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Frantz Fanon and the Dialectic of Decolonisation

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A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in African Studies

Faculty of the Humanities

University of Cape Town

[2010]

COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. 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.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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Acknowledgements

I want to thank my two supervisors, professors Andrew Nash and Harry Garuba: to Andrew for having guided my research and contributed to my intellectual development, Harry for having been instrumental in securing funding for my studies. I also wish to give a special thanks to Federico Settler for his enthusiastic support and input in the project. Lastly, but not least, I want to thank my family for their support and their patience with me while I took time to finish my studies.

University Of Cape Town

Abstract

It has been more than five decades since the wave of decolonization swept across Africa. For people on the continent, the rise to power by the former liberation movements brought hope for a better future in the post-colonial state. However later developments showed that independence would, in fact, not change the material and social conditions of the ordinary people. Although the national liberation movement took over the government of the former colony, colonial institutions and structures of power, which were founded on the economic exploitation of the colony, remained unchanged. Thus in this thesis I set out to examine Frantz Fanon's thought in order to provide a critique of post-independence failures in Africa. I will argue that whilst Fanon shared the same ideals as the anti-colonial movements in their objective to remove colonial regimes from power, that Fanon, in fact, had a critical attitude towards the anti-colonial movement. Whereas the latter conceived of freedom as independence, Fanon conceived of freedom as disalienation, premised on the complete recovery of the black self from the negative effects of colonialism. Thus the study sets out to examine the extent to which Fanon offered an alternative idea of freedom and liberation to the one which was being advanced by the national liberation movements.

Introduction

It has been more than five decades since the first African country Ghana secured its independence from European colonial rule. Since then the entire African continent became politically independent, with South Africa becoming the last country to secure its freedom. This was symbolized by the country's first democratic elections which took place in 1994. But the euphoria of African independence gradually turned into disappointments. The transfer of political power to the liberation movements did not improve the economic fortunes of the majority of people in the post-liberation state. If anything the reality of post-independence only managed to sink the post-liberation state into stagnation. Thus in this thesis, I set out to examine Frantz Fanon's thought as providing a critique of the problems emanating from the post-independence African state.

Frantz Fanon was born on 20th July 1925 in Fort-de-France, Martinique. He was born into a black, middle class family of eight children. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986:148) and *Toward the African Revolution* (1967:19-21) he regards the Antillean as believing himself to be a French man. From this we can assume that Fanon grew up regarding himself as French also. He was a third-generation descendant of slaves that were transferred from Africa to the Caribbean Islands. After an uneventful middleclass childhood, Fanon, at the age of seventeen escaped the island to the Dominican Republic in order to join the allied forces to liberate France which had been occupied by German forces. At this stage Fanon's political awareness was still undeveloped because the war was between whites and had nothing to do with the liberation of his country, Martinique. He joined the French army and took part in the war against Nazi forces particularly in the battle of Alsace, where he was injured. After the war Fanon returned to Martinique. This was during the time of elections and when Aimé

Césaire, who Fanon supported, was running as a Communist Party candidate for the National Assembly.

In 1946 he received a scholarship to study in France. Although he conceived himself as a French man, it was here during his second stay in France where Fanon suffered from the effects of white racism. These experiences raised his political awareness of the black man's plight as regards racism. While in France, Fanon studied and graduated as a doctor in psychiatry. This prompted him to consider the symptoms and the effects of psychological trauma in order to understand the conditions under which blacks were subjected to in France. This work culminated into Fanon's first book *Black Skin, White Masks*, a book which had previously been rejected as an academic dissertation (Macey 2000:155). After completing his studies in Lyon, France, Fanon took up an offer to work in Algeria as head of the Psychiatry Department at the Blida-Joinville Hospital. He inherited a racially segregated ward between European and Arab patients. He would desegregate the wards and introduce reforms in the way patients were treated. Some of these changes included the introduction of social and psychotherapeutic methods. However the social conditions under which people lived militated against the practice of psychotherapy.

In his letter of resignation to the Resident Minister, which he signed as an "outraged French citizen" (Macey 2000:299), Fanon wrote:

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 1967:52-54).

By this time Fanon had already developed sympathy for the cause of the Algerian people for national independence. As a psychiatrist, it was becoming clear to him that the social conditions under which people lived had to be transformed in order to make possible a healthy existence. Frustrated by these social conditions Fanon finally opted to join the ranks of the National liberation Front (FLN), Algeria's national liberation movement whilst still pursuing his medical practice. These early developments form the biographical context in which Fanon's theoretical work had its origins.

