The Concept of Alienation in the Work of Frantz Fanon

Siphiwe Ndlovu

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DERGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

2017

COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work is my own original work and has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree. Each significant contribution to, and quotation, in this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Siphiwe Ndlovu

17 May 2017

Supervisor

Doctor Bernard Matolino

17 May 2017

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Introduction

This study analyses the concept of alienation as it arises in Fanon's work. The analysis is predicated on the existential philosophical framework of Fanon's understanding of the recent, current colonial and post-colonial state of affairs – that of a state of alienation – obtaining in colonized cultures, particularly in Africa. It is argued that central to the alienation of Africans is their perceived cultural backwardness coupled with an inborn inferiority imputed to them by their European counterparts. Attendant to this perception is the colour difference(s) of African peoples in relation to European civilisations, with the former having a darker skin pigmentation in comparison to the latter. Accordingly, the racial categories of 'blackness' and 'whiteness' emerge as social constructs relating to the supposed inferiority and superiority of 'blacks' and 'whites' respectively. Furthermore, this perceived inferiority and cultural backwardness of Africans make them susceptible to colonization and economic exploitation. The study refers to the situation of the colonization of Africans by a white Europe as a condition of being-black in an anti-black world.

Furthermore, in this study, by 'black' or 'black people' is meant that group of people that the European colonial project regards as 'non-white'. Steve Biko (1978), the former leader of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa in his definition of 'blackness' asserts that "Being black is not a matter of pigmentation – being black is a reflection of a mental attitude" (1978: 48). According to Biko's definition, blacks are those who see themselves as politically, socially and economically excluded by society on the grounds that they are not white. Within the apartheid context in which Biko wrote, this meant to be oppressed and to be subservient to a white person and being subjected to all the social exclusions that the word entailed. When an individual aspires to be accepted as a white person and is rejected because of his or

her skin colour, that person, according Biko, remains a 'non-white' (1978: 48) and, therefore, black. Biko emphasizes blackness as primarily a state of mind, as opposed to it being a matter of skin colour. But, it is clear that this state of mind arises from the fact of being racially black in an anti-black social environment. Biko's understanding of blackness is based on how one conceives himself/herself within the social context of racial discrimination in which one finds oneself.

Fanon, on the other hand, does not primarily construe blackness as a state of mind. For him, being black is first and foremost a matter of pigmentation. He, thus, conceives of black existence as a kind of wretchedness and depersonalization that black people, as a group, are made to live in under structures of anti-black racism. This is because for him the suffering of black people is experienced as a *lived* experience as opposed to it being an intellectual one. It is a reality that generates responses such as the following: "'Dirty nigger' or simply, 'Look, a Negro!'" (Fanon 1967a: 82) among members of the colonizing race. So, although Biko and Fanon's emphasis on the term 'black' differ, what they share is the recognition that blackness arises from the reality of being categorized as not being white, the so called 'non-whites'. So I use the term 'black' broadly to refer to those people that the colonial project classifies as 'non-white'.

Notably, the term 'post-colonial' is used in this study in reference not only to the continuation of colonial structures and systems of domination among the post-independence state(s) but also to the maintenance of colonial logics of domination that undermine the integrity, sovereignty and the independence of the previously colonised world. So, the term is used here in the same way as the decolonial thinkers such as Ramon Grosfoguel (2007), Aníbal Quijano (2007) and Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2003) to mention but a few, use the term. For

instance, Ndlovu-Gatsheni speaks of the 'post-colonial' as a system of "coloniality [that] articulates continuities of colonial mentalities, psychologies and worldviews into the so-called 'postcolonial era' and highlights the social hierarchical relationships of exploitation and domination between Westerners and Africans that has its roots in centuries of European colonial expansion but currently continuing through cultural, social and political power relations" (2013: 8). So while the 'post' in 'post-colonial' may give an impression of transcendence and the overcoming of the colonial order, its usage here as can be gleaned from this passage, recognisises the continuing nature of the colonial logic of domination in a neo-colonial form.

In dealing with the concept of alienation as it arises in Fanon, the study recognizes firstly, that other, non-philosophical conceptions of the notion as it obtains in Fanon, do exist (Chapter two). However, restricting the analysis to these ignores the philosophical underpinning of the concept as it arises in Fanon. Thus, in making a case for the philosophical analysis of the concept, the study locates Fanon within the Africana existential tradition and argues that for Fanon, alienation manifests itself as colonial despair brought about by the race-based system of colonialism. Ania Loomba (1998) describes colonialism as "the take-over of territory, appropriation of material resources, exploitation of labour and interference with political and cultural structures of another territory or nation" (1998: 6). From this description, it is evident that, at the heart of colonial conquest is the desire and intention to subjugate, exploit and to dominate over the conquered people and their territory. This situation gives rise to the feeling of alienation among members of the oppressed group(s).

One of the major results of colonisation is the apportionment of civil liberties according to skin colour such that the status an individual enjoys in society is in accordance with his or her

skin colour in the racial hierarchy. In other words, the consequence is the racialization of social privileges. Fanon understood not only this logic of colonialism very well but also that, the inferiority of blacks was the result of a double process which at first, entailed the economic logic of colonization and secondly, the racialization of inferiority or what he refers to as "the epidermalization of that inferiority" (Fanon 1967a: 13). The result of such processes manifest in the form of racial domination and inequality. Thus, being white would be associated with wealth, and blackness with poverty. It is for this reason, therefore, that Fanon asserts,

> When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species…the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich (1967b: 31).

Thus, in the colonial encounter, the stage is set between two interests namely, that of the colonizer and that of the colonized. The colonizer conceives of his/her dominant position as just while the colonized conveives of it as unjust. What emerges from this encounter, to use Fanon's term, is a "psycho-existential complex" (1967a: 5) whereby whites assume social and political dominance while blacks assume a position of subservience. This means that social categories like 'blackness', 'whiteness', 'coloniser' and 'colonised' become social constructs rather than a natural reality. In other words, these categories become the products of human action or agency and during the process of colonisation take on particular meanings in line with the interest of the dominant group.

Alfred Schutz's (1962) definition of social reality explains the phenomenon of social construct very well. In his work *The Problem of Social Reality,* Schutz defines social reality as "the sum-

total of objects and occurrences within the social, cultural world as experienced by the common-sense thinking of men living their daily lives among their fellow-men, connected with them in manifold relations of interaction" (Schutz 1962: 53). From this definition, we can deduce that social reality is not given but is, in fact, a constructed reality. In other words, it is an attainment or an accomplishment for, it is an "occurrence" that is produced from human interaction and action. Thus, racial categories in a race-based social system, become constructs that are in line with the interests of the colonizing group, that is, the denotation of certain races as inferior and others as superior. This is the racist logic of colonialism.

Racism and racial consciousness provide a basis upon which colonial society is organised. It functions, discursively, as an organising principle according to which colonial divisions between blacks and whites, 'natives'[1] and Europeans, inferior and superior beings, are established and maintained. As colonial categories, the two species (black and white) are not complementary but opposed to one another. In Hegel's dialectical philosophy there is to be found a theory of historical movement in which history occurs through the principle of negation or negativity which in that moment of negativity, 'Spirit' progresses towards a higher unity or consciousness[2]. In racist societies, however, such as in the colonial countries, apartheid or in the segregated United States of America, this is not the case. The two zones (white and black) are opposed to one another and they are not in the service of a higher social order: "Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic, they both follow the principle of

---

[1] The term 'native' is used throughout the thesis in the pejorative sense, as used by the European colonisers to designate and to distinguish themselves from the indigenous peoples or the colonized cultures whom they deemed to be inferior, backward and primitive.

[2] Hegel's dialectical method begins with there being an existing situation, a thesis. The thesis contains within itself internal contradictions which create a response to it, its opposite. The response comes in the form of an antithesis which creates conflict between the two. From this conflict, emerges a synthesis which is a higher stage in the development of spirit. However, this new situation, the synthesis, soon discovers it's own internal contradictions and the process starts to repeat itself.

reciprocal exclusivity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous" (Fanon 1967b: 30).

The ability to enforce discriminatory practices upon a population introduces another related concept in Fanon and this concept is that of power. For, to discriminate against and thus divide a whole group of people on the basis of racial difference, presupposes considerable power over them. Thus, racist attitudes, combined with state power, produce devastating consequences for the racially-prejudiced social group(s). Biko defines racism as "[d]iscrimination by a group against another for the purposes of subjugation or maintaining subjugation. In other words, one cannot be racist unless he has the power to subjugate" (Biko 1978: 25). These sentiments attest to the fact that at state level, racism is not *merely* about colour prejudice or a state of consciousness but more fundamentally about power, that is, the power to subjugate and wield control *over* another group. Not everyone, however, who harbours racist attitudes possesses the power to discriminate against and oppress over others. An individual racist may exhibit race-based hatred towards other race groups but need not become a racial oppressor, probably because he/she lacks the means to do so. The individual racist, therefore, is not our concern here. On the contrary, it is state racism and power that Fanon is concerned with. Sivanandan argues that what matters with regards to the actions of a racist, in a racist society is what the racist *does* with his prejudice towards others whom he considers inferior. He notes that it "is the acting out of racial prejudice and not racial prejudice itself that matters…Racism is about power and not prejudice" (Cited in More 2008: 51). The idea of racism as power is also one that Andile Mngxitama (2009) expounds.

Mngxitama, a South African human rights activist and intellectual, notes that some of the key elements of racism are firstly, that a [racial] group must believe itself to be superior and secondly, it must have the power to enforce this belief. Lastly, it must be ready to use this power to create and maintain the reality of its superiority (2009: 8). Mngxitama points out that the inferiority of the black person was brought about through the military power of the state (2009: 8). The idea that takes into account white hegemony as being at the core of the West's encounter with black people also finds expression in the work of Peter Ekeh (1997), who observes that at the beginning of the period of contact between Europe and Africa, the former had achieved economic as well as technological advancement that far surpassed the latter. This advancement enabled the conquering of the latter, the black world. Thus, racial discrimination combined with state power have been at the centre of Europe's strategy in her encounter with the black world.

Similarly, the South African philosopher, Percy More (2008) argues that if racism entails the practice of discrimination, then racism also entails the power to enforce discrimination, that is, to coerce and exclude certain groups from material privilege. The state of emergency under apartheid South Africa, the ability to put the townships under siege through the army and the police, the forced removals of blacks from the cities to the 'homelands' and land dispossessions, all speak of the power and the coerciveness embedded in institutional racism. Taken from the point of view of the colonial system as a whole, state racism "establishes and maintains exclusionary relations of superiority and inferiority" (More 2008: 51). Thus, racism is combined with force to keep the 'natives' in line.

Fanon, too, restricts acts of racism to the colonizing race[3]. He points out that the European settlers and 'natives' are old acquaintances. But their acquaintance is one that has been singularly determined by Europe and with her interests in mind. Fanon acknowledges that it was not only through sheer power but also through (colonial) ideology that Europe was able to discursively create its desired Africa. In *Black Skin White Masks,* he writes that "what is often called the black soul is a white man's artifact" (1967a: 14) and this is a point which Jock McCulloch in his *Black Soul White Artifact: Fanon's clinical psychology and social theory* (1983) has also commented on. This point is reiterated in Fanon's assertion that "it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence" (1967b: 28). Taking these, as well as the economic rationale of colonialism into account, it becomes inevitable that the relation that results between the settlers and the 'natives' would be an asymmetrical one or one of white masters and black slaves. It is a relationship that has come about through brute force and coercion. So, it is within this context, an environment of anti-blackness that Fanon begins thinking about the alienation of the oppressed people.

Although this study treats the conpept of alienation philosophically and thus conceptually, it was deemed befitting to discuss contexts in relation to which the concept can be better understood. Hence, the inclusion of the last two chapters namely, alienation within the South African context (chapter five) and the chapter on violence (chapter six). The rationale is that to have a fuller understanding of Fanon as a thinker, theorist and philosopher, it is important to understand the context(s) within which his ideas arise as well as the teleology of his thought in relation to the condition of alienation. Notably, Fanon was not only an abstract

---

[3] It is important to note here that the mentioned authors were writing with colonialism as well as apartheid conditions in mind. It is possible, in the post-colonial as well as post-apartheid contexts to conceive of some blacks as being racists. For some black political and middle classes have become extremely wealthy and powerful even though the black majority has remained relatively much poorer.

thinker, but was also profoundly concerned with the material wellbeing particularly of the oppressed, the damned of the earth. It is in this sense, therefore, that Fanon becomes a philosopher of praxis and a practical thinker whose actions are premised on reflection on the social condition(s) in space and time. So it is in this sense that the last two chapters can be read. What follows below is a chapter outline of this study.

The first Chapter begins by locating Fanon within the tradition of Africana existential philosophy. The general approach of "Africana philosophy of existence" is explained and it is argued that Fanon's work can usefully be framed in this context. While Fanon's general understanding of how colonised people are economically and socially marginalised is the more dominant approach to his studies, it is argued, however, in the second Chapter that the existential philosophical analysis is also prominent in his thought and thus needs greater exposure. In Chapter three, the general understanding of human freedom underlying the concept of alienation is then discussed with recourse to some central philosophical influences on Fanon namely, Hegel, Marx, Sartre and Kierkegaard. It is argued that there can be no dialectic of recognition in the Hegelian sense because of the element of racial prejudice at work in the colonial situation. Furthermore, there is no necessary process of industrialisation in the colonised cultures producing a revolutionary class as Marx thought would be a universal phenomenon. The racial dimension in the oppression of black people leads to a new category, 'colonial despair'. This then also furnishes a critical perspective on Sartre's existential analysis of human freedom.

This analysis is extended in chapter four, specifically the discussion of alienation between Fanon and his philosophical interlocutors. Here, it is argued that while alienation can be overcome in Hegel and in Marx, this is not the case of the colonised black person. Sartre's

realm of non-being is brought in to explain how this is so. However, while for Sartre the material for his phenomenological analyses was European men and women, the application of this to the colonised subject brings in a radically new dimension namely, total deprivation of 'being-for-itself'.

The analytic framework is then applied in Chapter five to the evidence of alienation in the past and current South African situations and it is argued that whatever superficial changes have occurred in the country, black South Africans largely remain in total deprivation of their 'being-for-themselves'. Finally, in Chapter six, the thesis addresses the question of violence in the process of overcoming alienation. This chapter speaks to the teleology of Fanon's thought in relation to alienation. It argues that the category 'race' or 'colour' is so definitive in determining attitudes that there can be no authentic dialogue or negotiation among conflicting groups and that struggles against the 'white' regime must necessarily take the form of deliberate violence. The final Chapter seven, sums up the study and its ethical implications.

Chapter I

Fanon: Africana Philosopher of Existence

1.0 Introduction

This chapter locates Fanon's thought within existential philosophy. It begins by noting that there is – among the Enlightenment thinkers in the Western philosophical tradition – a general tendency of regarding Europe as the centre of knowledge and reflective reason and to confinement and collapse black intellectual production within the autobiographical frame. By doing so, blacks are seen in general as producers of experience and as devoid of reason. This view disregards the fact that black theorists have been around since the advent of modern theorising (Gordon 2000: 27). Thus, it is against this practice of confining blacks within the autobiographical frame that this chapter set out to frame Fanon, generally, as a philosopher and more precisely, as a philosopher of existence in the tradition of Africana existentialism. In doing so, the chapter seeks to dispel the myth of Africans as devoid of reason.

Following Lewis Gordon, Anthony Bogues (2003) eloquently demonstrates in his book *Black Heretics, Black Prophets* that black theorists, particularly those within the eighteenth century slave narratives, have engaged with the issues of liberty, slavery and separatism at the theoretical level. Despite this theoretical engagement, black literary production in the second half of the 20th century has, nevertheless, become synonymous with the autobiographic frame. Gordon views this trend that began from the late 1970s and which has endured right

up to the present period, as occasioned by the discursive practices of some of the influential thinkers of this period. These thinkers focused their energies, insofar as black writers are concerned, on autobiographical reductionism of race, gender and class (Gordon 2000: 25). Gordon sums this up candidly when he says that during this period: "Less concern focused on what previous black writers were saying and more on *which* black writers were writing or saying these things" (2000: 27).

Similarly, Bogues (2003) and More (2008) lament the way in which black literary production has been collapsed and confined into the autobiographical moment. Bogues views this as problematic in three respects. Firstly, it elides conceiving blacks as producers of knowledge. Instead, it works to reinforce the misconception that black people are only producers of experience. The concern for Bogues is that when written productions of black thinkers are studied only within the literary, autobiographical frame, we can miss their political ideas and purposes. The second concern relates to the narrowness of the autobiographical frame, which has as its focus, the experiences of life. The concern here is that as this happens "the complex relationships between the written testimony of the slave and the political language and context in which the testimony are embedded are elided or reduced to a secondary position" (Bogues 2003: 25). Lastly, the autobiographical frame fails to recognise important theoretical developments and/or strands in the slave narratives, particularly those of the late eighteenth century. Bogues identifies black abolitionism as an important strand of writing during this period and views it as a significant moment of black radicalism on the world stage (2003: 26)[4]. For Bogues, black theoretical production can be regarded as a way in which blacks demonstrate their membership to the human community in an environment wherein reason

---

[4] In addition to abolitionism, Lewis Gordon later identifies anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism as important strands in black radicalism. See his *Existentia Africana.*

is racialized. This is, arguably, something that might be elided by focusing on the narrow biographical frame.

More, in his influential essay "Biko: Africana Existentialist Philosopher" (2008) cites the Afro-Caribbean scholar, Paget Henry as lamenting the "near absence of an explicitly cultivated philosophical tradition" (cited in More 2008: 45) particularly within the contexts of South African and Afro-Caribbean philosophies, despite there being many internationally known religious, social and political figures.

More (2008), like Gordon and Bogues, laments the tendency of locking black theorists into a biographical frame and political activism. He associates the lack of a philosophical tradition as largely embedded in the problem of intertextuality. This is particularly true when it is viewed within the context of Western epistemic hegemony which Henry associates with the "particularisation of reason" which serves to cement the argument that "Europe acquired epistemic hegemony that made it co-extensive with the geography of reason" (2006: 2). What this means within the context of knowledge production is that, for the black intellectual to be able to make an intellectual contribution, she must go through Europe if she is to be heard at all. So, in seeking to locate Fanon within Africana existential philosophy, we shall first, have something to say not only about what Africana philosophy is but also what it entails.

1.1 Africana Philosophy

According to Gordon (2000), Africana philosophy is a branch of the much broader field of Africana thought. He describes Africana thought as a study that "raises ironic self-reflective, metatheoretical questions" (Gordon 2000: 3). Gordon further explains that Africana thought "refers to an area of thought that focuses on theoretical questions raised by struggles over

ideas in African cultures and in their hybrid and creolized forms in Europe, North America, Central and South America, and the Caribbean" (2008: 1). Having explained what Africana thought entails, Gordon then situates Africana philosophy within this broad and discursive field and sees it as concerned with "critical engagements with ideas in Africana cultures and their hybrid, mixed or creolised forms world-wide" (2008: 1). From this definition, we establish that the principal concern of Africana philosophy is not empirical reality *per se*, but abstraction from it. Africana philosophy is concerned with raising "theoretical questions" arising from reflections on ideas which emanate from Africana cultures. Notably, this does not mean that Africana philosophy is dismissive of objective reality. On the contrary, what it means is that Africana philosophy operates at a meta-philosophical level which results in the production of higher order knowledge which emanates from the lived experience itself. Such an engagement shows Africana philosophy to be a reflective intellectual activity, with its context being the lived experience of the black subject. Additionally, Gordon observes that the context for the emergence of Africana philosophy was the imposition of the identity 'black' upon the inhabitants of the continent of Africa by Western powers and the conflation of "most Africans with the racial term 'black' and [the] many [negative] connotations" (2008: 1) that "blackness" and "African" have assumed since the European conquest of Africa.

The African American scholar Lucius Outlaw (1996), writes in a similar vein and defines Africana philosophy as,

> [A] 'gathering' notion under which to situate the articulations (writings, speeches, etc.) and traditions of the same, of African and peoples of African descent collectively, as well as the sub-discipline—or field forming, tradition-

> defining, tradition-organizing—reconstructive efforts which are (to be) regarded
>
> as philosophy (Outlaw 1996: 76).

Like Gordon, Outlaw understands Africana philosophy discursively as a term "under which can be gathered a potentially large collection of traditions of practices, agendas and literature of African and African descended peoples" (Outlaw 1996: 77). In this agenda-setting field, however, what are important are those practices that fall under the rubric of philosophy. The question that might arise from this definition is: How is the status of Africana Philosophy secured? The following discussion will shed some light on this question.

In thinking about the philosophical status of Africana philosophy, it will be useful to first, consider the meaning of the term 'philosophy'. This is notwithstanding the fact that attempts to define philosophy have, historically, proven to be a challenge. This fact notwithstanding, the definition that is usually offered is that philosophy is 'the love of wisdom'. This definition, however, is itself not without some problems given the number of questions arising from it. For example, what is "the love of wisdom" in connectedion to? one might ask. Is a wise person, according to this definition, one who is adept in Astronomy, matters of love, Medicine or a combination of these? It is notable, however, that despite the difficulty concerning this definition, philosophers tend to agree that the "wisdom" in 'philosophy' is a special kind of thoughtfulness, a reflection that goes to the very foundations of knowledge, life and being. Thus, a philosopher is one who is not content with taking things "as given" or at face value, as it were.

In the history of Western philosophical thought, one such an individual who showed discontentment against taking life at face value was Socrates. Socrates questioned the kind of life that he led within the Greek city state and encouraged others to follow suit. Socrates is

mostly remembered for having expressed the view that an unexamined life is not worth living'. Since Socrates, the principal preoccupation of philosophy has been the "examination" of the meaning of life. This means that the kind of knowledge that philosophy produces is that which seeks to elucidate or explain the meaning of life in the world. Thus, a philosopher would step back and ask serious questions about being, others and the kind or nature of life in society. He or she might ask questions such as the following, "What is there?", "How can it be known?", "Is the society that I live in good and just?" These are some of the questions that a philosopher might ask.

Subsequent philosophers have tended to adopt this Socratic line of inquiry. For instance, in the *Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays,* Albert Camus defines philosophy in similar terms as we have defined it thus far. This is attested to by his assertion that "Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest — whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories — come afterwards. These are games...I have never seen anyone die for the ontological argument...the meaning of life is the most urgent of questions" (1955: 3-4). From this definition, we discern the corroboration of the view that philosophy is an attempt to understand life's most fundamental questions. In fact, many philosophers support this view of philosophy. For instance, Merleau-Ponty writes that "philosophy is merely an elucidated experience" (1958: 73). In his work *The Philosophy of Right*, Hegel explains philosophy thus: "To comprehend *what* is is the task of philosophy, for *what* is is reason" (2008: 15). Similarly, the noted Ghanaian philosopher, Kwasi Wiredu (1980), writes in *Philosophy and an African Culture* that "It is the function, indeed the duty, of philosophy in any society to examine the intellectual foundation of its culture" (1980: 20). As can be gleaned from the definitions

offered by the above philosophers, despite the difficulties in proposing a universally acceptable definition of philosophy, philosophers tend to agree that at its core philosophy is concerned with reflections on the meaning of life as lived by human beings in the world.

Similarly, Africana philosophy, like the broader field of philosophy, makes use of a similar line of inquiry. More precisely, it seeks to examine and to understand the meaning of life as lived by African and African-descendent people; or to use Wiredu's words, it seeks to inquire into "the intellectual foundations" of Africana cultures.

Thus, taking into account the history and the tragedy of colonialism in relation to African and African descendant people in particular, Africana philosophy raises pertinent questions about life as lived by this group of people. Some of the key questions that come to the fore are: "What does it mean to be a human being?" (Gordon 2008: 13); "Who or what am I?" These are identity questions. From the point of view of the oppressed, identity questions lead to teleological ones such as: "What can and should be done about my situation of colonization?" Gordon makes this point clearer when he asserts that "in taking modern concerns such as race, racism and colonialism seriously, [Africana philosophy] explores problems of identity and social transformation, of the self and the social world, of consciousness and intersubjectivity, of the body and communicability, of ethics and politics, of freedom and bondage" (2008: 14). So, as Gordon observes, the fundamental problem of concern for this intellectual tradition is an attempt to understand life as lived by black people by raising and engaging with philosophical questions relating to their existence. Thus, like the broader field of philosophy, the philosophical status of Africana philosophy is secured through reflection and thinking about life in an abstract and meaningful way within the ambit of reason.

At another level, it might be tempting to refer to Africana philosophy as, perhaps, 'philosophy born of struggle'. This would not be surprising, in that, life under oppression is lived as a struggle against the extraordinary circumstances placed upon the oppressed. But it is also a struggle to overcome the system that oppresses them. Thus, much of the philosophizing that takes place within Africana philosophy concerns coming to terms with black human suffering under conditions of oppression. But in describing Africana philosophy in this way, one is still confronted with a certain problematic. For instance, in proposing that it is 'philosophy born of struggle' one might ask the following questions: Whose struggle? What kind of struggle? And for what purpose is the struggle waged? So, it is unclear whether this title addresses these questions. On the other hand, the use of the term 'Africana' avoids such complications in the sense that the people concerned *are* themselves Africans engaged in an effort to understand themselves as human beings in the world. However, in addressing *what* Africana philosophy *is,* one must also address the question of *who* its practitioners are? As we shall see below, addressing this question has the added benefit of also addressing the very question as to why this tradition ought to be called 'Africana philosophy'.

The practitioners of this tradition of philosophy are Africana people. The term 'Africana' includes indigenous Africans as well as the African diaspora. Precisely because of their dark pigmentation, the colonial system designates them as 'black' or 'non-white' to differentiate them from the light-skinned cultures of Europe. It should not be surprising, therefore, that these thinkers are African, black and as such, have been subjected to European colonial processes as racial 'others' either directly or indirectly as descendants of colonized peoples. Thus, in addressing the question of "who?" are the practitioners of Africana philosophy, one is inadvertently made to face the inescapable reality that the people in question are first and

foremost, Africana people engaged with questions that directly affect their being in the world. So, there is, insofar as these thinkers are concerned, an intellectual and a personal interest in their philosophical endeavours. Despite this, the skeptic may still, however, query the use of the term 'African' as unfairly excluding other individuals using biology, geography and culture as grounds for these exclusions, things that they cannot change. The practice, however, of naming an intellectual tradition by the geography (and by implication, race) of its originators and practitioners is not a unique or uncommon phenomenon. For, the philosophical traditions of the world are usually known and named after the nationalities and/or continents of their initiators. For this reason, it is not uncommon to speak, for example, of the English or German traditions in philosophy. Similarly, Africana philosophy is referred to as such because of the geographical region of the people that originated the tradition and who participate in it. It becomes even more appropriate, therefore, to name the field in this way as opposed to 'philosophy born of struggle'. For this very reason, Outlaw comments that

> Use of the qualifier 'Africana' is consistent with the practice of grouping and identifying intellectual traditions and practices by the national, geographic, cultural, racial and/or ethnic name of the persons who initiated and were or are the primary practitioners – and/or are the subjects and objects – of the practices and traditions in question (1997: 267).

So, Outlaw corroborates the notion of identifying intellectual traditions in accordance with the identities of their practitioners. Insofar as Africana philosophy is concerned, it is befitting that this tradition be named in accordance with the identity and geography of its practitioners. In reference to this study, such terms as 'black thinkers', 'black theorists', or

'black theoretical production', speak to the intellectual productions of Africana people in the manner described above.

However, the identification of the tradition in this way need not necessarily exclude those who are not members of the group. Most importantly, one must recognize the fact that there are thinkers who contribute to Africana philosophy but who are not African, black nor of African descent. These are thinkers or people who recognize the importance and legitimacy of the philosophizing endeavours of the Africana peoples. Outlaw concurs with this view when he avers that,

> 'Africana philosophy' is meant to include as well the work of those persons who are neither African nor of African descent but who recognize the legitimacy and importance of the issues and endeavours that constitute the philosophizing of persons African or African descended and who contribute to discussions of their efforts, persons whose work justifies their being called 'Africanists' (1997: 267).

So, the use of the term "Africana" need not exclude anyone who wishes to participate in the tradition so long as the individual recognizes the importance of the intellectual endeavours in question. For another reason, the identification of this tradition with Africana people is important, in that, it also makes it possible to distinguish it from other philosophical productions by black people elsewhere in the world, what Gordon refers to as "black philosophies" (2000: 6). The distinction is important, in that, not all black people in the world are of African descent. As Gordon (2000: 6) observes, there are, for example, black people who are indigenous to Australia and whose identity is not African, but who have nonetheless lived their reality as blacks. There is thus a cultural as well as a philosophical distinction between Africana and other black philosophies in the sense that one philosophises from the

point of view of his/her subjective situatedness in space and time. Having thus defined and explicated the philosophical status of Africana philosophy, we are now in a position to understand what Africana existentialist philosophy entails.

1.2 Africana Existential Philosophy

The term 'existentialism' is generally associated with the human existential condition, that is, the anguish and anxiety of being situated within a particular context. It is thus concerned with reflections on the problems of human existence. Gordon defines 'existentialism' as premised on the thesis that "[t]he lived body is the subject of agency instead of subjects like the abstract Kantian transcendental subject; that the fundamental problem of value is the problematisation of self and other; and that anguish over freedom and the reality of unfreedom poses problems of liberation" (1995: 45). However, since black people, as the result of colonisation and conquest, experience their being as subservient to or inferior beings to 'superior' whites, Africana existential philosophy largely takes, as its concern, reflections on the reality of unfreedom that colonial and metropolitan racism have brought about, a condition which Noel Manganyi (1973) describes as the condition of "being-black-in-the-world"[5]. The intellectual writings of Africana thinkers need not necessarily be political as some of these intellectual productions also have, as their focus, other aspects of life such as culture, aesthetics, religion and so on. However, the problem of colonization has necessitated a preponderance with the desire to understand the lived existence of Africana people within the context of European colonialism. Thus, Africana existential philosophy operates antithetically from the ravages of race-based oppression occasioned by European colonial

---

[5] See Noel Chabani Manganyi's book *Being-Black-in-the-World* (1973).

projects in the formerly colonised and still colonised world. In this regard, the philosopher More expounds Africana existential philosophy in the following manner,

> By virtue of the historical fact of racial oppression, colonization, and slavery, Africana philosophy raises questions of identity and liberation by focusing on the reality that African people are a black people and hence are affected by the significance of race and racism. The raising and articulation of the existential questions of identity and liberation within the context and framework of the situation of black people, constitutes what has recently come to be known as 'Africana existential philosophy' (2008: 47).

From this passage, we can glean that it is the theoretical reflections and "articulation of the existential questions" within the shadow of "racial oppression, colonization, and slavery" that characterise Africana existential philosophy. Some of the grounding figures in this tradition include thinkers such as Qobna Ottobah Cugoano, Frederick Douglass, Anna Julia Cooper, W.E.B. Du Bois, C.L.R. James, Richard Wright, Aimé Césaire, Toni Morrison and James Baldwin. To a large degree, Fanon follows in the tradition of and is inspired by the works of these figures. This is demonstrated by his pained intellectual and practical engagement with the existential question of black identity and oppression.

One might perhaps trace the genealogy of this intellectual movement from the eighteenth century, through the political ideas of Qubna Cugoano's *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery* first published in 1787. Ottobah was a native of Africa and a former slave. *Thoughts and Sentiments* was a slave narrative and an important book for different reasons. Of utmost importance is the fact that it was the first abolitionist text written by an African in English (Gunn 2011: 629). This is not to suggest that Cugoano was the first individual to write an

abolitionist text as people such as Quaker John Woolman (1754) and Granville Sharp (1769) had already done so. Of importantance to us is the fact that the book raised the "most overt and extended challenge to slavery ever made by a person of African descent…the first [book by an] English-speaking African historian of slavery and the slave trade and the first to criticise European imperialism in the Americas" (Carrera 1999: xx). The book was also an ethical pastiche as it sought to challenge the system of slavery both on religious and epistemic grounds.

Epistemologically, Cugoano made use of the natural rights discourse of the Enlightenment thinkers at the time. Accordingly, he considered natural rights as common rights and extended these to black slaves. From here, Cugoano argued that since slavery robbed the slave of his or her liberty, then slavery was against the doctrine of natural rights. He considered slavery the worst kind of evil and to be contradictory to the key tenets of the Enlightenment. As he puts it: "But the robbers of men, the kidnappers, ensnarers and slave-holders, who take away the common rights and privileges of others to support and enrich themselves, are universally those pitiful and detestable wretches; for the ensnaring of others, and taking away their liberty by slavery and oppression, is the worst kind of robbery" (Cugoano 1999: 11).

Religiously, Cugoano challenged slavery on the grounds of the doctrine of monogeny (the belief that the origin of the human species is one creation by God) as opposed to polygeny (which sees human origin as plural). Accordingly, he believed that the creation of human beings was one project by God, notwithstanding external differences such as skin colour. Moreover, since we are created by God in a like manner, that is, in His image, Cugoano argued that human beings should be treated equally. Racial difference should not be taken to mean

difference in terms of ability. As such it should not, therefore, be used as a pretext for racial domination and oppression. Thus, those that promoted and participated in slavery and slave trade are regarded by Cugoano as operating against Divine Law.

Another important voice in this tradition is that of Anna Julia Cooper. Cooper was an African-American woman born into slavery in the 1800s and is best known for her work *A Voice from the South: By a Woman from the South*. In this text, she addresses issues such as gender, racism, education and inequality. Precisely for her emphasis on gender, the book has come to be regarded by some as one of the first articulations of black feminism. As she writes as both a black person and a woman, race and gender become intertwined even though she is sharply aware of the peculiarity of black women's suffering. For, a black woman must bear the anguish and double-edged sword of being categorised first as a black in a white dominated social environment as well as a woman in a patriarchal society. She thus ontologises the binaries of race and gender in white America particularly insofar as these affect black women and argues that black women suffer social invisibility, which, as one may deduce, exceeds that of black men. She thus asserts that "The colored woman is confronted by both the woman question and a race problem, yet is an unknown or unknowable fact in both" (1988: 134). She further observes that "the coloured woman too often finds herself hampered and shamed by a less liberal sentiment and a more conservative attitude on the part of those for whose opinion she cares most" (1988: 134-135). Thus, one finds in Cooper a sense of the predicament of an alienated black woman in a patriarchal and anti-black social environment on the one hand, and a 'voice' that desires the ear of society.

By making use of the dialogical method, Cooper voices the ideas and experiences of others as well as her own. Furthermore, through her writing she introduces to the audience the

existential category of 'an Other'. However, unlike the negative perceptions of the 'black other' in mainstream American society at the time, Cooper conceives of 'the other' in positive reductions and as an equal. Thus, the other is recognised as an equal interlocutor and an equal contributor in the production of knowledge and ideas. The advantage of her method is that it directly engages the affected individuals or social groups and avoids a situation wherein someone else or a group of others become the spokesperson(s) for another and who often distort the truth. She thus insists that people, coloured or white, ultimately are the same. So, for those who insist on the inherent differences among races and for those who deny the humanity of blacks, she writes "My 'people' are just like other people—indeed, too like for their own good. They hate, they love, they attract and repel, they climb or they grovel, struggle or drift, aspire or despair, endure in hope or curse in vexation exactly like all the rest of unregenerate humanity" (Cooper 1988: 112). In this light, Cooper's ideas are at odds with or go against the grain of prevailing Euro-American scholarship at the time in regards to the humanity of the black person.

At this point of our discussion, one already finds a broad parallel between Fanon and his predecessors. The themes of racial inequality, racial domination, anguish over the lack of freedom and recognition are some of the threads that connect Fanon to his predecessors. But one of the dominant intellectual figures who successfully diagnosed the black condition was W.E.B. Du Bois, particularly in his text *The Soul of Black Folk*. In the opening address of this work, Du Bois, notes that "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line,—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea" (1905: 13). Just as Du Bois had observed at the dawn of the twentieth century, the "color-line" to be the problem of the twentieth century—which Gordon has

described as "a line between 'normal' and 'abnormal' identities" (2000: 63)—race has indeed been one, if not, the major factor that has divided societies across the globe, in addition to religion and gender.

In this work, Du Bois sets out to critique the problem of being a black person in white America. To this end, the concepts of 'the veil' and 'double-consciousness' emerge as ways in which the author critiques black identity. By the 'veil', Du Bois has in mind "a particular sensation…of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (1905: 3). It is notable, though, that 'double-consciousness' describes an ontological condition whereby one feels his or her identity not as one but plural, and hence being torn into parts. Through these concepts, Du Bois goes on to argue that within the context of race relations in America, a context in which blackness has suffered systematic degradation, blacks suffer this double-consciousness. "One ever feels this twoness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unrecognised strivings" (1905: 3). Du Bois's argument is that blacks suffer a double identity of being black and/or African, on the one hand, and American, meaning white, on the other; the latter also being the society that rejects them. Furthermore, negative perceptions occasioned by the phenomenon of the veil and this double-consciousness lead blacks to question not only their identity and humanity but also leads to problems of black self-disparagement. The problem of 'double-consciousness' later found keen interest and attention in the work of Fanon, particularly in *Black Skin White Masks*. As we shall see below, instead of double-consciousness, Fanon proposed a triple or "third-person consciousness" (1967a: 110). For, as he saw it, the Negro[6] had in the trains and other public spaces, developed a triple awareness of his/her body and himself/herself. Accordingly, there was i) an awareness of self as

---

[6] The word Negro was a politically correct term during Fanon's days. However, over the years it has acquired negative connotations and ceased to be a politically correct term to refer to black people.

occupying space; ii) an awareness of self as seen through the gaze of the other, the white man; iii) and the sense of nausea associated with the fact of having to be made 'invisible' (Fanon 1967a: 112).

The rise of Africana existential philosophy as demonstrated in the works of the above thinkers such as Aimé Cesairé, Fanon, Lewis Gordon and Paget Henry, in the twentieth century, shows black people not only as producers of theory but also as endowed with self-reflective reason. Thus, contrary to the view that conceives of blacks as unreflective a people, this tradition clearly disproves that myth. Although existentialism with the capital 'E' originates and resonates with post-war European *angst* and the body literature produced by that continent, concerns over existential issues, such as freedom and dread, are universal phenomena. This is why Gordon in his book, *Existentia Africana* makes a distinction between Existentialism and philosophies of existence, the former being a "fundamentally European historical phenomenon" (2000: 10), while the latter being concerned with "philosophical questions, questions premised upon concerns of freedom, anguish, responsibility, embodied agency, sociality, and liberation" (2000: 10) and "by a centering of what is often known as the *situation* of questioning or inquiry itself" (2000: 10).

In a similar vein, Henry (2006) notes that the capacity for self-reflection is not something that is peculiar to Europe. On the contrary, it is something that each culture is endowed with. He asserts that within the context of Africana philosophy "the occasion for self-reflection has been the racist negating of the humanity of Africans and the caricature of 'the negro' that it has produced" (2006: 4). Henry, whose views are sililar to those of More and Gordon, views the occasion for Africana self-reflection as arising from the existential situations that blacks find themselves in relation to whiteness. Citing Enrique Dussel with approval, he asserts that

"[i]t was [as the result of] this context of colonial conquest that Africans became part of the underside of modernity" (2006: 4); and that which has occasioned the need for Africana self-reflection in the modern period. Like Fanon and some of his contemporaries, Henry locates the site of Africana self-reflection as produced by racist and anti-black situations. He, for instance, argues that because of colonial depersonalisation and the practice of uprooting Africans from their indigenous cultures, "The African has ceased to be a Yoruba or Akan and has become a 'black', a 'negro' or a 'nigger'" (2006: 4). It is in this discursive and rich philosophical tradition that this chapter seeks to place Fanon.

1.3 Fanon's Existentialism

Earlier, we noted that Africana existential philosophy is animated by black peoples' concerns in relation to the condition of being-black-in-an-anti-black social environment. These concerns relate to questions of freedom such as oppression, liberty and racism. It is these same concerns which are reflections on issues of identity, racial oppression, culture, recognition, liberty that characterise Fanon's philosophical reflections. What situates Fanon's thought within Africana existential philosophy is his insistence on understanding the black experience/condition as situationally lived experience by black people within the context of anti-blackness such as colonialism. Through transcendence, which, in reality, is a momentary suspension of the world of necessity, Fanon is able to view and reflect on the black existential condition abstractly at a meta-philosophical level. This means that the lived experience itself becomes the context that informs reflection. By making use of philosophical concepts particularly phenomenology, Fanon, in *Black Skin White Masks*, is forced to question the human status of the black subject within the context of Western hegemony and asks the question: "What does the black man want?" It is suggested that the question arises because

in a white dominated world the black subject does not hold any ontological resistance. By ontological resistance is meant that the black person does not register as a full human being and is, therefore, not recognised by a white self-consciousness as such. In other words, it is not as a human being or an 'other' that the white person sees the black, but an inferior form of being, that is, it is an inferior version of himself and is thus definitely not an equal. The reality is that as the result of inferiority complexes that result from colonial domination, the oppressed begin to internalise these pejorative ideas and stereotypes about their inherent inferiority and conversely whites internalise their superiority.

It is thus, worth recalling that through colonisation, the black person ceases to register in the white self-consciousness as a fully-fledged human being. Moreover, the oppressed is made to accept the superiority of the white man and himself as subservient to the white man. So, like his predecessors, Fanon becomes deeply concerned with the question of Being from a conceptual or philosophical point of view, that is, its meaning and/or significance. Gordon remarks in his book *Existentia Africana* of Du Bois that the latter did not simply "write of *being"* (2000: 63) but wrote more "about its meaning" (2000: 63). Similarly, Fanon does not want to simply examine Being merely from an ontological point of view but more so in terms of its *meaning* for the oppressed. He must then navigate the complex terrain of metaphysically ascertaining the status or what it means to be black in a white dominated world.

Additionally, there is another reason why Fanon's ideas are philosophical and this relates to the method of enquiry that he employs in relation to human reality. In *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man,* Gordon observes that Fanon's method or technique is existential phenomenology (1995: 45). This he ascribes to the juxtaposition of phenomenological and

existential concepts in Fanon, the problematisation of (the black) self in relation to the (white) other, "anguish over freedom" in the context of unfreedom and the raising of concern over the "*situationally* lived" existence by people of flesh and blood (Gordon 1995: 45). Indeed, because of his appeal and commitment to these values, this "situates Fanon's thought in existential philosophy and in terms of method, in existential phenomenology" (Gordon 1995: 45). The classic occasion in which Fanon employs phenomenology in existential situations is in his work, *a Dying Colonialism*. In this text, Fanon chronicles the suffering of the Algerian people under French colonialism during the Algerian War of Independence. In order to illustrate this point, Gordon notes that through our focus on the object of consciousness, the phenomenon, a philosophical or "phenomenological moment" occurs through our "suspension of certain kinds of interests" (Gordon 1995: 45) for that which is the particular object of consciousness. This kind of disciplinary commitment situates Fanon's thought broadly within philosophy and through his commitment to the situationally lived experiences of black people, in Africana existential philosophy.

It is thus for this reason that the Caribbean scholar Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2008: 93) remarks that "Indeed, Fanon's extraordinary effort to describe and examine the lived experience of the black and the condemned gain him a title of a philosopher of existence." More sees Fanon as one of the "dominant existentialist figure" (2008: 48) who has had a profound influence on Steve Biko. Although Fanon does not frequently state in his oeuvre that he is influenced by an existential outlook, there are, however, moments where this becomes explicit. In *Black Skin White Masks,* for example, he asserts that "My life is caught in the lasso of existence. My freedom turns me back to myself. No, I do not have the right to be a Negro. I do not have the right to be this or that" (Fanon 1967a: 178).

In an averment that is reminiscent of Sartrean existential philosophy, Fanon remarks that "I am not a prisoner of history. I should not seek, therefore, for the meaning of my destiny" (1967a: 179). In his lectures on existentialism, later published as *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Sartre asserts that one does not come into the world imbued with predetermined essences. Rather, these emerge later as spawned by the process of becoming. So, from this we can deduce that Sartre conceives of the process of individual development ethically as coming into being through human agency and individual responsibility. In a similar fashion, Fanon remarks that "I should constantly remind myself that the real *leap* consists in introducing invention into existence. In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself. I am part of Being to the degree that I go beyond it" (1967a: 179).

