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# Fanon, Hegel, and the Problem of Reciprocity

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## Abstract

In this article I put forward an interpretation of what is at stake in Frantz Fanon's claim that there is a reciprocity at the basis of G. W. F. Hegel's master-servant dialectic. I do this by staging a critique of the 'shared-humanity' interpretation of Fanon's claim. Fanon's problem, as this interpretation understands it, is that the master-servant dialectic describes a situation in which two human beings knowingly confront one another as such. Such a situation—because human-to-human confrontation is assumed—does not adequately describe a racially divided situation because of racism's dehumanizing force. Fanon's problem would thus be that Hegel assumed shared humanity. I contest this reading by claiming that Fanon's issue is not reciprocal humanity but reciprocal *struggle*. To get to this point requires demonstrating that the shared-humanity reading is implausible on a variety of grounds. Thanks to the work of Philippe Van Haute it can already be said that in Hegel's text no shared humanity takes place. But Van Haute nevertheless claims that the shared-humanity problem is present in Kojève. Thus, it first needs to be shown that Kojève's text disallows such a reading. With this result in hand, I move to show the textually unsupported nature of a subset of the shared-humanity reading—the 'ontological reading'—whose strategy of reading Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* obscures the Sartrean-Beauvoirian commitments which would in fact allow a more accurate reading of Fanon's claims about reciprocity in Hegel to be made. I then seek to show—with reference to these commitments and a broadly Kojévian emphasis on the centrality of struggle in human subject-formation—that Fanon's comments about reciprocity take aim at the question of mutual struggle in Hegel and Kojève. 'The French Negro', Fanon argues, did not get to experience the cost and value of freedom, unlike Hegel's servant.

Fanon's Hegel-critique is one of the most hotly debated sections of Fanon corpus. One can find within the literature all positions imaginable. Time and space do not permit a comprehensive engagement with this field in its entirety.<sup>1</sup> Instead, this article will stage a critique of one of these interpretative tendencies. This reading—called here the 'shared-humanity' interpretation—is held by George

Ciccariello-Maher, Lewis Gordon, Phillip Honenberger and Philippe Van Haute. To make my critique I will first briefly outline their understanding of Fanon's Hegel-critique. I will then, following Van Haute's cue, turn to Kojève's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* as the real object of this 'critique' to see if their shared contention holds water. Showing that Kojève's text disallows such a contention, I seek to propose a new interpretation. Before doing so however, the 'ontological' subset of the 'shared-humanity' interpretation—represented by Ciccariello-Maher and Gordon—needs to be shown to be textually unfounded. This is necessary in order to bring Fanon's commitments to the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre to light.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, in the Fanon-Hegel literature, an engagement with Sartre is sorely lacking and this negatively impacts our ability to understand Fanon's text. It is the underlying contention of this piece that only in light of Fanon's singular blend of Kojève and Sartre—alongside a grave misunderstanding of Martinique's history—can his comments about Hegel in *Black Skin, White Masks* truly make sense.

*Li.*

The 'shared-humanity' reading of Fanon's Hegel-critique takes Fanon's claim that there is 'reciprocity' at the 'foundation' of Hegel's master-servant dialectic as its starting point. It then seeks to understand what this reciprocity means (*BSWM*: 169).<sup>3</sup> Formulated in different ways by different authors, this interpretation claims that Fanon's problem with Hegel is that Hegel presupposes the shared humanity of each figure at the start of his master-servant dialectic. That is, in Hegel's dialectic, we get a human-to-human scene in which each person knows the other as like themselves. This assumption makes the master-servant dialectic inapplicable to the racial-colonial context insofar as this context is defined by a fundamental asymmetry between the two parties. Instead of the human-to-human encounter in the *Phenomenology*, we have the Manichean world of white-human-subjects and black-inhuman-objects/animals (*WE*: 6). So, while Hegel presupposed a subject-to-subject encounter to kickstart his master-servant dialectic, Fanon saw racial-colonialism as barring such a presupposition and by inaugurating a subject/object split. For Hegel there is reciprocity in the beginning of the master-servant dialectic, in the colonial context there is none (*BSWM*: 172n8). Because this interpretation takes aim at the 'human-to-human' confrontation at the beginning of Hegel's master-servant dialectic it will be called the 'shared-humanity' interpretation.

As noted above Van Haute, Honenberger, Ciccariello-Maher and Gordon share this interpretation. The differences between their accounts are largely terminological rather than substantive. Most recently, Van Haute has argued that the problem with Hegel's dialectic—or rather Kojève's, as Van Haute is sensitive

to the crucial differences between the two—is that it assumes that the two parties confronting each other have a ‘shared history’ (Stawarska 2020: 100) or participate in the same ‘genus’ (Van Haute 2020: 40). Unlike the situation described by the Kojèvean-Hegel, which presupposes that each being sees the other as like itself, and consequently as something to struggle against, the division of people into races precludes such implicit identification.

In making this argument Van Haute is generally following in the footsteps of the other interpreters mentioned above. Honenberger claims that this shared humanity is manifest in the ‘expectation’ of recognition (2007: 159). You can only expect recognition if you implicitly consider the other as the type of being that can recognize you and whose recognition is valuable. Gordon (2015) and Ciccariello-Maher (2012; 2016) make a similar claim but as part of a broader conceptualization of racialization as ‘reduction-to-non-being’ within the antiblack world.<sup>4</sup> So on their account, Fanon’s problem is that i) Hegel presupposes a shared ontological ground, whereas ii) colonialism creates a situation in which there are white-beings—who recognize each other—and black-non-beings denied such recognition, and as a result iii) Hegel’s dialectic does not adequately describe or apply in the racial-colonial context. Whichever author you pick, the shared logic is clear: the problem is that Hegel *begins* with two humans/beings who each see the other as the sort of being from which recognition could be desired or expected.

Things are, however, more complicated. Thanks to recent work of Van Haute, it can be claimed that in *Black Skin, White Masks* there is no ‘rigorous *Auseinandersetzung* (confrontation) with Hegel’s conceptualisation’ (2020: 26). Rather, in this text we find a Fanon who ‘reads Hegel through Kojève’s lens’ (Van Haute 2020: 26).<sup>5</sup> Centring Kojève’s influence is not particularly novel. Already in the work of Kleinberg (2003: 115) Kojève’s ‘surprising’ influence is documented, and today Kojève’s influence is well attested. What Van Haute does offer, however, is a detailed reading of the *Phenomenology* for the purposes of definitively distancing Kojève from Hegel, and so of Fanon’s Hegel from Hegel-in-himself. With Van Haute we can argue that Fanon’s Hegel is, to a large extent, Kojève’s. As a result, Van Haute’s shared-humanity argument aims solely at Kojève.

