "reflexive epistemology" (see also Urry). The shift from the epistemologically banished to active involvement bears directly upon the manner in which human action should be determined and, conjointly, how questions of truth must be adduced. If the regimes of rationality are now flawed, so are the systems of meaning and interpretation derived from them. Today, the decline of certainty is signaled by a plethora of concepts and discourses dramatizing the crisis and suggest corrections, often expressed in radical ways. Their suggestive power is persuasive, for while these concepts arrive from divergent spheres of human inquiry, their epistemological message is unified and consistent. Representative examples are contingency, indeterminacy, incompleteness, and undecidability. These deficiencies go to the heart of mathematical certainty, even if, like Werner Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, they originate in physics. The principle boils down to this: a certain measurement that mathematics applied as the verification of physics, as providing *the* basis of truth, was confidently expected to supply failed. The position and the momentum of a particle cannot both be measured, simultaneously, without sacrificing the accuracy of one of them. According to the principles of mathematics, this should not happen (see Herbert 68-69).

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At the level of social relations, the phenomenon appears as liquidity, complementarity, and complexity. Liquidity speaks to the Protean nature of social concepts. The contingency, for example according to Zygmunt Bauman, does not allow social reality to assume discrete explanatory shapes. Complementarity, itself influenced by quantum mechanics, speaks of the absence of synthesis and the mathematical determinism accompanying that concept. In fact, during interactions, where synthesis is posited, often one participant can take on the features of the other. In sociology, the phenomenon is generally explained under intersectionality. Complexity occurs when stated rational processes are interfered with by the very logic of rationality, giving rise to indeterminacy and disorderliness. How, then, does social or moral reason address questions of resolution in the absence of a singular definition? Barnor Hess speaks of "innovating" to establish meanings "that can be put to work" (30). In a like vein, Wendy Brown extols the promise of counterpoint as "a deliberate practice of multiplicity … [that] does not add up to a whole but rather sets off a theme by providing it an elsewhere" (74). As difficult and intractable as the task might be, somewhere in the stock of history, experience, and tradition is the grist for resolution: indeterminacy and ambiguity do not connote chaos, confusion, and irresolvability. If our human equipment, say, language and thought, is impossibly unpredictable, it assuredly provides support. The rationalist hates the indefiniteness of metaphors, but these are invaluable markers of practical wisdom. Such is our formulation of the alternative epistemology of uncertainty/ unknowability. It originates, partly, in its aggressive critique of the regime of certainty, but it does not exist as replacements provided in that spirit. In other words, uncertainty in the alternative—qualitatively different—does not consist, principally, in correcting certainty's errors, making it whole within the latter's logic of calculability. Uncertainty a la Cartesianism cannot be, later, made certain, via this logic. Indeed, the Wittgenstein informed the rationalist that some of his certainties are without answers or solutions. The uncertain/unknowable combine accepts uncertainty as unavoidable. Accordingly, human beings must seek meaning in this world of contingency. Mathematicized certainty does not have its origins in the human condition: it reacts, selectively, to that condition, without caring much what fate befalls it. What cannot be brought within the workings of the laws as physics, as the model, lacks validity. The concept of certainty, then, has become a term of art. The epistemology of uncertainty/unknowability is more broadly ontological: the regime of certainty, as explained above, is fallacious, as human beings, like it, inherently lack the wherewithal to garner certainty about the world as mostly everything about our very selves and the world is mired in the state of unknowability as Nietzsche postulated. Finally, uncertainty/unknowability is a reservoir of sorts, perforce heterogeneous as it is not systemic in conceptual details, and must accommodate diversity. Our only recourse is to trade in interpretations, minimizing the real possibility of domination by deploying dialogic and deliberative forms of discourse and action.