These foregoing discussion makes explicit the fact that Fanon is not merely concerned with diagnosing the black existential condition under colonial oppression and the anguish that it engenders. On the contrary, he is also concerned more critically with the question of transcendence or with "bringing invention to existence." His reflections on his situation and the problem of racial oppression in general lead him to begin raising questions on identity such as "Who or what are we?" and "What shall we do?" (More 2008: 7). For, as Gordon observes, once ontological questions of identity have been resolved, the logical thing to ask is: What shall be done? Within the context of colonial oppression, the question translates to: What shall be done about the problem of racial oppression? By situating and reflecting on the black situation on the basis of particularly lived experiences by black people within the context of anti-blackness, situates Fanon's thought within the tradition of Africana existential philosophy.

But, Fanon does not fit the typical description of the academic philosopher. As both an intellectual and activist, he must constantly oscillate between the two realms which, in fact, are dialectical. Thus, unlike the academic philosopher who merely contemplates the world, Fanon is also one who lives and puts into practice his ideas. In other words, he is one who lives his ideas. Similar sentiments are found in Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach,* when he asserts that what matters is not merely to know the world, but to change it. Similarly, Fanon is of the view that if the decolonial project is to succeed, then it is not enough to reflect and merely contemplate the world. Like Marx, Fanon is of the view that what matters is to change the world since "men change at the same time that they change the world" (Fanon 1965: 30).

Viewed from this perspective, the figure of Fanon reminds us of the Gramscian organic intellectual. In the *Prison Notebooks,* Gramsci (1971) conceives of 'intellectuals' not merely in terms of the intrinsic nature of their intellectual activities but more in terms of their social functions. His is thus a practical philosophy or more precisely, a philosophy of praxis. He defines 'praxis' as "consciousness full of contradictions in which the philosopher himself, understood both individually and as entire social group, not merely grasps the contradictions but posits himself as an element of the contradiction and elevates this element to a principle of knowledge and therefore action" (Gramsci 1971: 405). To a significant degree, Fanon epitomises this Gramscian organic or social philosopher. It is suggested in this study that Fanon's reflections on the black existential condition also situates him within black consciousness thought. For, the whole gamut of his works, from *Black Skin White Masks* to *The Wretched of the Earth*, can also be interpreted or understood as an attempt, by Fanon to raise the social and political consciousness of black people within the context of anti-

blackness, that is, as an attempt to raise the peoples' consciousness in order to understand themselves as black people under conditions of racial oppression.

His point of departure is that since colonialism as a system discriminates against and oppresses black people on the grounds of racial difference, then it is up to black people themselves, as a group, to organise and rise against that system in order to attain their freedom. His argument in this regard derives from the fact that the coloniser was not going to concede or recognize the humanity of blacks willingly. However, while Fanon sees the need for black people to rise against colonial oppression, he was also of the view that the denunciation of the colonial order ought to come about through a process of and as an outcome of self-understanding by black people themselves. This self-understanding or consciousness ought to emerge through the dialectical interaction with radical intellectuals like himself working within the anti-colonial movement (more on this in the third chapter). So, writing within the context of European colonialism and metropolitan racism particularly in France where Fanon encountered fierce racism while undertaking his studies in Lyon, he asserts that "The black is a black man; that is, as the result of a series of aberrations of affect, he is rooted at the core of the universe from which he must be extricated" (1967a: 2). By "the core of the universe", I interpret Fanon to mean the world or condition of race-based oppression and the system of anti-blackness in the colonies and the metropolitan countries within which blacks are immersed and from which they must be extricated. It is this complex reality that Fanon wants black people to be conscious of.

So writing with the social and economic reality that anti-blackness has produced in the world, Fanon argues that "it is apparent to me that the effective disalienation of the black man entails an immediate recognition of social and economic realities" (1967a: 4). As he construed

it, black alienation was not an individual problem nor merely a problem of phylogeny or ontogeny since besides these stood the question of sociogeny which is development through or because of social factors. Given the fact that historically these influenced each other, Fanon counsels that "The black man must wage his war on both levels" (1967a: 4). His objective is the understanding of the reality within which black people found themselves as this would lead to calling into question the colonial system by the oppressed as he avers that "Reality, for once, requires a total understanding. On the objective level as well as on the subjective level, a solution has to be supplied" (1967a: 4). All this, it is suggested, shows that Fanon can also be situated within black consciousness thought.

Furthermore, besides being an abstract thinker that made ready use of philosophical concepts, Fanon was also a philosopher of praxis. As we have established, he occupied both the intellectual and material realms in such a way that the one informed the other in a dialectical and symbiotic fashion. As is also demonstrated in the third Chapter, his form of praxis is rooted in the temporal which means that solutions to humanity's problems ought to arise and be informed by reality as it exists on the ground. In this regard, he asserts that "Every human problem must be considered from the standpoint of time. Ideally, the present will always contribute to the building of the future" (1967a: 5). Elsewhere he remarks that "this future is not the future of the cosmos but rather the future of my century, my country, my existence. In no fashion should I undertake to prepare the world that would come later. I belong irreducible to my time" (1967a: 6). It is this form of praxis that informed Fanon's approach towards the anti-colonial movement and his praxis quickly appealed to liberation movements such as the Black Panther Movement in the United States and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in South Africa which was led by Biko.

Within the South African context, Thomas K Ranuga (1986) notes that "The radical ideas of Fanon became available at the most critical juncture in the liberation struggle of Azania [South Africa]" (1986: 186) as this was the time when South Africa's liberation movements such as the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) had been banned by the apartheid government. According to More, "Both Fanon's classics texts *Black Skin White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, became the grounding texts of the Black Consciousness philosophy in South Africa" (2008: 48). These accounts testify to the influence of Fanon's thought and in terms of method show Fanon as an Africana philosopher of existence. Furthermore, Fanon's practice of making use of existential concepts and methods in order to understand existence as lived by black people under structures of anti-blackness, situates him within Africana existential philosophy. There are, however, some commentaries on the work of Fanon that do not view him as a philosopher and this is true, for example, of David Caute (1970).

Although acknowledging the influence of Sartre and, to a lesser degree Marx, on Fanon, Caute does not conceive of Fanon as 'a philosopher' or, at the very least, he does not think of Fanon as a philosopher in the 'proper' sense of the term. Caute makes a distinction between a philosopher proper and a social philosopher. The former approaches philosophy as a purely abstract intellectual activity not necessarily context-based and is guided by a philosophical method whereas the latter is not. After making such a distinction, Caute then moves to assert that the application of a philosophical method is not readily discernible in Fanon, that is, the method is implicit rather than explicit. On this basis, he concludes that since Fanon does not rigorously apply a philosophical method, then he "was not a philosopher" (Caute 1970: 33).

My reading of Caute's position on Fanon (and we can extend this to include black thinkers in general), is that he unwittingly makes the cardinal mistake we noted above, so characteristic of the Western philosophical canon of collapsing philosophy and reason with whiteness and experience with blackness and this cannot be further from the truth. For, if as a criterion, we take analytical philosophy that Caute prioritises as the criterion of what constitute philosophy, then other 'philosophical' traditions would not count as philosophy. According to this criterion, which is now widespread particularly in the academy, Continental, Indian, Chinese and African philosophies would not qualify as 'philosophy'. An ethnocentric (in this case, a Eurocentric) view, therefore, can be quite dangerous as it evaluates other cultures according to its own standards and expectations.

Historically, this was the case with Europe's encounters with other cultures in the rest of the globe which eventually led to the colonisation of non-European peoples. For example, Howard Zinn (2007) shows that when Christopher Columbus encountered the Arawaks (the people native to the island presently known as the Bahamas), he relied on the cultural standards of Western European civilisations in order to judge Arawakian culture. Having met the Arawaks, it is remarked that Columbus quickly jotted down in his diary the following: "They [the Arawaks] did not bear arms, and do not know them, for I showed them a sword, they took it by the edge and cut themselves out of ignorance. They had no iron. Their spears are made out of cane" (Columbus, cited in Zinn 2007: 1). What we note here is that because the Arawaks had not achieved the same cultural standard as the European civilizations, Columbus deemed them to be primitive and uncivilised and concludes on this basis that "They would make fine servants. Wwith fifty men we could subjugate them...and make them do whatever we want" (Cited in Zinn 2007: 1). What I am trying to illustrate here is that through

ethnocentrism, one can quickly dismiss another culture as backward because it simply does not conform or correspond to his or her own culture and the same is true in philosophy. The fact that Fanon's method (and other non-Western philosophical traditions) does not conform, for example, to Hegel's system, should not be taken as a foregone conclusion that Fanon is not a philosopher as Caute has concluded, since he is using another philosophical tradition that is appropriate for his context and purposes.

Furthermore, Caute points to another reason why Fanon is not a philosopher. This reason stems from the first, that is, the difference between those thinkers that rigorously employ a philosophical method like, for example, Sartre or Hegel and those that do not. I take Fanon and Sartre to be both existential thinkers and the foregoing discussion on Fanon's existentialism shows why. Despite the two thinkers being existentialists, Caute, however, takes the position that Fanon can be explained in terms of Sartre. In other words, Fanon's thought, according to Caute is a derivative of Sartre. As he puts it: "[t]he testimony of Fanon provides inseparable evidence for the wider and more complexly articulated system of Sartre" (Caute 1970: 33). Unlike Sartre or a white person, "the Negro", as he further explains "is thrown into the world in a total sense that escapes the white man" (Caute 1970: 33). Having stated this, he does not go on to explain what he means by the Negro being "thrown into the world" in a manner that is different to other human beings.

To Caute's charge that Fanon's thought is derivative of Sartre, I shall have two responses: first, that existentialism and philosophy in general, are universal phenomenona. As was noted above, the ability to philosophise is not a proclivity peculiar to Europe or the white man. This is why we have Indian, African, Chinese philosophies among others. Moreover, in relation to the existential philosophical tradition, Gordon observes in *Fanon and the Crisis of European*

Man that since existentialism concerns dealing with issues of dread, anguish over the reality that unfreedom poses in relation to liberation, "One need only find black philosophers who hold these theses and one will encounter, regardless of their self-ascription, existential philosophers" (1995: 45). Although Gordon stretched matters here a little by including "everyone", it is suggested here that by having committed himself, in terms of thought and action and by virtue of having shown fidelity to such existentialist tenets as described above, Fanon qualifies as a philosopher of existence.

Gordon further observes that some of the most recognisable figures in Western existentialism, such as Kierkegaard, Buber and Heidegger did not exactly call or regard themselves as existential thinkers. However, the fact that they use "its line of critique…they can easily be found in discussions of a small set of thinkers who include Sartre and de Beauvoir" (Gordon 1995: 45)[7]. In the case of Fanon, although the thinker does not often ascribe to himself the title of an existentialist thinker, there are moments when this becomes explicit. Moreover, the fact of his immersion and preoccupation with existential concerns and his making use of its line of critique, qualifies Fanon as an existential philosopher.

Secondly, by maintaining that Fanon can be explained in terms of Sartre, Caute fails to regard Fanon's originality within the existentialist tradition. It is true that Fanon owes intellectual debt to Sartre and other thinkers. This is unquestionable as Fanon scholars such as Macey, Gendzier and Geismar have also pointed out. However, appropriating the ideas of particular thinkers for your own intellectual objectives is not a uniquely Fanonian thing. Marx did the

---

[7] Consideration should also be given to Caute's charge about the lack of a philosophically articulated method in Fanon. However, as Gordon demonstrates that the fact that one does not attribute a title to oneself, does not necessarily mean that it does not apply to them. Gordon proves this to be the case with such figures as Kierkegaard, Buber and Heidegger.

same, for example, to Hegel's idealistic philosophy by materialising it and thus bringing it down to earth. Nobody, however, would question Marx's intellectual standing. Similarly, Fanon makes use of Sartre to understand the alienation of the black subject. Unlike Sartre, Fanon prioritises race as a critical factor in understanding the situation of blackness. Therefore, from this perspective, we can deduce that Caute's observation that Fanon is or was not a philosopher does not hold up to scrutiny.

Pursuant to understanding the black condition, Fanon recognises that racial prejudice has eroded the humanity of the black subject, that while whiteness *is* blackness *is not*. For this reason, blackness still needs to re-establish itself, first, as both self and other. This means that within the context of race relations in general, it is only then that black people can be recognised at a human level.

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter set out to locate Fanon within the Africana existential tradition. To this end, it was noted that Existentialism as an intellectual movement concerns reflections on the human condition which include, *inter alia*, concerns over issues of identity, freedom, dread life and being in the world. As a branch of Africana Philosophy, Africana existentialism was shown to have as its focus, the black cultural experience and the historical reality of having been born black in a world of anti-blackness. Because of his immersion and reflections on the black existential conditions and making use of existential concepts, the figure of Fanon is placed within the Africana existential tradition.

Furthermore, it was noted that there is, in the Western philosophical canon, a tendency to locate black intellectual production within the autobiographical frame. The danger is that

when this happens, black political and philosophical ideas are lost. It is an old phenomenon dating back to early European ideas about the absence of reason among the Africans which is a phenomenon well captured in Leopold Senghor's controversial statement that "Emotion is Negro as Reason is Greek" (Cited in Serequeberham 2000: 16). But, through the writings of black radical thinkers such as Fanon, it was shown that reason is not something that is uniquely European and that self-reflective reason is something that each culture is endowed with. The implication of this is that contrary to common beliefs, philosophy is not a Greek phenomenon, but a universal phenomenon. Fanon's philosophical reflections on the black existential condition, proves and qualifies him as a philosopher of existence. Having located Fanon within existential philosophy, we are now in a position of ascertaining the grounds on which Fanon proposes an existential conception of alienation.

Chapter II

The Concept of Alienation in Fanon

2.0 Introduction

Having located Fanon within the Africana existential tradition, this chapter makes an argument for an existentialist conception of alienation in Fanon's thought. To this end, existing analyses of alienation in the literature are drawn upon to establish what alienation, as philosophically understood by Fanon, involves. It will become clear that Fanon's general understanding of how colonised people are economically and socially marginalised, together with the resultant psychological and cultural problems consequent to the problem of colonisation are the more dominant approaches to his (Fanon) studies. While these approaches and readings are important, the existential philosophical analysis also features prominently. It is thus the aim of this chapter to argue for a reading of the concept of alienation in Fanon in existential and therefore, philosophical frame. Thus, the argument that is put forward is that Fanon's concept of alienation, within the context of European colonial conquest, can be conceived of as colonial despair. Notably, the despair in this regard emanates from the reality of being structured outside of humanity. Thus, it is hoped that by introducing a philosophical frame in which his theory of alienation can be read, the study contributes to prevailing scholarship on the concept in Fanon studies and to knowledge in general.

This chapter begins with an analytical explication of the concept of alienation. This is followed by a discussion of some of the aspects of alienation that arise in Fanon scholarship such as

socio-economic, psychological and cultural alienation. Subsequently, the chapter then argues for an existential conception of alienation in Fanon's thought. This, it is hoped, will address the gap that exists regarding the manner in which the concept of alienation in Fanon is /or can be read.

2.1 Alienation: A Conceptual Analysis

The term 'alienation' derives from the Latin word *aliēnātiō*, meaning 'to transfer', 'to surrender' or 'to dispossess'. The traditional usage of the term was largely in relation to property. Thus, 'to alienate' in this context would mean to part with or transfer something (for example, property) to another. In the field of law, alienation refers to the conveyance of a title of property while in its medico-psychological sense it refers to mental disorders, whereby the individual loses his/her ability to exercise reason and to distinguish right from wrong thus becoming estranged from the self and the world. According to the German scholar Erich Fromm (1955), the French word *aliéné* and the Spanish word *alienado* originally referred to the psychotic. (1955: 121).

In the recent past, 'alienation' has come to denote a wide range of phenomena describing various social ills. The renowned sociologist Melvin Seeman (1959), in his definitive essay "On Alienation" identifies five psycho-social pathologies associated with this concept. These pathologies are powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement. Seeman views these modes of being within the analytical framework of three other related concepts namely, 'reward value', 'behaviour' and 'expectancy'. In Seeman's conceptual framework, alienation as meaninglessness is viewed as a "'low expectancy' that satisfactory predictions about future outcomes of 'behaviour' can be made" (1959: 786). His view in this regard is accounted for by his construal of meaninglessness as a condition in which the individual has lost control over the physical world as well as the understanding of social

events. Consequently, his ability to act appropriately in any given situation diminishes thus resulting in him/her becoming alienated.

Tron Overend (1975), on the other hand, analyses the concept of alienation in terms of its locutionary power. In terms of this approach, a distinction is made between what the term refers to "being what the term denotes" and what "the term connotes" (Overend 1975: 304). Since the concept has been in existence for a long period and has acquired, in time, different forms throughout history, Overend emphasises the denotative aspect of this concept, largely because of its contingent identification with certain forms of existence and contexts. Identity statements in the form a=b can thus be made. Thus, having analysed the various contexts (for example, in Theology, Philosophy and Sociology) in which the term has been used, Overend has developed the following identity statements:

(a) Alienation is the separation of man [humanity] from the citizen body.

(b) Alienation is the loss or derangement of mental faculties.

(c) Alienation is the universal saleability. (Hobbes, Adam Smith).

(d) Alienation is the separation of mind from its essence, (Hegel).

(e) Alienation is reification, through religion, of man's essence (Feuerbach).

(f) Alienation is the separation/estrangement of man from nature.

(g) Alienation is the separation/estrangement of man from himself.

 (h) Alienation is the separation/estrangement of man from production.

(i) Alienation is the separation/estrangement of man from other men. (Marx) (Overend 1975: 308-309).

These identity statements demonstrate that alienation has many different qualities and connotations. It is against this backdrop, therefore, that Overend observes that these statements "reveal a common class the term alienation denotes" (1975: 309). Thus, from the various uses of the term, Overend deduces that alienation is related to the following

conditions: "'separation', 'saleability', 'reification', and 'estrangement'" (1975: 309). These conditions as suggested by Overend are facts which are not qualitative but relational facts to which the term relates. Based on this, Overend concludes that the term 'alienation' "has the common reference of the relational term (R)[8] as distinct from the qualitative (a or b)"[9] (1975: 309).

Since the publication of Marx's the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (1977), however, a popular conception of alienation has emerged namely, that of alienation as separation or estrangement. This notion has influenced a diverse group of scholars across the disciplines. This conception, for example, occurs in Marx's explication of the idea of estranged labour in a capitalist society. It is a useful way of conceiving of alienation, in that, it provides a general understanding from which other related concepts can be derived. The transfer of title to property, for instance, entails a separation of the owner from his property. The *loss* of control over social events reflects the fact that the individual has lost the ability to enforce certain outcomes in familiar situations. Thus, mental derangement, for example, involves an absolute separation of the individual from his ability to exercise his rational faculties.

Allen Buchanan's (1979) conception of alienation views the idea of exploitation as constitutive of alienation in Marx. At the heart of Buchanan's analysis lies the idea that bourgeois social relations in general are exploitative. He does not want to confine alienation narrowly within the production process but extends it to the broader society. Buchanan thus rejects as 'mistaken' commentaries that emphasise exploitation in Marx as limited only to 'the labour process itself'. For Buchanan, exploitation is central to bourgeois social relations in general and that on its own it does not constitute a form of injustice. However, what is disconcerting

---

[8] 'R' according to Overend is the relational term such as 'separation' (Overend 1975: 309).
[9] May refer to two or more qualities joined by R such as 'man' and 'nature' (Overend 1975: 309).

for Buchanan is that, in capitalist societies the owners of the means of production appropriate and exploit the creative energy of the working class for their own material gain.

It can thus be inferred from the explication above that Buchanan invites us to consider the Marxian suggestion that the wage-labourer's day should be conceived as divided into two parts. So, in the first part, the worker produces commodities equivalent to the wage he receives. In the second part of the working day, the worker works and produces for the capitalist since "what he produces is appropriated by the capitalist and is not returned to the worker in the form of wages" (1979: 123). Thus, since the capitalist exploits the surplus wage-labour for himself, Buchanan, like Marx, regards this as exploited labour because it exploits the worker and robs him of his labour power. Quoting Holmstrong, Buchanan avers that "It is the fact that the [capitalist's] income is derived through *forced, unpaid, surplus* [wage] *labor, the product of which the workers do not control*, which makes [wage labor] exploitative" (Cited in Buchanan 1979: 123).

What transpires from the explication above is that the ability to exploit (wage-labour) presupposes the possession of power by the capitalist over the worker, that is, the possession of coercive power. From this perspective, therefore, it can be surmised that wage-labour, as Buchanan observes, constitutes forced labour. This is because, the worker is left with no choice since it is the capitalist who owns the means of production. The consequence is that the workers are condemned to wage labour. The workers are left with little or no choice because "the threat of unemployment" and of "starvation" hangs over them should they decide not to enter the wage contract (Buchanan 1979: 123). Thus, exploitation, coupled with force and coercion, constitutes the necessary conditions for alienation which, according to Bhuchanan, underpins the labour process.

Buchanan further asserts that there is a certain generality as regards the idea of exploitation that goes beyond the labour process, regardless of class, stating that "the point, rather, is that…bourgeois human relations in general are exploitative; this includes not only his relations with the worker, but with his fellow bourgeois as well" (1979: 125). To illustrate the point, Buchanan refers to an example of individuals in the same economic class such as bankers or merchants. Although there is no wage-relation between them, they nevertheless exploit one another. This is because they view each other as means to further their own ends, that is, as an instrument to advance one's own ends. Thus, as a matter of convenience, "Each harmfully utilises the other as a mere means to his own advantage. Each views the needs and desires of the other not as needs and desires, but as levers to be manipulated, as weaknesses to be preyed upon" (1979: 126).

The view of alienation as separation is also supported by Richard Schacht (1970). Schacht notes that "When confronted with the term, one can reasonably be sure that the matter under discussion is some sort of separation" (1970: 241). It is noticeable that in virtually all the traditional uses of the term, Schacht identifies separation as being fundamental. The implication thereof is that for alienation to occur, a previous condition of unity must have existed. Thus, to be alienated, according to Schacht, is to be separated from something, someone or a group people. There are, however, instances when this unity has never existed and when alienation or separation arises as a lack. This is so particularly in the case of the psychotic (the self-alienated) or a mentally deranged person. Such persons need not have attained the ideal selfhood or connectedness with others to be alienated. When for some or other reason, this ideal is desired but not achieved, the said individual may be said to be in a state of alienation. So, we can deduce that regardless of how the separation comes about, for alienation to obtain, there must be disunity between things or beings that once belonged or

ought to belong together. To some degree, this notion is also present in Fanon's understanding of alienation as demonstrated in the discussion that follows.

Sinari Ramakant (1970), on the one hand, claims that alienation describes a situation in which the alien, as it were, is no longer in harmony with his/her milieu. Ramakant's notion of disharmony is also underpinned by the idea of separation. To this effect, she asserts that "On the level of subjective experience, alienation implies a strange feeling of being in a situation with which one is not in harmony. The suffering and anguish of an alien springs from the fact of his incongruous relationship with his situation" (Sinari 1970: 125). Arguably, the lack of harmony reflects a discordance or separation of things that once belonged together; "suffering" and "anguish" are the symptoms of not being in accord with the universe.

Mazruchi (1973), on the other hand, suggests that there are two types of alienation. The first is social alienation, whereby individuals find the social system in which they live to be oppressive and, in consequence of this, feel estranged from it. The other is self-alienation which refers to a situation in which individual selves lose any inclinations that conform to prevailing social patterns or norms. In this latter instance of alienation, a human being is, through some external medium, "denied a feeling of integrity" (Mazruchi 1973: 115) which comes about through the possession of his soul and body by another. In Mazruchi's account, alienation manifests itself as a frustration of the self's ability to carry out ends which can be said to be its own through ownership and control by another. A typical example of this phenomenon is slavery.

Similarly, Bernard Murchland (1969) perceives the problem of alienation in the modern period as a sociological phenomenon. Vewing it from this perspective enables Murchland to associate the concept with the rise of 'individualism' and 'atomism', which he argues has led to the "pulverization of being" (Murchland 1969: 434). Following Horowitz, he states that this

monism refers to a "separation" whereby "the parts are separated out – whether [the separation] be personal, social or scientific" (1969: 437).

One of the most sustained accounts of alienation in the twentieth century is offered by Erich Fromm in his work, *The Sane Society*. In this work, Fromm offers a psycho-social critique of modern society and makes use of Marxian categories in this regard. He notes that modern society can be analysed through the category of idolatry. Thus, according to Fromm, an idolatrous man is one that bows down to his own creation or creations (1955: 118). Notably, this is closely connected to the phenomenon of worship in religion as Fromm notes that the object of worship is either God in monotheistic religions, or any of the artifacts of worship in polytheistic religions. Fromm's argument in this regard is that in these kinds of religion, the object of worship is nothing other than the product of man's own creative energy. After having created this object (the idol), he, in turn, bows down to it as "The idol represents his life-forces in an alienated form" (1955: 118). Having created this idol, man will submit all his powers, reason and love to it only to pray to receive some of what he has projected onto it back. The idol, as an externalization of the self and as something standing independently over and above the individual, represents the process of alienation.

Having laid this foundation, Fromm is then able to provide a critique of alienation in modern capitalist societies. He maintains that "Alienation as we find it in modern society is almost total" (1955: 121). This is because while man has created a world of man-made effects as never seen before, through the system of private property, these creations stand over and above he who created them in the first place. In the same way as with idolatry, modern humanity no longer experiences himself as an embodiment of free will, power and agency, but as an "impoverished 'thing,' dependent on powers outside of himself" (Fromm 1955: 121). These externally constituted powers now confront him as an alien force standing over and

against him. In consequence, he no longer considers himself as the center of the universe. The irony is that the more he produces, the more powerless he becomes. "He confronts himself with his own forces embodied in things he has created, alienated from himself" (1955: 121). This phenomenon resembles idolatry whereby the individual becomes subservient to the product(s) of his own creations.

Fanon's concept of alienation contains many of the elements of alienation identified above. For example, it was noted that the dominant themes arising from the above discussion, to which Fanon finds an interest, are those of alienation as separation (or estrangement) and exploitation. This view is particularly present in the Marxian critique of bourgeois society. However, for Marx, alienation becomes the separation or estrangement of the proletariat from the product of his labour, fellow workers, work activity itself and from himself. Notably, this is also the theory upon which both Buchanan, Schacht and to some extent Fromm, build their theories of alienation upon in relation to modern society. Fanon, too, becomes interested in Marx's theory of alienation as separation and as exploitation. But for him, the concern is with the alienation of the colonized black subject. This means that for Fanon, race becomes the focal point of analysis. Accordingly, Fanon observes that through the system of colonialism, blacks are separated or estranged from their potential as complete human beings. Furthermore, through this system, blacks are economically exploited and the products of their labour separated from them as these are shipped to the colonial powers in Europe. What this discloses is that, although Fanon's ideas encompass a dynamic conception of alienation, the element of separation is also present in his analysis. The following, therefore, is a discussion of Fanon's concept of alienation.

2.2 Literature on Fanon's Concept of Alienation

As a black radical intellectual writing at the zeitgeist of colonialism and metropolitan racism, Fanon's concern is primarily with the alienation of colonised Blacks and Arabs in the Third World, particularly in Africa. Alienation, particularly the type experienced by blacks, was his central preoccupation. He thus sets out on an intellectual endeavor to study and understand the situation of life as lived by colonized people in a white dominated world. In this endeavor, he produces four works, *Black Skin White Masks, The Wretched of the Earth*, *A Dying Colonialism* and *Towards the African Revolution*[10]. The theme of alienation in these works features prominently. However, as noted above, literature on the notion of alienation in Fanon reflects a preponderance towards socio-economic alienation, psychological, cultural alienation or a combination of these. This is true of scholars such as Hussein Bulhan (1985), David Caute (1970) and Jock McCulloch (1983) to mention but a few.

These forms of alienation as enumerated above are addressed by Fanon, albeit in varying degrees, in all his major texts. For instance, he declares at the beginning of *Black Skin White Masks* that "The analysis that I am undertaking is psychological" (Fanon 1967a: 4) and continues asserting that "This book is a clinical study" (1967a: 5), which suggests a strictly psychological treatment of what is to follow. This, however, does not restrict him from addressing alienation philosophically in the same text. For example, the chapter titled "The Fact of Blackness" is one in which Fanon employs existential phenomenological concepts to render one of the sharpest critiques of the situation or 'fact' of being black in a white man's world. This is later followed by the famous section: "The Negro and Hegel" in which as a response to Hegel, Fanon treats the problem of recognition in a profoundly philosophical

---

[10] The last work published posthumously.

frame. These methodological shifts demonstrate the intellectual eclecticism of Fanon and, in particular, the divergent ways in which he conceives of alienation. As stated before, however, the purpose of this chapter and the whole study is to probe into Fanon's formulation of a philosophical framework in which the concept may be read.

As noted earlier, approaches to the study of alienation in Fanon are diverse with some rendering either a psychological treatment (McCulloch 1983 & Bulhan 1985), intellectual (Hansen 1977), and others like Zahar (1974) and Onwuanibe (1983) emphasing the socio-economic aspects of alienation. For reasons of completeness and logical development, we begin the chapter with a brief commentary on these.

2.2.1 *Socio-economic alienation*

Having engaged in a close reading of Fanon's texts, it becomes evident that the source of black social and economic alienation stems from the colonial encounter between Europeans and Africans. Through reports from travelers[11] and other pioneers such as Columbus that pointed to the 'cultural backwardness' of 'non-European' peoples in the rest of the world, the view of the amenability of these people to colonial conquest as Columbus's report earlier suggests, emerged. Economically, the conquest meant that the economic activities of the conquered people would now be directed to the interests of the conquering European powers. It so happened that the conquered 'natives' could also be distinguished by the colour of their skin, that is to say, as being darker than their European counterparts. This natural accident, then, becomes a marker of civilization. In other words, the lighter your skin colour, is the more civilised you are and vice versa. For the colonized, he or she, according to Fanon, "will be elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's

---

[11] See V.Y. Mudimbe *The Invention of Africa*.

cultural standards" (1967a: 8). It is on this basis that colonial society becomes exclusionary. Moreover, the fact of the coloniser being a European and hence not an indigene of Africa. It is against this backdrop, therefore, that Fanon often speaks of the settler as a 'foreigner' and as an 'outsider'. To this effect, he asserts that: "The governing race is first and foremost those who came from somewhere, those who are unlike the original inhabitants, 'the others'" (1967a: 31).

From the foregoing discussion, it can be gleaned that Fanon's assessment of colonial society is predicated on class formation which then takes on a racial dimension. In other words, there is a correlation between skin colour and class. Accordingly, the privileged classes are white Europeans while the poor, socially and economically marginalised are the indigenous blacks or Arabs. Thus, social privilege is determined through the criterion of skin colour. As Fanon puts it: "In the colonies the economic substructure is also the superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich" (Fanon 1967b: 31).

Within this context, the individual's economic status becomes a fact of having been born into a specific given race. This means that one's poverty or privilege depends on which side one falls in the racial divide. As Fanon puts it: "When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species" (Fanon 1967b: 30-31). So, what begins as cultural and racial difference materializes into economic privilege. It is in this sense then that the black subject becomes socially and economically alienated and made inferior. Furthermore, since it is as a group that blacks are socially marginalized and excluded, it is also as a group that they organize and demand recognition.

The idea of associating race with privilege, or lack thereof, later found a proponent in the political thought of Biko (1978). Biko notes that the colour question was introduced in South African politics for economic reasons (1978: 87-88). The idea, as he views it, was to create a barrier that would justify white privilege at the expense of indigenous people. Thus, he avers: "The leaders of the white community had to create some kind of barrier between blacks and whites so that the whites could enjoy privileges at the expense of blacks and still feel free to give a moral justification for the obvious exploitation that pricked even the hardest of white consciences" (Biko 1978: 88). So, like Fanon, Biko conceives of economic exploitation as being at the heart of black social and economic marginalization.

Having noted how race and class functions in colonial society Fanon comments in the following manner: "If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process:— primarily, economic;—subsequently, the internalization—or, better, the epidermalisation — of this inferiority" (Fanon 1967a: 4). It is on this basis, therefore, that colonial society reveals itself as Manichean in character. Furthermore, its Manichaeism manifests itself in terms of the geographical layout with separate zones of existence for whites and blacks and this is what he refers to at the beginning of *Black Skin White Masks* as "dual narcissism" (Fanon 1967a: 3). As noted thus far, such a division of society has implications with regards to the quality of life in the two zones. The reality of belonging to either of the zones follows what Fanon calls "the principle of reciprocal exclusivity" (1967b: 30). This reality is explained at length in *The Wretched of the Earth* wherein it is averred that "The settler's town is a strongly-built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly-lit town…The settler's feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea; but there you are never close enough to see them" (1967b: 30). In contrast to this, "The 'native' town" is described by Fanon as "a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light…a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town

wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs" (1967b: 30). Through the characterization of colonial society in the manner just described, Fanon shows how race materializes into social and economic privilege. It is in this way that socio-economic alienation may be read in Fanon's thought and it is in this sense that Richard Onwuanibe, on the whole, also reads alienation in Fanon.

Notably, although Onwuanibe (1983) shows awareness of the psychological and cultural impacts of colonization, he stresses a socio-economic reading of alienation in Fanon. To this end, he finds resonance in the way in which both Fanon and Marx treat alienation namely, as a fact of economic life (1983: 41). However, unlike Marx, Onwuanibe observes that although alienation, in Fanon, manifests itself as a socio-economic problem, its source is, in fact, racial prejudice. It is this system of racial exclusion that ensures the endurance of colonialism even if the economy may suffer. Therefore, attendant to the system of exclusion is the economic rationale of the colonial system. In our view Onwuanibe is correct in linking black economic alienation in Fanon with colonial and racial prejudice. However, by merely focusing on socio-economic aspect, his reading does not account for the philosophical or existential aspect of alienation in Fanon.

2.2.2 *Psychological alienation*

Another view of alienation that arises in Fanon's thought is that of psychological alienation. While in France Fanon studied psychiatry[12] and on completion of his studies, he went on to practice as a Chief Psychiatrist at Blida-Joinville as part of the French colonial service in that country. Notably, his training as a psychiatrist becomes instrumental in analyzing and understanding the impact of French colonialism on ordinary Algerians. His assessment of the

---

[12] See for example the autobiographical notes of Irene Gendzier (1973), Peter Geismar (1971) and David Macey (2000).

political environment under which his patients lived, led him to believe that the colonial situation in Algeria militated against his efforts at healing his mental patients at the hospital. Originally from Martinique, an island that also fell under French occupation, Fanon begins to show solidarity with the Algerian peoples' cause for liberation. He soon breaks rank with France and in his parting with the colonial power, he writes a letter of resignation which he addressed to the Resident Minister as an "outraged French citizen" (Macey 2000: 299). In this letter, Fanon raises serious concerns about the impact that French colonialism was having on the mental wellbeing of colonised Algerians. He writes:

> Madness is one of the means man has of losing his freedom. And I can say, on the basis of what I have been able to observe, from this point of vantage, that the degree of alienation of the inhabitants of this country appears to me frightening.

> If psychiatry is the medical technique that aims to enable man no longer to be a stranger to his environment, I owe it to myself to affirm that the Arab, permanently an alien in his own country, lives in a state of absolute depersonalisation (Fanon 1967b: 52-54).

As he wrote this letter, Fanon had already pledged solidarity with the oppressed of Algeria and their efforts for liberation. Furthermore, the passage demonstrates the influence of psychiatry in his analysis of the political and social situation of Algeria. He later commented that it did not take one to be trained in psychology in order to realize the trauma and the wretchedness under which the people of Algeria lived under French colonial occupation. Furthermore, as a direct result of the French occupation in Algeria, Fanon begins noting the rise of mental illnesses. The fact of being mentally impacted by the occupation meant, for the

person concerned, that alienation would be 'felt' doubly firstly, he or she will suffer alienation from the self and, secondly, he/she was alienated from the environment or social milieu.

Jock McCulloch (1983) is one of Fanon's commentators to emphasise a psychological reading of the concept of alienation. He recognises the infusion of psychiatry with politics in Fanon's works. In his book *Black Soul White Artifact*, he argues that Fanon's narrative takes the form of political psychology in which alienation is presented as a form of colonial deficiency (1983: 125). McCulloch further observes that Fanon's psychiatry was not the kind that is normally practiced in the West, but rather what he calls "ethnopsychiatry" (1983: 13). In his view, Fanon aimed at nothing less than the invention of a theory of the psychic life of colonial man. I argue that McCulloch misses the point in this regard, in that, while it is true that Fanon made use of his training in psychiatry to understand the psychic life of colonised people particularly in Algeria, he, however, does not confine his analyses only to the colonised as he also extends his thought in order to understand the mind of the oppressor. So, by confining Fanon's analyses only to the colonised people and in this sense referring to his methodology as "ethnopsychiatry" leads to race reductionism, meaning his psychiatric work only makes sense when applied to colonised cultures. Essentially, therefore, McCulloch fails to acknowledge the scope and wide applicability of Fanon's analyses. It is also on this basis that Ato Sekyi-Otu (1996) criticizes McCulloch. Sekyi-Otu (1996: 44) observes that reading Fanon in such "race reductionist" terms leads to perceiving Fanon as an ethno-philosophical thinker. On the question of race and class, Sekyi-Otu avers that McCulloch's eyes "light up when he comes across a mention of class determinism in Fanon's texts" (1996: 44).

Notwithstanding McCulloch's race reductionist reading of psychological alienation in Fanon, it is argued that in order to fully understand this aspect of alienation in Fanon, it is worth tracing it back to his initial discussion of this psychological alienation in *Black Skin White Masks*. Here, Fanon makes a distinction between a child that grows up in a white family and a child growing up in a black family. In the former, he observes that in a white dominated society the characteristics of the family mirror those of the social environment. As such, Fanon notes that a white child growing up under such an environment will become a normal man (1967a: 109-110) which means that his/her values will conform to the standards and expectations of his/her society. Sadly, the same cannot be said of the black child. Notably, there exists a disproportion between the life of a black family and the wider colonial society, that is, there is a mismatch between the values of a black family and that of society. As such, the black child, albeit growing up in a normal family will become abnormal. As asserted by Fanon (1967a: 111), this abnormality occurs as the child begins to be in contact with the (white) world. Since the values enshrined in state institutions are not congruent to those of her/his family, the disproportion that ensues causes psychic traumas.

Thus, following Freud, Fanon accepts the thesis that psychological traumas are related to certain traumatic experiences, or *Erlebnisse* (1967a: 111). According to Freud, the victim is not readily aware of these traumas because they are suppressed in the unconscious. However, when it comes to the black subject, the same cannot be said. In this regard, Fanon is of the view that the oppressed cannot and does not have the luxury of having these traumas suppressed in the subconscious. This is so because the racial drama is played out in the open in the colonies[13] (Fanon 1967b: 112) as "white man oppresses [the black] with the whole

---

[13] In this regard Sartre is quoted in the Preface of the 1967 translation of *The Wretched of the Earth* translated by Constance Farrington as saying "In the colonies the truth stood naked" (1967b: 7). Here Sartre is echoing Fanon's concerns about the brutality and human degradation of 'natives' in the colonies.

weight of his blackness" (Fanon 1967b: 116). Thus, contrary to Freud's averment in this regard, the subject of racial oppression cannot make the scenes of traumatic experience disappear into the unconscious. Psychologically speaking, the success of the system, among other things, can be seen by the emergence of the colonized personality type. This is the period in which the coping mechanism of colonized individuals finally collapses as the result of the extraordinary circumstances that colonialism imposes upon the 'natives'.

The psychological impact of colonization on the Arab population in Algeria becomes evident from the number of mental cases about which Fanon recounts in the last chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth* titled "Colonial War and Mental Disorders". Although some of the cases involved Europeans, most are of Algerians who have had traumatic experiences as a result of the war and of colonization in general. Furthermore, of the European cases recorded, it appears as though they arose largely as a result, in one way or the other, of their involvement in the torture of Algerians. The Algerian cases, on the other hand, are mostly of those on the receiving end of the brutality and torture. As a psychiatrist now firmly on the side of the Algerian people, Fanon's observation is that the war has "become a favorable breeding-ground for mental disorders" (1967b: 201). It is in this sense, in our view, that psychological alienation in Fanon can be read. This brings our discussion to cultural alienation in the next section.

2.2.3 *Cultural Alienation*

European colonialism in Africa, like in many parts of the world, was accompanied by cultural imposition. For optimal exploitation, Europe sought to change the cultural landscape of the conquered territories to mirror that of Europe. This meant the destruction of indigenous modes of knowing, a phenomenon known as epistemicide, the destruction and/or distortion of local cultures and their supersession by European epistemologies, cultural norms and

standards. In this regard, Fanon speaks of the "[cultural] rehabilitation of Africa, Mexican and Peruvian civilisations" (1967b: 168). The "rehabilitation" in question is not aimed at enriching or enhancing indigenous cultures as the word might suggest. On the contrary, rehabilitation meant bringing these regions within the cultural hegemony and grip of the occupying European power. To this end, colonialism disfigures, distorts and devalues indigenous cultures to the extent that the local people themselves no longer find value and worth in their own cultures in relation to the cultural hegemony of the colonizing power. As Fanon puts it: "Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it" (1967b: 169).

Furthermore, Fanon notes that in the process of European cultural imposition, nothing is left to chance as every effort is made to ensure the erosion of indigenous cultural symbols and the triumph of European values in the colonies. From the children's books that young Antilleans are made to read from an early age, right up to the European or French intellectual culture that these Antilleans are compelled to adopt when they arrive in France, the black subject is assailed on all fronts. In this regard Fanon notes that,

> When we consider the efforts made to carry out the cultural estrangement so characteristic of the colonial epoch, we realize that nothing has been left to chance and the total result looked for by colonial domination was indeed to convince the natives that colonialism came to lighten their darkness (Fanon 1967b: 169).

The importance that Fanon attached to culture and the problems it imposed for the colonized can be seen in the number of chapters that he dedicates to these in his major works. For

instance, he dedicates in this regard, three chapters in *Black Skin White Masks:* "The Negro and Language", "The Woman of Color and the White Man", "The Man of Color and the White Woman" and a chapter in *The Wretched of the Earth* titled "On National Culture". As he saw it, the adoption of another culture was not a simple matter as it meant also taking the world that came with it. Citing Paul Valery, Fanon likens culture to a "god gone astray in the flesh" (Fanon 1967a: 9). For as one takes another culture, he or she is at once taken by it. Thus, "Taking means in nearly every case being taken" (Fanon 1967b: 182) and "A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language" (Fanon 1967a: 9). The tragedy, however, is that, as the black subject adopts French culture, for instance, this occurs at the expense of his own original culture. Thus, alienation occurs necessarily, in that, the black subject becomes uprooted from his own culture; yet the culture that she flings herself to does not accord her complete recognition as a human being.

Closely related to cultural alienation is intellectual alienation. Intellectual alienation occurs largely among the 'native' elites or *evolués.* These are usually and relatively young French-speaking blacks who have Europeanised or evolved to assimilate French values mostly through education at colonial universities and other institutions. These young French-speaking blacks realize that in order to be recognized as men and as equal human beings, they have to assimilate French values and French patterns of behavior. This means that what begins as cultural imposition as can be seen by such utterances as "The black Antillean is the slave of…cultural imposition" or "The Negro is in every sense of the word a victim of white civilisation" (Fanon 1967a: 148), the *evolués* develop a slavish consciousness as they learn to internalise European values as their own. Thus, "After having been the slave of the white man," Fanon notes, "[the black subject] enslaves himself" (1967a: 148). But as noted earlier,

since assimilation is not a complete process as it is circumvented by colour prejudice, the black consequently experiences profound cultural alienation.

Nevertheless, Fanon notes that in the process of assimilation, the Antillean undergoes what he calls "ethical transition" (1967a: 148). This process, which for Fanon occurs at the level of the collective unconscious, is such that "if black = ugliness, sin, darkness, immorality" (1967a: 149) and whiteness = "Innocence…white dove of peace, magical, heavenly light" (1967a: 146), then the Antillean chooses the latter. The Antillean is obviously operating within the ambit of a broader colonial project based on white racial and cultural domination. This is not a given or natural reality but is one that has been produced historically and socially, a phenomenon that Fanon refers to as "sociogeny" (1967a: 4). Caught within the lasso of coloniality, the colonized Antillean does not have the capacity to understand this. His destiny is to become "white" (1967a: 3/4/148/150). His or her *modus operandi* becomes: "If I order my life like a moral man [that is to say, a white man as opposed to the immoral Negro savage], I am simply not a Negro" (Fanon 1967a: 149). Furthermore, when the black is introduced to a group of French intellectuals, as Fanon notes that, "He will insist that attention be paid not to the colour of his skin but to the force of his intellect" (1967a: 149). This is the reason why Antilleans would steep themselves in noted French intellectual giants such as Montesquieu and Claudel with the view of being able to quote them (Fanon 1967a: 149).