This places the rest of the ‘shared-humanity’ interpretation on unstable ground. For while these authors note Kojève’s influence, they cite only Hegel. This has the adverse effect of weakening their reading. As Van Haute demonstrates in detail, a close reading of Hegel’s text shows that there is no presupposition of ‘shared-humanity’ at work in the master-servant dialectic. Thus, to attribute to Fanon such a reading of Hegel’s dialectic is to attribute to him a misreading of Hegel’s text (Hogan 2018: 17). Nevertheless, Fanon’s Hegel-critique not being about Hegel raises an important question. does Kojève presuppose reciprocity

in this way? That is, does the critique as formulated by Gordon, Ciccariello-Maher and Honenberger apply to a Kojèvean-Hegel?

Van Haute clearly thinks so. Despite improving upon the shared-humanity interpretation by differentiating Hegel and Kojève, Van Haute's reading ends up looking similar (2020: 40). The problem is *still* that the master-servant dialectic presupposes a human-to-human, self-to-self, subject-to-subject, being-to-being scene in which each party implicitly takes the other as like itself. Van Haute's reading of Fanon's Hegel-critique then looks like this: in Kojève's dialectic struggle takes place because each party implicitly identifies with the other. In the racial-colonial context, on the other hand, there is a division of black and white into two different species which bars any such identification—hence no struggle.

As can be seen from this characterization, Van Haute and the shared-humanity reading locates the difference between (Kojèvean) Hegel and Fanon's master-servant dialectic in the different *ideas* each party has about the other. For Hegel, a human being knowingly confronts a human being, thus they can struggle. For Fanon, a white human being confronts a being considered less worthy, less human than themselves, and hence does not struggle. Racist concepts thus differentiate the dialectical contexts such that, in the latter, the lack of reciprocity (racialization) prevents struggle from taking place. To anticipate, my contention is that this gets things back to front. Rather, for Fanon the 'absence of struggle' is the 'absence of reciprocity' that differentiates his dialectic from Hegel's. There is no need to introduce racist ideas to account for the struggle not having taken place. This is evident in 'The Negro and Hegel' where Fanon claims that the American Negro's situation is *totally different* from the French Negro's precisely because of the presence of anti-racist freedom struggles in America and the absence of such struggles in Martinique and France more generally (*BSWM*: 172). Racialization structures both situations but the peculiar inferiority complex of Martinicans (black Frenchmen) that Fanon seeks to understand and overcome is rooted in the fact that for him they know 'nothing of the cost of freedom' (*BSWM*: 172). Supposedly, they know nothing of this cost because they did not win their freedom but were granted it. Herein lies the lack of reciprocity, reciprocity now understood as mutual struggle. On this reading Fanon is committed not only to a broadly Kojèvean<sup>6</sup> reading of Hegel's master-servant dialectic but also to a Sartrean<sup>7</sup> analysis of human existence, racialization and responsibility for self-positing (in addition to a serious misreading of the historical facts). Alongside the analogous contention Sartre (1965) had with Hegel, this is crucial to understanding Fanon's Hegel-critique.

To get to this point, however, requires showing that Kojève's rendition of Hegel is not sufficient to enable Fanon to make the shared-humanity claim. Here, the lack of reciprocity at the outset of Kojève's dialectic needs to first be established. If there is none, then the reading of Gordon, Ciccariello-Maher, Honenberger and Van Haute is found wanting and another kind of reciprocity is

what Fanon sought to criticize. Following this, the ontological reading of *Black Skin, White Masks* will be criticized and my reading of Fanon's Hegel-critique—as foreshadowed above—broached further.

### I.ii.

Many Hegel scholars are perplexed by Kojève's reading of Hegel. Jean Wahl wrote that it was 'quite false but very interesting' (Stern 1993: 11). Richard Lynch concurs, adding that this falsity is based on Kojève's 'highly selective practice of reading' (2001: 34). Kojève, when reading the self-consciousness section, begins without the pure concept of recognition in order to put forth his reading of Hegel which is fundamentally agonistic (Monahan 2006). Omitting Hegel's pure concept of recognition, as discussed during ¶¶178–85 of the *Phenomenology*, Kojève champions a reading of Hegel's master-servant dialectic which is focused on antagonism and death (Riley 1981). Kojève does not see this omission and obscuration as a problem. This is because for Kojève 'the meaning of the present and the significance of the past, depend, in the final analysis, on the way in which the Hegelian writings are interpreted today' (Kojève 1993b: 381). As a result, Hegel interpretation must be 'a work of political propaganda' (1993b: 380).

Kojève believed that Hegel's *Phenomenology* gives an anthropology of human existence (Van Haute 2020: 39). As a result, his interpretation begins of it with a discussion of the essential nature of the human-being *or* self-consciousness (Kojève 1993a: 312; Butler 1987: 63; Marmasse 2013: 240). Hegel's self-consciousness chapter is thus, for Kojève, an explanation of the fundamental difference between the human and the animal, an account of the emergence of historical experience, which animals—lacking self-consciousness—cannot possess.

So, what is this difference? For Kojève, the human being is the being which can utter 'I'. To understand the origin of the human-being, and in turn the beginning of history is therefore to understand the origin of the 'I'. A common belief is that thought distinguishes the human from animals. But thought, in Kojève's interpretation, is the purely 'passive behaviour of a "knowing subject"', and therefore, it 'never reveals the why or how of the birth of the word "I," and consequently of self-consciousness—that is, of human reality' (*Int.*: 3). Thinking, or what he calls 'contemplation' is purely passive because it is determined by what it thinks (*Int.*: 3). The object of thought impacts us, as though we were Plato's wax tablets, and our thought is merely imprinted upon. When the human-being is engaged in this object-determined activity, being-imprinted-upon, they do not come to self-knowledge, nor do they have an apprehension of the I, which would make them human. What returns the human-being to themselves, Kojève argues, is thus not thought, but conscious desire.

Conscious desire constitutes a being as self-conscious and reveals it as such by making it say ‘I’. For Kojève, the I or subject is the consciousness of wanting something. The subject ‘does not precede his desires’, rather it ‘is essentially defined through what it desires’ (Butler 1987: 66). To the subject, desire and the lack it entails reveals their difference from the object and consequently their wanting it and this breaks the ‘passive quietude’ of contemplation and drives them to act as an ‘I that desires ‘x’ (Int: 4). What this x is, however, is not indifferent to Kojève. What is desired determines the nature of the ‘I that desires it. As such, an I that desires a thing is a ‘thingish’ or ‘animal I’ (Int: 4). Self-consciousness, however, is what supposedly distinguishes the human from the animal. A human ‘I must therefore desire something other than objects or things. If ‘The supreme desire of animal life is its “desire to preserve its life”’, then human desire ‘must win out over this desire for preservation. In other words, man’s humanity “comes to light” only if he risks his (animal) life for the sake of his human Desire. *It is in and by this risk* that humanity is revealed [...] And this is why to speak of the “origin” of self-consciousness is necessarily to speak of the risk of life (for an essentially non-vital end)’ (Int: 7).