Our work with Edu-Tourism aims at creating partnerships of mutually beneficial kinds and resides, mainly, in collaborative efforts involving volunteers, students, and organizations, especially from North America (U.S. and Canada) with Jamaican people and organizations. Our location, the Parish of St. Thomas east of the capital Kingston is, nonetheless, considered the most "backward" parish, the non-tourist spot. The parish remains thus "plagued" as, one colleague volunteers, "Kingstonians don't have to drive east to go to the [tourist] North Coast." Much less frequently are we exposed to the parish's historical contributions and immense cultural richness: the legacy of the Maroons and related attachments to such Africanisms as Kumina, Obeah, or Myalism, together with ongoing and vibrant tales of the invisible, who must often be palliated with offerings of white rum and chicken blood. Our "edu-tourists" are deployed productively as the story of Keisha, recounted below, testifies. Such involvement includes working in the field of education with farmers' organizations, women's centers, public health units, among others. We operate through our partnerships, in the best traditions of culture brokers and agents of formal and informal education (for more details, see Dorn, Keith, Keirns). Theory and practice engage each other most encouragingly here. What follows is meant to suggest questions and is not meant to offer definitive answers. Two guiding ideas should be noted immediately. First, modernity, as belief in the expert, calculability, and the autonomous individual, persists; so, it should, since the task is to put expertise and calculability back in their proper place, to relate them, dialectically, to what Foster describes as contingency and unpredictable outcomes. These expressions of contingency prompt much of our work. We are concerned that hidden assumptions

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impeding true deliberation amongst all our partners — assumptions that normalize interactions and understandings — must be exposed maximally and addressed honestly. For partnerships to be horizontal in nature, this approach is unavoidable. The task here is to uncover the modern within and especially the pernicious and destructive. The second idea relates to appreciate the inevitability of radical uncertainty while retaining a commitment to interdependence and social justice. At a most basic level, this regime of understanding demands openness, problem-posing (inquiry), and dialogue to be engaged conscientiously, even as expert systems, goal setting, strategic planning, and measurable outcomes may remain. They must not insinuate themselves as universal rules. Simply put, *phronesis*, such as it is directly implicated here, requires that we put our actions to the test by asking whether and how they support the goal of reaching toward basic human values, being fully cognizant that such values cannot be singular and exclusive.

Our philosophy-practice interchange begins, narratively, with Keisha's story. Keisha is a young mother of humble background who, as our story commences, was participating in a program for teen mothers, where she was assigned to Sandy, one of our edu-tourists. Keisha was hardly a successful student, but eager to learn. The elements of our story result from some misfortunes: Keisha was motherless and nearly blind, which Sandy discovered and remained discreet about. What kind of life would Keisha have, Sandy puzzled, asking herself and us in the course of our group reflection sessions; and how would she be able to care for herself and her child? Touched to the core, Sandy pursued her questions, looking for solutions, truly ignorant of where to direct her search, but refusing to accept, as others insisted, that nothing much could be done. Her search led to a discovery: a program, entirely free, operated by Cuban physicians with Venezuelan development funds. Remarkably, the program had extensive exposure, but could Keisha benefit from it, given the obstacles? Undeterred, Sandy collected the necessary documents, made arrangements, worked through anxieties and fears (her own and Keisha's) — for Keisha, who had barely ever left her home town, would have to travel to Cuba for a cataract operation in both eyes. Inspired by her commitment, there was a remarkable groundswell of diverse support — emotional, relational, instrumental, and monetary. What had seemed impossible happened. Keisha can see again.

To understand this story's connection with our project, we must probe its interpretive lineaments. On the face of it, it shares many features of the countless human interest stories on global news outlets: good US-American girl uses her ingenuity to save poor "third world" girl while locals took no initiative, that is, not until moved to action by the example of our good Samaritan. We (in the North, at least) applaud. This story is, truly, heartrending. In fact, we were encouraged to capitalize on it, as a symbol of our NGO's good work and we admit to being tempted. And yet when we reflect upon the story, can we not so easily draw the wrong message? First of all, it was not really Keisha's story, as Keisha here was almost a pretext for a narrative about Sandy. And what of the almost exclusive focus on Sandy's actions — did she have any help?