It is also in this sense that Caute considers alienation in Fanon. Having dismissed any philosophical orientation in Fanon, Caute reads alienation in Fanon as a form of intellectual uprootedness largely confined to young and educated blacks under French colonial occupation. He, thus, views alienation as a consequence of the desire by these West Indians to relinquish their identity as blacks and to become Frenchmen. This is because being French (and therefore, European) is synonymous with superiority, civilization and all that is good.

They thus conceive of European values and the embracement thereof as a passport to high social status and recognition as men as opposed to Negroes or 'natives'. Caute thus conceives of alienation among these *evolués* as a 'white mask' neurosis and as a determination by these blacks to shed their blackness. He points out that for these West Indians "The French language, French education, French culture and French religion, all these become primary targets of attainment" (1970: 10). Caute notes, however, that although blacks, including Fanon himself, adopted French values and spoke French fluently, they nevertheless did not achieve their desired recognition from French society which is a situation that results into intellectual alienation.

Similarly, David Hansen (1999) observes that Fanon uses the term 'alienation' to refer to a variety of phenomena relating to a series of inferiority complexes which have a bearing on cultural and intellectual forms of alienation. Thus, he notes that Fanon uses 'alienation' to refer to a separation (or attempts at separation) of the individual from himself and that this is tantamount to intellectual alienation. In a white-scripted world, he reads separation as the negation or attempted denial of the individual's identity in order to embrace that of the dominant culture. For example, the fact of being an African is part of the existential self of being a 'native' of the continent of Africa and all that it entails. The denial of this fact results in a separation of the individual from his genuine identity. To deny one's identity is, according to Fanon, to annihilate one's own presence. Thus, following Fanon, Hansen concludes that "a black man who tries to run away from his existential condition of blackness manifests alienation" (1977: 74).

Both Caute and Hansen read Fanon's notion of alienation among the colonized subjects as culturally conflicted on the basis that the young Antillean *evolués* lives an ambiguous

existence, on the one hand, of being French but not fully French, and of being black and Antillean and thus uprooted from his original culture. Consequently, he or she becomes alienated. Moreover, the *evolués* in this sense manifests a white mask neurosis.

Thus, on the grounds of the foregoing discussion, it is maintained that by deriving insights from Fanon's theory of alienation a case can be made for a reading of alienation in cultural terms as Caute and Hansen have done, or in psychological and materialistic terms. For example, it was noted above that Fanon showed a deep and profound psychological concern for the impact of the war on ordinary Algerians. This was demonstrated by the number of chapters that he dedicated to this aspect of alienation in both *Black Skin White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*. Similarly, Fanon views colonialism as being accompanied by cultural imposition which, while promoting the culture of the occupying European power, discredits that of indigenous populations. The effects of cultural imposition are construed by Fanon as part of Europe's broader objective of economic dominance in Africa and other parts of the world. However, an analysis of alienation that only emphasises these forms of alienation does not exhaust Fanon's thought on the concept nor does it do justice to it. This is because, Fanon provides a comprehensive view of alienation which goes beyond the conceptions just outlined, as his analysis can also be defined in philosophical terms. Thus, the objective in the remainder of the chapter is to make an argument for an existentialist conception of alienation in Fanon.

2.3 Argument for an Existentialist Conception of Alienation in Fanon

Generally, existentialists like Sartre and Kierkegaard conceive of alienation subjectively as an inherently ontological[14] problem. Although existentialism has its origins in Hegel, existentialists, contrary to the latter, maintain that alienation cannot be overcome. This is true of both Sartre and Kierkegaard. Thus, arising from the conception of alienation in subjective terms, alienation manifests itself as 'a lack' of individual fulfillment. What this means is that as a lack, the predisposition of self-consciousness is towards itself and its realisation in the world. What follows, therefore, is an account of how existential philosophy, particularly of the Sartrean and Kierkegaardian type, firstly, conceive or understand alienation to be and secondly, how this conception influences Fanon in proposing an analysis of alienation concerning the colonised black subject. What also emerges is that alienation, for the existentialists, arises from the manner in which they conceive of Being. Thus, an understanding of Being as conceived in existential philosophy will assist us in understanding how alienation arises.

In *Being and Nothingness* (1958), Sartre understands Being as constituted by two separate regions namely, 'being-in-itself' and 'being-for-itself'. Being-in-itself is a mode of existence which is similar to that of things or objects and, as such, lies in a state of unconsciousness. As thinghood, it lacks the human character of selfhood. Just like an object such as a tree, being-in-itself lacks the capacity to be other than what it is as it lacks possibility and/or transcendence. "It coincides with itself in full equivalence" (Sartre: 1958: 74). Posited in this manner, being-in-itself does not have a without or distance. As Sartre remarks, the in-itself "cannot 'be potentiality' or have 'potentialities'" (1958: 98). Lacking potentiality, the in-itself

---

[14] Also see Mary Warnock's *The Philosophy of Sartre*.

exists only in actuality. To this effect, Sartre asserts that it "is full of itself [such that there is] no more perfect equivalence of content from container" (1958: 74). It lacks the capacity to be something other than what it appears to be. "In itself it is what it is—in the absolute plenitude of its identity" (1958: 98). For this reason, Sartre contrasts being-in-itself with human reality, or being-for-itself.

Being-for-itself, on the other hand, is deemed by Sartre as the opposite of being-in-itself. It is what Sartre associates with the condition of humankind namely, human reality. Its character is pure consciousness. Consciousness by its very nature, as Heidegger has shown, is intentional, in that, it is always directed at something. Thus, from the onset Sartre separates thought from the thinking subject and in so doing creates a distance between the two. This is different from Hegel in whom thought and being are united. Thus, unlike its counterpart being-in-itself, being-for-itself is always consciousness of something. Sartre sets a distance between the thinking subject and the object of thought and although he makes a distinction between the in-itself and the for-itself, the two are not completely autonomous or separate from each other as they constitute the totality of a human being or simply, Being.

Furthermore, Sartre also views being-for-itself in terms of the process of becoming. This means that unlike the in-itself, a self-conscious individual has the character of "non-being". The concept of non-being is used by both Fanon and Sartre and means different things or conditions for the two philosophers. For Sartre, non-being means the ability and freedom of self-consciousness to self-create. For Fanon, non-being means quite the opposite. Although he accepts Sartre's thesis of the freedom of every self-consciousness, Fanon recognizes that certain socio-political institutions or structures frustrate certain social groups (such as black people) from realizing or *becoming* themselves in the manner they imagine themselves to be.

This situation or inability to realise oneself is what Fanon has in mind when he speaks of non-being or more accurately "the zone of nonbeing" (1967a: 2). For Sartre, non-being can be associated with the character or quality of the for-itself and views it as having an ontological dimension of nothingness or transcendence.

Thus, being-for-itself *is* in the sense of being situated in space and time. Furthermore, it *is* in terms of which it can be defined on the basis of its facticity in the world. As Sartre comments, the for-itself "is in so far as it is thrown into a world and abandoned in a 'situation'…It is in so far as there is in it something of which it is not the foundation—its presence to the world" (1958: 79). However, because of the character of non-being that he ascribes to it, the for-itself, in the final analysis, can be summed as "a being which is not what it is and which is what it is not" (1958: 79).

In the context of our discussion, human beings are born into various life situations and existentialists believe that it is not these that define the individual. Due to the operations of the structures of the for-itself, such situations become, but temporal and continuously, changing moments. So, to be sure being-for-itself *is*, in the sense of being temporarily in a specific situation.

Furthermore, the character of the for-itself, as we can also see from the above, is its evanescence. This means that there is a gap that separates the individual from the imagined future-self that the individual is *always* striving towards. This is what the process of becoming entails. The imagined self is deemed to be that which will complete the individual self-consciousness. As Sartre comments, consciousness "lacks something for something else—as the broken disc of the moon lacks that which would be necessary to complete it and transform it into a full moon" (1958: 95). Thus, at the heart of human reality is the *lack* of fulfilment.

This can also be seen when Sartre further comments that "What I ceaselessly aim towards is myself, that which I am not, my own possibilities" (Cited in Warnock 1965: 44). Thus, from the way in which Sartre conceives of Being, alienation arises as the subjective lack that self-consciousness strives, in vain, to fill. For this very reason, there can be no resolution of the state of alienation in Sartre's philosophy. This, however, is not the case in the philosophy of Kierkegaard, as we shall see below. What emerges from this discussion is the fact that human beings cannot solely be defined in terms of physical determinateness, for, as nothingness or as a lack, s/he is constantly striving towards self-fulfilment. There are similarities in the way in which Sartre and Kierkegaard conceive of the self, however. The following brief discussion demonstrates this. This is so notwithstanding the fact that there is disagreement on the question of whether there can be a resolution of the state of alienation or not.

Thus, in his work *Sickness unto Death,* Kierkegaard grasps the self in a similar way that Sartre conceives of Being, that is, as a composition of two modes of existence, namely the finite and the infinite. These modes of existence correspond to Sartre's being-in-itself and being-for-itself respectively. Moreover, Kierkegaard associates finitude with necessity and the eternal whereas he associates infinitude with possibility, freedom and temporality. The self is now viewed by Kierkegaard as a synthesis or relation between these opposing or paradoxical elements. As he puts it "A human being is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity" (1980: 13). It is important to note, however, that not only is the self a synthesis but must, at the same time, strive towards finding a balance or equilibrium between the two modes of existence such that should the equilibrium not obtain, this will necessarily lead to alienation, a condition which Kierkegaard describes as 'despair'. However, in relating itself to itself, the self must still relate itself to

another which is construed by Kierkegaard as the foundation of itself namely, God (1980: 13-14). The existence of God at the foundation of the self in Kierkegaard's philosophy, allows for the possibility of the state of alienation to be resolvable. Thus, contrary to Sartre, Kierkegaard is of the view that alienation can, in fact, be overcome. This occurs by way in which the self in relating itself to itself, relates itself to God whose essence is its existence. Thus, at the foundation of its existence is God. The self ought, therefore, strive towards finding a balance with its Creator.

Underlying Kierkegaard's system is a similar distinction between thought and the thinking subject, reason and existence that we also find in Sartre. Kierkegaard accepts the thesis that thought is the function of a thinking being, but rejects the idea of the two being identical. As he puts it in his work *Concluding Unscientific Postscripts* he avers that "The difficulty is still there, that existence has it that the thinker exists" (Kierkegaard 2009: 58). In this quotation, Kierkegaard points to a distinction that exists between thought and existence and thus argues that because existence is always in motion, it then becomes difficult to contemplate. It is against this backdrop, therefore, that he argues that "Existence, like motion, is a very difficult matter to deal with. If I think it, I do away with it, and then do not think it. It might seem, then, that the right thing to do is to say that there is something that cannot be thought, namely, existing" (2009: 258). The underlying point for Kierkegaard is that although existence is always in a state of becoming, existence itself is always prior to thought. This is the position that is later adopted and expanded upon by Sartre particularly as explicated in his lectures on existentialism. The idea is that thought or reason is the capacity of an existing human being. This means that one must first exist before any speculation about the nature of existence is possible. In this way, existence really precedes essence. So as a thinking subject and as a paradox of two dialectically opposite elements, a human being is able to wrench himself or

herself out from the world of necessity into infinity as made possible by abstract thought. Therefore, a human being in Kierkegaard's thought, as it is with Sartre, is subject to the same processes of becoming as is made possible by the existence of the gap or lack that exists between the self and the ideal self.

Teeming in the juxtaposition of the self and Being in the manner just described, are the notions of alienation and freedom that arise. Further, the manner in which these notions arise in the two thinkers become important for Fanon in beginning to think about the alienation of the black subject. It must be remembered that for both Kierkegaard and Sartre, freedom consists in the possibility for consciousness to be other than what it is to which nothingness or non-being refers and which is essentially the ability to self-create. Kierkegaard asserts that "Freedom is the dialectical aspect of the categories of possibility and necessity" (1980: 29). What can be drawn from this is that alienation itself arises from the mortification of the categories of transcendence. The same is true of Sartre. The ability of the for-itself to form negative judgements and to strive towards making something of itself is suggestive of freedom. He remarks that "Freedom is precisely the nothingness which is made-to-be at the heart of man and which forces human-reality to make *itself* instead of to be" (Sartre 1958: 440). Thus, we find in the position of both thinkers that alienation obtains as an ontological phenomenon occasioned by the manner in which Being is structured or conceived. The notion of freedom underlying alienation, is extensively dealt with in the following chapter.

Notably, beyond the characterisation of alienation as a lack, Kierkegaard takes the matter further and argues for alienation as a misrelation in the self's desired relation to itself. This means that a possibility of a misrelation always exists. In fact, despair results from the very incidence of there being a misrelation. As he puts it "Despair is the misrelation in the relation of a synthesis that relates itself to itself" (Kierkegaard 1980: 15). Thus, in the occurrence of a

misrelation, the individual experiences alienation in a two-fold manner: alienation from the self (self-alienation) and alienation from the world. What Kierkegaard explicitly shares with Sartre insofar as alienation is concerned, is the idea of there being tension inherent in the paradoxical relation between the finite and the infinite, the in-itself and the for-itself.

This brief intellectual history by Kierkegaard and Sartre becomes the background and foundation from which Fanon begins thinking about the alienation of the colonized. Our aim is to ascertain the extent to which Fanon taps into the rich history of existentialist philosophy, particularly the notion of Being in order to establish how it assists him in proposing what is deemed to be a compelling analysis of black alienation in existentialist terms.

Initially, Fanon is generally in agreement with both Sartre and Kierkegaard insofar as the freedom of consciousness is concerned. However, he soon realizes that when extrapolated to the case of black bodies within the context of anti-blackness such as colonialism, apartheid or metropolitan racism, both Kierkegaard's and Sartre's theses become problematic. This is accounted for by the fact that there is a unique situation of racial prejudice confronting the colonized subject that the European men and women do not have to deal with. For Fanon though, there is in colonialism a conscious and deliberate effort to smother the black-self and to dominate over black bodies. Furthermore, as consequences of racial prejudice and colonisation, measures are put in place to ensure that the colonized subject's future social and economic outlook is made as feeble as possible. Colonialism, as a system, seeks to ensure that blacks do not become critical and independent thinkers, but rather are perpetually dependent on the colonizing race. Under such conditions, black self-consciousness cannot be said to be "free" in the manner described by the two European existentialists. For, black being is here, essentialised, *sui generis,* and reduced to a status less than that of a human being. This is evident in Fanon' assertion in *Black Skin White Masks* that through colonisation, "I

discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else…'sho' 'good eatin'" (1967a: 85). For these reasons, Fanon finds Sartrean existentialism, limiting in understanding black human existence and alienation. The racial element attendant to the alienation of black people ensures a certain endurance of their alienated condition which does not arise in the ontological phenomenology of Sartre.

Much of the disagreement between Fanon and Sartre relates to the centrality that the latter places on ontology in seeking to understand human affairs. It should be remembered that Sartre, on the one hand, terms *Being and Nothingness* 'a phenomenological ontology' while Fanon, on the other hand, shows a distrust for ontology as he cautions that "Ontology—once it is admitted as leaving existence by the wayside—does not permit us to understand the being of the black man" (1967a: 82). Fanon is correct in this regard. This is so because ontology as the study of being, concerns itself with notions of stable or well-adjusted human beings. As Gordon has noted, "Affective adjustment under racist conditions—[and the idea of] a 'well-adjusted slave'— is an obscenity" (1995: 10). The obscenity here also relates to the condition of a well-adjusted white person in his role as the master. Having taken these shortcomings into account, Richard Pithouse (2005), an attentive scholar on Fanon, concurs with Gordon's explication on ontology and concludes that ontology "has no credibility as a mode of investigation into oppression when it takes the being of the oppressed as the problem, because the problem lies within the structures of oppression and complicity with them, and not the being of the oppressed (2005: 10). It is these concerns that make Fanon develop an uneasiness towards ontology and to Sartrean analyses. Unfortunately, though, he cannot escape from it altogether. As one who also employs phenomenology in his social

investigations, Fanon is made to return to ontology since he cannot "reject the existential phenomenological impact of what he 'sees'" (Gordon, 1995: 10).

It is notable though that on the question of Being, Fanon is generally in agreement with Sartre and Kierkegaard, particularly on the question of the dualism of being-in-itself and being-for-itself. This fact notwithstanding, he *initially* questions whether the assumed freedom of self-consciousness holds particularly when extrapolated into the situation of colonized blacks as made possible by the positing of the for-itself as non-being or nothingness in Sartre's system. Notably, although Fanon initially questions the applicability of Sartre's thesis of the freedom of consciousness to the oppressed, he is nonetheless made to accept it to be so. For how else would the struggle for recognition and the imagination of freedom be possible?? This, notwithstanding, he initially sees the totalitarian posturing of such systems as colonialism, as structures that deny blacks of their being-for-themselves that is taken for granted in Sartrean and Kierkegaardian ontology. This is because of the fact that within colonial structures, black being is collapsed into the reductionism of 'colour' and the caricature of 'the Negro'. According to Fanon, this is tantamount to black humanity being collapsed and confined to the realm of being-in-itself. In Sartre's philosophy, this was identified with the existence of inanimate objects. Moreover, if being-for-itself is synonymous with the human reality as Sartre maintains, we can see in Fanon's analyses that the black subject is denied the very essence of being human. He or she is walled-in through and by the colour of his or her skin. This is the condition that defines 'the zone of nonbeing' that the black subject subsists in under colonialism. Although this is not a zone that escapes presence in the phenomenological sense of black bodies not being physically there, it is an ontological absence in the sense of being rendered invisible and not being recognized as a moral agent. This lack of reciprocity,

of not being recognised as a human being and of being denied this being-for-itself is what Fanon understands by alienation. Further, from the manner in which we have located Fanon within existential philosophy and thought about Being in particular, alienation thus arises for him, more concretely, as colonial despair. The notion of black existence as being in a state of despair can be found throughout his oeuvre although this is more evident in his first work *Black Skin White Masks*. While this is so, it is in no way close to the extent to which Kierkegaard treats the notion of alienation as our proceeding discussion shall demonstrate.

According to Kierkegaard, despair is telling of the sickness or corruption of Spirit. It can be characterized by the profound experience of feeling trapped between life and death; alive but not completely alive but not dead either. Essentially, therefore, this is the peripheral zone between being alive and being dead. It is also a zone in which Spirit is tormented by the unrest emanating from a life that has been rendered unbearable and the desire, on the other hand, for its termination, yet death itself becomes impossible. Death symbolises the end of life, the opposite of life. When, for example, a terminally ill patient loses all hope of life, he or she hopes for death as a solution from a life that has been rendered miserable. So, when all hope of life has been lost, death becomes the next hope. Thus, death, which is the termination of life, becomes the only hope of being delivered from the misery and existence rendered unbearable. It puts an end to life and the suffering that accompanies it, yet in despair, the despairing person lacks this very capacity. This is the central tenet of the concept of despair in Kierkegaard. To this effect, he asserts that "To be sick unto death [which despair entails] is to be unable to die, yet not as if there were hope of life; no, the hopelessness is that there is not even the ultimate hope, death" (1980: 18). Thus, another qualification of despair is impotence; in that, although the despairing person wants to die, he or she simply cannot do so.

Generally, the Being of a human being is such that even when faced with the most profound adversity, he or she nevertheless chooses to be hopeful than to despair and life over death. This predisposition is a function of the region of Being which Sartre calls being-for-itself and which we equated with the human reality. Like in Sartre, the predisposition towards hope becomes the function of the notion of infinitude in Kierkegaard's philosophy which symbolizes possibility. However, when one is faced with extraordinary danger and suffering or lack of self-realisation, infinitude turns into a desire to die.

What transpires from the explication above is that the problem of despair lies in the contradiction of sorts, in that, whilst the individual desires death, death itself does not only become impossible but also continually converts itself into life so that the individual concerned experiences what Kierkegaard calls "to die death" (1980: 18). The following passage quoted at length, encapsulates this view:

> To die signifies that it is all over, but to die death means to experience dying, and if this is experienced for one single moment, one thereby experiences it all forever. If a person were to die of despair as one dies of a sickness, then the eternal in him, the self, must be able to die in the same sense as the body dies of sickness. But this is impossible; the dying of despair continually converts itself into a living. The person in despair cannot die; 'no more than the dagger can slaughter thoughts' can despair consume the eternal, the self at the root of despair, whose worm does not die and whose fire is not quenched (Kierkegaard 1980: 18).

Notably, the excerpt above represents Kierkegaard's conception of despair and the experience of dying yet not dying. This exemplifies what he means by 'sickness unto death'. To a certain degree, despair as it arises in Kierkegaard's philosophy resonates with Fanon's analysis of the

situation of the colonized. For Fanon, however, it raises the question of suicide among the oppressed. Fanon's reflections on the question of suicide is directly related to the feeling of despair. He addresses the notion of suicide in *Black Skin White Masks* in the middle of a heated philosophical interchange with Hegel. Furthermore, although Fanon addresses himself to Hegel, this has implications for the way in which suicidal tendencies arise in Kierkegaard. As was noted earlier, for Kierkegaard, suicidal desires arise from the Spirit's failure to realize itself in the world. For Fanon, too, it becomes a phenomenon arising from the deprivation of the possibilities of self-actualisation. The exception though in Fanon's case is that for him, it becomes a function of life lived under colonial oppression.

So, Fanon directly begins addressing the question of suicide in his interchange with Hegel. But as already noted, he also anticipates Kierkegaard's treatment of suicide in relation to despair. In Hegelian dialectics, recognition is something that emerges from the process of struggle. This is because he regards recognition (and freedom) as fundamental human qualities and as such, worth staking life for. Hegel is writing with the European context in mind while Fanon, on the other hand, wants to extend it to the colonial context. He thus conceives of recognition and freedom as human qualities and values that are also applicable to colonized people insofar as they are also desired by them. Colonialism deprives and denies recognizing the humanity of the colonized in such a way that the decision to engage in an armed revolt, according to Fanon, speaks to the question and the desire for recognition and freedom among the oppressed which they are willing to die for. For example, the theory of violence that arises in the chapter "Concerning Violence" in *The Wretched of the Earth* is demonstrative of the willingness by blacks to risk life in order to realize these life values. Notably, the reduction of the colonized

to an existence less than that of human beings, an existence between subjecthood and objecthood produces feelings of despair among the oppressed.

Fanon notes in *Black Skin White Masks*, however, that despite the willingness by blacks to die for freedom, there are those in the Western world who are of the view that blacks, or as he puts it, "Negroes never commit suicide" (Fanon 1967a: 170). The underlying message is that blacks do not commit suicide because they do not have the moral capacity or apperception to realise the horror of their existence. In this regard, he cites M. Achille as one who holds such a view (Fanon 1967a: 170). Richard Wright is also one whom Fanon cites as having a white character in one of his stories saying, 'If I were a Negro I'd kill myself' (Cited in Fanon 1967a: 170). All what this means is that, the white person's apprehension of the oppressed, is such that the latter have a high tolerance for suffering and can submit to the most horrific conditions "without'', as Fanon notes, "feeling drawn to suicide" (1967a: 170).

But this cannot be further from the truth. Fanon wants to conceive of despair which is a condition that *may* lead to suicide—as a universal phenomenon. This is proven by providing statistics that show black suicide cases to be higher than those of their white counterparts in the United States of America. In the two cases that he cites he observes that "The Detroit municipal hospital found that 16.6% of its suicide cases were Negroes, although the proportion of the Negroes in the total population is only 7.6%" (1967a: 170). Again, he notes in Cincinnati that "the number of Negro suicides is more than double that of whites" (Fanon 1967a: 170). My citation of these cases is not intended to show suicide as a good or a socially acceptable phenomenon, but that the impotence that comes with the state of being in despair, leads some members of the oppressed to want to commit suicide. Moreover, the purpose was to show suicide (and its cause, despair) to be a universal human phenomenon to

which blacks, too, are prone. Through these cases, Fanon, like Angela Cooper, wants to show that blacks, too, suffer like everybody else. It is not the case that blacks readily resort to suicide but on the contrary what Fanon wants to demonstrate is that suicide remains a possibility, too, for a black self-consciousness. His overarching concern, as is demonstrated in his oeuvre, is to show the evolution of black consciousness as it arises from the wretchedness and inhumanity of colonialism towards the attainment of freedom and recognition.

It is thus arguable that in Fanon's construal, the systematic depersonalization of the black person on the grounds of skin colour immanent within colonialism was unique in comparison to other forms of oppression. This is so in the sense that colonialism does not only exploit but also dehumanizes those at whom it is directed. This is notable when Fanon comments that the black person ceases recognition at the human level and as the white man's other stating that "Though Sartre's speculations on the existence of The Other may be correct (to the extent, we must remember, to which *Being and Nothingness* describes an alienated consciousness), their application to a black consciousness proves fallacious. That is because the white man is not only The Other but also the master, whether real or imaginary" (Fanon 1967a: 106). It, then, becomes a misnomer to regard the black-self as the white man's other; and this aggravates alienation.

It is worth revisiting the issues of colour and race in Fanon's conceptualization of black/white relations. One of the dominant themes in *Black Skin White Masks* is colour prejudice. In this regard, Fanon notes that instead of apprehending the black as a complete human being, the colonist merely perceives the black person in terms of/or as 'a colour'. This is the bad faith immanent within colonialism. The apprehension of the black person in this manner effectively reduces him or her to 'thingness' and the person's subjectivity is overlooked while physical

appearances take precedence. We observe this concern playing itself out in the different ways in which blacks and Jews are treated in white supremacist societies. To begin with, he notes that the Jews are discriminated against on the basis of an 'idea' or "stereotype that others have of them" (1967a: 87) and are accordingly "overdetermined from the inside" (1967a: 87). Blacks, on the other hand, are discriminated against based on the stigma that is attached to skin colour and are on this basis "overdetermined from without" (Fanon 1967a: 87). While not diminishing the significance of Jewish suffering, Fanon still notes that the Jew can still hide or conceal his or her identity, his Jewishness. The black subject, on the other hand, is given no chance because skin colour is the most conspicuous manifestation of her/his identity that he/she cannot hide. It is for this reason, therefore, that he comments in the following manner: "I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of an 'idea' that others have of me but of my own appearance" (1967a: 87). The profundity of this sentiment lies in the fact that the black is prejudiced on the grounds of something that he or she cannot change or hide and nothing can be as more traumatizing.

In the chapter "The Negro and Psychopathology", black and Jewish metaphysics are further explored. Although he notes that Jews are hunted and persecuted (Fanon 1967a: 126)[15] simply because they are Jews, the black subject is victimised because he cannot hide the "corporeality" (1967a: 126) in which he/she appears. By emphasizing racial difference between blacks and whites, Fanon wants to show that there is, according to the colonizer, something completely 'other' or congenitally different about the being of the black person in anti-black social situations that outlaws any morality. This stems from the entire biological constitution of 'the Negro' that his or her skin colour represents. Fanon goes on to noting that

---

[15] The holocaust is testament to the persecution of the Jews in Europe.

for the white person "The Negro symbolizes the biological" (Fanon 1967a: 128) and in his/her biological makeup, the Negro cannot and does not have the capacity for rational thought. This perception of black people by their white white counterparts finds corroboration in the responses which Fanon received from some of his European respondents. Over a period of three to four years, Fanon conducted research among some five hundred different European nationalities relating to their perceptions of black people. He established that Europeans associated blacks with strength, biology and strong physic among other things. He remarks that, according to his respondents "The Negro brought forth biology, penis, strong, athletic, potent, boxer, Joe Louis, Jesse Owens, Senegalese troops, savage, animal, devil, sin" (Fanon 1967a: 128). So, as biology, the black or 'the Negro', as we can see, is perceived as bereft of morality and moral agency. This, again, results from the situation of which the black person is structured outside of humanity, lacking in reason and thus precluded from life in civil society.

These pejorative stereotypes are of course, ill-conceived. As was noted above, it is bad faith on the part of the oppressor to question and to deny the humanity of other human beings on the grounds of racial difference. In Fanon's thought, the humanity of the oppressed is something that is assumed. This is the reason why both as an activist and intellectual, he advocated for the demise of the colonial system in Africa and elsewhere. Colonialism and dehumanization along skin colour, makes such a form of oppression to be unique in the modern period. It is not just the domination of one group by another as has happened historically, particularly among the European nations during the two world wars, in particular. Over and above the question of domination is the reality of dehumanization in the colonies. Some European nations have historically dominated over others in consequence of the world

wars, but the dominating country still respected the humanity of the dominated peoples. As Fanon observes, "Under the German occupation the French remained men; under the French occupation, the Germans remained men" (1967b: 201). However, as history shows this has not been the case within the context of colonialism. Here, a whole group of people is dehumanized not on the grounds of differing political views, but simply because they are deemed to be different and, therefore, problematic.

So, while colonial society generally discriminates against black people, it also complicates the racial hierarchy of society, in that, it also creates a situation wherein certain blacks are elevated above their 'savage' or inhuman status. This depends on the degree of their assimilation of European culture and Fanon was aware of this when he observed that "The Negro of the Antilles will be proportionately whiter—that is, he will become closer to being a real human being—in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language" (1967a: 8). So, the system made it possible for some black people, to some limited extent, approximate to the zone or level of white people. These could be those blacks, such as the *evolués* in the French colonial system that have aligned themselves culturally with the interests of France, or the local national elites that take over power to carry forward the former mother country's economic mandate in the form of neo-colonialism. These social dynamics problematize and complicate the racial category of ''black or 'blackness' insofar as the system seeks to organize society neatly along racial lines since a slippage between identity and social status is created. Even here, however, there is a social ceiling or threshold according to which these indigenous elites cannot go beyond. This is due to skin pigmentation. Thus, the racial binaries largely remain intact. What this means is that for the most part the general wretched condition in which the colonized are subjected to is maintained and as a result, the condition of colonial

despair is exacerbated. Fanon also conceives of black alienation metaphorically as a form of existential incarceration under colonialism.

Thus, at times he equates colonialism with a kind of amputation or imprisonment. But this is not merely a corporal imprisonment or physical amputation but also a transcendental seizure and an arrest of what is possible. This is so for the reason that colonialism does not merely crush the body; but it simultaneously crushes the black subject's spirit with a kind of perverted logic. In this way, it reduces the ability of the latter to rise against his/her alienated condition. Under such conditions black self-consciousness is not thought of by Fanon to be free or to be *a lack* but rather some kind of existential imprisonment or amputation of the possibilities of both the body and mind.

In the chapter "The Fact of Blackness", the metaphor of existential imprisonment is further explored. Here Fanon finds an analogy between an amputee and the racialized black subject. There is a sense of victimhood and deprivation that he finds in both. For whatever circumstance, the amputee is robbed of a chance and possibility of utilizing his/her limbs in a similar way that the black is deprived of all sense of normality. From the movie *Home of the Brave*, he cites a "crippled veteran of the Pacific war" saying to a black soldier "Resign yourself to your color the way I got used to my stump; we're both victims" (Fanon 1967a: 107). In this we can see that if alienation as described by Sartre manifests as a lack, for Fanon, the black person suffers alienation doubly: firstly, as physical oppression or 'amputation', secondly, as the denial or perversion of the categories of possibility. This imprisons the colonized subject into the colour 'black' with all its acquired prejudices. Thus, it is averred grudgingly: "What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood" (1967a: 112). This is not a self-inflicted suffering like that of a

masochistic. On the contrary, this suffering is something that is forcefully imposed. Elsewhere, Fanon laments this existential imprisonment asserting that "I did not want this revision, this thematisation. All I wanted was to be a man among other men. I wanted to come lithe and young into a world that was ours and to help to build it together…nothing but a man" (1967a: 112-113).

Nigel Gibson (2003), an eminent scholar of Fanon's work, provides insight on the black body's crippled nature in anti-black social environments. He corroborates the metaphor of the black body as resembling the situation of an amputee, in that, in both "there is a degree of collapse of bodily projection" (2003: 25). However, Gibson is quick to point out that even here there are significant differences between the two in terms of their social status. For instance, even though the amputee, on the one hand, may be discriminated against and objectified, he/she may, as Gibson observes, escape such objectification by using a prosthetic limb. On this basis, he/she renegotiates the "subject-object relationship between the body and the world" (Gibson 2003: 26). The black, on the other hand, is simply denied this possibility. As Gibson observes, the black is "wholly determined by an Other" and locked within his/her blackness, "*qua* Blackness" (2003: 26). Thus, because the black is wholly determined by the Other through the absoluteness of his/her skin colour, he/she is on this basis, prevented from re-establishing a subject-object relationship like the amputee; because "one" as Gibson notes "cannot hide how one is seen by an Other" (2003: 26).

It is important to caution, however, that although Gibson (and Fanon) emphasise the question of the black person being "wholly determined" on the basis of his or her skin colour, there are, in fact, other physical characteristics that can evoke prejudice. These include such things as gender, height, age, body size among others. For instance, a blind person does not 'see'

colour but may use accent as a way of discriminating against other persons. Furthermore, when children play together they often do not notice skin colour as they must be 'taught' to see it. So, although both Fanon and Gibson are correct on the question of the black person being determined through skin colour, other features may also prove determinative. One may perhaps, understand the reason why Fanon puts tremendous emphasis on skin pigmentation and this is due to the fact that colonial society itself uses skin colour as a criterion to distinguish between a civilized person and an uncivilized one. Furthermore, Gibson and Fanon are more concerned with institutionalized racial discrimination as opposed to interpersonal discrimination. What are the implications?

The implications for Fanon are clear. Institutionalized racism leads to the frustration of the conditions of possibility. This means, for Fanon that, the notion of the freedom of consciousness is, under such conditions, 'suspended'. As Fanon puts it, under such conditions "black consciousness is held out as an absolute density, as filled with itself, a stage preceding any invasion, any abolition of the ego by desire" (1967a: 103). Furthermore, in social systems, such as colonialism and apartheid which militate against black self-realisation, black self-consciousness is made not to see itself as a lack, but as an end in itself. To this end, it is averred: "My Negro consciousness does not hold itself out as a lack. It *is*. [Instead of being an agent of historical progress] it [becomes] its own follower" (1967a: 103). Posited in this fashion, black self-consciousness possesses no capacity for transcendence, it is immanent within itself. "I am not a potentiality of something, I am wholly what I am. I do not have to look for the universal. No probability has any place in me" (Fanon 1967a: 103). It is these concerns, this social reality that lead Fanon to questioning Sartre's thesis of the freedom of consciousness, particulalrly when extrapolated to black being.

Similarly, Biko understood and recognized very well the nefarious intentions of the colonial project in colonizing the mind of the oppressed. He realizes just like Fanon that despite physical oppression, there is also a concerted effort aimed at oppressing blacks mentally in a way that militates against the latter from calling into question colonial social contradictions and which prevents the black subject from imagining a better society. As we have observed thus far, what is at issue is the intitutionalisation of racism and oppression such that it matters little whether a black person has a white friend or not and regardless of how strong the bonds of that friendship may be. Mentally enslaved, the black subject is circumvented from imagining himself/herself in a positive light, hence, Biko's lament that "The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed" (1978: 68). Here we can see that by dealing with the mind of the oppressed, the oppressor seeks to discipline the 'natives' from within in addition to physical policing. Moreover, enslaved in this manner the black is stripped of his/her inner subjectivity and becomes only an empty shell or object that can be used in the service of the oppressor. As Biko further notes, deprived of his or her subjectivity, the oppressed becomes like "an extension of a broom or additional leverage to some machine" (1968: 68). It is thus with such concerns in mind that Biko, after Fanon, begins emphasizing the need for black pride and the elevation of black consciousness.

In a hostile context that militates against black humanity, the implication is that blacks simply recede not only into invisibility but also into anonymity. The phenomenology of being socially invisible is narrated by Fanon through his own experiences in metropolitan France and notes that while he "occupied space" he was at the same time "not there, disappeared" and overcome with "nausea" (1967a: 85). This means that beyond the feeling of inferiority that the black will endure, s/he will at the same time endure a feeling of invisibility, "a feeling of

nonexistence" (Fanon1967a: 106). This encapsulates Fanon's statement in the opening lines of *Black Skin White Masks* when he asserts that "the black is not a man" (1967a: 1). Above all, this is what Fanon means when he speaks of black alienation. The denial of possibility, of non-being, leads to a deep sense of nausea and helplessness, in a word, colonial despair. Maurice Natanson's (1979) account of how alienation in society arises as a result of social anonymity or the socially 'invisible', has echoes of Fanon's idea of colonial despair.

For Natanson, our knowledge of others is mediated by what he refers to as 'the anonymous'. There are accordingly varying degrees of anonymity and the way we come to know someone or groups of people, depends on which side of the anonymous divide they fall. As he puts it: "To a greater or lesser degree, our knowledge of others who are at a distance from us is mediated by the anonymous" (Natanson 1979: 534). Following Schutz, Natanson takes the view that this mediation involves a process of typification by which human beings organize and grasp the world, events and the people in it (Natanson 1979: 534). Essentially, this typification process is twofold and involves firstly, observing the type of action that produced the act and then deducing from the action the type of person that must have acted in this way; secondly, it involves the opposite of the first which entails knowing the personal ideal type and then deduce the corresponding act (Schutz in Natanson 1979: 537). Thus, for both Schutz and Natanson, typification is at the heart of knowing in general.

What is of concern for us, though, is the manner (according to this view) in which an individual or a group of people become socially marginalized or alienated. For Natanson the answer lies in his idea of a "We-relationship" (1979: 541) which typification implies. Accordingly, our knowledge of others transcends the temporal here and now grasp of otherness. On the contrary, it is one that is rooted in the idea of the primordial unity of being. As such, it

presupposes not only the historical horizon we have of an individual but also the future which predictively gives us clues on what we are likely to know about them. The implication thereof is that recognition of any kind results from what we may associate with that person or thing. Thus, "All acts of recognition are rescues of identity and specificity from the anonymous ground of presence" (1979: 542). What transpires from this is that alienation results from the reality of being cast outside of the We-relationship. This is not difficult to comprehend because there are cultures or groups that remain on the margins of society. This phenomenon, as is argued here, emanates from the fact of being untypified. Natanson observes that "alienation arises because the constructs of typification remain completely and utterly withdrawn from the We-relationship…" (1979: 544). Furthermore, alienation becomes the "destructuration of the social—the negation of typification" (Natanson 1979: 544). Natanson's concept of the anonymous sheds important light on how alienation from society results from the annulment of typification and being structured outside the We-relationship. Notably, Natanson's conception as regards alienation is by and large similar to Fanon's conception of the alienation of blacks as structured outside of humanity and stripped of all human recognition.

It is worth noting, therefore, that the foregoing discussion sheds light on how alienation in existential terms may be read in Fanon. Analyses of the concept of alienation that take into account existential alienation in Fanon can be found in the works of Gordon and Sekyi-Otu (1996). An existentialist thinker himself and one who has written extensively on Fanon's works, Gordon views alienation as a form of bad faith according to which blacks are denied recognition as humanity beings. For Gordon, alienation then becomes an everyday suffering that black people experience in a racist white society. Gordon's point of departure is that

racism becomes normal in a racist society. As such, existence is racialized and normalized under colonialism and apartheid. Accordingly, there is the ordinary or mundane life of the white person with access to a good health care system, good jobs and safe housing; and there is the ordinary life of the black person characterized by poverty and squalor. Gordon notes that this situation is maintained by the state through the systematic negation of those whom it dominates and the denial of their human dignity. Following Fanon, Gordon thus argues in *Fanon and The Crisis of European Man* (1995) that the existential anguish of the dominated individuals causes them to perpertualy ask themselves such questions: "In reality, who am I?...Do I belong here? What is wrong with my kind? Am I good enough for this job?" (1995: 42). These questions attest to the degree of alienation and anguish under conditions of anti-blackness.

In *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience*, Sekyi-Otu, a pre-eminent Fanon scholar, emphasises the temporal, existential aspects of alienation in Fanon. Unlike Zahar, Hansen or McCulloch, however, Sekyi-Otu views alienation not only as the frustration of the 'for-itself' eloquently adumbrated in Sartre's representations of the saga of reified existence, but also as the absolute denial of intersubjectivity. Although the other is indeed an existential category, Sekyi-Otu notes that insofar as the black subject is concerned and insofar as black/white relations are concerned, there is to be found absolute "irreciprocity" (1996: 66).

In a reading informed by both Sartre and Fanon, Sekyi-Otu identifies and explicates the radical differences in the two authors' portrayal of reification (manifestation of alienation). In terms of Sartre's theory of alienation, he notes that although for Sartre reification is tantamount to an experience of being reduced to the status of a 'thing', the oppressed in Fanon's view, is taken to be the thing itself.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter set out to explore and understand the concept of alienation as understood by Fanon. To this end, it was noted that the dominant commentaries on the concept in Fanon, read alienation mainly in socio-economic, psychological and cultural terms. Contrary to this, an argument was made for a reading of the concept in existential and therefore, philosophical terms. Having examined how alienation arises in the existential philosophies of both Sartre and Kierkegaard, alienation mainly as a subjective lack, it was shown that such explanations prove inadequate as analyses of the alienation of colonised black people. The apprehension of the black person in terms of her/his skin colour and thus have him/her determined from without, frustrates her/his possibilities in terms of being able to realise his/her potentials as a human being. As a colour, the black subject is deemed in colonial society to have no interiority, reason, soul and no subjectivity. The denial of black subjectivity and the apprehension of the colonised in terms skin colour, to use Sartre's term, denies blacks of 'non-being'. Thus, the determination of the colonised in this fashion produces a feeling of colonial despair.

Furthermore, it was noted that central to the alienation of black people is the situation of being colonised on the grounds of skin colour. As was noted, racial prejudice was not the preoccupation of Sartre's and Kierkegaard's analyses. Furthermore, an external political structure militating against the self's attempt at fulfilment in the two European philosophers does not exist. This accounts for why for the two thinkers, on the one hand, alienation arises mainly as an ontological lack which is a fact of a free consciousness whilst for Fanon, on the other hand, alienation is facilitated or impacted upon by the historico-political situation of

colonisation which denies black people of their freedom. The notion of despair as it arises in Kierkegaard was discussed and it was noted that there are similarities in the way in which despair manifests itself in his thought to that of Fanon. In its manifestation despair is a phenomenon that gives rise to suicidal tendencies. Thus, since for Fanon the problem of despair and the tendency to commit suicide arises within the colonial context, alienation for him becomes a problem of colonial despair. Despair then, becomes the overall manifestation of alienation. The anguish that results therefrom discloses that determination is not complete as the coloniser might have it. The implication, thereof, is that the colonised remains with possibility which is at least to imagine a different political and social state of affairs than what colonialism presents. So, although Fanon is to some extent sceptical of Sartre's thesis of the freedom of consciousness insofar as it relates to the colonised, this is in fact what he takes from Sartre, the notion of the freedom of consciousness. It is thus as a consequence of this that freedom becomes possible.

Chapter III

Freedom in Fanon's Thought

3.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter a case for an existential conception of alienation in Fanon was argued for and it was suggested that in Fanon's existential thought, alienation manifests itself as colonial despair. In this chapter, therefore, the general understanding of human freedom underlying the concept of alienation is discussed through some central philosophical influences on Fanon namely, Hegel, Marx and Sartre. Notably, each of these philosophers conceive of freedom differently and this is informed by the way in which each conceives of alienation. With the exclusion of the existentialists, what binds the above philosophers together is the conviction that alienation can be overcome. It is argued that for Fanon, there can be no dialectic of recognition in the Hegelian sense when the relation of domination has an additive of colour. Furthermore, there can be no material dialectic of history as Marx proposed would be a universal phenomenon. Thus, the chapter begins with a discussion of freedom as it arises in Fanon's work. This is then followed by a discussion of the concept as it arises in Fanon's philosophical interlocutors, particularly how Fanon is not only similar but also different to the above-mentioned philosophers.

The term 'freedom' is used in this chapter guided by the complexity that it raises in Fanon's thought. For, as an existential thinker, Fanon acknowledges alienation in the form of a lack and as (colonial) despair embedded in colonial society. Alienation as a lack appears as a problem of a free self-consciousness. As an existentialist thinker writing at the height of

European colonialism, Fanon addresses mainly the issues of alienation and freedom from the perspective of the colonised. Thus, the term 'freedom' in Fanon's philosophical thought is used mainly to refer to liberation and/or freedom resulting from the processes of struggle which then pave the way for the recovery of the black-self. Furthermore, it is used to refer to the enabling social condition that allows for the black-self to flourish and to become self-actional. As an existential thinker, Fanon deems liberation and independence ethically and as a desirable socio-political state of affairs that ought to be attained by the oppressed.