Kojève made the struggle to the death and the risk of life it entails a necessary part of being human and human history. The I, in order to become human, must risk its life, and show that they desire more than this animal existence. However, through “un-deducible” acts of liberty, they must constitute themselves as unequals in and by this very fight’ (Int: 8). One fears the other, not by nature or by necessity, and thus becomes a slave, and the other, who stood tall in the face of death becomes a master. The slave gives up their desire to be recognized, and instead must ‘recognize the other without being recognized by him. Now, to recognize him is to recognize him as master’ (Int: 8).

The outcome is such that only one desire-for-recognition is satisfied. The slave gives up their human-desire, and thus gives up their humanity as, in desiring only a thing—bare life—they render themselves a thingish-I, an animal-I. The slave is transformed, or made into a:

Consciousness that [being in fact a living corpse—the man who has been defeated and spared] does not exist purely for itself, but rather for another Consciousness [namely, for that of the victor]: i.e., a Consciousness that exists as a-given-being, or in other words, a Consciousness that exists in the concrete-form of thingness.<sup>8</sup> (Int: 16)

The slave is ‘one with the natural world of things’, animal or ‘bestial’, Kojève claims (Int: 16).

Despite this analysis, Kojève nevertheless uncritically repeats and cites Hegel’s suggestion that it is possible to admit that prior to the struggle one can

still recognize the human-individual as a ‘human person’ (*Int:* 12; *Pbs:* ¶187). However, according to Kojève’s own analysis, this is impossible. If humanity is distinguished from animality through the object of desire, and the human ‘I’ appears as a result or epiphenomenon of human desiring, then it is impossible that, prior to this process of negating animal desire in pursuit of something higher, anything like the human-person could appear. Furthermore, the slave exists in the concrete form of thingness, ‘one with the natural world’ and forfeits their pursuit of human desire. As a result, they are returned to being the ‘animal-I’ which existed before the fight (*Int:* 16). The slave was unable to prove themselves to be more than animal; that is as existing in a human way. Kojève thus emphatically denies the possibility of any shared humanity *before, during* or *after* the ‘bloody fight’ whose consequence is to produce only *one* human being. Only one human ‘I’ is present at this moment; one present after and not before the fight, and it is in the figure of the master.

Why then does Kojève admit that we can recognize a human person at the outset of Hegel’s text? Attentiveness to what Stephen Houlgate (2013: 23, 29) calls ‘the role of the we’ in the *Phenomenology* does much to explain this seeming contradiction. Kojève himself is aware of the two registers operating in the *Phenomenology* and regards them as temporally distinct. Natural-consciousness which in the *Phenomenology* is on the journey of discovery, is always submerged in and fully committed to the position under evaluation. According to Kojève, it occupies a place in time prior to the place from which Hegel writes. Natural-consciousness does not know there to be either telos at play or an end-of-history from which one could survey. Natural consciousness is absolutely *in situ*.

We, as readers of the text, situated at what Kojève will controversially call ‘the-end-of-history’, can have the perspective of the ‘whole’ or the completed telos in view. Thus Kojève can say that:

for the author and the reader [...] who see man as he has been definitively formed at the end-of-history by the accomplished social inter-action it is possible to already see the I, as absolute mediation. (*Int:* 15)

For the two consciousnesses confronting one another this is not the case. All that exists is their inner certainty of being self-consciousness, their will to prove this certainty through antagonism and risk, and ultimately one of their reigning victorious as a newly emerged human-being above an animal-like, thing-like other. Thus, despite Kojève’s citation of Hegel’s statement that the servant is a person, he nevertheless maintains, according to the logic presented by his own interpretation, that if one inhabits the perspective of the master one will see that the ‘slave is for him an animal or thing’ (*Int:* 19). The slave is nothing but the master’s

means for satisfying their own desires. The slave is not capable of determining their own activity, nor are they a free human individual.

As a result, Kojève argues that ‘The relation between master and slave, therefore, is not recognition properly so called’ (*Int*: 19). The entire project of the master is characterized by failure to achieve recognition, as Butler writes: ‘The master may attempt to impose his individual will upon the slave who depends upon him, but this imposition can never elicit the recognition that the lord requires’ (1987: 77). It fails because the *slave is not recognized as a human being either before or after the struggle* which means that the limited form of recognition the slave gives to the master ‘cannot be received by him as a human recognition’ (1987: 77). One may therefore argue that Kojève’s understanding of Hegel’s self-consciousness section is characterized by his beginning and ending the exposition before and after any discussion of reconciliation or mutual recognition (1987: 77). This then allows for Kojève to cast ‘this dialectic as much more confrontational, one-dimensional and unidirectional than in fact is the case in Hegel’s story’ (Lynch 2001: 34). Reconciliation, reciprocity and mutuality are only ever achieved, according to Kojève, at the end-of-history.

### I.iii.

Where does this leave the interpretation of Fanon’s Hegel critique? According to Kojève there is neither reciprocity at the beginning nor at the end of the master-servant dialectic. There is a struggle to be sure, but this is a struggle to assert oneself as unshackled by life, as more than animal. It has nothing to do with recognizing the other as such. And how could it? The ‘I’ is animal-like until it shows itself unbound by life, and at the outset of this same movement no such demonstration had taken place. Given that we know Fanon was working closely with Kojève’s *Introduction*, his claim that there *is* reciprocity—if understood in the way the shared-humanity interpretation understands it—is in serious trouble.

But according to the shared-humanity interpretation this is precisely what Fanon thinks. As Ciccariello-Maher summarizes, opposed to Hegel’s ‘abstract’ master, who grants minimal recognition of the humanity of the servant, ‘The concrete, white master does not recognize the concrete, Black slave’s humanity on even the most basic level’ (Ciccariello-Maher 2016: 56). Fanon’s critique of Hegel is based on the claim that there is recognition in Hegel, a minimal acknowledgement of humanity which abides between master and servant. Or, as Gordon argues, there is a ‘subtle symmetry of Otherness’ between the two parties (2015: 69). Each I knows the other as an I like itself and this is why it can be considered ‘an other’. As Van Haute writes—here summarizing Kleinberg—the struggle for recognition can only ‘start if both partners recognise each other in some way as potentially human’ (2020: 40).<sup>9</sup>

On Kojève's reading, however, this recognition before recognition is won (i.e. one's being un-bound by life is proved) is not possible. It may be true from the perspective of the reader-narrator, but not for the figures involved. If this were the case, then the recognition attained by the newly emerged master would be satisfying. For in this case, the master knows from the outset that the being before them is *potentially* human (i.e. that they are an 'I' who desires more than life). In such a situation, what stops the recognition they attain from being satisfactory? That is, what stops it from being recognition from an equal?