The "edu" part of edu-tourism is thoroughly enmeshed in the practice of reflection to make sense of experience. For the most part, reflection is viewed as a reasoning process, one that includes 'hunting' our deep epistemological assumptions. Then, critical reflection makes us aware of power and domination, while commanding us to be protective of social justice (see Brookfield). Our experience working across borders created by such divides as North/South, gender, race, social class, and ability, as well as our epistemological discussion, counsel more inclusivity, and especially relevant here is the need for a more broadly ontological epistemology. If the self is body, emotions, reason, spirit, a more fully human being, then our work requires something akin to what Ananta Kumar Giri terms ontological nurturance. Encounters with diverse others can jolt us from, and force us to query the bases of, our pathological narcissism. Such reflection takes place even when the experience is entered willingly, as our edu-tourists do for the most part. But one must make room for accident: Stephen Brookfield remarks that such jolts may lead to the negative side of reflection, understandings that may be resisted as posing a threat to one's way of life, thus generating fears that may even telescope into hate and violence, whether self- or other-directed. Critical reflection needs courage and commitment as crucial emotional and spiritual supports. We need also to appreciate how our actions comport with larger schemas.

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Our own reflection (the authors') quickly revealed something we hesitate to admit — an initial difficulty in bridging immediately the gulf between philosophy and practice: our opening narrative is penetrated, copiously, by the hegemonic assumptions of modernity. The story is enticing, to be true, precisely because it is iconic. Involved here is an individual hero(ine) orchestrating an independent-dependent interplay. Sandy is the active principle — she who comes from the North — while Keisha is dependent, a passive recipient, the target for charitable intervention in the South, who must be saved. Of course, this interpretation must be offensive to our sensibilities, if edu-tourism takes cosmopolitanism seriously (recall Appiah). We must disabuse modernity and fashion interdependence from different interpretations, via, say, dialogue and deliberative democracy. Can multiple narratives be patched together, telling perhaps a story of interdependence?

In her book *Edgework*, Wendy Brown presents the musical counterpoint as "a deliberate practice of multiplicity … [that is] at once open-ended and tactical … [and] emanates from and promotes antihegemonic sensibilities" (74). Brown's intent is not to harmonize the different features or even reach toward a whole, but to embrace contrasting elements in ways that might even contest dominance, "bring[ing] out complexity that cannot emerge through a monolithic or single melody" (74). We should remark, in passing, that such a theme is presented by quantum mechanics, so much so that one of its leading lights, David Bohm, would dedicate life after quantum to an epistemology of wholeness (implicateness) in which much of our alternative epistemology stands supported. In the light of reflection and dialogue about Keisha's story, the narrative does become more complex. Edu-tourism might narrate a story that is not about an individual heroine, but one of mediated learning, institutional supports, networks coming into action to pursue what was unanticipated, but is nonetheless part of the "program." Our mediation is such that Sandy's work was open-ended by design; group reflection sessions are not bounded by exclusive professional concerns, about, for instance, the effectiveness of the day's tutoring and proven approaches to improve Keisha's reading. It is true that in a professional setting, Keisha's near blindness would become the teacher's concern — could she be a candidate for special education? — but our mediation has less to do with creating competent professionals, as much as it strives to be guided by the ethos of globalism, as the new mindset of interdependence across relations heretofore defined by dichotomous separation. We ask questions that might foster an emerging cosmopolitanism, questions about empathy, larger contexts for understanding, and about one's responsibilities, and those of others, and, yes, about interdependence rather than a (false) sense of independent Self and dependent Other. We also seek to provide emotional, technical, and other supports. Yes, we assisted Sandy and Keisha in struggling with feelings of helplessness. The narrative of edu-tourism goes further, asking about the value of such an open-ended approach for development-oriented organizations, and the problems inherent in the more common approaches that are bounded by expert-driven specializations, with support from categorical funding that "attacks" particular problem areas, such as teen pregnancy or HIV/AIDS. We might add that evaluation criteria for funding requests fall well within the metric/outcomes systems of Modernity. Is our approach perfect? No. We are not sure to what extent it speaks of interdependence, for instance, encouraging as the evidence is on the organizational level. In this narrative theme, Keisha remains rather dependent, although we note that she and her family took steps that demonstrated courage, initiative, and caring. The director of her program, a social work professional, went into action in ways she alone could, with her understanding of the family and the community. In her narrative, this is a story of community supports, including a loving, if initially cautious, father.