3.1 Fanon's Idea of Freedom: a Revolutionary Humanism

Fanon proposes a particular notion of freedom pertaining to the colonised. Richard Onwuanibe (1983) observes that in the colonial encounter, Europe "proclaimed the values of human dignity, freedom, justice, love and peace" (1983: 13), while these very same values were denied "other human counterpart, the colonised or oppressed" (1983: 13). It is within this context that Fanon proposes a new and radical form of humanism that sought to extend the values of freedom, recognition and humanity to include the colonised. Humanity and black humanity in particular, suffered under European humanism and through his new humanism, Fanon sought to bring about a new kind of human being, that is, "a new man" (1967b: 28, 255). Furthermore, his idea of a "new man" is different from the thingified human existence under colonialism. He locates the arrival of the new man as coming into being through the process of struggle to which decolonisation entails as he says "Decolonisation is the veritable creation of a new man" (1967b: 28). Thus, the idea of freedom in Fanon's vocabulary, is couched in the language of a new humanity. However, we may as well pause at this stage and ask the fundamental question: What exactly does Fanon mean by this idea of "a new man"?

Fanon does not go into any detail insofar as this question is concerned. The answer to it can be scantly found through a close reading of his texts. Accordingly, he locates the arrival of the new man from and as a product of decolonial processes arguing that the liberation of the colony through struggle does not leave behind the liberation of the individual. The liberation of the individual does not follow national liberation but ought to accompany it. He avers in *Towards the African Revolution,* that "An authentic national liberation exists to the precise degree to which the individual has irrevocably begun his own liberation" (Fanon 1967c: 103). So, there is a dialectic that he associates with an "authentic" revolution which is different from nominal or flag independence, in that, social transformation is also accompanied by the transformation of the individual from the conditions of slavery in colonialism to that of personal independence and growth. Furthermore, national liberation is accompanied by the liberation of the colonised subject from his/her infantilized and degraded state in colonialism to an individual who has begun the journey towards freedom. Thus, whereas the colonial state sees the colonised subject engaged in a frenzied identification with the coloniser, Fanon's new man shows, as he puts it, "a new, positive, [and] efficient personality" (1967c: 102-103). But the questions that can be asked at this stage are: Is total decolonisation possible? Is the general population of the oppressed able to embody Fanon's idea of decolonised "new man", particularly within the short space of a generation? This is unlikely and the history of independence seems to prove Fanon wrong, in that, much of the former colonies are still mired in a state of neocolonialism. It is thus arguable, therefore, that Fanon's new man is an ideal state wherein colonial mentality completely disappears.

Moreover, Fanon's idea of a new man, in the manner in which we have described it has a context. This is a context wherein the anti-colonial movement has developed a narrow or

nominal conception of liberation as political independence. Generally, the liberation movement had set its sights on political independence and this was, amongst other things, evinced by the statement of the first president of the first African country to receive independence, Kwame Nkrumah who remarked that "seek ye political freedom and the rest shall be added unto it" (Cited in Tambo 2004: 264). This conception of liberation was problematic, in that, it failed to consider the deeper and underlying nature of the colonial condition not only on the individual but also on the relation between the colonizing European power and the colony. By aiming its sights on political power, the nationalist movements neglected the disalienation of the individual. Such a conception of liberation only gives the semblance of liberation as it lulls the people to sleep under the guise of genuine freedom. Furthermore, this conception of liberation leaves unchanged the colonial economic structures that benefitted and continue to benefit imperialism as it only manages to reinforce the old colonial relations under the guise of national independence. Thus, schemes like Black Economic Empowerment, discussed in the fifth chapter, can be construed within this frame as part of the broader neo-colonial project that benefits a handful of the black political elite whilst economic participation and the ownership of the economy remains in the hands of a white minority.

On the other hand, Fanon's ideal and authentic liberation in which his idea of a new man is couched, sees the individual materially benefitting from the economy of his/her country. Whereas in colonialism the colonised subject only works to enrich the oppressor, Fanon's new and liberated polity sees the individual, to use Marx's term, becoming a species-being, that is, working and having his or her actions and the products thereof, recognised as his or her own and/or that of her country. As he puts it in *Towards the African Revolution:* "True

liberation is not that pseudo-independence in which ministers having a limited responsibility hobnob with an economy dominated by the colonial pact. Liberation is the total destruction of the colonial system" (1967c: 105). Thus Fanon does not view national independence generally and abstractly at a national level, but also views it in terms of which it uplifts the individual. It is under these conditions that Fanon locates his idea of a 'new man'.

But as we noted earlier, there are serious doubts on whether there could be total liberation or decolonisation. This is particularly so when one looks at how the world economy is organised between the centre and periphery, the universalisation of European values, languages across the world and so on. In any case, it remains an ideal. Despite this, Fanon insists on seeing the new man coming into being through a revolutionary struggle, a struggle that extends human agency and freedom to the oppressed. Onwuanibe echoes this sentiment and reads Fanon's new humanism as a "revolutionary humanism" in the sense that he regards him as being "in the tradition of those who want to universalise the concept of human dignity with regard to the relationship of Blacks and Whites" (1983: 15).

The engagement in the anti-colonial struggle to bring about freedom and the new man can be construed as a refusal by Fanon to accept the present condition of oppression as definitive of one's existence. He thus, views colonial oppression negatively as a situation to be transcended by black people in their historical journey towards freedom and realising their full humanity. As an existential thinker, he views this march towards decolonised society as a function of the tension inherent in human reality that colonial society seeks to supress among colonised peoples. He thus asserts that "It is through the lasting tension of their freedom that men will be able to create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world" (1967a: 181).

Fanon thus views self-understanding and the need to bring about a just world among the oppressed as a function of increased level of social and political consciousness.

To be able to think about freedom as a product and function of consciousness, Fanon engages with the work of philosophers such as Hegel, Marx, the existentialists, who have theorised about freedom in a similar fashion. Instead of locating the dialectic that leads to freedom within the same dialectical unfolding as these philosophers, however, Fanon, emphasises the consciousness of being black in a white-man's-world. With Marx and Hegel in mind, he remarks that the oppressed person will embark on his struggle "not as the result of a Marxist or idealistic analysis but quite simply because he cannot conceive of life otherwise than in the form of a battle against exploitation, misery, and hunger" (1967a: 174). Thus, in rejecting orthodox Marxism and Hegelianism, Fanon wants to concretise his theory of liberation from the particular conditions of colonial oppression.

The idea of centralising consciousness in struggle found its pinnacle within the liberal intellectualism of the Enlightenment thinkers through the philosophy of Hegel. In itself the idea is not originally a Hegelian construct. It has its origins, at least, within the Western philosophical context in the classical philosophers. It was Socrates who stated that "an unexamined life is not worth living" thus emphasising the need for critical self-awareness and consciousness of one's situatedness in space and time. Since Socrates, successive thinkers have grappled with this idea reaching its pinnacle in Hegel's philosophy of history; history being the function of the evolution of consciousness or Spirit. In a broadly Hegelian fashion, Fanon also argues that the key towards black liberation lies in the colonised subjects becoming conscious of their wretched condition, of their facticity within a white dominated world. Like Hegel, Fanon emphasises consciousness as the foundation of action and that

whatever course of action is taken, it must be taken guided by a heightened level of social and political awareness[16]. At the same time, Fanon differs from Hegel in that he emphasises self-consciousness by those on the receiving end of European colonisation whereas Hegel wrote within the European context.

Fanon thus views the work of raising the oppressed peoples' level of consciousness as the function of the militant intellectuals like himself within the context of the anti-colonial movement. To this end, he dedicates his first work *Black Skin White Masks* not only for the colonised black people to see themselves in the analyses but also to conscientise them of their condition and to enable them to be dialectical in their thinking. In the very first lines of this work, Fanon asserts:

> I do not come with timeless truths…Nevertheless, in complete composure, I think
> it would be good if certain things were said…Why write this book? No one has
> asked me for it. Especially those at whom it is directed. Well? Well, I reply quiet
> calmly that there are too many idiots in this world. And having said it, I have the
> burden of proving it (Fanon 1967a: 1).

In stating that "there are too many idiots in this world", Fanon is speaking generally here, on the one hand, to the condition of blacks having to live within the Western epistemic and hegemonic world and on the other hand, the hitherto inability by black people to reflect (and act) upon their condition of oppression. The message of aiding the oppressed to overcome their alienating condition of colonial despair is carried out right through to his last book *The Wretched of the Earth*, when he avers: "We ought to uplift the people; we must develop their

---

[16] In fact, the whole of "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" in *The Wretched of the Earth* can be seen as the chapter concerned with the need for an increased social and political awareness of the African masses. Fanon wants to see the 'native' intellectuals and the nationalist elite undertaking a serious programme of continuously engaging with the masses in elevating their level of consciousness.

brains, fill them with ideas, change them and make them into human beings" (1967b: 158).

He further asserts that: "This new humanity cannot do otherwise than define a new humanism, both for itself and for others" (1967b: 198). Therefore, uplifting the colonised subjects to become moral agents is the task Fanon had set out to achieve. Furthermore, decolonisation is thus construed by Fanon historically not only as "the disappearance of colonised man" (1967b: 198) or as an event, but as an ongoing process that transforms the native from despair into subjecthood, from spectator to actor. He states in the *Wretched* that decolonisation,

> Transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them. It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity. Decolonisation is the veritable creation of new men…the 'thing' which has been colonised becomes man during the process by which it frees itself (1967b: 28).

Raising the people's level of consciousness requires a concerted effort at political education. Fanon leaves this task to the intellectuals of the revolution. He makes a distinction between the militant intellectuals and the conservative intellectuals. The former intellctuals are radical in their approach towards the revolutionary struggle, whilst the latter are conservative. It is not that the conservative intellectuals, like the Negritude poets, support(ed) colonialism. On the contrary, like every member of the oppressed, they also abhorred it. The major problem rested in the way they went about demonstrating their disapproval and rejection of oppression. To understand the conservatism of Negritude, a brief discussion of the concept is necessary.

To begin with, Negritude sought to present a counter humanism to the pejorative stereotypes stemming from the West. Like the radical intellectuals they, too, spoke an antithetical language to Western humanism and its racism towards the oppressed. But instead of focusing on the present realities of colonisation, the Negritude intellectuals took a backward gaze and viewed the past as the *source* of their inspiration. This was the problem. Culture became, for the movement, the battle ground in their struggles for recognition. They sought to *re*discover the past achievements of black civilizations. They wanted to prove or to demonstrate to the white man that "a Negro culture exists" (Fanon 1967b: 167). Furthermore, since colonialism had dismissed the entire black race as primitive and savage, Negritude also adopted a universal standpoint which was the same as that of colonialism in addressing the problems of black oppression.

Both approaches are/were problematic for the following reasons: through its backward cultural gaze and the adoption of a universal standpoint, Negritude ended up essentialising the black experience. For, although there are similarities, Africans and African descendant peoples do not share a homogenous culture and are or were not exactly affected by racism in the same way. Secondly, although colonialism sought to destroy and uproot indigenous peoples from their cultures and although colonialism took a universal standpoint in dismissing the humanity of black peoples, the fight for national liberation ought to be particular and dialectical. What this means is that, the fight against colonialism ought to respond to actually existing conditions as informed by the situation or how colonialism manifests itself on the different localities. Fanon, himself, viewed the return to the past as irrational (1967b: 123) and as an ineffective strategy with which to base the movement as an antithesis to the deleterious effects of European colonial expansion. He reasoned that the attempt to rediscover the pristine past of black civilizations and cultures or the 'source', reinforced the stereotype of blacks as primitive savages, fraught with mysticism.

These stereotypes include the "Negro's *sui generis* odor…the Negro's *sui generis* good nature…the Negro's *sui generis* gullibility" (Fanon 1967b: 129). For these reasons, Fanon is justified in his objection to the conservative approach of Negritude as it did not tackle the problem of colonialism sufficiently.

Furthermore, regarding the achievements of black civilizations, this can be viewed as futile against a totalitarian and aggressive colonial machine. At any rate, the attempt to seek salvation in past achievements of black civilizations only worked at an abstract level. It did not consider the daily realities of black existence. Fanon concurs with this view when he asserts: "I admit that all the proofs of a Songhai civilization will not change the fact that today the Songhais are under-fed and illiterate, thrown between sky and water with empty heads and empty eyes" (1967b: 168). So, by appropriating the same logic akin to that of colonialism, Negritude fell into the trap that had been laid before it by colonialism. It made them adopt an abstract and, therefore, ineffective stance towards black alienation and liberation. According to Fanon, the battle for national liberation ought to be national and, therefore, particular and not continental or universal. For as he saw it, it is the particular that ought to inform theory and action.

For Joy-Anne James, an anti-colonial politics hinges on the attainment of bread and land for the oppressed. The radical/militant intellectual is one who has acquired an understanding of the workings of society, in this case, of colonial society and uses his or her techniques to illuminate the contradictions of society in order to contribute to the dialectic that brings about social transformation. He or she is depicted as an agent of change who puts his or her intellectual resources at the people's disposal in their march towards freedom. Precisely because of the revolutionary temperament that Fanon ascribes to the militant intellectual, it is on this calibre of intellectuals that this discussion will primarily focus.

Fanon posits the militant intellectual as an "element of the contradiction" who continually raises the contradictions of colonial life as knowledge toward action (Gibson 1999:3). He argues that these contradictions help to "explode the old colonial truths and reveals unexpected facets which bring about new meanings and pinpoints the contradictions camouflaged by these facts" (Fanon 1967b: 117). For Fanon, there is a dialectical relation between the intellectual and the people in the struggle in such a way that the project of national liberation becomes the product of a consciousness formed in and through struggle.

However, Fanon's injunction goes beyond the call for mere intellectual elaboration. Over and above this role, he demands of intellectuals that they become actively engaged in the actual and practical struggles of the people. Thus, he does not allow for a distinction between those intellectuals whose activities are directed towards "intellectual elaboration" or "muscular-nervous efforts" (Gramsci, cited in Bogues 2003). Fanon's radical intellectual embodies the two functions: he is both a thinker and an activist. The way in which Fanon himself lived his life epitomises this. Granted that colonialism co-opts some of the educated 'natives' to serve in administrative positions, as far as the settler is concerned the 'native', regardless of his educational attainment, remains 'a native' and a savage. Hence, for Fanon, the only sensible thing for him to do is to join forces with the people in rupturing the bonds of colonialism that perpetuate their wretched existence.

In the chapter on "National Culture" in *The Wretched of the Earth*", Fanon successfully demonstrates that during the anti-colonial struggle, culture is rendered unstable and it is in that instability of mass revolt that a new culture and new myths emerge (1967b: 180). The (conservative) intellectual who does not take part in the actual struggle, according to Fanon, runs the risk of "being out of date…in other words [a] late comer" (1967b: 181). Cautioning

the poets of Negritude, he warns against their backward gaze, emphasising that if they wish to make a truthful and authentic contribution to the struggle, they must realise that it is to the present that they must commit. For, it is the present that is generative of the future. "The present will always contribute to the building of the future" (1967a: 5). He further remarks that,

> [T]he native intellectual who wishes to create an authentic work of art must realise that the truths of the nation are in the first place its realities. He must go on until he has found the seething pot out of which the learning of the future will emerge (1967b: 181).

The injunction is to the immediate realities of the masses in revolt, working and fighting with them since it is there that new possibilities and new songs will emerge. Sékou Touré's intellectual who takes part in the revolution, resembles Fanon's idiosyncratic intellectual. Fanon cites him with approval as when the former remarks that "To take part in an African revolution it is not enough to write a revolutionary song; you must fashion the revolution with the people. And if you fashion it with the people, the songs will come by themselves, and of themselves" (Touré, cited in Fanon 1967b: 166).

Touré echoes Fanon's sentiments with regards to the intellectuals and the need for authentic revolution. He underscores the normative and dialectical relationship that ought to exist between the intellectual and the masses that Fanon is calling for and it is this kind of commitment that he wants and expects from the intellectual. Clearly distancing himself from the "poets of Negritude", Fanon stresses that,

> We must work and fight with the same rhythm as the people to construct the future and to prepare the ground where vigorous shoots are already springing up. A

national culture is not a folklore or an abstract populism that believes it can discover

the people's true nature. It is not made up of the inert dregs of gratuitous actions,

that is to say actions that are less and less attached to the ever-present reality of

the people (1967:188).

It can be gleaned from this passage that Fanon's injunction is clearly the call for action. However, as has been noted thus far, action for Fanon is not an arbitrary exercise in self-aggrandizement but is grounded by a particular theory, a theory of praxis. This kind of commitment also finds expression in Paulo Freire's (1970) work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

In this book, published almost ten years after Fanon's death in 1961, Freire invokes the same theory of praxis as Fanon and Cabral do, that is, of action upon reflection. His dialectical unfolding is contained in his notion of 'dialogue'. He is mentioned here for the similarity and corroboration that his idea of dialogue provides to Fanon's theory of praxis within the context and purpose of transforming the world. Accordingly, Freire views dialogue dialectically as a moving force or process. He asserts that "Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action" (Freire 1970: 68). These are for Freire, the constitutive elements of dialogue. In dialogue, there is not one without the other; the two elements are symbiotic. They are also historical in the sense that they are the operative force in the transformation of world reality. Thus, in dialogue, "There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world" (1970: 68).

As the two are but two sides of the same coin, this also means that one without the other will suffer. That is, the world ceases to transform when one of the constitutive elements is

sacrificed. Thus, the dominance (or sacrifice) of one necessarily affects the other. We can recognise this when he remarks that.,

> When a word is deprived of its dimension of action, reflection automatically suffers as well; and the word is changed into idle chatter, into verbalism, into an alienating and alienated 'blah'. It becomes an empty word, one which cannot denounce the world, for denounciation is impossible without a commitment to transform, and there is no transformation without action (1970: 68).

Freire further cautions against exclusive or over emphasis on action. An overemphasis on action alone leads to what he terms "activism" and he states that "If action is overemphasised exclusively, to the detriment of reflection, the word is converted into activism. The latter-action's sake-negates the true praxis and makes dialogue impossible" (Freire 1970: 69). At the heart of Freire's analysis of dialogue is a real existential concern for being in the world. One discerns in his text an underlying concern with the significance of being human in the world. For him, human beings make the world meaningful by way of dialogue. This is so since "Dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance of human beings" (1970: 69). It is for this reason therefore, that he views dialogue not as a luxury but as an "existential necessity" (1970: 69).

In making the world meaningful and intelligible, Freire proposes that his concept of dialogue, like that of Cabral, be diametrically opposed to the notion of revolutionary ideas being imported from elsewhere regardless of how good they may seem. In rejecting the idea of importation, he speaks of the concept of 'depositing' and says "this dialogue cannot be reduced to one person's 'depositing' ideas in another nor can it become a simple exchange of

ideas to be 'consumed' by the discussants" (1970: 70). He thus, speaks of dialogue as a process of creation. He distinguishes creation from dominance. In fact, he regards dominance or enslavement as a type of depositing in which the dominant other imposes his will upon another.

Colonialism can be construed within this framework of 'depositing' in which the West has, in various ways, imposed its will and its own notions upon the indigenous people of Africa and other parts of the world. What emerges from this kind of creation, if we can call it creation at all, is an exclusive or one-sided process of development. This means that in the encounter between Europeans and Africans, since the development and modernisation of Europe (and the Western world in general), comes about at the expense of Africans (and other non-Europeans), we can deem European modernity as a kind of depositing. Furthermore, from the point of view of this concept of dialogue, perhaps we can say that Europe engaged in a monologue or at the very least, undertook a dialogue with itself in the sense in which Euro-American modernity excluded the so-called non-Europeans in the rest of the world. This statement is not as bizarre as the reader might think.

In a similar fashion, Fanon deemed European humanism as a kind of "narcissism" in the sense that in naming and ordering the world, Europe excluded the rest of humanity and engaged in what Fanon also deems "A permanent dialogue with [it]self" (1967b: 253). So this kind of dialogue, or as it might be called, monologue, cannot result in the kind of creation that the Brazilian intellectual is advocating for. On the contrary, Freire's notion of creation that dialogue entails, takes into account the whole of humanity. His is an inclusive notion of creation and a genuine dialogue that takes the whole of humanity as interlocutors. In this regard, Freire states that,

Because dialogue is an encounter between women and men, who name the world, it must not be a situation where some name on behalf of others. It is an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one person by another. The domination implicit in dialogue is that of the world by the dialoguers; it is conquest of the world for the liberation of humankind" (1970: 70).

This passage is quoted not only for the insight it sheds as regards the author's concept of dialogue and humanity, but also for the striking resemblance with Fanon on his thinking about humanity and development which we have argued is inclusive. Perhaps, we need to pause at this point to reflect and consider aspects of Freire's thoughts on social transformation.

It is important to consider that Freire sought a methodology with which marginalised sections of society could escape social marginalisation, exclusion and oppression. However, rather than providing a socially relevant framework according to which poor Brazilians can use in order to escape their wretched condition, his ideas are appear to be more abstract than concrete. The poverty that he finds in Brazil, particularly in the period after the depression in the United States that affected Brazilian society, leads him to forging ties with poor and illiterate elements in that country. These social conditions, in fact, lead him to seek a form of praxis or more precisely, a philosophy of education in the struggle towards creating a transformed society. He moves from the premise that a human being regardless of social standing or how submerged they may be in structures of oppression, is a subject. Through his philosophy of education, he wants the oppressed in Brazil and elsewhere in the world to realise this aspect of their Being. However, rather than provide concrete solutions to situations of oppression, his ideas end up being abstract bordering on utopianism to the degree that they are not linked

to real life situations. Furthermore, his ideas seem to have, in mind, and speak largely to those on the progressive left to the extent that they may have the implication of excluding and alienating those on the liberal side of the ideological divide.

However, credit should be given to Freire for recognising history as movement through education and, in particular, in recognising, against the Francis Fukuyama's of this world, that history has not ended. For as long as poverty, illiteracy, social injustices, oppression and other social ills still exist, there remains scope for history to be made and this is what Freire's work brings our attention to. Through education, marginalised sections of the population realise their humanity, find one another in the process of creating their world. Freire's ideas in this regard enable humanity to be dialogical in outlook and this is what he shares with Fanon. For, Fanon too, espouses a dialogical and an inclusive notion of development and social transformation. The notion of centering the colonized in emancipatory political processes and raising their level of consciousness speaks to the inclusive nature of Fanon's political ideas.

According to Fanon, everything that concerns the collective people of the oppressed, ought to emanate from their minds and not from someone else. This means that their freedom should not be perceived as the heroic work of another. On the contrary, whatever results ought to be identified as the product of their own efforts. This means that the function of the intellectual ought to be that of giving birth to this revolutionary praxis. That is, the people must be enabled to understand where they are going and why. The consequence is that if the nation prospers, it would be as a result of the peoples' conscious action and not that of a demagogue or famous person, for example. Moreover, if there are any pitfalls, it should also be as the result of the peoples' own doing. The underlying idea in Fanon is that one learns and matures by doing.

Therefore, from the perspective of the colonised subject, s/he matures and becomes human during the process of the revolutionary struggle. The intellectual's engagement with the people in struggle ought, therefore, to lead them collectively towards achieving an understanding of themselves in such a way that they are able to act dialectically in an effort towards creating their own world.

For Fanon, every social and political development should result dialectically from the brain of the African contributing to his/her self-realisation. In this regard, Fanon gives an example of a bridge. The need for a bridge must arise from the need of the community and must contribute towards its awareness. The bridge should, therefore, not be 'parachuted' down, as it were, from the top. Rather, the community itself must realise its need and its importance in the community. If this is not the case, then the bridge ought not to be built. Thus, "If the building of a bridge does not enrich the awareness of those who work on it, then the bridge ought not to be built and the citizens can go on swimming across the river or going by boat" (Fanon 1967b: 162). The insistence of this dialectical approach is that self-realisation and self-development occurs organically such that freedom itself is felt at the level of the individual. We can glean from the foregoing that by insisting on consciousness or in this case black self-consciousness, Fanon wants to instil a certain pedagogy within the anti-colonial movement which is that of struggle and freedom as the product of consciousness. This pedagogy or ideology, as noted earlier, is edged in action based on reflection. It is also this kind of praxis that Paulo Freire refers to as the pedagogy of the oppressed[17]. In a word, it becomes a kind of political and social engagement that Leornard Harris (1983) has dubbed 'philosophy born of struggle'[18]. The advantage of such an engagement is that by emphasising facticity, which

---

[17] In fact, this is the title of his classic text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.*
[18] The term can be traced back to Leornard Harris' book (ed.) *Philosophy Born of Struggle: Anthology of Afro-American Philosophy from 1917* published back in 1983. It is a term that has acquired critical acclaim among

particularity entails, shifts the geography of reason from other conceptions of history, such as Marxian or perhaps even Hegelian, and thus decentralises revolutionary agency to those directly affected.

What is the point, one might ask? The point is that Fanon imagines a future in which the formerly colonised black masses act in self-directed ways. In other words, a future in which the people as a collective can recognise their collective will in the new institutions and culture that they create and in their arts among others. This means a society in which the people themselves legislate, exercise collective power and authority without external interference.

From this, we can infer that Fanon rejects a kind of theorization that becomes ever more abstracted from the lived experience. He lambasts intellectuals whose theoretical work has become an end in-itself. He rails against intellectual narcissism stating that

> A permanent dialogue with oneself…where intellectual work has become suffering
>
> and the reality was not at all that of living man, working and creating himself, but
>
> rather words, but different combinations of words (Fanon 1967:257).

For Fanon, it is evident that if the race-based system of colonialism has led to a de-humanisation of the indigenous people and had reduced them to an existence less than that of human beings, then the intellectual's engagement with the people must have as his/her bounden duty the full restoration of that humanity. Although blackness had, through the

---

Afro-American and Caribbean scholars particularly among the members of the Caribbean Philosophical Association (CPA). In fact, there is now an annual conference in the United States of America that has as its theme 'Philosophy Born of Struggle' (or PBOS).

colonial project acquired negative connotations, the humanity of the colonised is something that is always assumed in Fanon's thought. The basic problem as observed by Fanon "is that of restoring man back to his proper place" (1967b: 88). He is, thus, always guided by that political imperative: the reversal of depersonalization suffered through the colonial encounter and to put ordinary people at the centre of political processes and of the universe.

Secondary literature on Fanon corroborates the view of intellectuals as combining both theory and praxis in the conception of freedom. This is particularly so in the works of Gibson and Hansen, for example. In "Frantz Fanon: Portrait of a Revolutionary Intellectual", Hansen views Fanon's activism as a 'model' for the way in which an African intellectual should conduct him/herself. He notes that for Fanon, knowledge of the world is not enough but what matters is to change it. This means that the intellectual must not only introduce a programme of action to change the undesirable situation, as Hansen notes, but must as well *actually embark on activities* which lead to change" (1974: 25, own italics added). Thus, his reading of Fanon's intellectualism is not that of a privileged individual who merely reflects upon the contradictions of society and exposes the problems immanent in it. As important as reflection is, the intellectual must also use her knowledge to guide her into action, that is, she must live her ideas.

Gibson in *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination,* locates the intellectual's role within the context of the organization, particularly as a dialectical relation between the party militants and the rural masses. Accordingly, the organization is understood in epistemic terms as intellectual exchanges which the intellectual and the people have with regards to their revolutionary struggles. As such, the organization becomes the framework for "intellectual communication and exchange…[and] as responses people draw on as they reflect on their

revolutionary experience" (Gibson 1999: 7). However, while Gibson points to intellectual communication and exchange, he also notes that for Fanon, this ought not occur from the intellectual's position as an elite member of society or because of his/her education. As Gibson points out, the intellectual ought rather to descend to the level of the people and meet with them "on a *new* equal footing" (Gibson 2003:174, own emphasis added). Whereas the intellectual previously enjoyed a privileged status as colonialism's protégé, with the terrain shifting, they now need to eschew their bourgeois ways and their prejudices and put themselves into step with the people. This entails a repudiation of their nature insofar as they are the products of colonialism. In a tone reminiscent of Marx, Gibson quotes Fanon as commenting that this group of intellectuals need to "repudiate [their] own nature insofar as it is bourgeois" (Gibson 2003: 172) because honesty, morality and their contempt for the profiteering and scheming requires of them to do so. However, instead of a simple identity with the people, Gibson also points out that for the intellectual to become an element of the contradiction, he/she needs to become aware of his/her estrangement from them. And since, as is the case with Sartre, the radical intellectual has been made so by a system which accords him/her no real recognition, the intellectual's prudent mode of procedure is to join the mass struggle. Gibson further notes that there has to be a complete rupture with colonialism insofar as the intellectual is concerned. Failure to do so will result in them becoming anchorless and rootless.

The question arises, however, as to: How do we know if or when decolonisation and freedom have been achieved or are successful?" According to Fanon, since colonialism is a totalitarian system affecting every aspect of the colonised peoples' lives, then there will be freedom and/or disalienation insofar as things in their most materialistic sense begin to favour and reflect the aspirations of the colonised. Earlier discussion spoke of colonialism affecting the

colonised peoples' forms of knowledge, power relations and Being. Accordingly, freedom for Fanon exists wherein the social and political institutions begin to reflect the culture and identity of the masses. Epistemologically speaking, the forms of knowledge produced would be those that work in favour of the masses as opposed to working against them as was/is the case under colonialism. This can be gleaned from the phenomenology of the radio and medicine in Fanon's *Studies in a Dying Colonialism* which was written during the Algerian War of Independence. Although this technology was introduced as part of the French colonial enterprise in Algeria, Fanon shows how these forms of knowledge can be stripped of their foreign-ness and brought into the service of the people. Through their usage during the revolution, they contribute to elevate the collective awareness and self-understanding of the people.

In the chapter "Concerning Violence" of *The Wretched of the Earth,* Fanon speaks of decolonisation as starting things anew, of the *'tabula rasa'* that characterises the ushering-in of decolonial society. He asserts that "decolonisation is quite simply the replacing of a certain species of men by another species of men" (1967: 27). Here, Fanon speaks of the complete disorder that characterise the rupture with the old and the introduction of the new. Accordingly, we can tell its success by witnessing the colonial system being overhauled from the bottom up. Furthermore, this extraordinary change is not given as when the master tells the slave "'from now on you are free' but that it is 'willed, called for, demanded'" (Fanon 1967b: 27) by the colonised peoples themselves. In what follows, a comparison will be made between Fanon's thought with some of the European philosophers such as Hegel, Marx and Sartre and Kierkegaard. This is with the view of ascertaining the degree to which he converses with them in formulating his theory of freedom for the colonial subject.

3.2 Hegel and Fanon on Freedom

In the history of Western political thought, Hegel provides probably the most influential analysis of the processes of history. He maps the emergence of freedom arising from the objectification of Spirit in nature and other self-consciousnesses. His analysis of historical development has influenced subsequent thinkers like Marx, Fanon and Sartre amongst others. For Marx, however, the idea of freedom emanates from his conception of man and his condition in capitalist society. He, therefore, views man's freedom and his fullest potential realised in socialism. Unlike Marx, however, Hegel does not *a priori* determine the nature of political society to come, for example, whether it is liberal, socialistic or whatever the case may be. On the contrary, he views the emergence of the state idealistically as arising from the evolution of Spirit or consciousness in order to safeguard individual interests within the collective. This is contrary to Marx who views the state as emerging historically from the material base of previous epochs. What binds Marxism and Hegelianism together, however, is the conviction that alienation can be overcome. What sets them apart, concerns the way in which alienation may be overcome.

Insofar as Fanon's thought relating to the question of freedom is concerned, it was noted above that freedom is conceived as a lack, since it is a subjective and ontological problem of Being in the world and cannot be overcome; but freedom from colonial despair is, according to Fanon, realisable through struggle. Therefore, Fanon, insofar as the latter aspect of freedom is concerned, shares with both Marx's and Hegel in thinking that freedom from alienation is possible. Furthermore, in formulating his theory of freedom for the colonised, Fanon engages with Hegel. Most particularly, Fanon becomes interested in Hegel's master and slave allegory and dedicates a section in *Black Skin White Masks* to address the question of recognition as it pertains to the oppressed. His idea is infused with the notions of humanism and recognition.

Thus, this section focuses on how Fanon engages with the views of Hegel in developing a conception of recognition and freedom for the colonised. The argument advocated here is that according to Fanon, there could be no dialectic of recognition when the relation of domination is laden with racial prejudice. Fanon, therefore, does not see the freedom of the colonised arising within the same frame as context as Hegel's slave.

In Hegel's system, the notion of freedom appears at two but interrelated levels, firstly at the individual level and secondly, at the level of the state. He thus deals with the first notion in the *Phenomenology,* particularly in the master and slave narrative whereas he addresses the second notion of freedom in the *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*. The two are interdependent in the sense that individual self-interest finds expression in the State and is safeguarded in it. These are, therefore, examined as Hegel discusses them particularly in these two major texts. We will then establish how Fanon responds to Hegel, particularly, insofar as the question of recognition is concerned.

Hegel provides a starkly antithetical notion of recognition. For him, recognition does not occur automatically as when one self-consciousness decides to recognize another. On the contrary, recognition and freedom always result from the process of struggle which is a struggle to the death. Hegel's point of departure is that the disposition of self-consciousness is towards being recognised. As such, its worth inheres in the invidual being acknowledged as an independent human being in his/her own right. Furthermore, its goal is to establish the certainty of itself in the world. Thus, in encountering another self-consciousness, self-consciousness becomes beset with desire. This is the desire to be recognised as an independent self-consciousness. For, the other is another independent self-consciousness and as such, is not certain of its intensions. Self-consciousness must, therefore, move to supersede the other being in the

drive towards establishing its truth in the world. Thus, "It must proceed to supersede the other independent being in order thereby to become certain of *itself* as the essential being" (Hegel 1977: 111). Accordingly, they must move to prove each other in a life and death struggle (Hegel 1977: 113-114). This movement, it is suggested, must be construed within the broad context of Hegel's system as part of the evolution of consciousness objectifying itself.

Just as Hegel views physical nature objectively as something to be tamed and brought under the control of human beings, similarly, in encountering the other, self-consciousness wants to see itself as expressed in the other being, in other words, it sees its own image in the other being. As with physical nature, the other is viewed objectively as something to be brought under its control. As Hegel puts it: "What is 'other' for it is an unessential, negatively characterised object" (1977: 113). Thus, in moving to supersede the other, self-consciousness "receives back its own self" (1977: 111). Furthermore, "the other self-consciousness equally gives it back again to itself" (1977: 111).

Through the master and slave dialectic, Hegel set out to show the development and dialectics of recognition within the context of the evolution of consciousness. But what is also discernible from his account is the centrality of conflict in the dialectical unfolding. For, antagonism among the self-conscious individuals is what drives the processes of history leading towards mutual recognition. Thus, on this basis, recognition for Hegel, is not an *a priori* category of existence or being but a product of struggle.

As the outcome of the life-and-death struggle, the vanquished or bondsman, does not necessarily vanish from the face of the earth as he may still be recognised as a person. However, since he has not attained to that realisation of being proven and recognised as an independent self-consciousness, he will not, therefore, be recognised as an independent and

complete 'human being'. As the result of his vanquished position, he must perform work for the master. Accordingly, through his constant contact with reality and the use of tools in the srvice his master, the Hegelian slave experiences a rise of his/her consciousness. For through work, he realises the power inherent in himself as exemplified by the objects of his creation. Moreover, the master's 'independence' is not real independence because he is, at the same time, dependent on the slave to perform certain functions for him. As the master loses touch with reality, the master's victory becomes short-lived. The point that Hegel seeks to bring home is the mutual dependence between the slave and master and that of humanity in general. Fanon, on the other hand, does not agree with this kind of recognition and freedom emerging from the rise of consciousness within the framework of Hegel's master and slave.

To be sure, like many thinkers after Hegel, Fanon does make use of the former's categories in theorising about freedom for the colonised. However, rather than grounding his notion of freedom within the master and slave dialectic, Fanon takes a decolonial turn. Because of the racial problem, Fanon anticipates the real possibility of the denial of black human recognition within white supremacist societies. He argues that since within the colonial context the slave is a racial slave, a black in relation to a white master, the dialectic of recognition is blocked. On this basis, he does not deem the Hegelian dialectic as appropriate or adequate in analysing the situation of the colonised.

Furthermore, Fanon also, (albeit slightly), deviates from Hegel in thinking about recognition as an *a priori* condition of recognition. He does not think that self-consciousness *necessarily* must stake its life to be recognised. His reading of Hegel's notion of recognition is such that he wants to construe it as laden or replete with reciprocity. He asserts that "At the foundation of the Hegelian dialectic there is an absolute reciprocity that must be emphasised" (1967a:

169). So, although the actual Hegelian dialectic may not be consistent with this view, Fanon insists on imposing reciprocity as integral in human affairs. This means that whereas Hegel moves from the premise of seeing the other being objectively as "unessential" and as "natural reality", Fanon insists on apprehending the other being, instead, as "human reality" and without the necessity of imposing oneself unto him. What is important as he says, is "to restore to the other…through mediation and recognition, *his human reality*, which is different from natural reality" (1967a: 169). As noted above, Fanon takes the other's humanity as something that is assumed as opposed to it being questioned or needing to be proven in a life and death struggle. He avers that "it is the degree to which I go beyond my immediate being that I apprehend the existence of the other as natural and more than natural reality" (1967a: 169).

Thus, when extrapolated into the relation of blacks and whites, Fanon notes that there does not necessarily exist a state of conflict "between white and black" (1967a: 169). It should be stressed at this point that Fanon is here thinking of human relations normatively and not in terms of actual historical events because – normatively speaking – it is possible for each to recognise the humanity of the other without there being conflict or necessity for it. He, therefore, insists on the other self-consciousness being granted moral status and recognition holding that "In order to win the certainty of oneself, the incorporation of the concept of recognition is essential. Similarly, the other is waiting for recognition by us, in order to burgeon into universal consciousness of self. Each consciousness of self is in quest of absoluteness" (1967a: 169). So, as can be gleaned from the above, Fanon does not deem social antagonism or conflict as *a priori* categories of recognition as he does not think that recognition ought to result *necessarily* from the processes of struggle. Rather, each self-

consciousness ought to be accorded recognition "without reference to life" (Fanon 1967a: 169).

However, there is a moment in Fanon's thought wherein self-consciousness must engage in struggle. This is the moment in which self-consciousness encounters "resistance from the other" (1967a: 169). So, it is not that Fanon dismisses the possibility of conflict but that for him, conflict results from the situation wherein self-consciousness encounters resistance from the other. Historically, this has been the case in the encounter between Europe and Africans, whites and blacks. According to Fanon, it is under such a situation where the other's humanity is not recognised that self-consciousness accepts the risk to life. He says "he who is reluctant to recognise me opposes me. In a savage struggle I am willing to accept convulsions of death, invisible dissolution, but also the possibility of the impossible" (Fanon 1967a: 170). What we see here is a critical attitude that Fanon adopts towards Hegel. His positionality on the question of recognition without the necessity for conflict shows a close affinity to the traditional African thought on recognition which insists on mutual recognition without there being a necessity for struggle. This is because one's wellbeing is closely connected with the wellbeing of the community or others.

So, what Fanon does is to reformulate Hegel and argues that when the slave is also distinguishable by the colour of her skin, the development of recognition through labour is blocked. By emphasising the racial element in the relation between master and slave and by rejecting the idea that there could be reciprocity when the relation has an additive of colour, Fanon can be viewed as deepening the way in which Hegel's master/slave dialectic can be read. While he appropriates Hegel, he is at the same time refashioning and deepening the latter. For this reason, Lou Turner and John Alan (1999) remark that "It was he [Fanon] in

Black Skin White Masks who had deepened the Hegelian concept of self-consciousness and his sharp critique of 'reciprocity' denied there is reciprocity when the master-slave relationship has the additive of colour" (1999: 103). Thus, by emphasising the colour line in his analysis, Fanon becomes an important originator within the dialectical tradition. Recognising this aspect, Turner and Alan further remark that, in fact, Fanon made the race-based denial of reciprocity "the foundation of revolutionary action" (1999: 103). Thus, contrary to Hegel, Fanon views freedom and the rise of the colonised people's consciousness as realised in the organisation of the anti-colonial struggle leading to a decolonised and racially decentralised polity (1967b: 149-152)[19].

Fanon does not stipulate in much detail the kind of pollical community that emerges after colonialism. This fact notwithstanding, it can be gleaned from his works, particularly in his more political work *The Wretched of the Earth* that the decolonial state to emerge from revolutionary action ought to be rational and must secure individual freedoms. In Hegel's state, each acknowledges and recognises the humanity of the other. "It" as Onwuanibe points out of Hegel, "through their mutual recognition that freedom is achieved by each" (1983: 17). This view has caused some commentators to argue that Hegel's master and slave narrative paves the way for an Aristotelian conception of the state as the highest community. This is partly correct. It is true, in Hegel's philosophy, that humankind's destiny resulting from the evolution of Spirit is the creation of the State as the "highest right" (Hegel 2008: 315). As noted earlier, Hegel does not exactly state whether the state so created is liberal, socialist or whatever the case may be. He leaves this aspect to the contingency of history.

---

[19] Fanon does not deal at length with the nature of the state to supersede the colonial state. But through his insistence on the masses themselves driving political processes in the "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness", one gleans a sense that he is/was leaning towards some kind of a decentralised socialistic polity.

In the article "On Becoming Ethical: the Emergence of Freedom in Hegel's Philosophy of Right"[20], Sally Sedgwick convincingly argues that "one of Hegel's principal objectives is to specify the conditions under which a particular will becomes ethical" (2011: 01). However, what is 'ethical' in Hegel does not necessarily suggest any specific political community. As observed by Sedgwick, it is not about having attitudes and desires channeled in a certain way so that they correspond to a desired course of action(s). For Hegel, the 'ethical' relates to what is rational and what is rational can only be human. Hegel thus distinguishes human beings as rational creatures as opposed to other animals. For "unlike other animals, [only] the human animal is the thinking animal" (cited in Sedgwick). The ethical can thus only be that which takes into consideration other individual wills.

Similarly, Rousseau argues that as rational creatures, human beings are predispositioned in such ways as to will for that which is universal. For it is in the universal where individual interests are safeguarded. The state, therefore, emerges organically as a collection of individual wills. The sense of the state being ethical, therefore, consists in it being the expression of the universal will. Thus, Hegel asserts that "The state is the actuality of the ethical Idea. It is ethical spirit as the substantial will manifest and clear to itself, knowing and thinking itself, accomplishing what it knows and insofar as it knows it" (2008: 228). The state, therefore, becomes a product of Spirit or consciousness with the function to protect individual freedoms and interests. The individual thus "knows that his own dignity and the whole stability of his particular ends are grounded in this same universal and it is therein that he actually attains these" (2008: 160). Elsewhere, Hegel writes that "Rationality, concrete in the

---

[20] Paper presented at conference *Metaphysik bei Kant und Hegel*, Humboldt-Universität Berlin 2011.

state, consists (a) so far as its content is concerned, in the unity of objective freedom and subjective freedom; and consequently, (b) so far as its form is concerned, in self-determining action in accordance with laws and principles which are thoughts and so universal" (2008: 229).

It can thus be inferred that Hegel, contrary to Marx, for example, does not *a priori* determine the specific form of the 'right' state. For him, the state is only right if it corresponds absolutely with the rational wills of individuals. Hegel thus extends credit to Rousseau for having established the principle of the general will. It is important to remember, in Rousseau's social contract theory, that although humankind lives a relatively good and non-violent life, existence is nevertheless still characterized by solitude and irrationality. Moreover, although life is here unsophisticated, humanity lives only to satisfy animal-like needs. Thus, his condition in the state of nature necessitates the formation of a political community to rationalize the collective good. In forming a political community, however, individuals surrender something of themselves to the general will. Therefore, unlike Hobbes and Locke, the community so created becomes the expression of the general will as each makes a pledge to the other. Thus, freedom is constitutive of the general will which becomes the will of all in safeguarding the general interests and in determining what is good for all in the community. Self-preservation and pity thus become instrumental in the formation of the political community. Furthermore, by obeying the general will, each is in fact advancing his/her essential nature as a human being. Refusal to participate in the general will means denying one's essential nature and thus has the implication of being forced to be free.

So, although Hegel commends Rousseau for having established the principle of the general will, he criticizes the latter at the same time for taking the "[universal] will only in the

determinate form of the individual will, and he regards the universal will not as the will's rationality in and for itself, but only as a 'general' will which proceeds from this individual will as from a conscious will" (2008: 230). Thus, the essence of Hegel's criticism of Rousseau relates to the form of political community that emerges which is not rational in absolute terms but emerges out of abstractions (2008: 230). The result for Rousseau is that the hitherto formed political community becomes regulated by a 'contract'. Hegel is of the view that there could be a 'divine' union formed out of a consensus that will not necessarily conflict with the individual will. Whether such a consensus can exist is another matter all-together, nonetheless, it remains an ideal. It is amidst this Hegelian uncertainty that Marx proposes a radically different conception of freedom.