Ultimately Kojève's version of the master-servant dialectic more closely maps the racial-colonial situation than is typically noted. Indeed, more so than Fanon thought if his contention was with the presupposition of some shared humanity (insofar as it opens the conceptual space for thinking a relation between a human master and a thingish or animal-like servant, i.e. the non-relation of the racial-colonial context). Kojève's reading better reflects the Manichean oppositions that govern the racial-colonial situation; the human/thing, human/animal relations Fanon outlines. Indeed, Fanon continued to speak of the opposition between colonizer and colonized as between human and object, human and animal, human and thing. Such a characterization accords well with Kojève's *Interpretation*.

This leads to a troubling conclusion. If Fanon's contention is as described by the shared-humanity interpretation, then Fanon simply errs with respect to Hegel. Van Haute has shown it does not apply to Hegel himself, and my brief exegesis here questions its applicability to Kojève. We are left with two possibilities with respect to Fanon's Kojèvean, Hegelian and existentialist commitments: either he is inconsistent and must be charged with a misreading of Kojèvean Hegel, or he is consistent and his Hegel-critique must be reframed.

### II.i

For the rest of this article the second option is pursued. This enables us to maintain that Fanon is a careful reader of Kojève and has a broadly Kojèvean reading of Hegel, while aiding us in sidestepping the problems of Van Haute's interpretation—i.e. attributing to Fanon the shared-humanity critique of Kojève which now appears implausible—all the while emphasizing Fanon's deep indebtedness to Sartre's existentialism.

Before moving to put forth a new interpretation, however, some time must be spent demonstrating the textually unsupported nature of the 'ontological' reading of Fanon's Hegel critique. For, while Van Haute has shown that the reading put forth by Ciccariello-Maher and Gordon is insufficient as an understanding of Hegel and Kojève's role in Fanon's Hegel critique, the general co-ordinates of their reading have not been disputed. This disputation is necessary if Sartre's influence is to be duly observed in Fanon's text. Thus, before offering a new

interpretation I will show the textually unsupported nature of a subset of the ‘shared-humanity’ reading, called the ‘ontological’ reading. This will bring Fanon’s debt to Sartre more sharply into focus. I will then show that approaching Fanon’s text with an awareness of this debt allows one to properly understand his contention with Hegel himself in a way that does not compromise his commitment to Kojèvean Hegel, which sees struggle as necessary for freedom and the master-servant dialectic as characterized by a one-sided agonistic struggle. The universality of struggle—struggle occurring on both sides of the agon—is the source of difference that Fanon sees between himself and Hegel.

*II.ii.*

The ontological reading of Ciccariello-Maher and Gordon runs as follows.<sup>10</sup> i) The anti-black world relegates black human beings to the ontological status of non-beings. ii) This means that they are robbed of ontological status in the world, in daily life, and put outside of the realm of recognitive relations between fully human (white) beings. iii) This ontological difference, between beings (whites) and non-beings (blacks) problematizes any account of recognition between whites and blacks, for, not being given ontological weight, blacks do not appear as worthy of recognition (they are non-beings—what is there to recognize?) nor do they appear as worthy of soliciting recognition from (they are non-beings why do I, a being, need their acknowledgement?).<sup>11</sup>

Now this reading of Fanon’s contention with Hegel is highly dubious. Van Haute has demonstrated that Hegel does not presuppose shared humanity in the *Phenomenology* in this way and I hope to have shown that neither does Kojève. Worse, for the ontological reading, there is simply no textual evidence for this being Fanon’s contention. This interpretation rests on the connection of a series of disparate comments throughout *Black Skin, White Masks* which, if taken out of context, may be presented as evidence for this being Fanon’s view. Yet, when subject to scrutiny, this bundle of textual resources is shown to lack coherence—especially in light of Fanon’s commitment to a quasi-Sartrean philosophical position.

The ontological reading deploys two citations without fail. Yet, they come from two very different sections of the text, and the establishment of their immediate relation requires serious interpretative work. Firstly, in the introduction, Fanon writes:

At the risk of arousing the resentment of my colored brothers, I will say that the black is not a man. There is a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval can be born. In most cases, the black man lacks the advantage of being able to accomplish this descent into a real hell.<sup>12</sup> (*BSWM*: 1–2)

The second section usually cited in support of the ontological reading comes from the fifth chapter, 'The Fact of Blackness'. There Fanon states that the condition of the black cannot be explained by ontology (*BSWM*: 82). The black person, Fanon goes on to claim, has 'no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man' (*BSWM*: 83).

For the ontological interpretation the meaning of these passages is abundantly clear. Racialization renders the black 'non-human' by relegating them to the ontological status of 'non-being' in the anti-black world (Ciccariello-Maher 2012: 3). As a result, they have no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man. This is taken to mean that they are not capable of being recognized (Ciccariello-Maher 2012: 3). Anti-black societies put black people outside the realm of recognition, outside the realm of human-to-human relations. This establishes the original asymmetry highlighted by the shared-humanity reading and the rest follows as explained earlier.

Close attention to both the cited text and the respective contexts from which these citations are stripped should immediately problematize such an interpretation. First, and most damning, is the problem of the phrasing of Fanon's discussion of non-being. Fanon does say 'the black is not a man' (*BSWM*: 1). But attention to the text as a whole ought to put this statement in perspective. Later, in the conclusion, Fanon claims that 'The Negro is not. Any more than the white man' (*BSWM*: 180). That is, neither the black nor the white are 'men'. Why is this the case? In the conclusion Fanon claims that it is because whiteness and blackness are both 'inhuman' categories or 'voices' which enslave the human being, which predetermine their essence as white and black respectively (*BSWM*: 180). There is no such thing as a black human being for Fanon, any more than there is a white. This is because the human being is essentially free—that is, in the Sartrean parlance, their existence precedes their essence.<sup>13</sup> As Fanon claims, 'The body of history does not determine a single one of my actions. I am my own foundation' (*BSWM*: 180). Neither a 'mystical' black history nor a 'white world' is the basis for who he is. He is who he wills himself and makes himself, and this self-willed creation is the characteristic proper to all human beings (*BSWM*: 173, 176).

This claim is sure to raise a few eyebrows—especially among those who reject Sartre's existentialism and in the schools of thought which now seek to claim and construct a positive conception of race. Fanon does not share in these concerns or misgivings. He knew the controversial nature of his claim, noting that his claim would 'anger' his 'colored brothers' (*BSWM*: 1). But nonetheless he claimed it.

What does this have to do with non-being? An exhaustive analysis of the ways in which the thematic of non-being has been misread is outside the scope of this analysis. Suffice it to say that the suggestion that non-being = racialization = dehumanization in Fanon's work is a serious interpretative mistake. For, as the quotation

makes clear, the zone of non-being is not a place to which black people are relegated.<sup>14</sup> Rather, Fanon claims that they are denied access, they cannot *descend* to this realm of non-being (*le Noir n'a pas le bénéfice de réaliser cette descente aux véritables Enfers*). How can a contemporary tradition claim that blackness is equated with non-being if Fanon claims that the black person lacks the benefit of descending to the same zone of non-being? And further, how could he claim that this zone of non-being is a place from which authentic upheavals (*authentique surgissement*) take place? The equation of blackness and non-being is not present in Fanon's texts.