It is more difficult for us to gather notes for a theme from Keisha's own voice. A quiet and shy teenager (at least in our presence), she spoke largely through her expression. Calling from Cuba, she sounded excited and quite proud of herself, as well as genuinely thankful in ways that were not servile. She overcame enormous fears, initiated difficult conversations, found supports on her own, and made important decisions. A retelling would likely reveal that she was at least as much an active agent as Sandy. The fewer notes in her theme speak of the limits in our capacity to evoke dialogue and of our need to do better. There is also, for Keisha, a more uncertain future than the triumphalist ending of the first story. At our last meeting, she spoke of the need for continued medical care, as the success of such operations is varied. There was optimism, and hope, about the future, but it was guarded.

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Before concluding, we must insert a few all-too-brief comments on reaching toward interdependence through our partnerships. Partnerships are the relational and institutional mechanisms that facilitate our edu-tourists' border crossing and experiential learning. The same holds for enabling local organizations to take full advantage of the community workers we provide. One example must suffice. One of Edu-Tourism's first initiatives in St. Thomas was bringing donated computers from the U.S. and installing them in many of the basic (early childhood) schools in the parish. As a result of this work, representatives of the NGO, including the co-authors, were quickly recognized as foreign donors or charitable workers, although the founders and directors were diaspora Jamaicans. As we continued to return to St. Thomas, members of local organizations became more willing to negotiate the activities we should engage in, with a resultant broadening. Computer training had retained its value even after our donated computers had become obsolete. We have begun conducting interviews with our partners at the end of each group's stay. In the spirit of our new epistemological orientation, these interviews appear as open-ended, guided conversations about present and future needs and possibilities for mutually rewarding collaborations. We include a brief excerpt from one such conversation with Mrs. G., the director of the Basic Schools Resource Center (9 July 2008). Here the conversation revolved around our desire to move toward a sense of partnership in the horizontal mode. Mrs. G. was responding to a question about the meaning of partnership and how it could be further developed: "Mrs. G. [animated] Well, well, yes, I see you as a partner now, because you've been coming every year and sharing some of the duties of the resource center, which is [pause] so, when I write my report, it makes it richer, to say that you've come and you have impacted on these people, and so on. We have already established our partnership. NK By coming back and doing things? Mrs. G. Yes! [broad smile]. NK When we first started, how did you see us then and how do you see us now? Mrs. G. When you started, it was just the basic school teachers and with all that giving away stuff and so on. But now it's different, in that it's training, and I think … and the people are appreciative of it. So [pause] I believe you're making strides, going outside of just the computer, to other areas."

Two aspects of our collaboration seem important to Mrs. G.: a lasting relationship, and activities that met her needs. The two are connected, since it is the continuity in the relationship, overall, that makes collaboration valuable. We have moved, it would seem, from the charitable giving that was part of our first narrative, to something that might qualify as an emergent partnership. Mrs. G.'s comments are doubly interesting, as they cast in a new light the prevalent 'give me' attitude we and other foreign groups have encountered. Each of us, even on casual meetings, has been asked for specific gift items and indeed it is quite common for local organizations to meet foreign groups with a list of desired donations. In fact, this is one of the reasons for our initial gifts of computers, which we saw as a way of gaining goodwill. Yet the assumption that a one-way exchange of goods (or charity) is a preferred form of relationship needs to be reconsidered: at least for Mrs. G., it appears that this kind of exchange is valued only in the absence of the ongoing relationships that characterize a partnership. What, then, can we make of the interplay between philosophy and practice that we have undertaken here, as the way to configure and enact a new epistemology? We think that the discourse of interdependence and partnership this interplay is designed to promote begins to show itself in the two stories we have told. Clearly in the past these interpretations had no place at all in a discourse that was dominated by modernity. Of course, being fully cognizant of modernity's propensity to continue to dominate the dialogue, we must remain vigilant.

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