3.3 Marx on Freedom

As with his predecessor and mentor Hegel, Marx views historical evolution as occurring dialectically. However, contrary to Hegel's speculative philosophy, Marx sees history through as the function of the material forces stemming from the economic base of previous material developments. Essentially, therefore, what he does is to bring Hegel's speculative philosophy down to earth. His conception of freedom encompasses a strongly materialistic imprint in the sense that he views freedom from alienation in capitalism as realised in communism, sometimes referred to as 'socialism'. It is worth reiterating that in Fanon, the dialectics of recognition and freedom from colonial despair end in decolonial society. Marx, on the other hand, offers a slightly different analysis of history to that of Fanon. This stems from the way in which he conceived of alienation in bourgeois society. His is a class analysis that conceives of the bourgeois class as pitted against the proletarian class. He, thus, theorises a dialectical unfolding stemming from this class antagonism leading to the disalienation of man in

communism. Marx uses terms such as 'socialism' and 'communism' interchangeably and asserts that "Quite clearly the aim of socialism is man" (Cited in Fromm 1961: 57).

Since in capitalism, man is treated as means to an end, then the aim of socialism, according to Marx, is rather to have man as an end as opposed to a means to an end. Accordingly, socialism/communism creates conditions in which a human being can realize his/her fullest potential. Moreover, since in capitalism, human being's sustenance, physical nature and the products of his labour are separated from him, communism then sees man return to himself/herself as a human being and as a species being. Marx states in the *Manuscripts* that "communism is the positive transcendence of private property, as human self-estrangement, and therefore as the real appropriation of the human essence by and for man; communism therefore as the complete return of man to himself as a social (human) being" (Marx 1973: 102). Thus, for Marx, communism entails creating conditions for the proletarian class to overcome the type of alienation experienced within the system of private property (1961). In other words, "It is to create a form of production and an organization of society in which man can overcome alienation from his product, from his work, from his fellow man, from himself and from nature; in which a human being can return to himself and grasp the world with his own powers, thus becoming one with the world" (Fromm 1961: 57-58).

So as can be gleaned from this discussion, Marx specifies in concrete terms the kind of political community that shall replace capitalism and that which shall safeguard the dignity and freedom of all, proletarian or bourgeois. This is different from the way in which both Fanon and Hegel conceive of freedom. Marx's communism is, in fact, a classless society where everyone shares in accordance with his or her needs. By his insistence on the need for the

dissolution of the system that is based on the exploitation of the proletarian class, Marx wanted to set afoot a new society and a new humanism away from capitalism. The preoccupation with man as being at the center of the universe is, in fact, closely linked to his concept of humanism and this aspect resonates very well with that of Fanon. It was noted that for Fanon the struggle for freedom is accompanied by increased levels of consciousness leading to a (re)humanization of those engaged in it. Similarly, Marx views the evolution of society through the formation of a class consciousness, by the proletariat in rejecting the capitalist status quo, towards communism, as tantamount to humanism. This is because the movement towards communism leaves behind the individual in his/her wretched condition in capitalism and into a humane society in communism. Marx thus asserts in the *Manuscripts* that "This communism, as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism" (Marx 1973: 102).

It is notable, therefore, that Marx, like Hegel, and later Fanon, views the society that supersedes capitalism in ethical terms. However, what the "ethical" consists of differs in each of the philosophers. In Fanon, the ethical concerns according the black person the same human recognition as his/her white counterpart. For Hegel, it concerns the nature of the state in relation to the individual. Marx conceives communism as the disappearance of the values of individualism and capitalist greed so characteristic in bourgeois society and their supersession by the values of collectivism and general welfare. Historically speaking, however, this communism is not and cannot be the same as crude communism. Crude communism essentially entails the old primitive society of simple equalitarianism like that of hunter-gatherer communities. In contrast, by communism Marx has in mind a classless workers' state which is an economic stage of development that has transcended the narrow-based and self-interestedness of private property. In short, therefore, communism is man's

return to his essential nature as a human being. "It is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man—the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and the species" (Marx 1973: 102).

It is not that Marx dismisses the hitherto accumulated wealth and the means of its production. On the contrary, he is in fact of the view that it is the capitalist mode of production that makes communism possible. This is the reason why he often speaks of communism as the "positive transcendence of private property" (Marx 1973: 103). He, therefore, speaks of communism as a "return become conscious, and accomplished within the entire wealth of previous development" (Marx 1973: 102). Marx, therefore, looks at the human evolution historically, within the purview of preceding historical developments and dialectically from the material base of capitalism.

Towards the end of *Capital*, Marx expresses his sentiment of free society more clearly as the supersession of forced labour and compulsion by a condition characterized by rational production and distribution and where the means of production are brought under common control. To this effect, he asserts that,

> In fact, the realm of freedom does not commence until the point is passed where labor under the compulsion of necessity and of external utility is required. In the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of material production in the strict meaning of the term. Just as the savage must wrestle with nature, in order to satisfy his wants, in order to maintain his life and reproduce it, so civilized man has to do it, and he must do it in

all forms of society and under all possible modes of production. With his development

the realm of natural necessity expands, because his wants increase; but at the same time

the forces of production increase, by which these wants are satisfied. The freedom in

this field cannot consist of anything else but of the fact that *socialized man, the*

associated producers, regulate their interchange with nature rationally, bring it under

their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by some blind power; they

accomplish their task with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most

adequate to their human nature and most worthy of it. *But it always remains a realm of*

necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human power, which is its own end, the

true realm of freedom, which, however, can flourish only upon that realm of necessity

as its basis (Marx 1867: 954-955).

What can be inferred from this passage is that in communism, man produces in a rational,

noncompetitive and unalienated manner, whereas under capitalism, he is ruled by some blind

market forces. This reality is radically changed in communism as production is brought under

humanity's control.

Although Marx rejects the idea of man in capitalism being ruled by an abstract market force,

his belief that the working class will lead a revolution that would eventually result into a

classless society in communism, throws him into a kind of Hegelian determinism. Moreover,

although he shows commitment to the immediate, his belief in the proletariat as a force

driving social change manifests a linear projection of history. Fanon, on the other hand, does

not believe freedom for the colonized will result from the operation of objective forces. He

rejected the Marxian interpretation of history that conceives of it as following an *a priori* path

towards communism of which the bourgeois phase was a necessary condition. This is because

industrialisation did not occur in Africa in the manner that Marx had thought, that is, in a

manner that would produce a revolutionary proletarian class. For this reason, Fanon recommends in *The Wretched of the Earth* that the bourgeois phase in Africa ought to be skipped (1967b: 140). For, the bourgeoisie of underdeveloped countries can only justify itself insofar as it has sufficient economic and technical strength to build up a bourgeois society (Fanon 1967b: 140-141).

According to Marx, since the proletariat were the direct product of capitalist industrial development in the West, dialectically it was this class, then, that would carry out the revolutionary struggle against bourgeois social domination. But, his analysis is later overshadowed by an overreliance on material forces necessitating social change stemming from the contradictions of capitalist society. Notably, Fanon was cautious of Marx's shortcomings in this regard particularly when he says that,

> It is rigorously true that decolonization is proceeding, but it is rigorously false to
> pretend and to believe that this decolonization is the fruit of an objective
> dialectic which more or less rapidly assumes the appearance of an absolutely
> inevitable mechanism (Fanon 1967b: 170).

Thus, as can be gleaned from the above Fanon, unlike Marx, conceives of the liberation of Africa as a process initiated and executed by Africans themselves through their own subjective agency and reason. He reiterates this point when he says in *Towards the African Revolution* that,

> Africa will not be free through the mechanical development of material forces,
> but it is the hand of the African and his brain that will set into motion and
> implement the dialectics of the liberation of the continent (1967c: 173).

So, although Fanon concurs with Marx regarding the locus of resistance he, at the same time, differs from him insofar as the latter was unwittingly led to conclude that freedom from capitalist alienation would result deterministically through the operation and development of objective material forces. In this regard, existentialists assume an oppositional stance to both Hegelian and Marxists conceptions of freedom a discussion to which we shall now turn.

3.4 The Existentialists

Generally, existentialists oppose the Hegelian and Marxian views that alienation can be overcome. Although existentialism, as Raya Dunayevskaya (1973) has shown, has its roots in Hegelian philosophy, its position is generally that alienation can never be overcome. This is accounted for by the fact that existentialists generally understand alienation mainly in inward terms. Alienation is, as noted earlier, understood as an inherently subjective and ontological problem of human reality and it is the concrete individual's alienation from his own deepest being. Thus, it should be borne in mind that insofar as Sartre's philosophy is concerned, the notion of freedom raises some complexity. This is because there arises, in Sartre's thought, a two-fold conception of alienation namely, alienation in the form of a lack and alienation from the look. Whilst the former cannot be overcome, the latter can, however, be superseded. Because of its contribution to existential philosophy, it is alienation as a lack that we focus on in this section.

Notably, the way in which Sartre theorises freedom is informed by the way in which he conceives of alienation as a lack. Self-consciousness lacks something with which it identifies itself. As such, it must strive towards finding unity with that which it identifies itself. However, this striving towards itself which is the ideal unity of the self with itself speaks to the underlying freedom inherent in self-consciousness. It speaks to freedom as being at the foundation of

self-consciousness. As Sartre puts it: "There is possibility when instead of being purely and simply what I am, I exist as the Right to be what I am" (1958: 99).

The conception of human reality or self-consciousness as freedom manifests itself clearer in Sartre's theory of action. To begin with, he conceives of freedom as the primordial state of action. It is important to remember that for Sartre, action is what defines or confers identity and an essence upon an individual human being and not the converse. This means that the notion that there are predetermined essences that individuals are born with or conferred, for example, by God does not exist. Instead, action (as a function of freedom) is what determines essence. Thus, action is viewed as the function of a free and independent consciousness. The distinction that Sartre makes between reason (thought) and the world means that a self-conscious individual can remove or abstract him/herself from necessity in contemplation of the desired state of affairs and, therefore, the course of action required to attain it. In imagining the desired course of action, it is assumed that the material conditions permit for such an act to be realised. Thus, "It is when we conceive of a new state of affairs that a new light falls on our troubles" (Sartre 1958: 433). The mind is, however, construed as integral and as the point of departure in planning the desired course of action. Thus, invoking Hegel, Sartre maintains that "The mind is the negative" (1958: 436). By these words, Sartre emphasises the freedom of consciousness in planning and carrying out specific acts. Unlike Hegel, however, for Sartre it is not a matter of consciousness or mind 'acting' upon itself, but rather the mind reflecting upon what is possible in the world that it is an inextricable part of. Mary Warnock (1965), an attentive scholar of Sartre supports this view of the freedom of consciousness in imaging the ideal state of affairs.

Warnock asserts that "Freedom" for Sartre "consisted in this ability to…imagine what was not the case and this freedom turns out to be that which constitutes the gap between thought and object which is the essence of consciousness" (1965: 43). According to this view, material conditions alone do not determine or dictate action. Rather, action becomes the function of a free and conscious mind reflecting upon the world. It is only in this way that action, according to Sartre, can be conceived of as a function of its situation or facticity in the world. Moreover, since there is no action without freedom, the act itself becomes the manifestation of freedom.

From this, we can infer that Sartre espouses a dynamic concept of freedom. For him, freedom is not only conceived as freedom from an external force or another, but also as the ability or capacity of the individual herself to *act* in a particular manner dictated by reason. Thus, the possibility of the individual to act in a specific or particular manner is key in Sartre's conception of the freedom of the for-itself or self-consciousness as can also be noted in such statements as the following: "I am freedom, it is at the heart of my being" (1958: 439). For him, freedom "has no essence", but finds expression through the act; "it makes itself an act" and "we attain it across the act" (1958: 437-438). In conceiving of freedom in this manner, Sartre moves to comparing it to Heidegger's concept of 'Dasein' and avers that "In it existence precedes and commands essence" (1958: 437-438) and "at the very centre of the For-itself, right at the beginning, we discover both freedom and an emptiness" (1965: 43).

The positing of self-consciousness in this manner can further be seen in the nihilating power that Sartre ascribes to it. He holds that in carrying out a desired course of action, self-consciousness must proceed to perform what he calls 'double nihilation' namely, the individual must first, posit an ideal state as pure present nothingness and secondly, he/she must posit the actual situation as pure nothingness (1958: 435). Moreover, beyond the double

process of nihilation which is, in fact, the function of the mind, self-consciousness also must negate itself as in-itself that is part of its Being. For, in positing the for-itself in transcendental terms and as freedom, means that it must necessarily negate itself as in-itself that is itself. Sartre asserts that "for the for-itself, to be is to nihilate the in-itself which it is" (1958: 439). His intention as manifested through the nihilating power and ability of the for-itself is to demonstrate the freedom inherent in human reality, that is, human reality as congruent with freedom. "If negation comes through human reality, the latter must be a being who can realise the nihilating rupture with the world and with himself—this equates to freedom" (1958: 439). The positing of the for-itself as freedom raises questions about the existence of freedom when self-consciousness is confronted by adverse conditions such as a state of oppression. In the next chapter, we discuss how Sartre deals with this kind of situation particularly within the context of 'the look'.

The foregoing discussion shows freedom to be at the foundation in the manner that Sartre conceives of self-consciousness. Human reality is, for him, synonymous with freedom. The for-itself which is viewed as having the character of non-being or nothingness speaks to the freedom that Sartre ascribes to human reality. However, as noted earlier, Fanon initially questions whether there could be freedom in the manner described by Sartre under conditions of race-based oppression. He questions whether black self-consciousness can be construed as freedom or in terms of non-being. Although he uses the same term 'non-being' as Sartre, he does not seem to think that the black is synonymous with freedom in the manner that Sartre conceives of it. For him, under conditions of colonial oppression black being is represented as a total frustration of freedom and this is the reason why he speaks of "the zone of nonbeing". Thus, under colonialism, black being is not viewed by Fanon in terms of

nothingness. We shall also note that the way Kierkegaard conceives of freedom is similar in some ways with Sartre's conception of freedom.

Accordingly, Kierkegaard accepts the view of the freedom of consciousness. He proceeds from the standpoint that "The self is freedom" (Kierkegaard 1980: 29). We must remember that, like Sartre, he sees the self not as given but as a "conscious synthesis" whose objective is "to become itself" (1980: 29). In choosing to become itself, it chooses God. But, again, the ability to choose presupposes and symbolises freedom. For as we noted earlier, there always remain the possibility of a misrelation. So, like with Sartre, we find in Kierkegaard, freedom as being at the interior of the self.

Furthermore, the notion of freedom in Kierkegaard is closely associated with subjectivity or inwardness as opposed to objectivity. There is a profound element of individual responsibility and freedom that he associates with choosing oneself. Since the self is perpetually in the state of becoming, this means that it is free in the very act that it chooses and actualises itself.

The self is, however, at the same time, a derived relation. This means that it must, in its being, incorporate another who is its Power and foundation which we referred to above as God. To this effect, Kierkegaard comments "this relation…is yet again a relation and relates itself to that which established the entire relation" (1980: 13). Notably, Kierkegaard portrays a spiritual and deeply subjectivist notion of freedom in that in choosing oneself, the individual makes a return to God who established it in the first place. This return is subjective in that in returning to himself and to God, the individual abrogates the objective material world in order to re-establish the connection with God. In this transition, the individual, according to Kierkegaard, comes to the realisation that "he, himself exists before his God" (1980: 27).

In *The Present Age,* Kierkegaard becomes concerned with the kind of alienation arising from abstraction namely, alienation arising from the individual being assimilated into the crowd or the abstract 'public'. He called this process 'levelling' and asserts that,

> Levelling at its maximum is like the stillness of death, where one can hear one's own heartbeat, a stillness like death, into which nothing can penetrate, in which everything sinks, powerless. One person can head a rebellion, but one person cannot head this levelling process, for that would make him a leader and he would avoid being levelled. Each individual can in his little circle participate in this levelling, but it is an abstract process, and levelling is abstraction conquering individuality (1962: 51-53).

From this passage, we can infer that through public opinion, individuals were allowing themselves to be deceived by the abstract 'public' at the sacrifice of their own individuality. In this process, the individual loses him or her subjectivity and individuality. What emerges, instead, from this process of levelling, is not only abstract individuality but also abstract society. The individual becomes what Kierkegaard refers to as 'world-historical'. He then begins to denounce Hegelian philosophy in its entirety for having abstracted from the concrete individual in its posture towards becoming objective and world-historical. On the other hand, he marvelled at Lessing for having been conscious of this and more importantly, for having insulated himself in his own subjectivity asserting that "in religious respects he [Lessing] did not let himself be hoaxed into becoming world-historical and systematic" (1980: 55).

Kierkegaard, therefore, conceives of humanity's freedom as being realised in God. Freedom itself rests in the individual taking a religious leap to faith. This is because "The self is healthy and free from despair only when, precisely by having despaired, its rests transparently in God" (1980: 60). Having laid this foundation, he then proceeds to attribute Lessing's genius to God. He views him as one who has truly made the religious leap. Thus, he states that "Lessing has religious sensibility [and] has seized upon just that point of religious sensibility" (1980: 55). In the final analysis, Kierkegaard recognises in Lessing the epitome of inward subjectivity or creativity objectified onto the world.

The foregoing discussion sheds light on how existentialists generally conceive of freedom. It is also notable that Fanon, contrary to the European existentialists, emphasises the colour line as central in the alienation of colonised cultures. In doing so, he is *ipso facto* made to occupy an intellectual positionality that is radically different from these philosophers, in that, he is thinking from the positionality of a whole race that has been cast outside of humanity and this predicament necessarily affects his concept of freedom. What this means is that while in principle Fanon accepts the existence of alienation as a lack which is brought about by the state of being in the world and as an ontological problem, he does not think that this kind of alienation is central in the alienation of blacks. He, nevertheless accepts it because the anguish it engenders is part of the necessary process of becoming and of self-creation. But, as we have already established, colonial oppression denies black people the very possibility of advancement in society. For the black person is here reified into the caricature of 'the Negro'. On this basis, he or she is in essence denied alienation in the form of a lack. So, Fanon's originality within the existential tradition emanates from his conception of alienation as a fact of blackness in an anti-black environment.

So, what Fanon essentially does is problematize black being and thus comes to the conclusion that since black alienation stems from European colonial oppression, this condition can be overcome. Perhaps we might say that the freedom that results from the anticolonial struggle paves the way for blacks to experience Being as a lack. For it is thus that development and culture becomes possible.

3.5 Conclusion

This Chapter examined Fanon's conception of freedom from colonial despair. To this end, we noted that while Fanon draws from the philosophies of Hegel, Sartre and Kierkegaard, he simultaneously remaps and reformulates them in order to produce an original conception of freedom for the oppressed. As a black existentialist thinker, he does not think that the source of black alienation to be located in the existentialist *lack* as the continental existentialists do and is not regarding it as solely an ontological problem. While these have a bearing on the existence of the black body, Fanon thinks, instead, that black freedom and disalienation will materialise by addressing the colonial problem that seeks to perpetuate black anguish and despair as the result of oppression. Furthermore, although he appropriates Hegel, Fanon does not think freedom for the colonised should be conceived of in terms of or within Hegel's master and slave framework. What he, in fact, takes from Hegel is the conception of freedom as a product of consciousness and struggle. Since blacks are colonised and oppressed as a racial group, Fanon accordingly, conceives of the rise of black peoples' consciousness as a collective effort against colonialism and racial oppression such that consciousness itself becomes a product of struggle. To this end, the function of a radical intellectual in illuminating the socio-political consciousness of the masses in revolt becomes pivotal.

Chapter IV

Alienation within the Context of Modern Western Philosophical Thought

4.0 Introduction

This chapter locates Fanon's concept of alienation within the context of some of his philosophical interlocutors namely, Hegel, Marx and Sartre among others. The chapter argues that among the colonised cultures, the racial element produces a total deprivation of being-for-itself. The realm of 'non-being' as it appears in Sartre, is brought in to explain this phenomenon. While Sartre's phenomenological analysis was the condition of European men and women, its application to the colonised shows a total deprivation of the conditions of possibility. The racial element as was noted in the second chapter, brings in a radically new category namely, colonial despair. So, while Fanon converses with some of the philosophers mentioned above and taps into their intellectual resources, he simultaneously reformulates and produces an original theory of an alienated and colonised black subject. This is important to note for the reasons which follow below.

Although Fanon makes use of the theories of the above-mentioned thinkers, his ideas cannot simply be read as a derivative of their thoughts. In the first Chapter, it was noted how black intellectual production is usually confined only to the autobiographical frame. This coupled by the tendency of treating the intellectual productions of black philosophers as deriving from white ones Gordon (1995). For these reasons, it becomes important for this chapter to

demonstrate that although Fanon appropriates the categories of the above mentioned European philosophers, he, at the same time reformulates their categories to produce an original framework of alienation concerning the oppressed. As Gordon points out, while indeed "Sartre can be better understood in terms of Fanon", the converse is also true that there is an extent to which Fanon makes sense in terms of Sartre and other European philosophers (1995: 14). With this in mind, it is important, therefore, for this chapter to demonstrate Fanon's originality within the context of the thinkers mentioned above.

The importance and influence of Marx's thought as well as that of Sartre on the concept of alienation influences this chapter to ground Fanon's thought on alienation within the context of these philosophers. It is argued that Marx provides a general idea of the concept which both Fanon and Sartre make significant use of. It is also argued that although Marx's proletariat suffer alienation harmfully as the result of the system of private property and the organisation of industrial relations in capitalist societies, Fanon's colonised subject suffers a more profound form of alienation. For, while indeed the proletariat suffers as a consequence of existing as a cog in an industrialised society, he or she does not have to contend with racial oppression. The black subject, on the other hand, suffers a double-edged sword in the sense of being dehumanised and objectified firstly, on the basis of racial difference and secondly, in terms of work which he or she must perform under conditions of slavery that takes away his or her human dignity. Because Fanon is directly in conversation with both Sartre and Marx, much of the discussion will focus on these thinkers. However, for reasons of logic and historical development of the concept, the chapter begins with a brief discussion of alienation as it arises in Hegel's system. This is because Hegel provides an intellectual and historical context upon which subsequent thinkers like Marx, Fanon and Sartre, develop their ideas,

particularly in relation to the notion of alienation. Notably, Hegel provides an idea of alienation and history that has in various ways influenced subsequent thinkers like Marx and Sartre. For this reason, we will begin our discussion with a brief reflection on Hegel's musings on the concept.

4.1 Alienation in Hegel

Alienation in Hegel's system is conceived of as a problem of Spirit. This is different from Marx in whom alienation becomes a fact of political economy. In thinking about alienation in Hegel's system, it is instructive to begin our discussion by noting also the way in which he views the relationship between individual self-consciousness and the world. Notably, Hegelian metaphysics puts forward the idea that the human mind is the embodiment of the world and that knowledge itself is the function of the human mind. As such, it is as an Idea that the world exists. For this reason, Hegel is an idealist because he views the world as a product of a thinking mind.

Hegel espouses a form of idealism called Objective Idealism. His idealism which he shares with Plato and another German idealist, Schelling holds the view that ideas or thoughts constitute reality. Furthermore, it holds the view that there is a parallel between nature and the structures of consciousness. According to this view, reality becomes but a single, all-inclusive Mind which Hegel calls Absolute Spirit or simply, The Absolute. Postulated in this fashion, Hegel's Objective Idealism becomes dissimilar from the Subjective Idealism of Berkeley and Kant's Transcendendal Idealism, for example. Kant's point of departure is that there can be no knowledge of things-in-themselves. It is notable that although Hegel later takes a different direction to that of Kant, he begins from the same position as the latter, asserting that the world and the objects in it cannot be comprehended as things existing in-themselves,

independently of consciousness. The implication, thereof, is that knowledge of the thing-in-itself does not exist. What becomes the real is, in fact, the Mind or Spirit.

Furthermore, since the Absolute or Spirit constitutes fundamental reality, nothing occurs outside it. Spirit (sometimes also referred to as *Geist*) is not static but pregnant with possibilities and as such, is constantly progressing. An individual consciousness as part of the Absolute Spirit is in the quest of establishing certainty of itself in the world (Hegel 1998: 93). As such, it views the world as an inextricable part of itself. In its quest to find certainty of self, self-consciousness must venture out of itself and it is here that the moment of alienation arises. This means that self-consciousness must negate itself as itself to come back to itself again. Thus, it is precisely at this moment of negativity that alienation occurs, in the objectification of itself in nature.

In this regard J.S. McClleland (1996) observes of Hegel's proposition that one of human beings' objectives "is to feel at home in the world" (1996: 523) of which they are a part. Human beings, however, feel uneasy when there is disharmony between the self and the world and this is particularly true of Hegel. 'Spirit's' object, therefore, becomes that of finding congruence with the world. As Hegel puts it: "But the existence of this world, as also the actuality of self-consciousness, rests on the process in which the latter divests itself of its personality, thereby creating its world. This world it looks on as something alien, a world, therefore, of which it must now take possession" (Hegel 1977: 297). It is at this moment that the notion of the unity of thought and being becomes crucial in Hegel's system. As self-consciousness takes possession of the world, it becomes in unison with it. Similarly, this is what happens, when self-consciousness encounters another self-consciousness since it desires recognition from it.

Alienation thus occurs in a two-fold significance and this come about through the process of double negation. In the encounter with the other being, self-consciousness must first, alienate or negate itself as itself. In doing so, it loses itself as it realises itself in the other being. Furthermore, since it regards the other as non-essential it, therefore, moves to supersede the other. The supersession, however, does not entail an annihilation of the other. When "Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it must come out of itself. This has a twofold significance: first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an other being; secondly, in doing so it has superseded the other, for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other sees its own self" (Hegel 1998: 92).

However, in the moment of objectifying itself in the world, individual consciousness discovers the degradation of itself which must be superseded. It is in this process of supersession that alienation is overcome in Hegel. Through phenomenology, Hegel demonstrates the tension immanent in human reality. This view is corroborated by Jean Hyppolite's observation that "*This is a tension inseparable from existence*" (1969: 87 author's emphasis). Hegel can, indeed, be credited for having drawn our attention to this tension as a phenomenon at the very centre of human self-consciousness (Hyppolite: 1969: 87). History thus becomes the function of this tension which is constitutive of the progression of Spirit in space and time.

The idea of tension and progress as characteristic features of Spirit as well as its driving force finds expression in the philosophies of both Kierkegaard and Sartre. In this sense, Hegel then becomes the precursor to both thinkers. Where there is disagreement with Hegel concerns his proposition of the unity of thought and being. Sartre's disagreement with Hegel in this

regard rests on the former's insistence that existence precedes essence[21]. Similarly, Kierkegaard rejects Hegel's position by insisting on the primacy of existence over thought. Thus, he asserts that

> This triumph of pure thought (that, in it, thought and being are one) is something to both laugh at and weep over, because in pure thought there can be no real question of the difference. – Greek philosophy assumed without question that thought has reality. Reflection on this would force one to the same conclusion, but why is reality in thought confused with actuality? Reality in thought is possibility, and thought has only to dismiss any further question as to whether it is actual (Kierkegaard 2009: 275).

The implication insofar as Kierkegaard is concerned is that philosophy's point of departure ought to be from Socratic wonder. However, Hegelian philosophy, particularly his concept of alienation, finds a keen interest in the young Marx to whom our discussion on alienation shall now turn.

4.2 Alienation in Marx

Marx develops his theory of alienation against the background and intellectual foundation that had been laid by Hegel. Notably, however, that whereas Hegel conceived of alienation and historical progress abstractly as the function and product of Spirit's objectification of itself in nature, that is, history as the product of the mind, Marx, on the other hand, sought to change this as he thought that the converse was, in fact, true. Marx believed that history ought to begin from the real and actually existing conditions of men and women of flesh and blood. Thus, he argues that "We proceed from an actual economic fact" (2011: 69). It is

---

[21] Prior to Hegel, the Cartesian *cogito* was such that thought precedes existence (or essence). See Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*.

notable, therefore, that contrary to Hegel, Marx emphasises the material conditions as the point of departure. But just like Hegel, he still views history as the product of consciousness. For him, however, this is the consciousness of the proletariat who have now formed a class consciousness within the context of bourgeois social domination. Whereas for Hegel alienation becomes the process of the objectification of Spirit in the world thereby creating culture and social institutions, Marx, on the other hand is of the view that these are the product of the human, particularly worker activity. He thus criticises Hegel for conflating the two. In the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, he comments that,

> Hegel makes the predicates, the object, independent, but independent as separated from their real independence, their subject. Subsequently, and because of this, the real subject appears to be the result; whereas one has to start from the real subject and examine its objectification. The mystical substance becomes the real subject and the real subject appears to be something else, namely a moment of the mystical substance. Precisely because Hegel starts from the predicates of universal determination instead of from the real…subject, and because there must be a bearer of this determination, the mystical Idea becomes this bearer (Marx 1970: 24).

As can be gleaned from this passage, Marx views culture and human beings' identification with it as the product of human subjectivity. Work, in this regard, becomes an integral aspect of being. Thus for Marx, alienation becomes a matter of and an outcome of the way in which conditions of work are organised in bourgeois societies.

On this point, Marx is correct insofar as the European experience is concerned. However, industrialisation has not occurred in colonised cultures in such a manner as to produce a

revolutionary class as envisaged by Marx as a universal phenomenon. Accordingly, Marxism, on this point, finds a sharp critique in Fanon's thought as we shall see below.

Marxian philosophical thought on alienation is premised on there being a distinction between existence and essence and on the idea that man is estranged from that which he ought to be, his essence. As Fromm comments,

> The concept of alienation is based on the distinction between existence and essence, on the fact that man's existence is alienated from his essence, that in reality he is not what he potentially is, or to put it differently, that he is not what he ought to be that which he could be (1955: 46).

What transpires from the explication above is that there is an essence that Marx attaches to human reality. In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844,* he associates this human essence with the idea of a 'species being'. According to this notion, man finds joy when he, through his creative activity, produces for himself. Thus, Marx constantly refers to the idea of free and creative labour by which he has in mind the objectification of man's subjectivity in physical nature. This is free creative labour without external control. Nature thus constitutes an essential element for man on earth. To a certain degree, Marx views physical nature as intricately linked with the human body in the sense that man depends on nature for his survival. As he puts it "Man lives on nature [which] means that nature is his body" (Marx 1977: 67). Thus, if there is a human essence, it subsists in the idea that man is able to use his free creative labour in order to meet his/her human needs. Marx thus links the human essence to labour which the idea of a 'species being' implies. From this we can discern that Marx views labour normatively as something that ought to be free from external control. Fromm (1961) notes that Marx rejects the idea of viewing man as means to an end, a condition particularly

evident under the capitalist system. On the contrary, Marx insists that man must always be an end in himself. To this effect, Fromm observes that "Marx's concept touches here on the Kantian principle that man must always be an end in himself and never a means to an end" (1961: 53-54).

In virtually all his works, Marx evinces that within the system of capitalism, the human essence of free creative labour is perverted. This is because the means of production are not collectively owned but are held privately. Thus, a human being is made not to produce for him/herself as species-being, but for another who is the owner(s) of the means of production. Within the colonial context in which Fanon wrote, the means of production were held by the colonising powers and/or race. For Marx, the capitalist, as the owner of the means of production, appropriates and expropriates the worker's surplus labour for his own material gain. The result is that the worker becomes separated and alienated from the products of his creation. Estranged from him, the product then confronts him as an alien power standing over and above him. "The object which labour produces—labour's product—confronts it as something alien, as a power independent of the producer" (1977: 63). This means that the more he produces, the more he becomes powerless in relation to the products of his creation. In this instance, work becomes a means to satisfy animal rather than human needs. Moreover, as Marx demonstrates in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, not only does the worker become estranged from the product of his creation, he also becomes estranged from himself and other workers (1977: 65). As Marx puts it "the proposition that man's species-nature is estranged from him and as such it means that one man is estranged from the other as each of them is from man's essential nature" (1977: 69). This clearly shows that

for Marx, the idea of separation (estrangement) is key to his conception of the alienation of the proletarian class.

This reading of Marx is accepted by Marxists scholars such as Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, CLR James and Allen Wood who generally accept Marx's view of the capitalist system as characterized by estrangement. Wood identifies two themes in this regard: alienation as the frustration of human self-actualisation and alienation as the domination of social conditions over their creators (Wood 1981: 50). In both cases, human beings are frustrated and stripped of their freedom to carry out their own projects and thus become doomed to economic servitude. In the essay "The Marxian Critique of Justice" (1972), Wood notes, in addition, that although capitalism leads to exploitation, the system itself is not unjust. For him, the evil in the system arises from the fact that it constitutes a form of servitude. As he puts it: "Under the capitalist mode of production the appropriation of surplus value [by the capitalist] is not only just, but any attempt to deprive capital of it would be a positive injustice" (Wood 1972: 265). Wood is of the view that exploitation is not only necessary but is an essential feature of the capitalist system.

This view is, however, at odds with other Marxian commentaries such as those of Allen Buchanan (1979) and Nancy Holmstrom (1977). In response to Wood, Buchanan points out that the latter's error is that he fails to comprehend the generality of Marx's theory of exploitation. Buchanan argues that Wood's mistake is to "restrict 'exploitation' to the wage-labor process" (Buchanan 1979: 136) and thus fails to recognize that bourgeois human relations, in general, are exploitative. Buchanan argues that for Marx, it is not merely that the labour process is exploitative but that capitalist society, in general, is unjust. He observes that since under capitalism the capitalist controls the means of production, wage labour amounts

to "*forced* labour" (Buchanan 1979: 123); and this has ramifications for other aspects of life. Labour is forced because the threat of unemployment and starvation hangs over the worker if he/she does not enter into a wage contract. At the centre of the disagreement between Wood's and Buchanan's reading of Marx is the scope according to which the theory of exploitation in Marx may be expanded. Furthermore, although they disagree in this regard, they do, however, share the view that the capitalist system as portrayed by Marx is essentially exploitative. Although Fanon would agree with the view of the capitalist system as fundamentally exploitative, he *would* at the same time contend that the degree of exploitation experienced by the colonized subject is far more profound than that experienced by Marx's proletariat. This is due to the category of race in the exploitation and alienation of the colonized.

Although racism in consequence of the colonial encounter is at the heart of the colonization and alienation of Africans in the modern period, it is important to stress that existential alienation concerning black people is something that predates European colonialism. This is so since existential concerns are phenomena that affect humanity in general irrespective of colour. However, what we have observed with European colonialsm is the oppression of the darker nations on the basis of racial difference, a phenomenon that not only exarcebates alienation, but also exceptionalises it in the modern period.

Evidence in this regard can be adduced from Fanon's reference to the situation of the serf and that of the colonized subject in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Concerning the serf, he notes that although there exists inequality or "difference" between the serf and the knight, this difference can be explained by reference to "divine right" (1967b: 31) which implies that neither violence or oppression on racial grounds is involved in the relation. When it comes to

the situation of the colonized, however, there is the question of race and violence that accompanies domination and exploitation of colonized cultures. Thus, we can here ask the question: is Fanon's view justifiable in thinking that the colonised suffers far more exploitation than the proletariat? The answer here is in the affirmative that indeed the colonised suffer more profoundly compared to the European worker. For, although they both experience exploitation, what compounds the problem for the colonized is the reality and condition of racial depersonalisation and dehumanization accompanying exploitation. Furthermore, since colonial domination is total, this exacerbates the exploitation and alienation of the colonized, it leads to the phenomenon of colonial despair. Regarding foreign occupation, Fanon comments that colonialism brings to the colonial world the "destruction of native social forms and…[breaks]…up without reserve the systems of reference of the economy, the customs of dress and external life" (1967b: 31). This aspect contributes to the totalitarian posturing of such systems as colonialism, in that, the system seeks to regulate and control both the public and private life of the oppressed.

Notably, when compared to his black counterpart in Africa and other so-called 'non-whites' in the rest of the globe where Western imperialism has made its mark, it becomes evident that the white worker experiences a less vicious form of alienation. Earlier, we noted that Fanon links colonialism with the economic interests of the coloniser. The economic rationale of the system is such that valuable raw materials and the mineral wealth of the colonised world are extracted only to be shipped for processing in the industrial countries of the North. This means that the European worker begins to get involved in the production process at a higher level of the value chain the foundation of which had been laid by the oppressed under conditions of servitude. Since the colonised is, here, already cast outside humanity, his or her situation

becomes ever bleaker. For, since he or she is stripped of all humanity, the black is condemned to produce under conditions of slavery. This is the reason why Fanon remarks that "Racism belongs to the shameless exploitation of one group of men by another which has reached a higher stage of technical development" (1967: 38).

Fanon's positionality as regards to seeing black labour as slave labour and as exceptional, can be construed to some extent, as a subversion of Hegel's idea that self-consciousness exists solely in being recognised (Hegel 1977: 111). We are speaking here with the colonial situation in mind. It is not that Fanon does not view recognition as fundamental to the human condition, rather his argument is that in the relation between the coloniser and the colonised, recognition is not essential. This is so because all the former wants from the latter is work (1967a: 172) and not necessarily recognition. Thus, because of his emphasis of the racial dimension, Fanon can be read at the very least as 'suspending' the Hegelian idea of recognition in human affairs because the overriding concern for the coloniser is work. Under such conditions the onus is on the colonised to demand recognition and reciprocity from the other. Central to Fanon's argument here is the notion that recognition is the fact of an independent self-consciousness and the colonial slave is shown to be lacking in self-independence compared to the Hegelian slave.

The Hegelian slave, on the other hand, demonstrates independence by "losing himself in the object" and in finding "his work as a source of liberation" (Fanon 1967a: 172). The colonial slave, on the other hand, looks up to the master. This is as the result of the creeping-in of inferiority complexes among colonised cultures as a result of conquest. Consequently, the colonial slave does not seek independence and instead "wants to be like the master" (Fanon 1967a: 172). In looking towards the master, the black slave abandons the object and his work

while Hegel's slave, on the other hand, does the opposite. In this process, the black slave is shown to be possessing a slavish consciousness as the coloniser simply "laughs at the consciousness of the [black] slave" (Fanon 1967a: 172). It is against this backdrop, therefore, that Fanon arrives at the conclusion that the white master does not want recognition from the colonised, but labour. For the colonial slave does not seek, to use Sekyi-Otu's words, "individuation and self-authentification" (1996: 57). In wanting to be "like the master" the colonised slave only reaffirms the master's values and supremacy. In other words, the slave does not prove its being-for-itself. Thus, an inference can be drawn in relation to Marx's proletariat that the colonised suffers a more perverse form of alienation and this is manifested through the loss of the sense of self-hood among the colonised people.

Moreover, while the proletarian condition is made difficult by the fact of being a member of the lower class in relation to the dominant bourgeois class, the white worker nevertheless maintains his/her humanity. As a member and citizen of a free society, he/she has the right to civil liberties which entail the right to vote and to generally participate in the public affairs of her political community among other things. However, when the colonised subject is 'thingified', these rights and privileges are denied. This condition applies under conditions of legalised or institutionalised racism. Therefore, although both are in one way or the other alienated, their differing existential conditions show that the proletariat suffers a less vicious form of alienation compared to his black counterpart in the colonies.

Furthermore, if at all the colonised is viewed as a worker, s/he is apprehended first, as a 'black', as a colour and not a human being. As such since he /she is apprehended in terms of skin colour which the coloniser has deemed inferior, this means that the conditions under which s/he works would and for the most part be inhumane. This is the reason why Fanon in

Black Skin White Masks speaks of the colonised digging the ports of Abidjan with their bare hands. The element of colour is linked to the second point which is the fact of being a colonial and racial slave. The fact that she/he is colonised is precisely because he/she is deemed congenitally inferior and, therefore, amenable to colonial enslavement. Thus, over and above economic exploitation, the black suffers racial slavery and as such this means, as Renate Zahar (1974: 19) has noted, that the European colonial powers can suspend ascribing human qualities to the 'natives'. All these add to the exceptionality and viciousness with which the black subject experiences alienation. Such oppression leads, as is argued for above, to the condition of despair which is a midpoint between life and death.

The reality, therefore, is that European colonialism as a product of Western modernity splits humanity into a certain kind of Manicheanism as it categorises humanity into white and black zones; the zone of being and the zone of non-being respectively. In the zone of being which is essentially the white zone, the way social conflict is managed is through law and such social institutions as the schooling, churches, the media and the like. This is the reason why social groups like homosexuals, working class people, women and the disabled, albeit being discriminated against, are still regarded as human beings. Their white skin accords them such recognition. In the zone of non-being which is the black zone, however, the way in which social conflict is managed is through brute force and coercion. As a social critique of the society in which he belonged, Fanon comments in *The Wretched of the Earth* that in the industrial countries it is the "education system", the exemplar of an honest worker who is given a medal after a long period of service, and other forms of "aesthetic expressions of respect" that lighten the necessity for force and coercion in the management of conflict there (Fanon 1967b: 29). In the zone of non-being, however, he notes that the intermediaries between the state

and the people are the police and the soldiers who are "the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression" (Fanon 1967b: 29). The implication for work and labour in the two zones is clear. It means that the black worker is subjected to the most inhumane conditions without consideration for human rights because to him/her these do not apply. Fanon's extension and critique of Marxism demonstrates the profundity with which the colonised suffers in relation to the Marx's proletariat. So, although Fanon makes use of the Marxian critique of society, he does not think it to be adequate in explaining the situation of the colonised.

The problem with such theories as that of Marx and many of the European thinkers before and after him, is the presupposition that their theories exhaust thought and experience across the globe, in that, their theories hold sway irrespective of space and time. This cannot be further from the truth. For instance, Marx's materialist conception of history as ending with communist society speaks to the class antagonism in Europe. Furthermore, an argument can be made of the Cartesian *cogito* 'I think therefore I am' that it is in reference to the European man. Furthermore, the Enlightenment thinkers which is a period to which Descartes belongs, generally saw Africa as a region still locked in a state of inertia[22]. Concerning Marxism, it is true that in Europe the proletarian class was the direct product of capitalist industrialisation and it is feasible to argue, as Marx does, that dialectically this was the class that was dialectically poised to wage the struggle against bourgeois social domination. But, for the reason that was given earlier, it would be wrong to assume or to extrapolate the European experience to the colonised world, that history there should proceed with the same logic as in Europe as Marx argues. This is the reason why Fanon comes to the conclusion that "Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial

---

[22] See for example Lucius *Outlaw's on Race and Philosophy*

problem" (1967b: 31). For these reasons, Marxist analysis, insofar as it extrapolates from the particularism of the European experience and its universal posturing, can be deemed to be racist. The implication for us in the 'Third World' is that Marxism should always be read in terms of the particularity and the context in which Marx wrote, which may or will not necessarily be the same elsewhere. The foregoing shows epistemological racism as *implicit* in Marxist thought.

However, there are instances where Marx's writings are explicitly racist and this is discernible in his writings of the 1850s on political economy and the modes of production in which he writes very negatively of India. For instance, in the article "The Future Results of British Rule in India" Marx argues for imperial Britain's dissolution of the Indian mode of production which he refers to as 'Asiatic', meaning backward and irrational. In Marx's view, India was characterised by incoherent, isolated villages and self-sufficient inertia and, therefore, had no hope of historical progress. Marx's views on India and other non-Western nations are problematic in that they are 'coloured' by ethnocentric biases. As such, he proposes that India be brought under the capitalist economic mode and that England should fulfil a double mission in India, "one destructive, the other regenerating the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and laying the material foundations of Western society in Asia" (Marx 1853: 2). The racial undertones are quite remarkable. It is thus notable that for there to be progress, there must be an intervention of the white man. Essentially, without the white man, there will be no progress. It is against this backdrop, therefore, that Marx's writings can be deemed to be explicitly racist given his insistence on the need to impose the European experience upon other cultures such as in India.

On other occasions, however, Marx writes as though he is sympathetic to the situation of people in the colonized world. This view is corroborated by statements such as "*Labour* cannot emancipate itself in the *white skin* where in the *black* it is branded" (Cited in Zieger 2007: 25). This, it is suggested, is what has gained Marx and Marxism support and sympathy beyond the borders of Europe. In *Capital,* for instance, Marx seems to sympathise with the colonised in Africa when in his observation of the impact of European imperialism on the continent. He, for instance, notes that capitalism on a world scale has turned Africa "into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins" (1954: 703) which is a deplorable and immoral. It is worth noting, however, that this aspect is only secondary in his writings. Marx's principal concern is with the realisation of communism of which the capitalist mode of production was a necessary stage of material development. Thus, he asserts in *Capital,* that the process of primitive accumulation, a concomitant product of capitalism, "signalised the *rosy* dawn of the era of capitalist production" (Marx 1954: 703).