The only way to make sense of Fanon's text is to attend to his Sartrean commitments. As Richard Aquila claims, the human is ontologically a non-being for Sartre (1977: 167). That is, the human being is essentially a negation of what is (Barnes 1992: 15). As Sartre argues, this human being is a relation of being and nothingness and *this admixture of being and nothingness is what makes them free*. If the human being were simply a being—i.e. a being-in-itself in Sartrean terms—then they would be unfree, for being-in-itself, lacking negation, entails no change, movement or development. To simply be a being would be the worst possible fate, it would mean that the human being would be inhuman, essentialized, unchangeable—at base unfree (Sartre 1992: 14).

Non-being is thus a 'good' category—what free beings *are*. Fanon's claim can thus be reconstructed. Racialization attempts to render free beings (ontological non-beings) static (fixed as a being-in-itself) by constructing a fictionalized genus of which all members of that genus are nothing more than instantiations of their genus without individuation—the negro is the negro and all negroes are the same.<sup>15</sup> To be racialized, then, is to be fixed according to an unchanging essence and, if this racialization is internalized, to treat yourself as such too (Gordon 1995). This in turn means denying the most human part of oneself, which is free self-positing—being one's own free foundation (*BSWM*: 180).

To say that the negro is *not*, is simply to say that race does not exist and that the identification 'black man' does not make any sense. Why? Because it is an attribution of two incompatible properties to the same entity. On the one hand, it is to claim that a thing is a racial type—unmoving, unchangeable, unfree—a being-in-itself. On the other, that thing is essentially free, irreducible to any determination—a being-for-itself, an ontological non-being, a human being. Such a thing—a white *man* or a black *man*—would be an unfree-free-being, which Fanon sees as unintelligible. Thus, he writes *Black Skin, White Masks* to end this identification and this fiction, stating 'I seriously hope to persuade my brother, whether black or white, to tear off with all his strength the shameful livery put together by centuries of incomprehension' (*BSWM*: 8). That livery, that costume, is the 'race' in which he has previously stated the white man and the black man are encased. The man behind the 'race' must be freed.<sup>16</sup>

The second relevant citation, in which Fanon claims ontological explanations are impossible and that black people lack ontological resistance, is interpreted in an equally spurious way. Fanon's claim that ontology cannot account for the status of the black person is—no more nor less—a direct confrontation with anyone who would ontologize or essentialize the difference between the black and the white, between the European and the African (Yaki Sayles 2010: 158–59). To understand the black condition, we cannot have recourse to black souls or black being. Instead, following Sartre, Fanon simply wishes to claim that the racialized and diminished object (in Sartre's case 'the Jew' and in Fanon's case 'the black'), is constructed by the white (or anti-Semite).<sup>17</sup> This is the reason he must immediately clarify that the black has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man. For, as he explicitly says, a contrarian interlocutor could retort that the white man is equally a construct of the black (*BSWM*: 83). But this is evidentially and logically absurd for Fanon.

The black man does not in turn have the social or political economic power to systematically dehumanize or racialize the group who racialized them in the first instance. In the same way that the Jew struggles to affect the identity of the anti-Semite or anti-Semitic society (Sartre 1965: 8), the black person is not—in the world of racial-capitalism—granted equal weight in the construction of the meanings and practices of whiteness. Ideally each term in the relation would be able to objectify, contest and negotiate the meanings claimed and assigned by and for the other.<sup>18</sup> This would be a state of mutual recognition, which Fanon takes as a normative ideal (Bird-Pollan 2015; Hogan 2018; Hudis 2015). In the anti-black world, however, such a situation is systematically denied. One group of people is totally objectified and subjected to objectification without being able to adequately contest them.

Thus the statement about lacking ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man becomes clear. To claim that the black person lacks ontological resistance is not to claim that they are reduced to non-being. Rather, it is to claim that—for the white in the anti-black world—the black person does not appear as an occasion for struggle, self-definition, as an occasion for the for-itself or freedom.<sup>19</sup> For, as Sartre already claimed in *Being and Nothingness*, there is no for-itself, no consciousness, nor freedom without resistance (1992: 495, 507). Fanon then—far from claiming that the black man is simply a non-being—is claiming that in the anti-black world the black human does not exist in the world in such a way that the white finds themselves objectified by the black, as worth struggling against and being in mutual recognition with.<sup>20</sup>

That is, Fanon simply makes a simple point in Sartre's existentialist vocabulary: blackness is a product of the white man, and not vice versa. Objectification—that is, imposition of identity—goes only one way, just as Sartre had demonstrated in relation to anti-Semitism (and subsequently with racial-colonialism, as Sekyi-Otu 2021 shows). The experience of being objectified is one of total transparency and

knowability. Nothing about you, your life, dreams, and desires, is not already obvious from the colour of your skin. Nothing about the black person remains a secret, resistant to the inquiring question or onlooker's gaze. There is no occasion for the white man to ask, 'who are you really?' The black person is well defined, totally knowable, non-resistant, and is not an occasion for freedom nor a source of objectifying gaze to be nihilated—they are simply black, and the meaning of blackness is well-known.<sup>21</sup> Racism thus reduces the human being—essentially a 'protean' becoming—to a being-in-itself, totally fixed and objectified (Prashad 2000: 178).

In both cases the ontological reading draws on citations taken out of context, misunderstood, and reconstructed in an artificial way—particularly through the suppression of the Sartrean heritage of these points. In so doing it misses the real philosophical unity binding the two statements. These statements do not attest to black-non-being-in-the-world. Instead, they attest to the fact that the black person is produced as a totally transparent being-in-itself, an object neither resistant nor incalculably free, offering no counter-objectification and occasioning no struggle. That is, they are produced as negationless, lacking the negativity of the for-itself, seemingly unfree, while simultaneously not being put into a situation wherein a violent and liberating negation of that same identification as negationless would be possible or even appropriate. As Fanon says in the introduction, they are *denied* the fall into non-being; that is, *denied* the nihilating activity which is consciousness itself.

This reading of Fanon sees racialization as the process of being denied the nihilating fall into and surge out of non-being, and thereby being denied being-for-itself. Racialization is hence understood by Fanon as a process contingent upon the denial of one group's capacity for self-creation and reactive imposition. That is, racialization denies the racialized group access to the contestatory, creative and free nature of human existence.