Although Fanon supported the cause for the freedom and independence of Algeria and other colonised countries, it appears that Fanon had a critical attitude towards the anti-colonial movement. On the one hand he shared with the national liberation movements the need for the removal of colonial regimes and the establishment of sovereign states. On the other, he was opposed to the idea of seeing liberation as merely political and therefore formal. The lack of a clear vision and ideology for the future state by the national liberation movements, accompanied by their inability to anticipate the prospective class rifts caused by the existence of differently privileged classes within the liberation movements, sets Fanon apart from the anti-colonial movement. While the liberation movement(s) called for universal franchise in the form of one man one vote, Fanon on the other hand, insisted on placing the masses at the centre of the political process. He argued for a people's government not in the form of one man one vote, but a polity where the people themselves decide the destiny and the future of the state.

Although in theory liberation movements espouse the aspirations of the masses for freedom, predicated on the eradication of hunger, ignorance, poverty and unawareness (Fanon 1967:164), in practice once in government, they become seduced by power and

bureaucracy to the point that liberation becomes a mere formality for the majority of the people. It is at the backdrop of these problems that Fanon, in his last book *The Wretched of the Earth*¹, develops a critique of the post-colonial state. His critique is particularly present in the chapters “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness” and “On National Culture”. These chapters indicate Fanon’s departure from the line of the liberation movement in anticipating the problems of the post-colonial state. In the *Wretched*, Fanon presents a political programme which firstly calls for the radical transformation of the colonial system through the use of violence. His conception of violence within the context of the revolution differs from that of the liberation movements. While he shares with the liberation movement the necessity of the use of violence in toppling the colonial regimes, Fanon also conceives of violence as working therapeutically in aiding the colonized individual to regain his self-confidence and humanity. Secondly Fanon presents a political programme that is aimed at the creating a revolutionary national, political culture aimed at replacing the ideology of the colonial system. His project, as presented here in this thesis can be summed up in the following manner: i) critique of the impact of the colonial system, and subsequently the critique of the national bourgeois state, ii) the creation of a new national culture, aimed at the full recovery of the black-self.

Having noted the dehumanising effects of colonial violence on the colonised Fanon argued that counter violence by the colonized, in response to the violence of the colonizer, would help heal the colonised from his inferiority complex. The violence of the colonised acts as a balancing mechanism to the violence perpetrated by the coloniser. Through violence the “natives” create history, in that, the old colonial truths are exploded (Fanon 1967:117) while

¹ I will at times use the shorter *Wretched* to refer to Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*.

at the same time that new ones are being created. As Fanon puts it: “the thing which has been colonised, becomes man in the process of freeing itself” (1967:28).

While the national liberation movement succeeds in dethroning the colonial regime, covert elements within the liberation movement move to take over positions which are a legacy of colonialism. These are the national elites who, once colonialism has retreated, establish a state which is only formally independent, complicit with the imperialist forces in the former colonising country. Since independence, the compradorial activities of the national bourgeoisie have undermined the development of the nation state. So Fanon proposes that the bourgeoisie ought to abandon their class narcissism and join forces with the masses in revolt in order to repel imperialism and build a new nation. He argues that the national bourgeoisie, as beneficiaries of colonial education, rather than becoming local agents of foreign companies, ought to put their intellectual and technical resources in the service of the revolution. He says that the bourgeoisie “ought to consider as its bounden duty to betray the calling fate has marked out for it, and to put itself to school with the people” (1967:120). This entails aiding the people and working *with* the people, not against them.

In saying this Fanon has in mind the establishment of a new national culture, a revolutionary culture concerned with the full recovery of the black self. He argues that decolonisation should not only bring about an end to colonialism but should also lead to a disappearance of the colonised man. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon says that “when there are no longer slaves, there are no longer masters” (1986:219).

Thus through a close reading of Fanon’s ideas I hope to show Fanon, both ethically and politically, as concerned with the humanistic objective of transforming the “natives” from dehumanized existence towards the realization of their full humanity and dignity.

Accordingly he critiques formal independence as preserving the psychological damage of colonialism. He goes on to set out the political conditions that make possible a healthy life after colonialism.

In his conception of social transformation I will show Fanon as drawing from the rich history in the philosophical thought of thinkers such as Hegel, Marx and Sartre. In doing so, I seek to demonstrate that while Fanon draws on these authors' theories; he also transcends them in such a way that he produces an original theory of social transformation for the black or the colonised people. This enables Fanon to distinguish between false liberation, that is, liberation based on the acquisition of state power without fundamentally changing the old colonial relations and institutions, and genuine liberation which he conceives as the product of consciousness, determined by the masses themselves.

Chapter 1: Power and Alienation under Colonial Rule

If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process: primarily economic; subsequently, the internalisation—or, better, the epidermalization of that inferiority.