Notably, the overarching idea in Marxist thought is the notion that capitalist production presupposes the existence of previously accumulated capital. This is how the stage of primitive accumulation becomes so important. Marx deems the stage of primitive accumulation, which is a violent process of dispossession, as a necessary condition. The main purpose in this regard is towards stripping the original owners of their land, of their means of sustenance and thus make them dependent on the new owners. The tragedy is that to survive, the dispossessed will then have to provide their labour at the fraction of the price to the new owners. So, primitive accumulation is supposed to be a stage laying the foundation for capitalist development to take place and this was achieved in Europe.

In the formerly (and still) colonised world, however, violence and dispossessions have proved not to be a temporary phenomenon nor a stage as Marx had thought. On the contrary, it is a continuing social phenomenon. Today, it is said that Africa is free and independent. However, despite the freedom that Africa is said to be enjoying, violence persists. In January 2015, *The Economist* published a report titled "The Twilight of the Resource Curse"[23] in which it noted that the African continent "is home to a third of the planet's mineral reserves, a tenth of the oil and it produces two-thirds of the diamonds". Yet, much of the continent is still plagued by conflict such that it makes it impossible for the people of Africa to benefit economically from their mineral wealth. Amnesty International, in their 2014/2015 Africa regional overview, reported six unfolding conflicts[24] on the continent. It also notes persistent security issues on the horn of Africa particularly in Kenya and Somalia as well as in West Africa through the threat of Boko Haram. This clearly shows that in Africa violence and conflict do not constitute a stage but an ongoing social reality. This condition of experiencing one's existence as a perennial process of dispossession and violence is symptomatic of the feeling of colonial despair in Fanon's thought regarding the people whose existence is confined to the zone of non-being.

To recapture, this section sought to discuss not only the way in which Marx formulates a theory of alienation but also how Fanon taps into it in developing his own theory of alienation for the colonised. To this end, it was noted that while both the proletariat and the colonized suffer as labourers who produce not for themselves but for another, it emerged that because of the element of race in Fanon's theorization of alienation, the colonized suffer a more vicious form of alienation compared to Marx's proletariat. Furthermore, it was noted that the way in

---

[23] http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21638141-africas-growththe -being-powered-things-other-commodities-twilight

[24] https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/report-africa/

which Marx conceives of historical progress is based on social conflict and the assumptions of the inevitability of the proletarian class revolting against the system that oppresses them. However, within the context in which Fanon wrote, particularly in Africa, it was shown that there did not or does not exist a proletarian class in the way that Marx had postulated would be the case. On this basis, Marx's theory on alienation and his conception of history fail to recognize the lived experience of colonized cultures and the processes of history under conditions of racial oppression. In addition to Fanon's critique of Marx, the latter also finds refutation in African philosophical thought. Julius Nyerere, for example, is one African thinker who dismisses Marx's materialistic analysis of history in Africa. Like Marx, Nyerere subscribes to the moral merits of socialism. He differs from Marx, however, in that he does not believe that capitalism is a necessary condition for the building of socialism in Africa. On the contrary, he is of the view that socialism in Africa ought to be built based on the old African traditions of collectiveness and brotherhood. He, therefore, proposes *Ujamaa* as the basis of African socialism (Nyerere 1968).

It is notable, though, that the idea of alienation emanating from the works of Marx and Hegel's influence, provide a philosophical framework in which both Sartre and Fanon become interested. For instance, the idea of alienation that emerges when being-looked-at by another in Sartre is symptomatic of the condition of otherness and alienation. Fanon's notion of the colonised as uprooted from their indigenous culture is constitutive of the idea of otherness or alienation as estrangement in Marx. Moreover, although there exist some similarities between Marx and Fanon, we noted that for Fanon the racial dimension that is at work in the alienation of colonised people produces an almost total deprivation of the black person's

being-for-itself. Hence, in the following discussion, Sartre's realm of non-being is brought to explain why this is the case.

4.3 Non-being as Freedom in Sartre's System

Sartre's analyses of the concept of non-being arises in relation to his articulation of the notion of freedom and in the way in which self-consciousness overcomes alienation. The notion of freedom in Sartre was discussed in the previous chapter. Its brief recollection in this chapter is meant to demonstrate its connection with the notion of non-being. So, right from the beginning we can say that Sartre views non-being as the freedom inherent in human reality. His point of departure is that a human being is simply abandoned in the world and as such he/she is not anything.

We thus find in Sartre the notion of existential abandon. Thus abandoned, self-consciousness is confronted by the problem of what we termed earlier as an existential lack which it seeks to overcome. The very ability to overcome the lack speaks to freedom to which non-being refers. Thus, the lack can be overcome through the quality of non-being that Sartre ascribes to self-consciousness. As we noted in the second chapter, non-being for Sartre means freedom as opposed to Fanon's 'zone of nonbeing'.

Accordingly, as non-being, self-consciousness for Sartre possesses the character of 'nothingness' which entails the possibility to make of itself something in the world which, in turn entails overcoming the lack which is at the heart of its being. Essentially, Sartre conceives of non-being as a way in which self-consciousness can overcome the tension immanent in Being. He thus, argues that "The characteristic of selfness (*Selbstheit*), in fact, is that man is always separated from what he is by all the breadth of the being which he is not" (1958: 17).

As such, self-consciousness exists perpetually haunted by the anxiety and anguish of becoming. So, non-being for Sartre arises as the freedom of self-consciousness in relation to its desire to overcome the state of its abandonment in the world. The second instance in which non-being arises in *Being and Nothingness* and as a phenomenon that interests Fanon relates to alienation arising from 'the look' or 'the gaze of the other'.

Thus, according to Sartre, the look from the other has an objectifying experience on the one being looked at. In order to illustrate the point, Sartre hypothesises a situation wherein one is peeking through a keyhole and on the other side of the keyhole is "the spectacle to be seen" (1958: 259). At this point "I", the the one peeking through the key hole, am alone without another to inhabit my consciousness. As such my actions and my attitude are my own, that is, my subjectivity is without an outside. As Sartre comments, at this point "I am pure consciousness of things" (1958: 259). Furthermore, looking through the keyhole I am like the Cartesian *cogito* absorbed in my own reflection of things.

According to Sartre, my world is, however, suddenly turned upside-down when I hear footsteps in the hallway. I suddenly realise that someone is now looking at me. In that ontological encounter, I become aware of another "'I', [as a] for-itself I, as I am" (Husserl cited in Schacht 1970: 221). Through shame and the ego, the look from the other shocks and disorientates me. This is because the other conceives of me only in terms of my physical determinateness: a *body* peeking through a keyhole. Thus, the other grasps my presence as an object like any other object in his visual field. As Schacht notes, "It is an object that I appear to him" and since the other acts as reference to myself, it follows that "It is an object that I appear to him when he looks at me; and so, it is as an object that I now experience myself"

(Schacht 1970: 221). Thus, the other's look necessarily and coercively objectifies me as it alienates me from my possibilities and from the real me. In this regard Sartre states,

> In the shock which seizes me when I apprehend the Other's look, it happens that suddenly a subtle alienation of all my possibilities, which are now associated with objects of the world, far from me in the midst of the world (Sartre 1958: 264-265).

It is at this moment of objectivity that Sartre speaks of the occasion of 'being-for-others'. For it is in this moment too that my bodily possibility reaches a certain cul-de-sac, a mortification which is an obstacle at the behest of another "I". In this moment, I exist not for myself, but as an object for the other (Sartre 1958: 264). Although it appears as if the one being looked at reaches a cul-de-sac in terms of her possibilities, it is still nevertheless possible, from the point of view of the one being looked at, to reverse the impact of the look. In fact, notwithstanding the other's look, Sartre wants one's existence not to be conceived in terms of objectivity but in terms of subjectivity and possibility, that is, as non-being. For, as non-being, the one objectified is able to reverse the impact of the look. Shame and the ego become instrumental in reversing the impact of the look. This ability to reverse the impact of the look, again, speaks to the freedom of self-consciousness that is conferred to it through non-being.

The reconfiguration of self-consciousness from objectivity to subjectivity does not entail turning the other into an object. This is because self-consciousness needs the other to confer recognition freely to realise its own subjectivity. The denial of subjectivity to the other takes away his or her freedom to give me recognition. So, Sartre insists that in the moment of objectivity the other retains and remains with his or her freedom. "Through the look I experience the Other concretely as a free, conscious subject who causes there to be a world" (1958: 270). This is because it is not the other that is the object of degradation through the

look but myself (Sartre 1958: 271). Thus, my re-emergence from objectivity to subjectivity does not entail the alienation of the other; it is but my reconnection with my possibility and myself as freedom that is at issue. Essentially, it is the individual regaining his/her existence as non-being. It is also in this vein that Schacht reads Being in Sartre's philosophy. He notes that in Being "I am not merely an object, a thing among other things. Rather, my nature is to be conceived in terms of *freedom*" (1970: 221). Sartre adds "it is my possibilities, and not simply my determinateness which are definitive of my existence" (1970: 221).

Reflecting upon the notion of 'the look' in Sartre shows it to be a phenomenon that is presented in a negative light, as objectifying and as a phenomenon that always makes the other into a thing. Martin (2002) is one of Sartre's scholars who reads the concept of the look mainly in this frame as he views it as a threat to enslavement to the for-itself (2002: 97). Arguably, this need not be the case. There are instances in human relations and interaction where the look is cordial and reciprocal. This could be when someone is showing affection to another person. Furthermore, the African social philosophy of *Ubuntu* requires each community member "to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interest of building and maintaining a community with justice and mutual recognition" (Nussbaum 2003: 2). The Zulu and Xhosa aphorism *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* becomes important here, which means that I am because you are. It means also that first and foremost I recognise the humanity of others before my own and that my own humanity only becomes possible because of others. The recognition of the humanity of others is so central in such a way that "when I dehumanise you", "I" as the Emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu has said,"inexorably dehumanise myself" (Cited in Juhant & Zalec 2012: 253). Thus, to be a human being, as the South African philosopher, Ramose (1999) elaborates, "is to affirm one's

humanity by recognising the humanity of others" (1999: 52). All what this discloses is that the look need not necessarily be construed in negative terms, as a threat to the other's freedom, for there are instances when the look is positive.

It should be stressed here that there is no contradiction in reading 'the look' in Sartre as negative and in seeing self-consciousness as freedom as the two are not the same. The look is exactly that, another looking at me albeit it *may* have the impact of objectifying me. The freedom of consciousness is also something different; it is what Sartre ascribes to self-consciousness, or human reality and deems it to possess the dimension of non-being. So, the way I see myself as non-being is different from what the other sees in me. So, the positing of the look in a negative light (in Sartre's philosophy) does not contradict the positing of consciousness as freedom in the manner just described.

So, like Sartre, Fanon wants to emphasise the freedom of every consciousness, he advocates the view that one's nature ought not to be conceived in the same way that one conceives of objects and that my nature ought to be viewed in terms of agency. However, we note in Fanon, that the racial dimension within the colonial context frustrates the categories of possibility for the oppressed. The system denies them non-being and thus deprives them of being for-themselves. This is accounted for by the fact that the colonised subject is apprehended in the same way that one conceives of objects, *qua* things. As we shall see in the sixth chapter, racial oppression combined with the identification of the colonised with inanimate objects eventually leads to the adoption of violence by the oppressed. This violence stems from the fact that the oppressed are human beings and as human beings, they also possess the ability and the apperception of the need to revolt against social and political injustices and that they too desire freedom. What this means is that whereas Fanon had initially questioned Sartre's

notion of the freedom of consciousness under conditions of colonial oppression, he is ultimately made to accept it to be so, too, of the oppressed.

There is evidence in Fanon's oeuvre to suggest that ultimately he concurs with Sartre on the latter's position of the freedom of consciousness and that ultimately a human being is what he or she makes himself or herself out to be. Sartre avers in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* that "man is the product of his product" (Cited in Schacht 1970: 227). Similarly, Fanon holds that "society unlike biochemical processes, cannot escape human influences. Man is what, brings society into being" (1967a: 11). Here we can see that Fanon also wants to see being in terms of its *telos,* of possibilities, becoming and not as a reified existence. But, for the most part he realises that the system of oppression seeks to thwart this. Thus, the notion of the gaze of the other under conditions of racial oppression becomes interesting in the thought of Fanon, particularly insofar as it reveals the way in which the colonial system seeks to thwart the freedom of the oppressed. Furthermore, the divergent ways in which the look pans out under conditions of colonial domination in Fanon, furnishes a critique of Sartre whose ontological analysis has in mind the existential situation in Europe.

What Fanon does with Sartre's notion of the look is to historicise and contextualise it by extrapolating it to the colonial context and in so doing introduces a racial element. Like Sartre, he finds the look as utterly objectifying. His genius and originality is to be able to anticipate the differences between the impact of the look as merely an ontological problem and its impact under conditions of racial oppression. Institutionalised racism in a white supremacist society become, for Fanon, the necessary condition for the black person's experience of alienation. Whereas for Sartre the look becomes a question of one self-consciousness confronting another, the look for Fanon becomes a racial gaze. The peculiar impact of the racial

gaze can be seen as when Fanon comments that the glances of the white man "fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye" adding that "an unfamiliar weight burdened me" (Fanon 1967a: 82 (1967a: 82). We can say here that he becomes "burdened" and "fixed" because the white man's gaze is loaded with the historico-political situation of colonisation that the white man represents.

So what distinguishes Fanon from Sartre is that the feeling of black alienation is experienced here by the colonized subject through and within a power-inflected situation between the white colonizer and the black slave. In this relation, the reconfiguration of the self becomes impossible without changing the whole power political and economic superstructure. So, what we find is a certain endurance associated with the experience of the look under conditions of racial oppression in a way that denies the oppressed their non-being as it reproduces the obedience of the colonized subject. The oppressed are, therefore, unable to reverse objectification through the look. There is not a possibility to reciprocate, for the look assumes a one-sided dimension directed towards the dominated black subject. His lament that "all this whiteness…burns me" (1967a: 86) is symptomatic of the racial gaze syndrome which is embedded in the coloniality of power under colonialism. Fanon argues that the black person does not experience this when among people of his own kind. This is observed when he asserts in *Black Skin White Masks* that "As long as the black man is among his own, he will have no occasion, except in minor conflicts to experience his being through others" (1967a: 82). This means that there is general reciprocity that he ascribes to relations among the colonised people themselves perhaps in the same way that recognition is conceived through the philosophy of Ubuntu as we noted above.

Sekyi-Otu echoes Fanon's sentiments regarding the impact of the look when extrapolated to the colonised. He notes that when the element of race is involved, as in Fanon's case, the look becomes a coercively 'thingifying' experience. In a colonial context, undergirded by the politics of racism, alienation or objectification through the racial gaze, cannot be overcome by simply 'looking back'. This is so because here, the colonizer enjoys the monopoly of seeing without being seen. It is for this very reason, therefore, that Fanon concludes: "the black person has no ontological resistance to the white gaze" (Cited in Sekyi-Otu 1996: 72). For Sekyi-Otu, the implication is that colonial relations can only be understood in terms of the Aristotelian logic of mutual exclusivity.

Gibson explores the dynamics of the look by observing the divergent impact the look has among the colonised people and the Jews thus noting that the Jew can become intellectual about things and that by becoming intellectual he can transcend bodily confinement. This is because the Jew sometimes cannot be seen in who he is and as such he or she can escape objectification through a "disembodied intellectualism" (Gibson 2003: 20). By making the distinction between the Jew as an intellectual other and the black as an embodied other, Gibson concludes that "The Jew is an internal Other, [while] the Black [is] the external Other" (2003: 20). This position of the black as an absolute other finds corroboration in Fanon when he states that:

> Having adjusted their microtomes, they objectively cut away slices of my
> reality. I am laid bare. I feel, I see in those white faces that it is not a new man
> who has come in, but a new kind of man, a new genus. Why, it's a Negro!
> (1967: 87)

So, it can be inferred from this passage that the black person is alienated because of skin colour and unlike the Jew, she/he cannot hide who she/he is, for skin colour is the most conspicuous manifestation of identity.

To recapture, as an existential thinker, Fanon like Sartre, wants to conceive of consciousness as freedom or non-being. However, under conditions of colonial and/or racial oppression, the black subject is, because of overdertermination from without, denied her freedom. Sartre's realm of non-being was brought upon to understand how this is so. It was noted that while freedom is possible in Sartre's philosophy, the racial dimension in Fanon, prevents the conception of black being as freedom or possibility. This denial of possibility in Fanon leads to despair.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter set out to locate Fanons thought insofar as the concept of alienation is concerned within the context of other uses in philosophy, particularly Hegel, Marx and Sartre. It was noted that while Fanon converses with these thinkers, he taps into their intellectual resources in order to formulate an original theory of alienation for the colonised subject. It was argued that while these thinkers wrote with the European context in mind, the racial element at work in the oppression of colonised cultures produces a total deprivation of being-for-themselves. It was noted that while freedom is possible in the philosophies of Marx and Hegel, this proves to be problematic for the black subject under colonialism.

Marx's conception of alienation was explored in some detail and it was argued that although Marx's proletariat suffer exploitation as workers under conditions of bourgeois social domination and as the result of the system of private property, the colonised suffer a more

profound form of alienation. Here, racism denies the colonised any rights such that 'labour', if we can call it that, takes place under conditions of legalised and institutionalised slavery. The European worker, on the other hand, remains with his/her rights as recognised to be a member of the white race while the black subject, on the other hand, loses not only his/her rights but also his/her sense of self-hood. Racial prejudice brings in a new dimension, the total deprivation of possibility and freedom.

Sartre's notion of non-being, in relation to the being of both white and black people, was brought in to explain this phenomenon. This concept was discussed within the context of alienation from 'the look' as well as alienation as a lack in Sartre. The ability of self-consciousness to overcome alienation in both instances showed freedom to be at the heart of Sartre's conception of being. The notion of 'the look' becomes interesting, in that, while for Sartre its impact can be reversed, the opposite was proved to be true when extrapolated to the case of colonised peoples. The impact of the look thus endures because it is – in the manner described – a racial gaze. Moreover, while it appeared as if Fanon rejects the idea of the freedom of consciousness as construed from the lived experience of black people in anti-black social systems he is, in fact, made to accept it to be so of the oppressed.

As an existentialist thinker, Fanon does not want to view being in terms of its physical determinateness: the object-self. If the colonist apprehends the colonised negatively as a 'thing' among other things, Fanon, on the other hand, wants to conceive of being in terms of agency and as possibility. What this means is that although Fanon acknowledges the objectification of the black person in consequence of being structured under conditions of anti-blackness and although the colonial system tries to instil in the mind of the oppressed the idea of black inferiority, ultimately, Fanon subscribes to the idea of the freedom of

consciousness. So, although colonialism takes the body and the mind mind of the oppressed to be a singular determination of black being, ultimately Fanon, like Sartre, takes the view of consciousness as always free. For, it is this freedom of consciousness that makes it possible for the oppressed to begin imagining a post-colonial world. This analytic framework developed in this chapter, that of the total deprivation of black being, is now going to be applied to the evidence of alienation within the South African situation in the next chapter.

Chapter V

The Case of South Africa

5.0 Introduction

Like elsewhere on the continent, the advent of independence in South Africa symbolized by the 1994 elections brought hope for freedom and prosperity in the new nation. Expressions of unity that depicted the country as '*Simunye*' (we are one) or 'the rainbow' nation quickly became part of the new national discourse. The ushering in of this national discourse was precipitated by events resulting in the unfolding of the new country which was conceived of as a 'miracle'. It was conceived of as a miracle because of the fact that the country did not deteriorate into a protracted civil war as many had feared. Nelson Mandela emerged as the father of the new nation and symbolized the triumph of good over evil. However, beyond this *Simunyeism*, another reality was unfolding. This reality was best encapsulated by the contradiction of the coexistence of democracy with poverty, 'freedom' and social injustice. Thus, despite the democracy that the country was said to enjoy the majority of the so-called 'previously' disadvantaged groups continued to languish in poverty and social marginality. Sadly, despite the new era of 'unity' that blacks and whites were said to have entered into, the new South Africa seemed to have reproduced the racial Manichean structure of colonial apartheid under the guise of democracy.

So although a black government took over the reins of political power, the black majority continued to languish in despair. Instead of the new nation facilitating the creation of

conditions for black self-realization and a new mode of being, this latter aspect remained largely neglected despite political rhetoric to the contrary. Thus, by making use of Fanon's existential phenomenology, this chapter sets out to assess and establish the extent to which Fanon provides a framework within which we can understand contemporary alienation in South Africa. Thus, it is argued that despite the superficial changes that have occurred in the country, black South Africans in general remain in a state of total deprivation of being-for-themselves.

Although Fanon wrote under a different context to that of contemporary South Africa, his analysis of post-independence Africa (South Africa included) have been prophetic, in that, South Africa did not achieve genuine liberation. It is argued, therefore, that what South Africa received was, in fact, formal or bourgeois freedom and that the country lacked a revolutionary ideology with which it could rally the masses of the people out of poverty and historical inertia. As a result of the elite nature of South Africa's transition into democracy, the largely black majority was left behind and made to continue subsisting under conditions reminiscent of the apartheid era. It is thus suggested that this wretched condition can be viewed within Fanon's framework of colonial despair which typifies the zone of nonbeing that he sees as resulting from the fact of blackness in an anti-black world. This reality is largely demonstrated by the despairing and wretched existence depicted through widespread poverty and general social marginality that the majority in the new South Africa are still condemned to live in. The land and other means of economic production remain largely in the hands of a white minority[25]. So, although the negotiated settlement democratizes politics, it has ironically monopolised the economy and legitimized inequality.

---

[25] "Africa Check", an online publication, released a report on 14 September 2014 under the title: "Do 40 000 whites own 80 per cent of South Africa?" In this report, it noted that as of 1991 dataset "100,665,792 hectares

5.1 The 'Post-colonial'[26] Quagmire and the Problem of Ideology

Decades before the political 'independence' of South Africa, Fanon (1967b: 186) had raised concerns about the new countries that were being born in Africa, particularly in the mid-1950s to the latter part of that decade. During this period, Fanon observed that Africa was sinking evermore into neocolonialist lines. Thus, Fanon reckoned that Africa lacked a revolutionary ideology behind which the founding fathers of the new countries were to rally the people. This ideology can be construed as part of the broader project of raising the consciousness of the oppressed as noted in the third chapter. It is spawned, among other things, by his belief that despite the fact that the new African states were being politically deracialized, the economic structure still reflected the economic structure of formal colonialism serving the economic interests of European powers. It is worth reiterating that as a psychiatrist working under the French colonial administration in Algeria, Fanon had come to a realisation that his efforts at healing mental patients, particularly at Blida-Joinville Hospital where he worked as a Chief psychiatrist, were coming to naught as the recovery of patients was being impeded by anti-Arab French colonialism. Recognising the importance of ideology in the revolutionary struggle, Fanon realized that to bring about meaningful social change and sanity upon the Algerians, the system that militated against the recuperation of his patients had to be changed from the bottom-up which, in effect, meant that Algeria had to be decolonized. But decolonization would require a liberatory ideology to rally the masses of the colonized

---

– or 82.3% of South Africa's surface area – consisted of farmland. Of this, 81.9% (or 86,186,026 hectares) was considered commercial agricultural land". Since by 2012 the government had only returned about 7.5 of formerly white owned land into black hands, it is safe to conclude that most of the land still remains in white hands.

[26] The inverted commas are used here in order to indicate the continuing nature of colonialism through the reproduction of colonial structures of oppression in the period after independence.

people. Thus, ideology, particularly in the late 1950s and early 1960s, became Fanon's major concern.

Fanon's position was that since colonial ideology had its roots deeply entrenched in every aspect of colonial society, it was unlikely to simply disappear by merely conferring political power to the liberation movement. What further complicated the situation was that the 'native' political elite that was earmarked to take over the political reins was itself the product of colonial education and in some cases handpicked to study in Western universities. This means that the 'native' elite itself imbibed colonial ideology. The values of the national elite were, therefore, largely European and thus foreign. As Fanon reckoned, this situation coupled with the economic structure that colonialism had laid out in colonial countries, posed serious ideological problems to the envisaged independence of African countries. For Fanon, it was no longer colonialism that threatened Africa but, as he puts it in *Towards the African Revolution,* the absence of a revolutionary ideology (1967c: 186). As he reckoned, failure in this respect would create fertile conditions for the universalization of neoliberal values in Africa.

Furthermore, the danger of neglecting this important aspect of the struggle was that European values, interests, institutions, would endure and find expression even in the new nations in the form of neocolonialism, a condition that Mahmood Mamdani, in his book *Citizen and Subject*, refers to as 'indirect despotism'. Thus, instead of independence being the occasion for celebration and to start things anew, a new era of post-coloniality, oppression, and alienation would be heralded and legitimized by the installation of a black nationalist government as it has happened in most of the 'post-colonial' African countries. This situation is accounted for by the fact that the way in which freedom comes to Africa is such that it is always supervised by the erstwhile colonial powers. At this point of our discussion the skeptic

might raise the argument that this freedom or concession by the colonizer does not come about willingly from the colonizer's good heart but is fought for. Granted that the concession to grant Africa its independence comes about through long processes of struggle, it is suggested, however, that when freedom is transferred into the hands of Africans, the colonial powers ensure that colonial institutions, culture and European values find expression in the 'post-colony'. It is thus notable that although a black government takes over the political reigns, the system of exploitation continues precisely because colonial institutions and structures remain largely intact. So, it is in this sense that Fanon emphasizes the importance of ideology. This is a concern that he shares with Amilcar Cabral (1969). Both men were involved in the anti-colonial struggle as activists and as intellectuals of the revolution. Cabral's views on ideology are also discussed below given the light his theoretical work sheds on the subject of ideology within the context of the anti-colonial movement.

In the chapter "The Weapon of Theory" of his book *Revolution in Guinea*, Cabral, like Fanon, thought that the greatest danger that threatened Africa in its fight against imperialism was "ideological deficiency" (1969: 92). By ideological deficiency, Cabral had in mind a simple and rudimentary state of consciousness. In this essay which was initially delivered as an address to the first Tricontinental Conference of the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America in Havana, Cuba in January 1966, Cabral maintains that any movement that seeks to defeat imperialism needs first to take stock of its own particular internal contradictions and its historical reality. By emphasising particular social reality, Cabral is invoking Fanon's view of locating the revolution in the present. He thus maintains that it is that reality that ought to inform responses to it. Cabral, therefore, singles out ideological deficiency as being the major concern pertaining to colonised countries and remarks in the following manner: "Ideological

deficiency, not to say the total lack of ideology, within the national liberation movements…constitutes one of the greatest weaknesses of our struggle against imperialism, if not the greatest weakness of all" (Cabral 1969: 92-93). So, Cabral wants to see Africans espousing a radical ideology, although this ideology must, for him as it is for Fanon, be grounded in the present.

As can be gleaned from the above, the problem is not that there is a total or absolute lack of ideology within the liberation movement. On the contrary, a semblance of ideological orientation did exist except that it was only rudimentary and, therefore, needed bolstering. The major problem of ideology, as Cabral conceive of it, is that this aspect of the revolution is simultaneously pervaded by "ignorance of the historical reality which [the liberation] movement claims to transform" (1969: 92). Perhaps like the Gramscian organic or even a Fanonian radical intellectual, Cabral sees the need for the enlightened elements of the revolution to introduce a theory of revolution that is rooted in the particular historical reality of domination. Thus, the inference that can be drawn from Cabral's proposal is that the rank and file are not seen as impervious to new knowledge. On the contrary, they are to be seen as capable of appreciating and understanding its facticity in history and responding to its challenges.

It is thus notable that in the march towards freedom Cabral, like Fanon, stresses the importance of consciousness. The particular social and historical reality is the condition that shapes consciousness. Thus, for Cabral, it is the particular that ought to be the force driving the revolutionary struggle, such that particular reality itself becomes like the seed that is planted within consciousness and becomes its beacon of light. He contends that "the development of a phenomenon in movement whatever its external appearance, depends mainly on its internal characteristics" (Cabral 1969: 92). On this basis, therefore, Cabral

eschews the importation (or exportation) of social revolutions from elsewhere. To this end, Cabral argues that "On the political level our own reality – however fine and attractive the reality of others may be – can only be transformed by detailed knowledge of it, by our own efforts" (1969: 92). He adds that "national liberation and social revolution are not exportable commodities; they are, and increasingly so every day, the outcome of local and national elaboration" (1969: 62).

So, while fully aware of the factors of colonial domination of the African people, particularly the colonisation of the people of Guinea by Portugal, Cabral wants the people of Africa to undertake an ideological introspection and to see to it that it is "*the struggle against our own weaknesses*" (1969: 91) that warrants most attention. He cautions that a revolutionary struggle that neglects this fundamental element runs the risk of failure (1969: 93); failure to realise and understand its mission. Similarly, Fanon had stressed that at any given point in time, a generation has a specific duty or mission to fulfil. He asserts that "Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it" (1967b: 166). Failure to take this responsibility leads to what Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* calls "tragic mishaps" (1967b: 119).

There is a specific ethic that emerges in both Cabral and Fanon's reflections on existence and freedom. This ethic pertains to the existential notion of responsibility which they associate with the being of the human. The existential idea of 'throwness' or existential 'abandon' assumes, in the thoughts of both, a particular agency of acting in direct responses to one's facticity in the world. It is an ethic that speaks to the question of authenticity that emerges the moment that an individual or a group of people shows commitment to the present. This study concurs with both Fanon and Cabral in their averment that for genuine freedom to obtain, it ought to have been the product of a heightened level of political and social

consciousness. Specifically, two things emerge from Cabral's musings on ideology. Firstly, it is that a revolutionary ideology ought to emerge and be informed by actually existing conditions on the ground. The merit of such an awareness is that the anti-colonial movement's responses and strategies are informed by the conditions that obtain in space and time as opposed to the adoption of political strategies that may have worked elsewhere but have no bearing, for example, to the people of Guinea which is Cabral's country of birth. Secondly, Cabral highlights "ideological deficiency" as one of the greatest dangers confronting the anti-colonial movement. In pointing out this aspect, Cabral encourages self-introspection, that is, the need for the anti-colonial movement to address ideological weaknesses within its own ranks. What this means is that, one need not only assess the shortcomings of one's enemy in order to overcoming it; equally important is the need for self introspection to understand the weaknesses that may exist internally. This process assists in determining areas where improvements can be made. In Cabral's case, it is the ideological weakness within the movement that was a critical factor. The implication thereof is that the indigenous population is not seen as lacking capacity for rational thought as the colonial project conceives of them. Like Gramsci and Fanon, Cabral conceives of the oppressed as capable – through appropriate education – to understand their situation in relation to colonialism as well as being able to respond to it. This is the reason why he traversed the whole of the Guinea countryside addressing the question of Portuguese colonisation of the country and the islands of Cape Verde. He reckoned that to galvanise the indigenous population to adopt a stance against Portuguese colonisation, the political situation had to be explained and solutions sought with the masses. It was in this way that the Guinea achieved its independence from Portugal; it was through his emphasis and commitment to the present realities of the country that independence was achieved. Failure in introducing and instilling a revolutionary ideology

would lead to neo-colonialism, a condition that Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) refers to as the coloniality of power which also speaks to the coloniality of knowledge and being.

According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni, coloniality, particularly within the context of post-independence, speaks to the endurance of European values and institutions that undermine the independence and democracy of African states. He explains coloniality as a system that

> Articulates continuities of colonial mentalities, psychologies and worldviews into the so-called 'postcolonial era' and highlights the social hierarchical relationships of exploitation and domination between Westerners and Africans that has its roots in centuries of European colonial expansion but currently continuing through cultural, social and political power relations (2013: 8).

What is expounded above has been the trend in the so-called 'post-colonial' societies in Africa and from which South Africa is not immune. This is so, in that, in the political transition leading to the ANC taking over the government of the country in 1994, that transition, as Patrick Bond (2000) has observed in his book *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa,* was overseen by Western interests both locally and internationally to ensure the continued dominance of the neoliberal agenda in the post-apartheid state. In this way, the material status quo of old fashioned apartheid-colonialism remains largely intact as can be seen through the continued concentration of economic activity in the towns, spatial zones of mineral extraction from which the roads and railway lines lead straight to the habour. It is a nightmare that Fanon had of the African countries that were receiving their independence as early as the 1950s. He notes that "The national economy of the period of independence is not set on a new footing. It is still concerned with the ground-nut harvest…with being Europe's small farmers who specialize in unfinished products" (Fanon 1967b: 121-122). The reality of

the continuation of the old under the guise of democracy and freedom can better be understood against the framework of what Fanon understood by 'decolonization'.

Thus, to begin with, Fanonn conceives of decolonization as a programme of complete rupture with colonialism and with the past. This is attested to in his averment that "the proof of [its] success lies in a whole social structure being changed from the bottom up" (Fanon 1967b: 27). From this explication, we can surmise that decolonization is not about effecting some piecemeal reforms here and there as would happen in a negotiated settlement. On the contrary, as Fanon reckons, decolonization is a programme that ruptures with the past and in so doing, makes the past unrecognizable in the new society that is being forged. It is thus against this background that we should examine the decolonisation process in South Africa and ask the pertinent question: Are black South Africans, who constitute the majority, free? In the last chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth* "Colonial War and Mental Disorder" Fanon expounds on what true liberation and true independence entail in the following manner,

> Total liberation is that which concerns all sectors of the personality...Independence
> is not a word that can be used as an exorcism, but is an indisputable condition for
> the existence of men and women who are truly liberated, in other words who are
> truly masters of all material means which make possible the radical transformation
> of society (Fanon cited in Gibson 2011: 26).

What emerges from the above explication is that Fanon's understanding of independence is that it is a radical programme whose success lies in the revolutionary way in which it transforms individuals and society. Thus, its success can be gleaned from the way in which decolonization does away with colonial mentalities and colonized personality, colonial

institutions and racial segregation. Of utmost importance is the extent to which independence gives birth to a new form of Being. Fanon's understanding of the decolonization process was that through it, "The 'thing' which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself" (Fanon 1967b: 28). Elsewhere, Fanon asserts that decolonization is the realisation of that biblical prophecy wherein "the last shall be the first and the first last" (Fanon 1967b: 28). It is thus with this in mind that in this study we shall examine the post-independence experience in South Africa. Furthermore, it will demonstrate that based on Fanon's conception of alienation and his idea of decolonization in the manner just described, decolonization in South Africa has not taken place and that the majority of South Africans (largely black) are still, in the true sense of the word, unfree and still live in a state of colonial despair.

When British colonial rule ended in South Africa in the early 1900s, a white settler government representing both the English and Afrikaans-speaking nations in South Africa was formed. This new formation which comprised the four Afrikaner and English Republics was named the Union of South Africa[27]. Ironically, this 'union' *excluded* the black majority who were/are the indigenous people of the country[28]. In 1948, the Afrikaner nationalist government took over the reins of political power and accelerated racial discrimination and the suffering of black South Africans on the grandest scale, what has now become known in literature as the South African exceptionalism[29]. As a result of internal and external pressure, the nationalist government was forced to make way for the country's first black administration in the early 1990s. The 1994 moment which culminated in the country's first democratic election is often

---

[27] See "Roots of Urban Segregation: South Africa at Union, 1910" by A.J Christopher.
[28] See for example A.J. Christopher's (Op. Cit.) discussion on racial segregation during the Union of South Africa.
[29] See Mahmood Mamdani's *Citizen and Subject.*

construed as the country's watershed moment that signaled a move towards democracy; but the 1994 moment came as the result of a negotiated settlement[30]. As a result, the country did not experience a radical transformation of the economy, racial equality, inclusive empowerment and so on. It is in this sense then that this tudy views the unfreedom in the post-1994 political dispensation.

In an effort to bring political democracy to fruition, the new political dispensation and constitution make provision for regular elections whereby the citizenry, black and white, elect political leaders under the principle of 'one man one vote'. Additionally, the new political dispensation allows freedom of association, religion, the freedom of speech and so on. But these are political rights and as such do not speak of the need to democratise the economy, genuine economic empowerment and individual disalienation. It is also notable that although there are policies relating to affirmative action and black economic empowerment, these are skewed in favour of the politically connected and largely those who live in the cities and towns. In existential terms, the inability by those in power to create an enabling social environment for a majority of the people to realise their potentials, denies them existence as full human beings. Our argument in this regard derives from the fact that these people live life only to satisfy what Marx refers to as animal needs as opposed to human aspirations as dictated to by reason.

As a way of showing how the question of racial equality was mishandled, Patricia Tuitt (2013) notes that in the new dispensation, "Racial equality was reduced to 'black economic empowerment' according to which only a black minority would gain entry into the economic

---

[30] See Herman Giliomee (1997) "Surrender without Defeat: Afrikaners and the South African Miracle"

elite" (2013: 90). This shows that the liberation that resulted from the negotiations became only formal or nominal as it left behind the majority of the people. It was also political as the economy and land ownership remained largely unchanged in the hands of the white minority. So, although the country had all the trappings of a free and sovereign nation, for example, universal suffrage, regular elections, the separation of powers and so on, the economic gains of democracy did not and have not trickled down[31] to the ordinary people. This is a far cry from the concept of decolonization as the process of starting things anew that Fanon talks about. The liberation movement itself has, through its policies in government, betrayed collective ideals of equality, non-racialism and equal share in the country's wealth. It is against thisbackdrop, therefore, that Gibson (2011), Moeletsi Mbeki (2009) and Patrick Bond (2000) speak of an 'elite transition' insofar as the South African experience is concerned.

A useful way of understanding 'post-apartheid' alienation is to see it from its antecedents in apartheid's racial Manicheanism and contradictions. This provides us with the background according to which we can judge the success, or lack thereof, of the new political dispensation. In an unpublished article, More,[32] observes that the term 'apartheid' within the South African context first appeared in 1943 through the Afrikaner newspaper *Die Burger*. According to More, the literal meaning of the word is 'apartness' or 'separateness'. Thus, the idea of 'apartness' or separation of the different race groups was to become the Nationalist government's policy of social engineering when it took over power in 1948. On paper, the doctrine was couched in the language of separate development and separate destiny for each of the racial and ethnic groups in the country. As More further observes of B. Cronje, one of

---

[31] See Ben Turok (ed.) *Wealth Doesn't Trickle Down* (2008).
[32] Unpublished manuscript in the author's possession.

apartheid's chief architects, apartheid policy aimed not at racial suppression and domination, but at separate development and differentiation for each of the race groups.

In practice, however, apartheid proved otherwise as the so-called development of blacks was to take place in the homelands, popularly known as 'Bantustans' under the system that Mamdani refers to as "institutional segregation" (1996: 6) where the economically unproductive sectors of the black population in the towns were pushed. In this way, this section of the population would be governed indirectly through their own traditional institutions in the homelands. Land that had previously been owned collectively by the indigenous people was, through a system of unjust laws, dispossessed by the regime. This made possible the accumulation of capital under the apartheid system and the supply of cheap labour particularly for the mines and farms. According to du Toit, cheap labour from the black peoples of South Africa was foundational in the building of the modern South African economy (1981: 442). He further maintains that this labour was "drawn from the defeated African peoples who were in no position to bargain and were compelled to accept work on the terms on which it was offered" (1981: 442). Du Toit further observes that during this period, it had been the policy of the state to keep the "mass of workers at the level of 'cheap docile labour'" (1981: 442) with mining being the backbone of the country's economy even to this date. Moreover, although the manufacturing sector during the apartheid period grew rapidly, but because of poor pay, the cheap labourers could not use their wages to purchase the consumer goods that they produced.

The tendency of treating blacks as less human as exemplified by the way in which the apartheid state and monopoly industries treated black workers, is also consistent with the way in which Fanon perceived of developments in South Africa under the apartheid regime.

Writing at the height of the apartheid (and colonial) regimes in Africa, Fanon writes in *Black Skin White Masks* that South Africa was built on a "racist structure" (Fanon 1967a: 64). Rhetorically he asks: "What is South Africa? A boiler into which thirteen million blacks are clubbed and penned in by two and a half million whites" (1967a: 64). Since blacks were considered by the regime as complete 'others' and alien, the lives of black people was something that could easily be dispensed with. It is for this reason, therefore, that the regime did not hesitate to gun down some 69 peacefully protesting black people in 1960 at Sharpeville as was also reported by The *New York Times* on 16 March 1960. This incident has now become known as the Sharpeville Massacre. Absolute force and violence was taken to be a concomitant element of civilisation and of putting the 'natives' into line; basically, a means to an end; as the saying goes, 'the end justifies the means'. Accordingly, the intermediaries between the state and the colonized people would inflict brute force and violence upon the indigenous people without any moral conflict or contradiction. The Sharpeville Massacre is testimony to this fact. It is against this background, therefore, that post-1994 South Africa should be seen. Moreover, the great deal of alienation that we see to today, it is argued, has been spawned by the adoption of bourgeois social ideology by the liberation movement. This, sadly, has led to the continuation of coloniality under the guise of democracy. The following discussion on the elite nature of South Africa's transition into democracy outlines some of the problems that have led to the marginalization of the large section of South African society.

5.2 The 'Elite Pact' of South Africa's Transition

In his recent book *Fanonian Practices in South Africa*, Gibson examines post-1994 South Africa through the emancipatory lens of Fanon's revolutionary humanism. Accordingly, he locates

contemporary South African alienation to the surrender by the national liberation movement of its radical stance as it moved, instead, towards neoliberalism. Prior to 1994, the anti-apartheid struggle had always mobilized and worked very closely with the masses and other social formations. This was in no doubt in line with the Fanonian philosophy or praxis (discussed in the third chapter), that the enlightened elements of the revolution ought to work closely with the masses in order to raise their level of social and political awareness. However, in the period culminating to the 1994 election, it was becoming evident that the new government was not going to implement a radical economic policy based on the human needs of the majority and that pressure from the West to liberalise the South African economy was starting to bear fruit. It is for this reason that Gibson remarks

> The government's failure to alleviate poverty is not simply because of a lack of resources or the pressures of multinational capital, but is also due to the specific political-economic choices defined and made during the transition period by nationalist political elites that turned their backs on mass democratic participation (Gibson 2011: 74).

One gleans in Gibson's reading of the post-1994 condition that the anti-apartheid movement seemingly, lacked a revolutionary post-apartheid social imagination. This is attested to by the adverse conditions as described by Gibson (2011) impacting negatively on the black South Africans. Gibson shows that contrary to the official ANC stance, the social conditions for the poor have, since 1994, taken a turn for the worst. He contends that many people have since 1994 sunk back into even deeper poverty. Consequently, "The gap between rich and poor has widened, with the number of people living on less than a $1 a day doubling from two million

in 1994 to four million in 2006" (Klein cited in Gibson 2011). These are some of the contradictions of the 'rainbow nation'. Gibson further observes that,

> Over a third of children among the poorest 40 per cent of the population suffer chronic malnutrition. Twenty per cent of urban households have no electricity, 25 per cent have no running water and a third have no flush toilet. Life expectancy dropped from 48.4 years in 2003 to 43.3 in 2005, and South Africa is one of only a dozen nations worldwide where child mortality has risen since 1990 (Gibson 2011: 73).

It is in light of the material condtions explicated above that Tendayi Sithole[33] conceives of the independence of the 'new' South African nation, as an "illusion of liberation which featured formalistic bourgeois freedoms". For Gibson, however, the dominance of the neoliberal paradigm domestically and internationally during the 1980s and 1990s made it difficult to imagine a future that was not determined by it. It is thus, through this lens that Gibson views the ANC shifting policy from its more progressive and socially inclusive Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), used as its election manifesto prior to the elections in 1994, to adopting a very neoliberal policy in the form of Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR). So, from the point of view of the need to start things anew, the vertigo that leads to the commitment to bourgeois social ideology signals, from a Fanonian point of view, a sclerosis of thought. This is so irrespective of the pressure put on the revolutionary movement, be it local or international. As a matter of principle, the struggle against oppression is

---

[33] Unpublished paper titled "Fanon: Manichean Structure and the Challenges of Coloniality in the Post-1994 South Africa", paper presented at Codesria's 13th General Assembly, Rabat, Morocco, 2011.

predicated on specific revolutionary principles. In South Africa, this sclerosis, this giddiness at the decisive moment and pitfall of national consciousness, can be seen, among other things, through the back-and-forth shifting of the country's founding president, Nelson Mandela. According to Gibson, upon his release from prison in 1990, Mandela initially showed commitment to the ideals of the Freedom Charter. However, in the following year, Mandela had back-tracked now adopting the view that the "ANC was not the enemy of private enterprise" and was determined to "create the necessary climate which the foreign investor will find attractive" (Cited in Gibson 2011: 101). However, by 1994 the move towards neoliberalism had been sealed as was indicated by the announcement by the former Statesman saying:

> In our economic policies…there is not a single reference to things like nationalization, and this is not accidental. There is not a single slogan that will connect us with any Marxist ideology (Mandela Cited in Gibson 2011: 101).