That this is Fanon's conception of racialization should be evident from the forgoing discussion about the non-existence of both the black and the white. If additional evidentiary work is required, one need only look to his essay 'Racism and Culture' to see that racialization is described in terms of ossification, fixing and mummification (Fanon 1967: 34, 84). Whereas human life, culture and society are all essentially grounded in the freedom of the human being—hence in a state of perpetual negotiation, reinvention and differentiation—racism robs culture itself of dynamism and individuals of their dynamic relation to culture (Fanon 1967: 35). But this is not the purpose of the present investigation. Stated succinctly, racialization is not about the reduction of human beings to non-beings but is rather about the reduction of human beings—who are essentially non-beings, freedom in the flesh—to beings that endure no change or creation, to being-in-itself in the Sartrean sense.<sup>22</sup>

### *II.iii.*

Understanding this to be Fanon's existentialist critique of racialization—i.e. that it is not about being rendered a non-being but rather that it is about being racialized and structured in such a way that resistance as such (in all its modalities) is denied—Fanon's contention with Hegel takes on a new hue. It is not that Hegel cannot account for non-being or the lack of shared humanity at the outset of this dialectic. Rather, it is that his dialectic does not describe a situation wherein resistance, negation or struggle is denied to one party. The problem in the *Phenomenology* is not that each figure of consciousness knows the other as implicitly like themselves, *it is that both enter into the struggle as a process of resisting one another and attempting to assert themselves*. As Fanon writes in the section on Hegel, one day the blacks in Martinique were set free. The problem is not shared-humanity, ontological equality or proto-recognition. It is the absence of struggle, the problem of resistance plain and simple (Güven 2010: 167).<sup>23</sup>

It is for this reason that in his Hegel critique Fanon is pre-occupied with the thematic of being-set-free or the absence of struggle.<sup>24</sup> Fanon mentions that historically the French Negro was set free from slavery (*BSWM*: 172). That they want an occasion for struggle with whites. That they were acted upon and did not act themselves. That the 'Negro knows nothing of the cost of freedom' (*BSWM*: 171–72). The comments about the centrality and absence of struggle are too numerous to cite in full (*BSWM*: 168–73). Yet, despite this centrality, most commentators have failed to realize that the argument about being set free and the problem of reciprocity are one and the same. When lack-of-struggle *is* acknowledged, it is treated as a consequence of the relegation of the black party to non-being, inhumanity or a different genus, i.e. of the lack of reciprocity as understood on the 'shared-humanity' interpretation.

Fanon opens the section on Hegel by claiming that the human being is only a human being to the extent that they impose their existence on the other in order to be recognized (*BSWM*: 168). That is, he begins from explicitly Kojèvean assumptions.<sup>25</sup> If the other does not recognize you, they remain the 'theme' of your actions, i.e. all your efforts go to pleasing, approximating, enjoining the other to recognize you, because your worth and social recognition depends on it (*BSWM*: 169). The meaning of one's life is condensed in the other to which you appeal for recognition and upon whom you impose your existence.

Now, this is all well and good if both are struggling and each can impose themselves in turn and hence each recognize the human reality and worth of the other that confronts them. In such a situation we have the general scene of human existence as described by Sartre. But, as Fanon goes on, 'There is not an open conflict between white and black. One day the White Master, without conflict, recognized the Negro slave. But the former slave wants to make himself

recognized' (*BSWM*: 169). That is, the situation in Martinique—Fanon is at pains to emphasize that the section on recognition is about the Martinican or more generally the French situation, it is not a universal theory of blackness or the black experience<sup>26</sup>—is such that the black person is recognized by the other as no longer a slave. This seems at first to be unproblematic. However, problems arise here because that recognition was 'granted' without *struggle*. 'Freedom' and 'human' status are granted but without the imposition of existence that Fanon identified as constitutive of human reality and worth.

Why is the struggle so important? Fanon draws his lesson from Hegel via Kojève. The struggle is important for here the contesting parties both learn an important lesson about the cost of freedom and freedom's irreducibility to mere natural being; that is, struggle instigates a change in the consciousness of those who struggle (*PbS*: ¶194; *Int*: 25–26).<sup>27</sup> This lesson will recur with more force in *Wretched of the Earth*, where it is in the process of revolutionary upheaval that the colonized Algerians *discover* their own self-worth, *become* responsible, and *start to* form a national consciousness (*WE*: 133; Van Haute 2020: 41). In *Black Skin, White Masks*, however, no such struggle is documented. Instead, struggle—and the revolution of consciousnesses it inaugurates—is bypassed for action from without (*BSWM*: 171). The former slaves are elevated, their social station has changed but nothing changed in their consciousness. As Fanon writes, 'The upheaval did not make a difference in the Negro. He went from one way of life to another, but not from one life to another' (*BSWM*: 171). The White master's decision to end slavery was a change, a substantial one at that,<sup>28</sup> but it did not change much where it counted; *in the consciousness of the formerly enslaved and racialized people*.

Without struggle there is no change in the French Negro's consciousness, no appreciation of the value of freedom, no risk of life, and as a result no recognition from the whites of France. The French Negro remains stuck wondering 'whether the white man considers him consciousness in-itself-for-itself' (*BSWM*: 173).<sup>29</sup> For, as Fanon had previously stated, in a situation without real recognition the 'other' remains the 'theme' of the unrecognized subject's actions. In this case the French Negro having not struggled, not been able to prove themselves to be inherently free by risking death, remains totally fixated on the white world, concerned with their values, concerned with whether they are considered to be really human, really free and equal. This concern manifests itself in all sorts of racialized pathologies, but also primarily, as Fanon writes in this section, in seeking out and 'detecting resistance, opposition and contestation' from the white world. Such a search is only natural, Fanon thinks. For this would enable the French (or Martinican, Fanon shifts between the two) Negro to really prove themselves, to impose themselves on the other and *finally* be confirmed as consciousness in-and-for-themselves.

So, struggle is what is lacking in Fanon's situation (Hogan 2018: 20).<sup>30</sup> The problem—which Fanon states at least thrice in this section—is the absence of

struggle in France, the lack of resistance as the occasion for the mutual recognition of human by human (*BSWM*: 171–73). If the action of recognition had been mutual, born of struggle and opposition, then the French Negro and white would not be in this mess. Alas, recognition was granted without a fight—the former slave never had a chance to learn the value of freedom or prove freedom to be their essence. The attentive reader will have realized the significance of this claim for interpreting Fanon’s Hegel critique: *unlike in Hegel’s dialectic of mastery and servitude, no struggle for recognition has taken place*. That is, whereas both master and servant in Hegel’s *Phenomenology* had risked their lives for freedom—an experience which proves to be vital for the servant’s development of a sense of freedom and self-consciousness—the French Negro (according to Fanon) did not even get as far as struggle. Ironically this means that the image of the Fanon-Hegel relation in contemporary scholarship is flipped on its head (Sekyi-Otu 2021: 7). On the shared-humanity interpretation, Hegel’s dialectic is seen as not being antagonistic enough, not accurately reflecting the violence and one-sidedness of the racist situation. Here, however—it must be noted, Fanon’s text is not about Algeria but about now ‘free’ racialized subjects from Martinique—Fanon’s problem is that Hegel’s dialectic contains excessive struggle, whereas the situation with the French Negro was one wherein struggle did not even occur.

No change of consciousness occurred for the formerly enslaved, they remain—to use terms foreign to Fanon—mentally enslaved or spiritually colonized (Yaki Sayles 2010: 63). That is, they remain ‘dependent’, totally concerned with the whites; with proving or disproving what they think, with showing their humanity to them, which is a concern Fanon seeks, finally, to put to rest totally for the sake of a conscious and chosen struggle against the political-economic root of his racialized condition.<sup>31</sup> This accounts for the otherwise unintelligible claim that the French Negro is less independent than Hegel’s servant, for the French Negro remains totally fixated on the white master, or, as Fanon states it ‘The Negro wants to be like the master’ (*BSWM*: 172n8). In the absence of struggle, the white master remains the theme of the French Negro’s actions, something to imitate or someone to prove wrong; that is, the French Negro is concerned with donning a white mask.<sup>32</sup> However, the true aim is to bring about an end of the racial-capitalist order.

It is important to note, with Fanon biographer David Macey, that Fanon got his historical facts wrong. While France did officially end slavery—that is, externally grant the French Negro their freedom—in Martinique, not only had there been multiple slave rebellions but, ‘before the official decree reached Martinique, one final insurrection forced the governor to make a premature declaration of its abolition’ (Macey 2012: 11). Macey notes that Fanon’s error is an exemplification of the effectivity of the French education system, which sought to frame itself as benevolent even to the descendants of the previously enslaved. Historical inaccuracies aside, this belief in the dependency of the French Negro, and of the

Martinican in particular, remained a central presupposition for most of his life. Only upon hearing news of the Cuban revolution did Fanon ever begin to rethink his position on the impossibility of revolution in the Caribbean region (James 1979).

## Concluding Retrospective

Where does this leave us with regards to the thorny problem of Fanon's Hegel critique? Hopefully somewhat closer to the heart of the matter. Beginning with a brief and non-exhaustive survey of the range of interpretations, I singled out the interpretation shared by Ciccariello-Maher, Gordon, Honenberger and Van Haute. This interpretation claims that Fanon's main critique is that the master-servant dialectic begins with a presupposition of shared humanity. As a result, Fanon's critique is then formulated like this: unlike in Hegel's master-servant dialectic, in the racial-colonial situation there is no shared humanity presupposed at the beginning and this precludes the struggle from taking place. This lack of reciprocity, understood as the division of human beings into blacks and whites, prevents struggle. Van Haute has recently shown that, while this is not true of Hegel, it is true of Kojève who cannot account for the emergence of two races or different species. Taking Van Haute's findings seriously, I then moved to show that Fanon's critique also does not apply to Kojève. In neither Hegel's nor Kojève's version of the master-servant dialectic do we find a situation in which each party implicitly treats the other as like itself. As a result, we then had to attribute to Fanon either a misunderstanding or a new reading.

Opting for the second option, I then set out to propose a new reading of Fanon's Hegel critique. Before this, however, Fanon's Sartrean commitments needed unearthing, for Fanon does not address Hegel in a contextless void. Rather, he does so in the midst of an essentially Sartrean analysis of the human being and the way racism denies human reality. To do this, a subset of the shared-humanity interpretation was singled out; the ontological interpretation of Gordon and Ciccariello-Maher. This reading was contested because its interpretative orientation toward *Black Skin, White Masks* as a whole offers serious credibility to the shared-humanity interpretation by claiming that while Hegel's dialectic begins with two beings, the racial-colonial dialectic begins with a being and a non-being. The ontological interpretation was shown to be textually uninterpretable, and often at odds with Fanon's statements and his philosophical commitments.

Finally, it was shown that Fanon's problem with Hegel or Kojève has nothing to do with a presupposition of shared humanity, but instead has to do with the 'historical fact' that French Negros had been set free. The absence of struggle is what differentiates Fanon's context from Kojève and Hegel's, and it is the mutual

struggle of both parties for their freedom which Fanon identifies as the basis of reciprocity in Kojève and Hegel's dialectic.<sup>33</sup> The lack of reciprocity (racism) does not preclude struggle; *the lack of struggle is the lack of reciprocity*. Despite Fanon getting his facts wrong, it is hoped that this interpretation renders his text intelligible, internally consistent, and still conforms with those excellent interpretations that emphasize Fanon's commitment to the model of mutual recognition as the ideal accord between human beings, and so too between nations.<sup>34</sup>

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### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The scholarship contains views ranging from 'Fanon rejects Hegel' to 'Fanon's critique of racial-colonialism is Hegelian'. The former view is represented in such works as Sekyi-Otu (1996), Gidwani (2008), Maldonado-Torres (2008), Güven (2010) and Ogungbure (2018). The latter in, for instance, Bird-Pollan (2015) Hogan (2018), Monahan (2006) and Hudis (2015). Unfortunately, this latter tradition engages little with the former. The result is that the two traditions look like two equally viable interpretations. The former is, nevertheless, textually unsupportable for a number of reasons. As a result, I largely agree with this latter tradition's assessment—synthesized in Hogan's (2018: 29) claim that 'Fanon's corpus is unified by a conception of freedom that is implicitly Hegelian'—albeit with the caveat that they often overstate Fanon's understanding of and engagement with Hegel's philosophy.

<sup>2</sup> All references to Sartre in the text must also be understood to be implicit references to the work of Simone Beauvoir. For want of space in this essay I have not been able to adequately include the subtle differences between Sartre and Beauvoir's approaches, nor have I been able to include references to both works by Sartre and Beauvoir. Nevertheless, for Fanon their existentialism and analysis was a shared one and thus influence by one is always-already influence by the other.

<sup>3</sup> Abbreviations used:

*PbS* = G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. T. Pinkard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2018).

*Int* = Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, ed. A. Bloom, trans. J.H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969).

*BSWM* = Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. C. Markmann (London: Pluto, 2008).

*WE* = Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, trans. R. Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Ciccariello-Maher writes, “‘locked into thinghood,’ he does not appear as a subject to struggle against, much less to recognize, and the slope on which he stumbles is a slippery one that leads directly to the zone of nonbeing’ (2016: 56). Gordon, ‘Here, we see why theoretical articulations of the *négré*’s condition on the basis of Self–Other relations fail. They presuppose the subtle symmetry of “Otherness”. Since racism is a denial to an Other attributes of the self and even those of another self—in other words, even of being an Other—the resulting schema is one of location below, in the zone of nonbeing’ (2015: 69).