What sense, then, can one make of this, which from an existentialist point of view amounts to the abdication of responsibility? The abdication of responsibility here is used in the Sartrean and existestial sense of not acting and claiming responsibility regardless of one's circumstances. For we must remember that Sartre emphasizes the freedom of every consciousness. So, if the revolution is premised on certain principles, for example, self-determination, freedom, equality and so on, which the ANC also stood for, then those principles ought not to be compromised. The compromise of allowing the country to be ruled on the grounds of neo-liberal policies and leaving the economy untransformed and undemocratied can be viewed as what Fanon refers to as retrograde maneuvers by the anti-colonial movement which is symptomatic of the 'unpreparedness' and 'cowardice' of the

educated classes (1967b: 119). The mistake which the educated classes make, which is also the mistake that the ANC itself committed, was to aim for political freedom with the *hope* that the rest would be achieved, perhaps, through black economic empowerment legislation such as affirmative action. This leads us to what Fanon regards as the "pitfalls of national consciousness", which for the light it sheds in analyzing the behavior of the local political elites in South Africa, is quoted at length. To this end, Fanon avers that,

> National consciousness, instead of being the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people, instead of being the immediate and most obvious result of the mobilisation of the people, will be in any case only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been. The faults that we find in it are quite sufficient explanation of the facility with which, when dealing with young and independent nations, the nation is passed over for the race, and the tribe is preferred to the state. These are the cracks in the edifice which show the process of retrogression that is so harmful and prejudicial to national effort and national unity. We shall see that such retrograde steps with all the weaknesses and serious dangers that they entail are the historical result of the incapacity of the national middle class to rationalize popular action, that is to say their incapacity to see into the reason for that action.
>
> This traditional weakness, which is almost congenital to the national consciousness of under-developed countries, is not solely the result of the mutilation of colonized people by the colonial regime. Is also the result of the intellectual laziness of the national middle class, of its spiritual penury, and of the profoundly cosmopolitan mould that its mind is set in (Fanon 1967b: 119).

So, from the point of view of the masses of the people, what bourgeois social ideology also means is that the rendering of public services would now be managed from the top-down,

instead of the bottom-up approach that Fanon had insisted on in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Instead of being the liberator, the political party and the whole movement becomes the modern form of a dictatorship, "[i]nstead of welcoming the expression of popular discontent, instead of taking for its fundamental free flow of ideas from the peope [the party] forms a screen, and forbids such ideas…frequently reminding the people of the need for 'silence in the ranks'" (Fanon cited in Gibson 2011: 96). This is the period, as Gibson has observed, when the people discover that oppression can wear a black face "*amabhunu amnyama*" (black boers or oppressors, cited in Gibson 2011).

It must be stressed, however, that nationalism does not necessarily mean or translate to good governance. Fanon seems to view nationalism as a panacea for and as the basis according to which the anti-colonial struggle ought to be fought. This is not necessarily true. Most anti-colonial movements were based on nationalism but many soon became chauvinistic and tribal. Fanon himself also alludes to some of these problems in *The Wretched of the Earth*. In South Africa, Afrikaaner nationalism became part of the broader political scheme or system of apart-ness introduced by the Afrikaaner Nationalist government. What this shows is that nationalism does not always lead to or translate to good consequences.

Returning to our discussion, although Gibson laments the elite nature of local political parties when they form a screen between themselves and the masses of the people, in reference to the South African case, he does, however, concede that there have been some changes since the ANC-led government took office. For example, the repealing of "crude racial laws of apartheid…that determined where people live[d]" (Gibson, 2011: 72). He also concedes that the 1994 Constitution also safeguards universal rights, for example, the right to vote and the freedom of movement among others. While these gains seem to demonstrate progress, they

have nevertheless been negated by new forms of social exclusion. Instead of using the law, race-based social exclusions in the current dispensation are now practiced through the market mechanism, private security, gated communities and secure shopping centres (Gibson, 2011: 72).

It is in this vein, too, that Sithole[34] sees post-1994 South Africa. He laments the elite nature of South Africa's transition to democracy. As he views it, the transition to democracy left the majority people outside of political processes. Instead, it gives them what in liberal discourse is referred to as 'negative freedom', which is basically freedom without empowerment. Accordingly, Sithole views the country as having gone through a process of what he terms "embourgeoisement" (Sithole 2011: 3). To this effect, he remarks that "As an elite project, the national liberation struggle underwent embourgeoisement and systematical liberal disciplining which culminated into a negotiated settlement"[35]. However, it is as the result of the travesty of the failed democratic project that the author speaks of the country's liberation as an 'illusion'. Speaking generally of independence processes on the continent, Ndlovu-Gatsheni concurs when he argues that what came out and was celebrated at independence was, in fact, "a myth taken for reality" (2013: 14). The concern for Sithole is that this has entrenched bourgeois and foreign ideas of freedom such as "the bill of rights, all-race elections, a black political administration…Truth and Reconciliation Commission (without reparations)"[36] instead of freedom based on human needs. From this reading, we can see that the liberation project becomes instead a truncated project because of the semblance of

---

[34] "Fanon, Manichean Structure and the Challenges of Coloniality in the Post-1994 South Africa", paper presented at Codesria's 13th General Assembly, Rabat, Morocco, 2011.

[35] Op Cit, p.3.
[36] Op. Cit. pp. 4

democracy without empowerment. Thus, it for this reason that Sithole, following Ndlovu-Gatsheni, refers to the country's democratic project as 'half-way' or 'still-born', alluding to its incomplete nature.

The notion of South Africa's democratic project as half-way' and/or 'still-born, as noted by the above two authors, warrants some comment. We begin by noting that 'still-born', on the one hand, entails that whatever is referred to is or has died while, on the other hand, 'half-way' means a state of something being incomplete with the possibility of being completed at a future date. Now the problem here is that, something cannot be both half-way and still-born as is suggested above as it is either dead or is in a state of being incomplete. The distinction is important, in that, if, for example, a baby is said to be dead then there is no possibility of it coming back to life, for its life has come to an end. On the other hand, the realisation of a dream may be incomplete or 'half-way', meaning that with both time and the conditions permitting, the dreamer could then still complete it. So, going back to what is suggested by the two authors, perhaps it would be correct to say that South Africa's democratic project is incomplete. This is because, the conditions and possibilities of its realisation may still be said to exist.

However, insofar as Gibson is concerned, the present South African reality is reminiscent of the "exclusivity of heavily guarded colonial spaces that Fanon describes" (2011: 72) particularly in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Such an outcome has echoes of what Fanon meant by the absence of ideology leading to 'tragic mishaps'. In explaining Fanon, Gibson writes: "by 'absence of ideology', I take Fanon to mean an absence of a social vision, or a unifying liberatory ideology" (2011: 79) and the lack of a social vision. But the irony is that with a black

government now running the country, one would think that the apartheid Manichean structure would be a thing of the past, or at the very least, in the process of being eradicated.

However, as the South Africa based Marxist scholar Andrew Nash (1995) has observed of the new dispensation, "far from doing away with the contradictions that characterized the period of mass struggle", the new dispensation "only expresses them in new form"[37]. What this means is that although the country has been politically deracialised, material privilege has not. Since the economy remains in white monopoly control, the implication is that white supremacy is still the order of the day in the 'new South Africa'. The economy is largely characterised by the presence of monopoly industries and a few multinational companies whose owners and management remain largely white males. As in the old days, under this socio-economic climate, the government could justifiably be said to be managing the country in the service of these powerful industries and their owners and to a far lesser degree its citizens. As Fanon observed of the 'native' elites in *The Wretched of the Earth*, at the morrow of independence, its values undergo a certain metamorphosis as it tears itself off from the masses, as it now seeks to identify itself with the Western bourgeoisie. Accordingly, it conceives of itself in a like manner as the bourgeoisie of the former mother country. However, although the former has not amassed wealth in the same way as its Western counterparts, it nevertheless wants to measure up to the latter's standard in terms of spending ability. It, therefore, starts from the end. Thus, a materialist disposition of conspicuous consumption begins to set in. These are also some of the contradictions that we discern in present-day

---

[37] See Andrew Nash's "The Contradictions of the new South Africa", paper presented the Department of Philosophy, University of Western Cape, 16 February 1995.

South Africa. Nash captures the general condition that has come to characterize social decadence in South Africa very succinctly, especially when he asserts that,

> All of us are, to some extent, caught up in a society whose purpose and goals have been democratically affirmed by the majority in the election of 27 April 1994, and yet in which the interests of a small, privileged minority are decisive. We live under a government which represents the aspirations of the oppressed majority, but can only carry out the programme of the privileged minority. The fact that the privileged minority is being deracialised, to a limited extent, does not alter the fundamental inequality which characterizes this society (Nash 1995: 3).

The "fundamental inequality" that Nash refers to speaks to the unequal material conditions between blacks and whites and what Fanon refers to (above) as the "epidermalisation" of social privilege immanent in colonial society. It is a reproduction of apartheid social contradictions now legitimized by the installation of a black government. Under such conditions, the tragedy of Marikana which saw 34 miners being gunned down by the police, testify to the anti-black nature of the post-1994 South African state. Many whose memory spans to the period of the 1960s would find in the Marikana massacre resonance with the Sharpeville massacre. In fact, because of the striking resemblance in the Marikana massacre to Sharpeville in terms of scale and brutality, Carl-Ulrik Schierup refers to the Marikana massacre as "Democracy's Sharpeville" (2015: 209). Taking into account the enormous inequality that still exists in this country between whites and blacks, the haves and the have-nots, another Marikana could be deemed as something that is always in the air. For example, the World Bank estimated that South Africa's income Gini-coefficient is 0.70 in 2008 and consumption Gini of 0.63 in 2009. The same report estimates that the top decile of the

population accounted for "58% of the country's income, while the bottom decile accounts for 0.5% and the bottom half less than eight percent" (World Bank 2004).

The Oxfam report titled "Even It Up: Time to End Extreme Inequality" (2012) highlights the travesty of democracy and inequality in South Africa. The report notes that the richest South Africans—with a wealth of R154.95 billion—have the same wealth as the bottom half of the population. The Oxfam report further notes that inequality in the country is greater today than it was at the end of apartheid. The result of increasing inequality levels has gained the country the status of the most unequal society in the world, even above that of Brazil[38]. Such developments in the post-1994 era, are testimony to the fact that the country's trickle-down economic model has or is failing the ajority of the people. In 2014 Stats SA[39] reports that at least 25% of the population is unemployed. The online newspaper *The Daily Vox* reports[40] that the situation is even more dire for those under the age of 35 as the unemployment rate is estimated to be at 70% in that age group. This empirical data shows that such high levels of inequality and poverty create fertile conditions for instability and conflict.

The present reality of South Africa does not resemble a genuinely free and independent nation. It is also a far cry from the way in which Fanon describes true liberation and independence. Rather, the post-1994 existential condition can be categorized by what Fanon refers to as the "zone of nonbeing" for most of the black population. For there is nothing free nor democratic about poverty, inequality and illiteracy. In terms of educational attainments,

---

[38] The Money Line released an online report titled "SA Most Unequal Country of Earth: Report Ahead of Davos" in which it noted that South Africa had become the most unequal country in the world. The story emerged after an Oxfam report was released on 18 January 2015 ahead of the World Economic Forum in Davos. http://www.moneyweb.co.za/archive/sa-most-unequal-country-on-earth-report-ahead-of-d/
[39] See the report on http://beta2.statssa.gov.za/?m=2014
[40] See the report on (http://www.thedailyvox.co.za/sa-youth-unemployment-whats-the-problem/)

for example, the World Bank ranks South Africa's reading and Mathematics scores to be modest compared to those of poorer countries such as Kenya and Tanzania (World Bank 2014).

Such social ills are inconsistent with democracy but consistent with the apartheid style of creating poor living conditions for blacks in general and lowering the education standards of this group among other things. After twenty years of democracy, one wonders if this is by design or default. For Gibson, the answer lies in the former. From the South African experience, it becomes easy to discern that it is in the interest of power to keep the political consciousness of the oppressed as low and as feeble as possible so that they are made incapable of meddling in political affairs. Thus, a corrupt regime or one that operates in bad faith[41] will, therefore, always be a step ahead of its citizenry as the people will lack the capacity and ability with which it can hold the government to account.

Like elsewhere on the continent, the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa seemed to have its sights on capturing state power with little interest in the way in which the economy of the new nation needed to be handled. It also became indifferent to the racial way in which national wealth had been historically distributed and how it must be redistributed. Fanon notes this phenomenon in *The Wretched of the Earth* of the nationalist parties that, their objective is from the onset "strictly national" (1967b: 121). Therefore, instead of emphasising race and nation, it adopts instead a class consciousness. In South Africa, the ANC had long developed the Freedom Chapter, a progressive document which ideologically spelled out how the movement would run the country once in power. However, under the weight and

---

[41] This is the term used by Lewis Gordon in his book *Bad Faith and anti-black Racism*. But it is a term that can be traced back to Sartre.

pressure from monopoly industries especially mining, coupled with the globalization discourse stemming from the 'global North' with its emphasis on globalization, the ANC capitulated under pressure[42].

From the point of view of consciousness, anti-black racism even under circumstances of perceived freedom, black self-consciousness remains in check. The damned of the past, the so called Previously Disadvantaged Individuals (PDIs) remain the damned of the present. Instead of witnessing a rise in the consciousness of the oppressed black majority and improved social conditions, we instead realise that the route towards neoliberalism creates a screen and blocks this dialectic. Their plight in the new South Africa now manifests through lack of or poor service delivery and on-going service delivery strikes which have become increasingly violent[43]. In consequence of a consciousness kept in check, a white mask neurosis creeps in and many see themselves one day occupying the privileged position of the settler colonialists or the position of some of the black elites who have become *nouveau riche* through Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) schemes. What is clearly not being discussed as part of the national discourse is the need to do away with the structures that perpetuate racial discrimination and inequalities in society. These are the structures that make it pointless as to who is in government because the system is inherently and fundamentally oppressive.

We have thus far mapped the road that runs from colonial-apartheid alienation to post-apartheid alienation. But what is the philosophical significance of this? There is a deep sense of human-ness that comes with being in control of one's destiny, that is, to be able to carry

---

[42] See Bond (2000) and Gibson (2011).
[43] On 12 February 2014 the Mail & Guardian online carried a story which noted 'a sharp rise' in the number of protesters killed between 2004 and 2014. See the report at http://mg.co.za/article/2014-02-12-research-shows-sharp-increase-in-service-delivery-protests

out desired actions and have them recognized as your own and for a moral agent to live in accordance with his/her will without reference to another. The classical conception of man was that of a being who fully participated in reason (Aristotle 2000: 33-34). Thus, a rational individual (or group of people) was thought of as having the capacity to think independently and, therefore, having the capacity to exercise free will. Precisely because of the implication that it has, particularly, on colonial (and post-colonial) situations, the notion of free will becomes crucially important for Fanon in his analysis of the colonial situation. Within the South African context, the emergence from apartheid to neoliberal politics raises important metaphysical concerns relating to the collective will or lack thereof of the black majority.

Fanon raises profound metaphysical concerns about the kind of freedom, within the context of colonialsation that comes about without being fought for. Furthermore, considering the way in which freedom comes to Africa and South Africa, freedom without a decisive victory in struggle, Fanon thought that this kind of freedom cannot be true freedom. As we saw above, his idea of liberation is one that comes about through conscious action, but in Africa we notice that the erstwhile colonial masters have had a huge interest in the way in which freedom comes about. For Europe, Africa ought to be further reintegrated into the global capitalist system as set out during colonialism and follow the path of capitalist globalization along imperial lines. But, the problem with merely following or mimicking as Fanon saw it, is that Africans will simply move from one way of life to another, a way of life that does not emanate from the consciousness of her inhabitants but from that of the oppressor. This crisis is best expressed by Fanon when he writes: "The upheaval did not make a difference in the Negro. He went from one way of life to another" (1967a: 171). To a very significant degree, this has been the case in South Africa too where through negotiations, the new nation was in

the main, made to follow the path of neocapitalist modernisation without considering the aspirations of the oppressed South Africans.

It is thus within this frame that Gibson makes use of Fanon in order to provide a critique of contemporary South African reality. For him the adoption of neoliberal ideology symbolizes a move from race to class[44]. As such, the continued suffering and social marginalization of black skins in post-apartheid society is viewed as the result of "the suppression of avenues for participatory democracy as well as anti-poor policies produced by the transition from apartheid to neoliberal post-apartheid" (Gibson 2011: 21). According to Gibson, even the xenophobic violence of 2008 could be construed in this light, as the outcome nurtured through social marginalization that pits marginalized groups against poor immigrants. Therefore, instead of viewing the 1994 transition as a 'miracle', Gibson views it rather as a bitter moment of South African history and as a missed opportunity to create a just world. Empirically, this bitterness of the new nation can also be seen, among other things, by the stabilization of contact crimes as the unemployed youth resorts to crime. The ANC itself has, alas, identified the triple problem of poverty, unemployment and inequality as some of the most pressing challenges facing the country. What it would not admit to, however, is that this is the consequence of its own behavior and its own policy choices in government.

Mbeki (2009), a South African author and social critic, locates the shift from race to class within the South African context as arising from such schemes as the BEE and other affirmative action policies of the government. In his book *Architects of Poverty,* he views BEE as a stratagem by South Africa's oligarchs of co-opting the nationalist elite into the economic

---

[44] This is also the sentiment expressed by Moeletsi Mbeki. See his *The Architects of Poverty*.

elite. He asserts that "The object of BEE was to co-opt leaders of the black resistance movement by literally buying them off with what looked like a transfer to them of massive assets at no cost" (2009: 67). The intention of the oligarchs, as Mbeki maintains, was to retain the wealth that it had amassed during colonial and apartheid epochs. Through BEE, only a handful of the black national elite would be brought into the fold of the economic elite at the expense of radical social and economic transformation that would benefit the majority of the people. As Mbeki notes of the ANC bigwigs, what the oligarchs intended to do through BEE was to ensure that it won them from "radical economic ambitions such as nationalizing the major elements of the South African economy, by putting cash in the politician's private pockets, packaged to look like atonement for the sins of apartheid, that is, reparations to black people in general" (2009: 68). In this way, a few politicians became extremely rich without having had to do anything while the rest of the population suffered. Thus, "Overnight the politicians were transformed into multi-millionaires without having had to lift a finger because all the financial wizardry was performed" on their behalf (Mbeki 2009: 67).

In the case of the BEE empowerment company, New Africa Investment Limited (Nail), for example, Mbeki observes that this company was the invention of Sanlam in 1992, two years before the country's first democratic elections in 1994 (2009: 66). Nail was created to co-opt struggle leaders without any financial cost to them or their having to do anything. At the time, Sanlam was South Africa's second largest insurance company. It started Nail with the support of the National Party, the governing party during the period of apartheid in South Africa, together with the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) a "state owned industrial development bank started in 1940" (2009: 66-67). In the Nail transaction, everything was done by Sanlam's senior executives and "All the politicians had to do" as Mbeki asserts "was

to show up at the party to launch Nail and thank their benefactor. Even the debt the politicians incurred was largely fictitious as Metlife had to pay it back to the IDC" (2009: 67).

Underlying Mbeki's analysis of BEE is the contention, contrary to what many might believe, that BEE was never the brainchild of South Africa's liberation movement, but that of the economic oligarchs (2009: 66-77). Moreover, despite it being the invention of the oligarchs to benefit the few at the expense of the majority, BEE has nevertheless become an important ideology of the black political elite under the guise of extracting reparations for South Africa's PDI's. Thus, what gunnerd BEE support from the masses was the buy-in by the leaders of the liberation movement. For Mbeki, the real reason for its adoption as the policy of the government was to legitimize the enrichment of these political elites. He states, "BEE and its subsidiaries – affirmative action and affirmative procurement – which started off as defensive instruments created by the economic oligarchs to protect their assets, have metamorphosed. They have become both the core ideology of the black political elite and, simultaneously, the driving material enrichment agenda which is to be achieved by maximizing the proceeds of reparations that accrue to the political elite" (Mbeki 2009: 69). Essentially, BEE is the result of failure by the liberation movement, within the South African context, to transform society such that it uplifts the majority people from poverty to hope and prosperity.

Because of its skewed nature, BEE, as Mbeki notes, robs and underscores the underdevelopment of the country at both the state and individual levels. At the individual level BEE, as practiced in South Africa, has harmed a majority of the people in the sense that, it first rendered almost the entire population, (91 per cent according to Mbeki), into the category of PDIs. In this way, the state creates the impression that "all black South Africans" like the few political leaders "could and would [also] benefit from BEE" (Mbeki 2009: 68-69).

What the ideology does is basically to give hope of 'reparation' but only hope and nothing more. Furthermore, by initially buying off leaders of the anti-apartheid movement, BEE creates the impression that sooner or later the masses, too, will benefit. According to Mbeki, this move "legitimized the co-option payment to the black political elite by dangling before the masses the possibility that one day they, too, will receive reparations for the wrongs done to them during the apartheid era" (2009: 69). As the period of the first twenty years of democracy has shown, the masses have not benefitted from BEE. Instead, only a few politically-connected individuals have.

At the level of the state BEE is deleterious, in that, instead of the black elite seeing itself as entrepreneurs and the role of state as developmental, the elite merely sees itself in entitlement terms as beneficiaries of reparations and the role of the state as distributive. This approach, Mbeki locates in the entrapping ideology of reparations stating that "The ideology of reparations traps members of the black elite as beneficiaries of the production of other social groups and, therefore, primarily as consumers" (Mbeki 2009: 72). Regarding the lack of entrepreneurial spirit among the ranks of the political elite in government, Mbeki has the following to say: "the black elite don't see themselves as producers and therefore do not envisage themselves as entrepreneurs who can initiate and manage new enterprises. At best, they see themselves as joining existing enterprises, the process of which is to be facilitated by the distributive state through reparations-inspired legislation" (2009: 72). Such is the state of the 'rainbow' nation. We have thus far noted how the assumption of political power by the national elites does not automatically lead to meaningful socio-economic transformation, that, in fact, independence within the South African context has served rather to reproduce

and legitimize apartheid status quo, *qua* domination. There are, however, those who might perceive post-1994 South Africa in a positive light and as a nation in transition.

5.3 Post-modern Responses

In post-colonial theory, Homi Bhabha (1994) emerges as perhaps the most dominant voice on how colonial identities can be understood. One of his achievements lies in being able to coin and deploy terms such as 'hybridity', 'in-between', 'third way' and 'beyond' which are the result of his infusion of post-structuralist methods to colonial situations to describe the formation of new cultural forms. He wants to move away from seeing colonial identities as locked in the past. He, instead, challenges such notions and in the process, regard them as encroaching onto the present in ways that undermine Manichean structures.

Bhabha's ideas are largely influenced by post-structuralist thinkers such as Martin Heidegger (1962), Roland Barthes (1998), Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) among others, which according to M.A.R. Habib (2005) challenge the "notion of fixed identity, the undermining of binary opposites, and an emphasis on language and discourse—together with the power relations in which these are imbricated—as underlying our understanding of cultural phenomena" (2005: 750). Thus, Bhabha wants to see identity as fluid, as something that is always in transit, "here and there, on all sides…hither and thither, back and forth" (1994: 2). He thus encourages moving 'beyond' seeing social categories such as race, gender and class, monolithically into seeing them as fluid terms, for there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the 'beyond', an exploratory, restless movement" (1994: 1). Thus, Bhabha would view race as problematic and as a hindrance of sorts in understanding post-colonial situations. Moreover, what is crucially important to note in Bhabha's analysis is that through what he

terms the 'in between' he opens space for cross-cultural influences and the negotiation of new cultural formations. It is as though power and hegemony become irrelevant or made indifferent in the process of collaboration as both the privileged and marginalized sectors enter the transcendental cultural realm of the 'beyond'. It is suggested, however, that his views become problematic in understanding 'post-colonial' social formation particularly in South Africa. For, Bhabha's analysis would suggest that post-apartheid South Africa, as Sithole puts it, "can be regarded as a society in hybridity—that is, …characterized by the double edgeness in the process of iteration and differentiation" (2011: 5). This is because, his notions of 'hybridity' and 'in-between' constitutes and suggests a moment in space and time that opens possibilities for contestation and collaboration. As Bhabha puts it, this space is one that provides an opportunity to "initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation in the act of defining society itself" (1994: 2).

While allowing everything that is due to Bhabha, it is argued here that contemporary South African reality resembles less a hybrid society in transition than a Manichean one in which ANC nationalism has failed to reconcile the country and to redress the legacy of apartheid race-based exclusion and social inequalities. Contrary to there being a 'third way', the dialectics of social transformation have here been thwarted by the neo-liberal, neo-apartheid agenda which has prioritized the highly-skewed BEE at the expense of broader human and social development, as well as the reluctance of white minority capital to share in the riches and wealth of the land. Therefore, while Bhabha speaks of the 'beyond', his narrative fails, at least within the South African context, to consider the denial of recognition of the black self by the white Other. Under such conditions, we cannot speak of there being collaboration as each is locked in their narcissism. The only relation that can be said to exist is that of

dependency between the white owners of the means of production and the poverty-stricken black people.

Just as Fanon acknowledged that the white master does not necessarily seek recognition from the colonized blacks, but their labour, white monopoly capital in South Africa has historically prospered at the expense of black labour. Under such conditions, the possibility for "collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society" as Bhabha (1994: 2) contends, is perverted. Without social and economic redress, the two zones will, as Fanon would put it, remain "[o]bedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic" (1963: 30), thus conforming to the principle of mutual exclusivity.

Thus far the discussion in this chapter has centred around the condition of the largely black majority in South Africa who suffer alienation. Questions arise, however, as to whether the white minority does not suffer alienation? Or whether there might be severities of alienation among the various social groups? How much of the alienation can be traced to race and how much to economic conditions? Furthermore, does the black *nouveau riche* suffer no alienation? How applicable is Fanon's explanatory model to other countries, or is the South African case *sui generis*? These are some of the questions that arise. Although much of the discussion in this chapter and this study in general has focused on black alienation, it would be disingenuous to imagine that whites do not suffer or are not socially alienated. Today, we know that there are white South Africans who live in informal settlements and who are just as socially vulnerable as their black counterparts. Moreover, particularly in the major cities of the country, one hardly drives around without noticing a white burgher standing next to traffic lights. This shows that white people, too, are affected by alienation. The focus on black people in this chapter and the entire study is accounted for by the sheer number of the black

people affected by alienation in relation to that of whites as the proportion of the alienated blacks is much larger than that of the white community. Furthermore, it is also because Fanon himself was largely concerned with the condition of black people in general. So, what this also shows is that there are different severities of alienation among the different racial groups, which as we have noted, disproportionately affect black people.

Perhaps the explanation for this situation lies in the history of racial oppression and exclusion in South Africa that reached its pinnacle with the introduction of apartheid in South Africa. As we have noted thus far, however, racial exclusion is not a uniquely South African phenomenon as other African countries and other parts of the world have been affected by it. The severity of the South African situation could, perhaps be explained by the introduction of the apartheid system that further entrenched and consolidated racial discrimination in the country after British colonization. Some of the questions raised above are answered in this study, albeit, in varying degrees. Furthermore, these questions could also be answered by way of future research.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter set out to ascertain the extent to which Fanon provides a framework within which to understand contemporary alienation in South Africa. To this end, it was noted that the transition from apartheid to the democratic dispensation symbolized by the 1994 election simply reproduced apartheid social contradictions under the guise of democracy. It was noted that according to Fanon, decolonization is a programme of complete rupture with the past and a programme that seeks to transform society from the bottom-up. Since in South Africa freedom arrived through a negotiated settlement managed by the erstwhile oppressors, this

kind of freedom only gives a semblance of and not genuine democracy. Moreover, because of the elite nature of South Africa's transition to democracy, it is inferred that the majority of South Africans are unfree. Although the country has the trappings of a free and sovereign nation and formal apartheid has been abolished, racial exclusions and segregation are still the order of the day. The racist structure on which colonial apartheid was built remains largely unchanged and still vehemently militate against black self-realisation. The discrimination of the largely black majority along racial lines in the post-1994 dispensation as seen through lack of empowerment, deprives the black majority of the possibility for self-actualisation.

Moreover, it was noted that although a black nationalist government took over the reins of political power in 1994, this did not change the existential condition of the so-called previously disadvantaged groups in any meaningful way. This is so because the government adopted a neoliberal neo-apartheid economic paradigm which exacerbated the plight of the people as empirical evidence shows. Under such conditions, we can conclude that the black administration manages the economy in the interest of the privileged white minority at the expense of the impoverished black majority. Because of these social contradictions, the idea of a 'rainbow nation' appears to be more of a myth than reality. Taking these factors into account, the superficial changes that occurred in the transition period together with the way in which Fanon conceives of alienation as described thus far, we can conclude that the majority of black South Africans remain in a state of colonial despair reminiscent of old-fashioned colonial-apartheid. Thus, from a Fanonian point of view, violence becomes the only solution to this state of despair, a discussion to which we shall now turn in the next chapter.

Chapter VI

Violence: Resolution to the State of Alienation

6.0 Introduction

In the revolutionary struggle for freedom and political independence, Fanon proposes violence as a solution to the state of alienation that oppression engenders. In conquering a territory, the coloniser makes use of violence and coercion to subjugate and dominate over the indigenous people. As a dialectical thinker, Fanon is of the view that the oppressor's violence can only be defeated through violence by the oppressed. He then proposes counter violence by the oppressed people themselves. Thus, this chapter addresses the question of violence in the process of overcoming alienation. It argues that the category 'race' or 'colour' is so definitive in shaping peoples' outlooks that there can be no authentic dialogue or negotiation among conflicting groups and that the struggle against white supremacy and black oppression must necessarily take the form of considered violence. However, the question of violence, as it arises in Fanon's thought, is not without some problems. The problems arise mainly from the fact that Fanon is both a revolutionary and a humanist. As a revolutionary he wants to see the demise of the colonial regime that imposes terror and domination by man over man and of one race over another. As a humanist, on the other hand, he ought to see all human life as sacred, irrespective of colour or creed. So, there is tension insofar as the figure of Fanon is an embodiment of these mutually exclusive values. How Fanon deals and overcomes this difficulty is the subject of this chapter. The argument, however, is that as an existential thinker concerned with every human life, Fanon does not

view violence as an end, but views it as a means to a higher and mutually inclusive human society.

Thus far we have shown Fanon as having an ambiguous relation to Sartre and as someone who, on the one hand, appropriates Sartrean philosophy and at the same time, critiques it. Most particularly Fanon has been shown as someone who questions the Sartrean thesis of the freedom of consciousness when applied to black bodies under conditions of racial oppression. It was also argued, however, that Fanon is made to accept it to be so, for it is as thus that freedom becomes possible. What emerges in this chapter, therefore, is that, like Sartre, he views the act of violence itself as the reclamation and as an "expression of human freedom" (Frazer & Hutchings 2008: 91) by the colonised. For, if we take to it to its logical conclusion, the existential thesis that as facticity, human reality is an irrevocable tension towards itself, and further, as Sartre has observed that by its very nature, being-for-itself is freedom towards itself, it then becomes easy to see that through violence, the oppressed reclaim this tension in their journey towards self-rediscovery. Thus for Fanon, it is through violence that the oppressed recover their humanity. Indeed, this is the truth that emerges in the thought of Fanon regarding violence. We will begin our discussion with Fanon's theory of violence. This will be followed by a discussion of Fanon's revolutionary humanism.

6.1 Fanon's Theory of Violence

As we already established, the question of violence in Fanon's thought originates from the colonial encounter between Europeans and Africans. Race becomes central in the categorisation of the indigenous people as primitive, savage and as complete 'others'. Furthermore, such attitudes continue to prevail even after political independence has be declared. According to Fanon, such a state of affairs can only be remedied by the adoption of

armed insurrection by the oppressed. At another level, the justification of violence by the colonised is spawned, in Fanon's thought, by his notion that in conquering, ordering and maintaining a territory, European colonial empires in Africa, themselves make use of violence. This we can discern so clearly in *The Wretched of the Earth* when Fanon notes that the encounter between whites and blacks "was marked by violence and their existence together—that is, the exploitation of the natives by the settler—was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannon" (1967b: 28). Elsewhere he asserts that in "The dividing line, the frontiers are shown by barracks and police stations" (1967b: 29). We can see here that the settler, initiates the process of violence and he flings it into the world of the oppressed (Fanon 1967b: 39). Having observed this phenomenon, Fanon then proposes the adoption of violence as a mode of praxis and rebellion against conquest.

Initially the 'natives', overwhelmed by the sheer power and brute force of the settler simply crumble and capitulate under the power that grows out of the barrel of the settler's gun. I am aware of the distinction that Hannah Arendt (1970) makes between violence and power. She is cited here for the enrichment that her perspective on violence brings onto our discussion of the subject. In her work *On Violence,* Arendt deems power to be the opinion or the consent of the people in a political community. As such, power becomes for her, a function of the *numbers* of the people. Violence, on the other hand, is seen by her, in instrumental terms and its effectiveness thereof is dependant on implements. In this distinction, Arendt notes that regardless of the numbers of the people (power), by virtue of the might in the hands of a minority which is made possible by its weaponry, the former can be subdued by the latter.

Historically, and as was also noted above through Columbus's encounter with the Arawaks, this was the case in the encounter between Europe and Africans. Europe had reached a stage

of technical capabilities far exceeding that of Africans and this was evidenced by her superior weapons. This means irrespective of the sheer 'power', to use Arendt's term, in terms of the numbers of Africans that the European settlers would encounter, with a small army of theirs, they would easily subdue the former. The strength of the colonial armies derived not from its multitude but from the might of their weaponry. Moreover, the more superior the industry and technical abilities of the Europeans, the more strength they had in relation to the Africans.

This is the central argument of Friedrich Engels' (1987) in the essay "The Anti-Dühring". Engels is, however, looking at the relation of domination between Man Friday and Robin Crusoe on an island and therefore, not from a colonial perspective. In responding to Herr Dühring, Engels notes that for there to be a sword, its existence must have been preceded by industry or labour. For him industry is central in the production of weapons that eventually lead to the establishment of master and slave classes or domination (1987: 155). Although Fanon was aware of Engel's argument as evidenced by his citation of a passage from Engel's essay, he did not think that Engels' argument was appropriate for the colonial situation, particularly in Algeria. This can be gleaned from, among other things, an interview which Irene Gendzier (1973) had with Reda Malek, a friend of Fanon in Tunis who worked with him on *el Moudjahid.* In this interview, Gendzier recounts a story of how disappointed Fanon was after reading Engels' work on Dühring which Malek had brought for him. According to Malek, Fanon was disappointed because he felt the piece "was too mild" (Cited in Gendzier 1973: 203) and perhaps "inappropriate to address his interests in the Algerian situation" (Genzdier 1973: 203). So, Fanon cites Engels on the theory of violence only to rebut it by stating that the "Violent reaction of the colonised introduced a qualitatively new element" (Fanon cited in

Gendzier 1973: 203). The "new element" here is suggestive of the use of guerrilla tactics that would suit the anticolonial movement quite well in relation to the military might of the settler armies.

So, although Fanon would repudiate Engels, particularly looking at the issue from the point of view of the violence of the colonised, he does concede strength arising from industry. For, it was this very strength, derived from a strong economic and technical base that made possible the conquest and colonisation of colonial countries by European powers that also made possible the exploitation of black skins. It is also in recognition of the force of European armoury that Fanon notes in "Concerning Violence" that "the coiled, plundered creature which is the native provides fodder for the process as best as he can, the process which moves uninterruptedly from the banks of the colonial territory to the palaces and the docks of the mother country" (1967b: 39). So, violence as we can glean from the foregoing discussion, is at the foundation of the colonial project. In fact, colonialism, as Fanon shows in "On Violence", is synonymous with violence and as such, it is at the heart of the colonial enterprise.

This violence, as Fanon views it, does not only manifest itself as physical force but is also psychological. This can be gleaned, for example, through the architectural layout of colonial society and the statues erected across colonial towns. All these constitute forms of not only psychological violence but also the violation of space upon the oppressed. They are perennial symbols and reminders of the presence of a foreign occupier. For, these as Fanon notes, are "The statue[s] of the general who carried out the conquest, the statue of the engineer who built the bridge; a world which is sure of itself, which crushes with its stones the backs flayed by whips" (1967b: 40). This is Fanon's phenomenology of violence in the colonial context as it manifests itself virtually at all facets of colonial life.

How then does the colonised receive the coloniser's violence, and what impact does it have on them? In his work *The Wretched of the Earth,* Fanon begins noting that initially, the oppressed people learn to stay within bounds as set by the system (1967b: 40). Thus, given the limitation imposed on him/her, the colonised subject does not have an outlet for venting his or her anger and of letting off steam. In *Black Skin White Masks,* we learn that in the industrialised countries, people make use of the cinemas, amusement parks, among other things, to calm down everyday stresses as these provide avenues for letting off steam. Excluded from these in the colonies the question now becomes: How do the oppressed cope with everyday stresses? Psychologically, Fanon notes that this bottled-up anger finds expression in the colonised person's dreams (1967b: 40). Thus, it is argued that "his dreams are of action…of aggression. I dream I am jumping, swimming…that I span the river in one stride" (1967b: 40). This is accounted for by the fact that the colonised subject is in a "state of permanent tension" (1967b: 40). It is notable, however, that beyond such dreams are the dreams of freedom away from despair.

At an advanced stage, however, the colonised peoples' anger finds expression in violent clashes among the colonised peoples themselves. The 'native', according Fanon, becomes easily irritated and quickly reaches for his knife at the slightest provocation (1967b: 42) by another 'native'. Old and forgotten grudges between tribes come to the fore, it is black-on-black violence all over. The inherent 'tension' thus finds an outlet in the colonised subject's own kind. The problem for Fanon is that these scenes only serve to confirm to the oppressor that 'these people', "these men are not reasonable human beings" (1967b: 42). We may begin to wonder as to, at what point then does the oppressed, in Fanon's thought, come to reciprocate and direct their anger to the real enemy namely, the settler? We will notice that

this violence occurs dialectically in a two-pronged process, firstly, as spontaneous violence and secondly, more as conscious and organised violence.

In the first instance Fanon traces the reason for reciprocal or spontaneous violence on the continued and increased repressions as well to physiological factors associated with anger and tension. The slaughter of 'natives' by colonialism in places such as "Sétif in Algeria…Central Quarries in Morocco, Mraramanga in Madagascar" (1967b: 56) are cases in point. Thus, a combination of anger with such kinds of repressions sets the mood. It only takes a single incident to start the upheaval and then "guns go of by themselves, for nerves are jungled…everyone is trigger-happy" (1967b: 56). Furthermore, under this climate we are told that "'Good' natives become scarce; silence falls when the oppressor approaches" (1967b: 56).

So, whereas it is the coloniser who brings violence into the homes of the oppressed and whereas it is him that hurls violence into the universe, like a boomerang, that same violence is taken up by the colonised and is now directed at the settler. In the "Preface" to *The Wretched of the Earth,* Sartre locates this revolt as premised on one simple choice facing the colonised namely, "servitude or supremacy" (Cited in Fanon 1967b: 11). At this point of the revolution the oppressed demands not only "supremacy" but also his humanity. The violence which has ruled over the colonised world is now being taken by the oppressed and returned to the oppressor,

> The violence which has ruled over the ordering of the colonial world, which has
>
> ceaselessly drummed the rhythm for the destruction of native social forms and
>
> broken up without reserve the systems of reference of the economy, the customs
>
> of dress and external life, that same violence will [now] be claimed and taken over

by the native at the moment when, deciding to embody history in his own person,

he surges into the forbidden courters (Fanon 1967b: 31).

Like Sartre, Peter Geismar (1971) is correct in reading the notion of violence in Fanon historically and as the only recourse towards the attainment of freedom by the colonised when he asserts that "real violence lies in the heart of Western civilisation, and that the colonised are forced to choose violent struggle as the only recourse for genuine freedom" (1971: 181).

Thus the second phase of violence emerges from the increasing historical awareness by the 'natives' of their historical situation in relation to colonialism and anguish over freedom. At this point, the 'natives' are no longer acting spontaneously but there is now an element of purposefulness. What this also discloses is that at this point, there is an element of responsibility associated with the violence. Fanon ascribes this increase in awareness among the oppressed as a consequence of the rising level of political consciousness made possible by the lived experience of the revolution and aided by enlightened leaders. Thus, when the repressions continue, instead of inhibiting the peoples' resolve, they spur it even further.

This violence which is now violence by the colonised people themselves must be construed within the broader context of decolonisation. It is asserted that to achieve freedom and decolonisation, the coloniser's force must be "confronted" by even "greater violence" (Fanon 1967b: 48). Decolonisation, as we are told at the beginning of *The Wretched of the Earth*, is the process that will bring about the reversal of roles in the relation between colonial masters and black slaves. Furthermore, this reversal of roles does not come about through a friendly tete-a-tete, but shall come to "pass after a murderous and decisive struggle" (Fanon 1967b: 28).

It is worth reiterating that the way in which Fanon theorises violence particularly the one associated with the increased levels of social and political awareness, what Frazer & Hutchings (2008: 96) refer to as "educated violence", is influenced by Sartre's theory of action. According to Sartre, an act is such that it is always preceded by a state of consciousness and freedom. His point of departure is that preceding the act is the attainment of the freedom of consciousness. As we saw above, this freedom inheres in the way in which Sartre describes the for-itself and as having the character of non-being or nothingness. As 'nothingness' the for-itself is able to formulate negative judgements which are then carried out. By this very ability to make negative judgements, Sartre shows the freedom of every self-consciousness as contained in the process of formulating free and independent choices such that the act that results from such a judgement can be recognised as its own. But for Sartre, not only is the act a product of a free and conscious mind, but the act itself becomes an expression of freedom and as such, it is something that we attain "across the act" (Sartre 1958: 437-438).

Similarly, the way in which Fanon conceives of the second phase or stage of violence by the colonised is such that it is a conscious act aimed at a conscious goal namely, freedom. For him though, it is the hitherto experience of victimisation and humiliation that raises this awareness among the colonised of the need to take up arms against oppression aided by the radical intellectuals. He argues that their recent history of "violence and menaces", the "rockets…has prepared them to understand and grasp the situation" (1967b: 63). The notions of violence, dehumanisation and brutality perpetrated against the oppressed as they arise in Fanon's thought, bring to the fore the question of just war. For while others view violence negatively, there are instances where the use of violence becomes legitimate.

John Mattox (2006) outlines the conditions under which there could be grounds for a just war. He probes into this question within the context or principles of the just war theory (*Jus ad bellum*). According to the just war theory, war would be deemed to be just when it meets the following conditions i.e. there is a just cause, just intention and the element of proportionality obtains, among other things. The 'just cause' principle means that "The reason for resorting to war must, itself, be a just reason" (Mattox 2006: 9). Thus, just cause could include the protection of innocent people against aggression and the recovery of stolen property among other things. The 'just intention' principle means that the intention to go to war must be a reasonable one. For instance, the intention to wage war should not be based on ambitions for territorial expansion, hatred or coercion. Lastly, the principle of 'proportionality' entails that the moral good for waging war must outweigh the evil that comes with war (Mattox 2006: 10). In the colonial encounter we note that Europe's ambitions in Africa and other parts of the world are based largely on territorial expansion and economic dominance. Reflection on the violence of the colonised shows the conditions of the just war theory to be met. For instance, the decision to adopt an armed resistance is based on the rejection of an unjust system and on the need by the oppressed to protect themselves against exploitation and social injustice. So, the principle of 'just cause' and 'just intention' are met in the violence by the oppressed. Lastly, the 'proportionality' of the violence by the colonised rest on making use of the relevant and necessary means for the overthrow of an unjust system of oppression. Like a surgeon that cuts those parts of the body that are deemed to be deleterious to the health of a patient, violence by the oppressed also needs to be measured and calculated to harm the functioning of the colonial machinery. This is Fanon's argument in the Chapter "Spontaneity: Its Strength and Weaknesses" of *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Thus, the decision to enter an armed revolt can be understood as borne of consciousness. This is because the colonised have reached an understanding of their historical situation in relation to the colonial situation and of the need to free themselves from it. The adoption of an armed struggle by the colonised subjects is also an acceptance of the risk to life in order to obtain the ultimate price, freedom. Thus, the willingness to die is essentially a premeditated or calculated move based, according to Fanon, on the willingness "to die for the 'cause'" (1967b: 106).