<sup>5</sup> In this piece I emphasize Kojève and Sartre despite Bernasconi’s suggestion that Hyppolite’s commentary might be an important influence on *BSWM*. Bernasconi (2020: xvi) notes that Fanon’s spelling of ‘thing’ as *choséité* (Hyppolite’s spelling) instead of *chosité* (Kojève’s) suggests he may have been working with Hyppolite’s commentary. I find this suggestion implausible for three reasons. First, we have evidence of Fanon possessing annotated copies of Hyppolite’s translation of the *Phenomenology* and Kojève’s *Introduction* (Fanon 2018: 736, 741), but no *Genesis and Structure*. Second, Hyppolite (Hegel 1947) uses *choséité* throughout his translation of the *Phenomenology* so the presence of *choséité* instead of *chosité* need not suggest Fanon read *Genesis*. Third, Fanon did not type the book himself, he dictated it to Jose Fanon (Macey 2012). In such a context attributing to the spelling of a single word such weighty intention is not wise. His other proof—that Fanon emphasizes work—is unconvincing. One can read this in the *Phenomenology sans* Hyppolite.

<sup>6</sup> Kojèvean being in some sense a synonym for agonistic or violence/struggle-centric as Butler (1987), Lynch (2001) Monahan (2006), Riley (1981) all note.

<sup>7</sup> Sartre’s reading also emphasizes and the centrality of struggle (Sekyi-Otu 2021).

<sup>8</sup> Kojève’s insertions.

<sup>9</sup> Van Haute claims that this ‘proto-recognition’ marks each party as ‘belonging to the same history’ (2020: 40). On Kojève’s terms this is an unintelligible framing. There is no history until the struggle, thus there is no original belonging.

<sup>10</sup> Maldonado-Torres also shares this reading and the critique applies equally to his approach.

<sup>11</sup> It is worth noting that Gordon (1995) takes Sartre seriously.

<sup>12</sup> The French reads: ‘Il y a une zone de non-être, une région extraordinairement stérile et aride, une rampe essentiellement dépouillée, d’où un authentique surgissement peut prendre naissance. Dans la majorité des cas, le Noir n’a pas le bénéfice de réaliser cette descente aux véritables Enfers’ (Fanon 1952: 6).

<sup>13</sup> As Macey (2012: 41) writes, ‘*Peau noire, masques blancs* does not end with a plea for racial equality but with a Sartrean bid for total freedom as a radicalized consciousness leaps into a future that escapes all ethnic determinations’.

<sup>14</sup> As in Gordon (2015); Ciccariello-Maher (2012, 2016); Maldonado-Torres (2008).

<sup>15</sup> Fanon (1967: 34–35) states that ‘Phrases such as “I know them,” “that’s the way they are,” show this maximum objectification successfully achieved’.

<sup>16</sup> The thematic of freeing the human from an imposed category is also present in Fanon (1965: 32) ‘What we Algerians want is to discover the man behind the colonizer; this

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man who is both the organizer and the victim of a system that has choked him and reduced him to silence’.

<sup>17</sup> This claim is in direct continuity with his earlier claim that the black soul is a construction of the white man and is an implicit citation of Sartre (1965: 8). Moreover, Fanon (*BSWM*: 69) explicitly mimics and then cites Sartre’s formula ‘Let us have the courage to say it outright: It is the racist who creates his inferior. This conclusion brings us back to Sartre: “The Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew: that is the simple truth from which we must start. . . . It is the anti-Semite who makes the Jew’.

<sup>18</sup> Truly human societies founded on this mutual recognition allowing over time a ‘crystalisation of collective values’ (Fanon 2018: 414, also 362, 410). And this situation is not devoid of negation for as Fanon writes, ‘the self takes place by opposing itself’ (*BSWM*: 173).

<sup>19</sup> Here Fanon is practically repeating Sartre (1965: 57) *verbatim*.

<sup>20</sup> Hence the French Negro is left ‘spoiling for a fight’—akin to Sartre’s Jew. While conflict is by no means pleasant, at least humanity can be proven therein and the implicit antagonism, violence, anti-semitism, and white supremacy are brought out into the open.

<sup>21</sup> Sartre describes a similar experience (1965: 57).

<sup>22</sup> Fanon (1967: 35) states that racial-colonialism produces an ‘object man’.

<sup>23</sup> Resistance’s centrality is already attested on page three of the introduction. Fanon (*BSWM*: 3) writes of his ideal of human life thus: ‘Mankind set free of the trampoline that is the resistance of others, and digging into its own flesh to find a meaning’. This idea of bouncing, jumping, and digging ought to also put Fanon’s comments about non-being in their proper light.

<sup>24</sup> That and the fact that Fanon was clearly inspired by Sartre’s (1965: 57) analysis.

<sup>25</sup> Kojève (*Int*: 7) writes that humanity comes to light only because of struggle, and Fanon opens his Hegel critique with a citation of Hegel wherein this same point is made.

<sup>26</sup> C.f. ‘I say “the French Negro,” for the American Negro is cast in a different play. In the United States, the Negro battles and is battled’ (*BSWM*: 172).

<sup>27</sup> It must be noted that Beauvoir makes a parallel point in *The Second Sex*. Girls are forbidden to fight, and as a result, forbidden violence. As Stawarska (2020: 99–100) summarizes Beauvoir’s argument ‘The real obstacle for women is that they do not learn the lesson of violence [. . .], and that their affects do not find direct expression in their actions. If they did, girls would be less likely to assume the inferior status imposed upon them at an early age, and their subjectivity would be less likely to be overdetermined by psychic servitude. As it is, girls and women are locked into the position of resentment. Unlike the other socially subordinated groups, they do not actively struggle for liberation’.

<sup>28</sup> ‘It is not an announcement that one hears twice in a lifetime. The black man contented himself with thanking the white man’ (*BSWM*: 171).

<sup>29</sup> Here Fanon implicitly criticizes both the gesture of trying to approximate white values and standards of humanity *and* the gesture of Negritude poets whose assertion of the value of blackness remained caught in Manichaeism.

<sup>30</sup> Here Fanon paraphrases and applies Sartre (1965: 57), ‘In periods of crisis and of persecution, he is a hundred times more unhappy, but at least he can revolt, and, by a dialectic analogous to

that which Hegel describes in his Master and Slave, he can regain his liberty by opposing oppression and denying his accursed “Jewish nature” in armed resistance against those who wish to impose it on him. But when all is calm, against whom is he to revolt?’.

<sup>31</sup> Fanon (*BSWM*: 75) writes ‘my objective, once his motivations have been brought into consciousness, will be to put him in a position to choose action (or passivity) with respect to the real source of the conflict—that is, toward the social structures’.

<sup>32</sup> This is also why work is not liberating. In a situation in which no fight has taken place there is no fear of death and without fear of death there is no potentially liberating work in Hegel’s account.

<sup>33</sup> In this respect the question of struggle and violence as the foundation for a free and mature conscience is the thematic which unites *BSWM* and *WE*—the former looking at the alienation of what happens without, the latter at how struggle founds a national consciousness.

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