The willingness and the preparedness by the 'native' to die does not mean that he or she will simply and uncritically fling himself/herself in the way of death. On the contrary, it entails a calculated move aimed at realising the 'cause' of freedom. Fanon discusses this aspect of the revolution in some detail in *a Dying Colonialism* with reference to the *fidai*[45]. While the *fidai*, on the one hand, "has a rendezvous with death", in deciding to fight for freedom he, on the other hand, has "a rendezvous with the life of the revolution, and with his own life" (Fanon 1965: 57). So, the *fidai* does not simply sacrifice himself or herself for independence and "at no moment does he choose death" (1965: 58) but accepts the real possibility of a rendezvous with death in deciding to revolt.

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre is at pains in explaining that an act is not merely the function of the factual or objective reality, that is, political and the economic structure or a psychological "state" (1958: 435), but that an act is the function of consciousness upon the factual (1958: 435-6). This means that present conditions alone do not determine action. This is why the for-itself in Sartre, as it is with other existentialists like Heidegger and Kierkegaard, is always seen in terms of facticity. Action, for him, becomes the principle of intention (1958: 433). Moreover, action thus, becomes the function of the state of being in the world and this

---

[45] The *fidai* is described by Fanon as "a death volunteer, in the Islamic tradition" (1965: 55).

state, as we have observed, is mediated by consciousness. This is the reason why he argues that it is when we conceive of a new 'state' of affairs that a new light falls on our troubles (Sartre 433-5).

Similarly, the way in which Fanon theorises violence can be understood in this way. For him, it is a series of events associated with repressions, depersonalisation helped by the progressive intellectuals in illuminating colonial social contradictions that lead to the increased level of consciousness and the need to fight. It is at this point that action becomes historical because changing the world through violence is a conscious action by which the 'native' enters history. This, too, is what Sartre had in mind when he asserted that "To act is to modify the shape of the world" (1958: 433). This is because in acting consciously, the individual or the group recognise themselves in the act. For Fanon, the violence that changes the colonial world can be viewed thus, as historical in the sense that as the 'native' becomes conscious of the purpose of violence, he/she embodies and enters history as he/she becomes its "moving force" (1967b: 29). This conception of violence can be seen when he avers that "To wreck the colonial world is henceforward a mental picture of action which is very clear, very easy to understand and which may be assumed by each one of the individuals which constitute the colonised people" (1967b: 31). Fanon further comments that "The natives' challenge to the colonial world…is not a treatise on the universal, but the untidy affirmation of an original idea propounded as an absolute" (1967b: 31). By "absolute" Fanon is here thinking of the term as used by Hegel in whom the dialectic of history ends in the unity of thought and being. In Fanon, however, the absolute is an 'end' or a dialectical unfolding arising from the lived experience of victimisation and despair under colonialism.

Once unleashed by the colonised, violence takes on a dialectic of its own and, according to Fanon, is therapeutic or beneficial in two respects. Accordingly, Fanon views violence by the colonised as therapeutic for the oppressed individual and the collective. At the collective level violence unites the people as it shutters old colonial values and myths of the superiority of whites and the inferiority of blacks whilst simultaneously engendering new ones born of the struggle. One of these values that is quick to disappear is individualism (1967b: 36). Whereas, for example, colonialism inculcates the values of self-love, self-interestedness and individual narcissism; during the process of struggle the 'native' sees a return to his people (1967b: 36). As the result of the revolution, the 'native' learns new vocabulary such as, "brother, sister, friend" (1967b: 36). Thus, as a result of the unity brought by the struggle, old grudges between tribes disappear; that is, the revolution makes possible "the disappearance of old quarrels and the final liquidation of unbroken grievances" (Fanon 1967b: 105).

At the level of the individual, cathartic violence functions therapeutically as a liberating or 'cleansing force'. Whereas the individual 'native' had been steeped in irresponsibility, inessentiality, in a word, colonial despair, Fanon suggests that cathartic violence frees the individual from this condition, that is, "It frees the individual from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect" (1967b: 74). Gendzier in her work *Frantz Fanon: a Critical Study,* also reads Fanon correctly insofar as cathartic violence as advocated by Fanon is concerned. The practical and critical role played by the colonised individual in the decolonisation process means she views violence in Fanon's thought as "the absolute form of praxis" (1973: 200). According to Fanon, during the upheaval the colonised individual subject discovers that, in fact, there is nothing special about the white person and that "his breathing heart" (1967b: 35) is no different from his own and that "the

settler's skin is not of any more value than a native's skin" (1967b: 35). These discoveries are, for Fanon, revolutionary for the individual and finds assurance in them. In the fourth chapter, we noted how the racial gaze objectifies the oppressed. During the violent clashes the oppressed discovers that the white man's "glances no longer shrivels [him] up nor freezes [him], and [his] voice no longer turns [him] into stone" (1967b: 35). It is, thus, in this manner that Fanon conceives of violence.

Fanon provides a compelling argument regarding the cathartic effect or impact of violence upon the individual. But, upon scrutiny his theory reveals a red herring. For instance, a rebellion against a dictatorship is justifiable on the grounds that the ruler does not enjoy support or legitimacy among the ruled or on the grounds that the way in which coercive power is administered is deemed oppressive by the ruled. Under such circumstances the use of objective violence may be deemed necessary and justifiable to overthrow an unjust system. Within this context, violence may be viewd as a justifiable or as means to end namely, fairness, social justice and civil liberty. But to claim, as Fanon does, that violence cleanses the individual is unusual. It gives the impression that the perpetrator of violence derives individual gratification by inflicting harm or even death upon another human being. This is indeed strange if not bordering on immorality.

It is also with these concerns in mind that Gendzier reflects on the question of cathartic violence in Fanon. She asserts that "To justify violence as part of the need for armed struggle in a process of national liberation is one thing; [but] to justify individual acts of violence in the belief that they cleanse those who so act, is quite different" (1973: 201). Gendzier further cast doubt on whether "revolutions and coups in Africa" (1973: 201) were so narrowly based. Moreover, she doubts whether the Algerian war of national liberation, a country in which

Fanon spent most of his adult life, was premised on this. Furthemore, Gendzier notes that "Few if any Algerians in the [National Liberation Front] have been known to justify the Battle of Algiers…on the ground that it would cleanse its participants of the humiliations of colonialism" (1973: 201). So, indeed, questions hang over the way in which Fanon theorises cathartic violence. Having discussed the way in which Fanon conceives of violence, we now focus our discussion on the implications of Fanon's notion of violence to his humanism.

6.2 Revolutionary Humanism

As we have observed from the foregoing discussion, the theory of violence as it emerges in Fanon's thought arises from the contradictions of a world in which Europe proclaimed the values of humanity for the Caucasian race and denied the same to their African counterparts. As a humanist, Fanon wants these same values to be extended to the oppressed Africans. Because of the need to extend human recognition to black peoples, Fanon begins advocating for an armed struggle against race-based oppression. Thus, he asserts in *Black Skin White Masks* that "since the other hesitated to recognise me, there remained only one thing: to make myself known" (1967a: 87). Elsewhere, he avers that "If the white man challenges my humanity, I will impose my whole weight as a man on his life and show him that I am not that ''sho' good eatin' that he persists in imagining" (1967: 178). Under such a context black human recognition, for him, can only result from the processes of struggle. It is in recognising this aspect that Onwuanibe speaks of "revolutionary humanism" (1983: 15) in Fanon's thought.

Fanon views violence and politics as intertwined. This is because the practice of exclusion aimed against blacks is not merely an individual phenomenon but is embedded in the whole superstructure of colonial society and is enforced by its social and political institutions. Thus, in political terms, violence is viewed by Fanon, first, as a means for the overthrow of the

exploitative and dehumanising colonial system and secondly, as a means for the replacement of that system by a more humane and democratic political system expressive of the will and collective aspirations of the oppressed people. This is evident throughout his writings and most particularly so in *The Wretched of the Earth*, *Towards the African Revolution* and in *a Dying Colonialism*. The decolonial process that he keeps referring to in *The Wretched of the Earth* is, in fact, a violent political process that will culminate in the removal of the foreign occupier and its replacement by a black government that ought to serve the social and human needs of the oppressed as opposed to the colonial powers' interests.

As a foreigner, the settler has no moral or political authority over the indigenous peoples. This is the reason why in talking about decolonisation, Fanon often speaks of "the replacement of a certain species of men by another species of man" (1967b: 27). His concern is with the establishment of sovereign African states independent of foreign domination. In *The Wretched of the Earth,* Fanon points to the need to put in place "a new nation", "a new state" with "its [own] diplomatic relations, and its own economic and political trends" (1967b: 26). Thus, violence assists the colonised because through it, "the people legislates, finds itself and wills itself to sovereignty" (Fanon 1967b: 105).

Fanon expresses similar sentiments in *Towards the African Revolution* wherein he laments the need for Africa's independence. Writing as a psychiatrist in the service of the French colonial presence in Algeria, he notes that one need not exactly be a psychologist to understand the harshness that Algerians experienced daily under French occupation. He further notes that the purpose of society is to serve humanity's needs. Since in the case of colonial Algeria, France had failed Algerians in this regard, Fanon called for the total abolishment of colonialism there asserting that "a society that drives its members to desperate solutions is a non-viable

society, a society to be replaced" (Fanon 1967: 53). Rebellion against an unjust system was for him the reason or the rationale for violence. Fanon is not alone in calling for the abolishment of colonialism and an end of Western humanism, for, Aimé Césaire, Qobna Cugoano and others before him, had done so.

For instance, right at the beginning of this work, *Discourse on Colonialism*, Césaire makes the point that Europe is a civilisation that is in decay. Its decay arises from the fact that it has colonised and from the inhumane way in which contact with 'non-European' cultures particularly in Africa was made. He goes on to note that "no one colonises with impunity" (Césaire 2000: 39) hence, to the extent that Europe, through its colonial practices, dehumanises those at whom it is directed and to the extent that it justifies force; Césaire calls for its retribution and says "a civilisation which is morally deceased, which irresistibly, progressing from one consequent to another, one denial to another, calls for its Hitler…its punishment" (2000: 39). So, as Fanon would later do, Césaire is calling for the use of violence against the coloniser.

In the chapter "Decolonisation and Independence" in *Towards the African Revolution,* Fanon further elaborates on his political views in relation to the anti-colonial activities of the FLN. He explains that what the people of Algeria led by the FLN needed, was not, for example, "the relaxation of oppression" (1967: 101), but (total) independence. Thus, he remarks that "what the FLN demands is the independence of Algeria. An independence that will allow the Algerian people to take its destiny wholly in hand" (Fanon 1967b: 101). So, it is evident that the way in which he conceives of violence is embedded in political objectives. It is also in this vein that Onwuanibe reads the notion of violence in Fanon.

Accordingly, Onwuanibe conceives of violence in Fanon as integral in political matters and in his humanism. His reading of Fanon is in our view correct, in that, he reads violence as means to an end and as transitory in the process leading towards a just world. Although he advocates for political violence, Fanon did not advocate for a permanent policy of violence. For, once freedom was achieved, there would not be a need for it, perhaps except in the enforcement of law and order. To this effect, Onwuanibe remarks that "Fanon was committed to the achievement of national independence on the part of the colonised. Political independence is *sine qua non* of political injustice on the part of the colonised" (1983: 26). With reference to Fanon's humanism, he views violence as integral in establishing a new humanism that recognises the dignity of both blacks and whites. Because of this fact, he regards Fanon as a critical theorist and remarks that on his insistence of the need for black human recognition "Fanon is in the tradition of those who want to universalise the concept of human dignity with regard to the relationship of Blacks and Whites" (1983: 15). Onwuanibe, therefore, regards black human recognition as closely associated with Fanon's revolutionary humanism. This is because "recognition", as he further remarks, "is at a markedly human level, the bedrock of authentic human relation. It draws an irreversible line…between a human existence and a 'thingified' existence" (1983: 15-16).

So, although the embodiment of Fanon as revolutionary that espouses violence as well as a humanist is somewhat contradictory, it is important to note that Fanon did not espouse a concept of gratuitous violence resembling that of Sorel. This view is attested to by the last pages of *The Wretched of the Earth* where he avers that "What we want to do is to go forward in the company of Man, in the company of all men" (1967b: 254). This passage does not suggest a congenital or an inborn desire for the mutilation of another human being, but

demonstrates the desire for coexistence, and as it were, "to set man free" (1967a: 2). In fact, there are numerous passages in *Black Skin White Masks* which demonstrate that as a humanist, Fanon envisioned a world that recognised the humanity and harmony of all human beings irrespective of colour. This view finds corroboration in such statements as the following:

> Those Negroes and white men will be disalienated who refuse to let themselves be sealed in the materialised Tower of the Past (1967a: 176);

> I as a man of colour do not have the right to seek ways of stamping down the pride of my former master (1967a: 179);

> No, I do not have the right to go and cry my hatred at the white man (1967a: 179);

> In the absolute, the black man is no more to be loved than the Zceck (1967a: 2);

> I am not the slave of the Slavery that dehumanised my ancestors (1967a: 179);

> I as a man of colour, to the extent that it becomes possible for me to exist   absolutely, do not have the right to lock myself into a world of retroactive reparations (1967a: 180)

In his work *a Dying Colonialism*, Fanon makes the point that no revolutionary decides to kill without being confronted by a profound moral dilemma. Thus, he remarks in this work that "The decision to kill a civilian in the streets is not an easy one, and no one comes to it lightly. No one takes the step of placing a bomb in a public place without a battle of conscience" (1965: 55). These passages are not suggestive of a man filled with personal hatred for the Caucasian race. On the contrary, what Fanon wanted was to set afoot a world of mutual reciprocity and recognition. Gendzier (1973) corroborates this view when she notes that

insofar as Fanon's decolonial project was concerned, it "implied the possibility of reconstructing human relations and so producing a new society" (1973: 200). Thus, according to her, those who liken Fanon's thought on violence, for example, to such authors as Georges Sorel, Mao or Che have missed the point (1973: 98).

Fanon's views against excessive violence are expressed in *The Wretched of the Earth*, *Black Skin White Masks* and *a Dying Colonialism* when he cautions his comrades against hatred or retributive violence against the coloniser or the white man. Thus, he states in *Black Skin White Masks* "That the tool never possesses the man. That the enslavement of man by man cease forever. That is of one by another. That it be possible for me to discover and love man, wherever he may be. The Negro is not. Any more than the white man" (1967a: 180). His conclusion in this work captures his views of the new society very candidly when he asserts that "I want the world to recognise, with me, the open door of every consciousness" (1967a: 181). It is in this vein, too, that Geismar reads the limits of spontaneous violence in Fanon.

Although Geismar (1971) notes the fervour with which Fanon, as an intellectual, wrote about violence, he ultimately finds that in fact the man was traumatised by violence. His conclusion on violence in Fanon is that although he lived in times of violence, he was distressed by it. Thus, he writes that "Fanon found that he could not really accept violence with the same equanimity with which he wrote about it" adding that "bloodletting traumatised him" (1971: 189).

In their study of politics and violence in the works of both Fanon and Hannah Arendt, Frazer and Hutchings arrive at a similar conclusion that the centrality of violence in Fanon is predicated on politics. These authors view violence in Fanon as central in two major respects, firstly, "as a means necessary for political action" (2008: 102). In this regard, they interpret

Fanon to be a "structuralist" (2008: 102) by which is meant a new polity or humanity. Secondly, they recognise the notion of violence in Fanon as "an organic force that follows its own logic" (2008: 102). This finding refers to cathartic violence which the authors take to be influenced by "physiological" (2008: 102) elements. Fanon's view on violence in relation to politics is at odds to that of Arendt who eschews or seeks to delink violence from political affairs. She is mentioned here for the contrasting view that her work provides in relation to Fanon on the question of violence in political affairs.

So, whereas Fanon views the building of decolonial society through the means of violence, Arendt takes a different route and argues for a polity built, instead, on the principle of popular consent. Her enquiry goes back as early as the eighteenth century and there she notes that at the foundation of the republican revolutions that emerged during this period was the need to go beyond the form of government based on the arbitrary "rule of man over man" (Arendt 1970: 40). The obejetive thereof was to a form of government based on the rule of law. The merit of such a system for her is that the laws so created are by the citizenry as a collective and, therefore, democratic as opposed to a rule by decree which is the same as that which a monarch, for example, would impose. The people are thus inclined to support and live by these laws as they would have consented to them in the first place.

Such support or consent, however, is, according to Arendt, not unquestioning. In this regard, she makes a distinction between the kinds of support or consent that would emanate from the collective efforts of the people as expressed through their general will and consent arising from coercion on the other hand. Thus, power is construed by her as made up of the consent that the people give in a representative government. Accordingly, the individual would be obedient to being governed through such power and laws of such a state. It is thus a critical

or discerning consent or obedience which is radically different to that which a criminal would exact with the help of a gun or a knife, for example. For Arendt, the essence of modern states is the power that is expressed through popular consent. She remarks that "All political institutions are manifestations and materialisations of power" (Arendt 1970: 41). The proof that she gives in this regard is that this power immediately decays as soon as the people withdraw their consent (1970: 41). Violence, on the other hand, does not depend on numbers but rests on implements. This is the reason why a government that governs through the force of violence would require a very restricted number of people.

From the way in which Arendt makes the distinction between violence and power, it becomes clear that she does not see the need for the materialisation of violence in political matters. Power vested in the people, acting in concert is what makes politics and not violence. Furthermore, although she concedes that a state needs to have capacity for coercive power or violence to function as a state, the two should not be confused. According to her, the fact that the state needs to be able to enforce its laws through violence should not be taken to mean that violence is the prerequisite to power as this conclusion would be mistaken. Arendt expounds this by pointing to the unpredictability of violence in revolutions. Accordingly, she begins by pointing out that "In a contest of violence against violence the superiority of the government has always been absolute" (Arendt 1970: 48). The key to the superiority of the government rests in the army and the police obeying commands. To this effect, she avers that "But this superiority lasts only as the power structure of the government is intact" (1970: 48). Having made this point, Arendt then concludes that revolutions cannot be said to be predictable and that since they are not predictable, they are "not made" (1970: 48). She explains that they are not predictable in the sense that their success will always depend on

the power structure of the government. For Arendt, it is when the power structure has decayed that "one can speak of an armed uprising" (Arendt 1970: 48). She, however, qualifies this point by noting that once this stage of decay has been reached, the necessity for violence is no longer of any use for the power structure has already collapsed.

Two things, in particular, emerge from Arendt's reflections on violence. Firstly, it emerges that violence does not have a place in politics and secondly, that violence is not a prerequisite to power. Her position that violence has no place in politics is problematic, in that, she elides historical situations whereby whole groups of people are not only disenfranchised but are also denied their very humanity by an external force that wields tremendous power over them such as was the case with colonialism or apartheid. In our view, therefore, her position in this regard is strange, in that, she lived a greater part of her life in the age of European colonisation with her book coming out only ten years after Fanon's work *The Wretched of the Earth.* So, she could not have been unaware of this situation. Instead, she refers to the European revolutions of the eighteenth century which arose out of the need for a polity based on consensus and objective laws. In her backward gaze, she *ipso facto* turns a blind eye on the situation in the colonies. Fanon on the other hand, notes that when the 'native' is disenfranchised and dehumanised on the basis of colour, there remains only one thing and that is to fight.

Secondly, Arendt argues that although states need capacity for coercive power or violence to enforce law and order, violence itself is not a prerequisite of power. This is somewhat contradictory since if the republican governments of the eighteenth century that she speaks of emerged out of revolutions, then it is inconceivable to think that violence had not been at their foundation. This is because revolutions by their very nature are violent. Furthermore, if

states, as she admits, need coercive power in order to maintain political integrity, whether against criminals or invasions, then by implication, violence becomes, even unwittingly, a prerequisite of power. Based on these shortcomings, her reflections on violence do not hold up to scrutiny.

Contrary to Arendt, Fanon offers a more realistic analysis. Although Fanon, in practice, was repulsed by violence, he does not think that the freedom of the colonised could come about without violence. Thus, his insistence on violence is not violence as an end in itself, but as a means not only to freedom but also to independence and black human recognition.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter set out to examine the way in which Fanon conceives of violence. To this end, it was noted that Fanon conceives of violence in a revolutionary sense and as a means by which the oppressed overcome colonial domination. Furthermore, Fanon notes that since it is the coloniser who brings violence into the lives of the 'natives', that same violence can only be countered by even greater violence by the colonised. As an existential thinker, he accepts the inborn freedom of the black-self that colonialism tries in vain to supress. Thus, the acting-out through violence is construed by Fanon as the realisation and expression of the freedom of the colonised.

In this chapter, it was noted too that there is tension insofar as Fanon is both a humanist and a revolutionary, the embodiment of characteristics which are diametrically opposed. This fact notwithstanding, it was shown that the way in which Fanon overcomes this moral predicament is such that violence is construed as a necessary evil to forge a world of mutual reciprocity. He thus views and advocates violence as a means necessary for the realisation of

a just and inclusive world, a world of mutual recognition between blacks and whites. Insofar as Fanon theorises that violence humanises the colonised and brings them into history, he can be deemed to be in the company of those who sought to extend the processes of history through the struggle to include the oppressed peoples.

By Way of Conclusion

This study set out to understand the concept of alienation as it arises in Fanon's thought. To this end, it noted that the body of literature on the subject emphasises either a psychological, cultural or socio-economic interpretation of the concept of alienation in Fanon, or a combination of these. However, by focusing on these, existing literature neglects a fundamentally philosophical aspect of the notion of alienation arising in Fanon's oeuvre. It was thus with the aim of addressing this intellectual lacuna that the study set its task. More concretely, the study sought to make an argument for an analysis of the concept of alienation in existential and, therefore, philosophical terms emanating from colonial and post-colonial situations which obtain in colonized cultures, particularly in Africa. The originality of the thesis rested on the extent to which the argument for a strictly existential conception of alienation can be advanced in relation to the prevailing literature on the subject in Fanon's thought.

In his endeavor to analyse and understand black alienation in existentialist terms, Fanon taps into the intellectual resources of existential philosophers such as Sartre and Kierkegaard. In doing so, he finds that the philosophical assumptions that informed these thinkers, were to some degree limiting for his purpose. This is accounted for by the fact that these philosophers wrote with the European context in mind. In particular, their conclusions rested largely on ontological and phenomenological assumptions and, therefore, not impacted upon by the historical and political problem of racism as in the colonies. Thus, for these thinkers, alienation manifested itself largely as an existential lack which was deemed to be a problem of a free self-consciousness.

Fanon, on the other hand, finds that central to the alienation of black people, is the racial problem. So, while he appropriates the categories of his European philosophical influences, he is at the same time extending their analyses, particularly by incorporating the racial dimension. For Fanon, the racial dimension at work in the alienation of colonized cultures envelopes them into the caricature of 'the Negro'. This confinement and reduction of black people to the colour of their skin, denies them their freedom, that is, of their being-for-themselves. This effectively reduces black being to the same category as the existence of things and/or objects in the world, what Sartre refers to as being-in-itself. It was, therefore, suggested that alienation as philosophically conceived by Fanon under these conditions, manifests itself as 'colonial despair'. This phenomenon which is indicative of life lived on the peripheral zone between life and death was likened to and influenced by Kierkegaard's notion of despair. For Kierkegaard, despair is symptomatic of the condition of being 'sick unto death', whereas for Fanon, it is indicative of 'the zone of nonbeing'. Although these conditions stem from differing social conditions, the impact they have on the affected individuals or groups can be deemed to be similar in that the impact leads to a desire for and in some cases the commission of suicide.

Underlying the conclusion of this study, particularly the conclusion of alienation as colonial despair was first, the argument made in the first chapter that not only was Fanon a philosopher, but he was a particular kind of philosopher namely, a philosopher of existence in the Africana existential tradition. The argument advocating the view that Fanon is an existential philosopher was spawned by two intellectual tendencies: firstly, the tendency particularly in the Western philosophical canon to collapse black intellectual production only to the autobiographical framework. Secondly, the lacuna in Fanon scholarship which neglects

a philosophical reading of his thought particularly his concept of alienation. Thus, to be able to make an argument for a philosophical analysis of the concept of alienation in Fanon, this study first argued for the location of Fanon within existential philosophy. To this end, it was concluded that by virtue of his employment of philosophical concepts, such as phenomenology, existentialism and to some degree ontology, Fanon qualifies as a philosopher of existence. The thesis then moved in the second chapter to ascertain the extent to which Fanon provides a philosophical framework of alienation insofar as the colonized are concerned the findings of which are contained in the initial paragraphs of this conclusion.

We then moved to discuss and to understand human freedom as underlying the concept of alienation. This was done through some central philosophical influences on Fanon namely, Hegel, Marx, Sartre and Kierkegaard. It was concluded that when the relation of master and slave is tainted by the additive of colour, there could be no dialectic of recognition in the Hegelian sense. Furthermore, because industrialization in Africa did not occur in the same scale as Marx thought would be the case, there can be no material dialect of history as Marx proposed would be a universal phenomenon. For these reasons, Marxian, Hegelian and other such philosophies, must be stretched when dealing with the colonial situation and be read within the context in which they were written.

Having addressed the question of freedom underlying alienation, the thesis then moved to addressing Fanon's concept of alienation within the context of his philosophical interlocutors. To this end, it was noted that because of the racial dimension, the colonial subject who is the prime focus of Fanon's analysis, suffers a more vicious form of alienation when compared particularly to Marx's proletariat. In fact, racial prejudice among members of the oppressed group(s) produces a total deprivation of their being-for-themselves. Sartre's notion of non-

being was brought upon to explain why this is so and its application to the oppressed showed a total deprivation of the conditions of possibility and/freedom. This situation was deemed to be contributing to the feeling or condition of despair among the oppressed.

The notion of blacks as being in the condition of total deprivation and in despair, was extrapolated to the 'post-apartheid' South African situation in the fifth Chapter. Here, it was noted that because the 1994 moment democratizes politics, the economy remains untransformed and continues to exclude the black population which constitute the majority. Furthermore, despite the democracy that the country is said to enjoy, the negotiated settlement leading to the first democratic elections in 1994, has reproduced the racial Manichean structure of colonial apartheid. Thus, by making use of Fanon's philosophical framework, it was concluded that because of the superficial changes that were made culminating to the 1994 moment, black South Africans, in general, remain in a state of total deprivation of their being-for-themselves and as such remain in the condition of 'colonial despair' reminiscent of old-fashioned colonial apartheid. Moreover, because among other things the elite nature of South Africa's transition to democracy, the idea of the 'rainbow nation' appears to be more of a myth than reality. For, the 'post-apartheid' state has thus far failed to bring about social harmony and economic inclusion.

The denial of black human recognition and freedom in anti-black or white supremacist societies leads in Fanonian dialectics to the adoption of violence by the oppressed as a means of reclaiming their freedom. This aspect of Fanon's thought was addressed in the sixth chapter. The chapter noted that 'race' as a category, proves to be absolute and uncompromising in anti-black social environments, in that, it precludes the possibility of there being a dialogue among conflicting social groups. The conclusion from a Fanonian point of

view was that the struggle against black oppression and white supremacy must necessarily take the form of deliberate violence. Thus, violence becomes the only means by the oppressed to reclaim their freedom. So, what is/are the ethical findings of this study?

The study notes that the denial of black human recognition by the European colonial powers was and still based on the assumption of or perceived inferiority of blacks in relation to the latter. As we saw in the case of Columbus' encounter with the Arawaks, cultural and racial differences become the standard for the exclusion of the darker nations or races from the *human* race. On this point, the study concludes that it is unethical to deny other human beings their humanity based on these or any other differences. Human beings, wherever they may be in the world, ought to be allowed to choose the kind of lives and practice their cultures in a manner that they deem fit without the threat of enslavement or having their humanity questioned. We must remember that in Fanon's thought, the humanity of black people is something that is not in question but that which is accepted. This is what white humanity must extend and recognize of the black other. Failure in this respect amounts to bad faith.

In terms of future research, since this study focused abstractly on the question of alienation as it arises in Fanon, future research could perhaps take the direction of making use of or extrapolating his thought (particularly on alienation) to 'post-colonial' contexts. Although an attempt was made to apply Fanon's theory of alienation to the South African context, there remains enormous scope for the extension of his thought to 'post-colonial' situations in general, particularly in Africa. It should be remembered that Fanon died when only a handful of African countries had gained independence. Thus, there lacks an interpretation of his thought within the context of 'post-colonial' African situations in general.

Bibliography

Arendt, H. 1970. *On violence*. Orlando: Harcourt Publishing.

Aristotle. 2000. *Politics*. Translated by Benjamin J. Mineola: Dover Publications.

Baldwin, J. 1998. *Collected essays*. New York: Penguin Putnam.

Barthes, R. 1998. The death of the author. In: E. Dayton, ed. 1998. *Art and interpretation: An anthology of readings in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*. Peterborough: Broadview Press. pp.383-386.

Bhabha, H. 1986. Remembering Fanon. In: F. Fanon, 1986. *Black skin white masks*. Translated by C.L. Markham. London: Pluto Press.

Bhabha, HK. 1994. *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.

Bhakhtin, M. 1981. *The dialogical imagination: four essays*. Translated by C. Emerson and M. Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Biko, S. 1978. *I write what I like*. Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers.

Bogues, A. 2003. *Black heretics, black prophets: Radical political intellectuals*. New York: Routledge.

Bond, P. 2000. *Elite transition: From apartheid to neoliberalism in South Africa*. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Bond, P. 2005. *Fanon's warnings, a civil society reader on the New Partnership for Africa's Development*. Asmara: Africa World Press Inc.

Buchanan, A. 1979. Exploitation, alienation, and injustice. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 9(1), pp.121-139.

Bulhan, H. A. 1985. *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of alienation*. New York: Plenum Press.

Cabral, A. ed., 1969. *Revolution in Guinea, selected texts*. Translated by R. Handyside. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Camus, A. 1955. *Myth of Sisyphus and other essays*. Translated by J. O'Brien. New York: Lnopf.

Caute, D. 1970. *Frantz Fanon*. New York: The Vikings Press.

Cesairé, A. 2000. *Discourse on colonialism*. Translated by J. Pinkham. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Cooper, A.J. 1988. *A Voice from the South by a black woman of the South.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Cugoano, Q.O. ed., 1999. *Thoughts and sentiments on the evil of slavery and other writings.* New York: Penguin Books.

Du Bois, W.E.B. 1905. *The souls of black folk, essays and sketches*. London: Archibald Constable & Co. Ltd.

Dunayevskaya, R. 1973. *Philosophy and revolution: from Hegel to Sartre, and from Marx to Mao*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Dussel, E. 1996. *The underside of modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the philosophy of liberation*. Translated by E. Mendieta. New Jersey: Humanities Press.

Du Toit, D. 1981. *Capital and Labour in South Africa, Class Struggle in the 1970s*. New York, Routledge.

Ekeh, P. 1997. European imperialism and the Ibadan School of History. *Problematising history and agency: From nationalism to subalternity*, 7, pp.1–60.

Engels, F. 1987. The anti-Dühring. In: F. Engels and K. Marx. *Collected works*. Moscow: Progress Publishers. pp.1-15.

Fanon, F. 1967a. *Black skin, white masks.* Translated by C.L. Markmann. New York: Grove Press.

Fanon, F. 1967b. *The wretched of the earth*. Translated by C. Farrington. London: Penguin Books.

Fanon, F. 1967c. *Towards the African revolution*. Translated by H. Chevalier. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Fanon, F. 1965. *A dying colonialism*. Translated by H. Chevalier. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Frazer, E. & Hutchings, K. 2008. On politics and violence: Arendt contra Fanon. *Contemporary political theory*, 7(1), pp.90-108.

Freire, P. 1970. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Translated by M.B. Ramos. London: Penguin Books.

Fromm, E. 1955. *The sane society*. London: Routledge.

Fromm, E. 1961. *Marx's concept of man*. New York: Ungar Publishing Co.

Geismar, P. 1971. *Fanon*. New York: Grove Press.

Gendzier, I.L. 1973. *Frantz Fanon: a critical study*. London: Wildwood House.

Gibson, N. 1999. Beyond manicheanism: Dialectics in the thought of Frantz Fanon. *Journal of political ideologies*, 4(3), pp.337–364.

Gibson, N. 1999. Thoughts about doing Fanonism in the 1990s. *College literature*, 26, pp.96-117.

Gibson, N. 2003. *Fanon: the postcolonial imagination*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gibson, N. 2011. *Fanonian practices in South Africa, from Steve Biko to abahlali basemjondolo.* Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Gordon, L.R. 1995. *Fanon and the crisis of European man, an essay on Philosophy and the human sciences*. New York: Routledge.

Gordon, L.R. 2000. *Existentia Africana, understanding Africana existential thought*. New York: Routledge.

Gordon, L.R. 2008. *An introduction to Africana Philosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Gramsci, A. 1971. *Selections from the prison notebooks*. Translated by Q. Hoare and G. N. Smith. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Grohs, G.K. 1968. Frantz Fanon and the African revolution. *The Journal of modern African studies*, 6(4), pp.543-556.

Grosfoguel, R. 2007. The epistemic decolonial turn: Beyond political-economy paradigms. *Cultural studies*, 21, pp.203-246.

Hansen, E. 1977. *Frantz Fanon: social and political thought*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Harris, L. 1983. *Philosophy born of struggle: Anthology of Afro-American philosophy from 1917.* Dubuque: Kendal/Hunt Publishing Co.

Hegel, G.W.F. 1977. *The phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A.V. Miller. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Hegel, G.W.F. ed., 1998. *The Hegel reader*. Oxford: Oxford Publishers.

Hegel, G.W.F. 2008. *Outlines of the philosophy of right*. London: George Bell and Sons.

Heidegger, M. ed., 1977. *Basic writings*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Heidegger, M. 1962. *Being and time*. Translated by J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Henry, P. 2006. Africana phenomenology: Its philosophical implications. *World's and knowledges otherwise*, 1(3), pp.1-23.

Holmstrom, N. 1977. Exploitation. *Canadian journal of Philosophy*, 7, pp.353-69.

Horowitz, I.L. 1969. Further remarks on alienation and the social order. *Philosophy and phenomenological research*, 29(3), pp.439-40.

Hyppolite, J. 1969. *Studies on Marx and Hegel*. Translated with an Introduction, Notes and Bibliography by J. O'Neill. London: Heinemann.

James, J.A. 1996. Bread and land: Frantz Fanon's native intellectual. In: L. Gordon, T.D. Sharpley-Whiting and R.T. White, eds. 1996. *Fanon: A critical reader.* Oxford: Blackwell. pp.309-311.

Juhant, J. & Zalec, B. eds., 2012. *Reconciliation: the way of healing and growth*. Berlin: Lit Verlag.

Kierkegaard, S. 1962. *The present age*. Translated by A. Dru with Foreword by W. Kaufman. New York: Harper and Row.

Kierkegaard, S. ed., 1980. *Sickness unto death, a Christian psychological exposition for upbuilding and awakening*. Translated with Introduction and Notes by H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kierkegaard, S. ed., 2009. *Concluding unscientific postscript to the philosophical fragments*, Translated by A. Hannay. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Loomba, A. 1998. *Colonialism/postcolonialism*. London: Routledge.

Macey, D. 2000. *Frantz Fanon: A life*. London: Granta Books.

Maldonado-Torres, N. 2008. *Against war: Views from the underside of modernity*. Duke University Press

Mamdani, M. 1996. *Citizen and subject, contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Martin, T. 2002. *Oppression and human condition: An introduction to Sartrean existentialism*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers

Manganyi, NC. 1973. *Being-black-in-the-world*. Johannesburg: Spro-cas/Ravan Press.

Marx, K. 1853. The future results of British rule in India. *MECW*, 12, pp.217-222.

Marx, K. ed., 1867. *Capital: A critique of political economy. Vol. III – Part II, the process of capitalist production as a whole*. New York: Cosimo Classics.

Marx, K. 1934. *The eighteenth brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Marx, K. 1954. *Capital: A critique of political economy. Volume I*. Translated by S. Moore and E. Aveling. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Marx, K. 1963. *The poverty of philosophy*. New York: International Publishers.

Marx, K. ed., 1970. *Critique of Hegel's 'philosophy of right'*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Marx, K. 1973. *Economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844*. New York: International Publishers.

Marx, K & Engels, F. 1998. *The German ideology* including *thesis on Feuerbach and Introduction to the critique of political economy.* New York: Prometheus Books.

Marx, K. 2011. *Economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844*. Mansfield: Martino Publishing.

Marx, K. ed., 1977. *Selected writings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mattox, J.M. 2006. *Saint Augustine and the theory of just war*. London: Continuum.

May, V.M. 2004. Thinking from the margins, acting at the intersections: Anna Julia Cooper's *'a voice from the South'*. *Hypatia*, 19(2), pp.74-91.

Mazruchi, E. ed., 1973. An Introduction to the notion of alienation. In: F. Johnson. *Alienation: concept, term and meanings*. New York: Seminar Press. pp.111-124.

Mbeki, M. 2009. *Architects of poverty*. Cape Town: Pan McMillan.

McCLelland, J.S. 1996. *A history of western philosophical thought*. London: Routledge.

McCulloch, J. 1983*. Black soul white artifact: Fanon's clinical psychology and social theory*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Memmi, A. 1990. *The colonizer and the colonised*. Translated by H. Greenfeld. London: Earthscan Publications.

Merleau-Ponty, M. 1958. *The Phenomenology of perception*. Translated by C. Smith. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Mngxitama, A. 2009. Blacks can't be racists. *New frank talk*, 3, pp.1-32.

More. MP. 2008. Biko: Africana existentialist philosopher. In: A. Mngxitama, A. Alexander, N. Gibson, eds. 2008. *Biko lives! Contesting the legacies of Steve Biko*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mudimbe, V.Y. 1988. *The invention of Africa: gnosis, Philosophy, and the order of knowledge*. Indiana University Press.

Murchland, B. 1969. Some comments on alienation. *Philosophy and phenomenological research*, 29(3), pp.432-438.

Nash, A. 1988. Marxism, Hegel and the philosophical foundations of social revolution. *Paper for Marxist theory seminar*, 14 October 1988.

Nash, A. 1995. The Contradictions of the new South Africa. *Paper presented at the Department of Philosophy, University of the Western Cape*, 16 February 1995.

Natanson, M. 1979. Phenomenology, anonymity, and alienation. *New literary history*, 10(3), pp.533-546.

Ndlovu, S. 2010. *Frantz Fanon and the dialectic of decolonisation*. Dissertation (MPhil.), Upper Campus, University of Cape Town.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. 2013. *Coloniality of power in post-colonial Africa: myths of decolonisation*. Dakar: Codesria.

Nursey-Bray, P. 1980. Race and nation: Ideology in the thought of Frantz Fanon. *The journal of modern African studies*, 18(1), pp.135-142.

Nussbaum, B. 2003. African culture and ubuntu: Reflections of a South African in America. *Perspectives,* 17(1), pp.1-12.

Nyerere, J. 1968. *Ujamaa: Essays on socialism*. Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press.

Onwuanibe, R.C. 1983. *A Critique of revolutionary humanism: Frantz Fanon*. Missouri: Warren H. Green Inc.

Outlaw, L. 1996. *On race and philosophy*. New York: Routledge.

Outlaw, L. 1997. Africana Philosophy. *The journal of ethics*, 1(3), pp.265-290.

Overend, T. 1975. Alienation: A conceptual analysis. *Philosophy and phenomenological research*, 35(3), pp.301-22.

Parris, LT. 2011. Frantz Fanon: existentialist, dialectician, and revolutionary. *The Journal of pan African studies*, 4(7), pp.4-23.

Pithouse, R. 2005. *Frantz Fanon and the dialectics of solidarity*. Thesis (Ph.D), Howard College, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Quijano, A. 2007. Coloniality and modernity/rationality. *Cultural studies*, 21, pp.168-178.

Purtschert, P. 2010. On the limit of Spirit: Hegel's racism revisited. *Philosophy and social criticism*, 36(9), pp.1039-1051.

Ramose, M. 1999. *African Philosophy through ubuntu*. Harare: Mond Books.

Said, E. 1977. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin.

Sartre, J-P. 1947. *Existentialism*. Translated by B. Frechtman. New York: Philosophical Library.

Sartre, J-P. 1958. *Being and nothingness: an essay on phenomenological ontology*. Translated by H.E. Barnes. London: Methuen Ltd.

Sartre, J-P. 1965. Black Orpheus. *The Massachusetts review*, 6(1), pp.13-52.

Sartre, J-P*. 1968. The anti-Semite and the Jew.* New York: Schocken Books*.*

Sartre, J-P. 1967b. Preface. In: F. Fanon. *The wretched of the earth*. Translated by C. Farrington. London: Penguin Books.

Sartre, J-P. 2004. *Critique of dialectical reason*, *Volume I*. Translated by A. Sheridan-Smith. London: Verso.

Schacht, R. 1970. *Alienation*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

Schacht, R. 1981. Economic alienation with and without tears. In R.F. Geyer and D. Schweitzer, eds*. 1981. Alienation: problems of meaning, theory and method.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. pp.36-67.

Schacht, R. 1994. *The future of alienation*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Schierup, C., ed. 2015. *Migration, precarity & global governance, challenges and opportunities for labour*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Schutz, A. 1962: *Collected papers I: The problem of social reality.* The Hague: Martinus Nijhof Publishers.

Seeman, M. 1959. On the meaning of alienation. *American sociological review*, 24(6), pp.783-791.

Sedgwick, S. 2011. On becoming ethical: the emergence of freedom in Hegel's philosophy of right. *Paper presented at conference Metaphysik bei Kant und Hegel*, Humboldt-Universität Berlin 2011.

Sekyi-Otu, A. 1996. *Fanon's dialectic of experience*. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Serequeberham, T. 2000. *Our heritage: the past in the present of African-American and African existence*. Boston: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Sharp, G 1769. *A representation of the injustice and dangerous tendency of tolerating slavery*. London: Benjamin White and Robert Horsfield.

Sinari, R. 1970. The problem of human alienation. *Philosophy and phenomenological research*, 31(1), pp.123-30.

Sithole, T. 2011. Fanon: Manichean structure and the challenges of coloniality in the post-1994 South Africa. *Unpublished paper on file with the candidate*.

Sorel, G. ed., 2004. *Reflections on violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tambo, R. 2004. *Beyond the Engeli Mountains*. Claremont: New Africa Books (Pty) Ltd.

Terreblanche, S. 2003. *A history of inequality in South Africa*. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Tuitt, P. 2013. Literature, invention and law in South Africa's transformation. In: K. Van Marle, and S. Motha, eds. 2013. *Genres of critique: Law, easthetics and luminality*. Stellenbosch: Sun Press.

Turner, L. and Alan, J. 1999. Frantz Fanon: World revolutionary. *Rethinking Fanon, the continuing dialogue*. New York: Humanity Books. Pp.103-118.

Turok, B. 2008. *Wealth doesn't trickle down: The case for a developmental state in South Africa*. Cape Town: New Agenda.

Warnock, M. 1965. *The philosophy of Sartre*. London: Hutchinson & Co.

Weate, J. ed., 2001. Fanon, Merleau-Ponty and the difference of phenomenology. *Race*. Oxford: Blackwell. pp.169-183.

Wiredu, K. 1980. *Philosophy and an African culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wood, A. 1972. The Marxian critique of justice. *Philosophy and public affairs,* 1(3), pp.244-282.

Wood, A. 1981. *Karl Marx*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Woolman, J. 1754. *Some considerations on the keeping of Negroes : Recommended to the Professors of Christianity of every denomination*. Philadelphia: James Chattin.

Zahar, R. 1974. *Frantz Fanon: Colonialism and alienation*. Translated by W.F. Feuser. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Zieger, R.H. 2007. *For jobs and freedom, race and labour in America since 1865*. Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky.

Zinn, H. 2007. *A young people's history of the United States*. New York: Seven Stories Press.

Websites

STATS SA Statistics South Africa. 11 December 2014. The September 2014 Quarterly Employment Statistics (QES) report. (online). Available from: http://beta2.statssa.gov.za/?m=2014

The Daily Vox: SA youth unemployment. 16 June 2014. What's the problem? (online). Available from: http://www.thedailyvox.co.za/sa-youth-unemployment-whats-the-problem/

Films

Home of the Brave. (1949). [video]. USA: United Artists.