Frantz Fanon

Since the arrival of European colonialism in Africa, Asia and Latin America the histories of these continents has come to be known as part of Europe's colonial crusades in these regions. Through conquest and domination, colonialism managed to displace traditional communal relations and in the process imposed its own standards. Taking into account the traumatic experience from the encounter with colonialism this chapter will focus on the "native" population's alienation that resulted from that encounter. This is with the view to showing how colonialism tilted power relations in favour of the colonising power. In doing so, I will rely on Fanon's critique of colonialism in order to examine its impact of on the colonised people.

As is the case in the Hegelian dialectic of recognition, Fanon's argument is that the enslavement of the colonised, under the dehumanising colonial conditions, raises an awareness of the need by the colonised people to extricate themselves from colonial bondage towards a realisation of their freedom. For Fanon violence becomes a key instrument towards this end. The first section will focus on Fanon's analysis of the colonial situation, its economic rationale and also how colonialism through exploitation transforms the socio-economic relations between the colonised and the colonising countries. The following section will focus on Fanon's analysis of the nature of alienation under

colonialism. The last section will focus on violence as a mode of recovering the black self in Fanon's project together with the limits of violence.

1.1 Colonialism

In Fanon's thought there is an interplay between colonialism's economic exploitation of the "native" populations, racial discrimination and the use of violence. Race distinctions become an important determinant by which to divide the colony between "natives" and Europeans, that is, between the haves and the have-nots. Colonial violence, on the other hand, which is the violence of the settler against the "natives", serves as a cohesive element first, to establish "order" within the colony and secondly to dehumanise the "natives" and thus reduce them to the level of slaves. Hence exploitation, racism and violence, under colonialism, are interwoven in such a way that the relation between the settler and the "native" is always an economic and exploitative one in the interest of the colonizing power.

The brief account of colonialism rendered here is aimed at shedding light on some characteristic features of colonialism together with the economic rationale that underlies it. Fanon understands economic exploitation as the basis for colonialism. He understands that the exploitation of the colony is necessary for the economic development of the metropolis. Thus the relation is structural and is also one of dependency. Fanon acknowledges this fact as when he writes in *Black Skin White Masks*² that

If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process:

- primarily, economic;
- Subsequently, the internalisation—or, better, the epidermalization of that inferiority (Fanon 1986:13).

² I will at times use the shorter *Masks* to refer to *Black Skin White Masks*.

Here Fanon is making the point that the colonial encounter is an economic encounter and that economic privilege is mediated through race, or as evidenced by the “epidermalisation” of privilege or lack thereof.

In *The Wretched of the Earth* he declares that “The originality of the colonial context is that economic reality, inequality and the immense difference of ways of life never come to mask the human realities” (1967:30).

Both these statements attest to Fanon’s awareness of the historical and economic rationale of the colonial system. Fanon deemed colonial exploitation as vital for the economic existence of the metropolis.

In a similar vein Ania Loomba locates colonialism as grounded in the economic reality as Fanon does. She 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). In her description of colonialism Ania Loomba stresses the dependence between the colonised and colonising countries as centered around the economic exploitation of the former by the latter.

As we can see here Loomba does not examine colonialism in isolation but ties the denigration of the colonized through labour to the economic demands of imperialist nations for raw materials and labour as contained in her definition. Her analysis of the colonial phenomenon shows that there is an inter-connection between the development of modern capitalism in the West and colonial expansion. She says that “Thus we could say that colonialism was the midwife that assisted at the birth of European capitalism, or that without colonial expansion the transition to capitalism could not have taken place in

Europe” (1998:4). Like Loomba, Fanon deems colonial exploitation as vital for the economic development of the metropolis. He observes that:

The bourgeoisie in the colonies is, before independence, a western bourgeoisie, a true branch of the bourgeoisie of the mother country that derives its legitimacy, its force and its stability from the bourgeoisie of the homeland (Fanon 1967:143).

Here Fanon seeks to show that the colonial bourgeoisie, before independence, are representatives of the colonising country bourgeoisie and as such, are in line with the material interests of the colonizing country, and not the colony. As such the colonial bourgeoisie has no desire for the economic development of the colony but its exploitation.

With exploitation as its objective, Fanon further observes that colonialism, therefore, cannot occur without the creation of socio-economic changes between the coloniser and the colonised. That, in fact, the terms “native” and settler are colonial notions that, through exploitation, have acquired material connotations. He says that “For it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence. The settler owes the fact of his very existence, that is to say his property, to the colonial system” (Fanon 1967:28). Fanon does not deal with the historicity and motives of the colonial enterprise at length but his awareness of the exploitative nature of capitalism is scattered throughout his writings. In *Capital* and *The Communist Manifesto* Karl Marx provides background on the economic links between colonialism and capitalism from which Fanon draws.

In *Capital* Marx locates the development of capitalist production as based on previously accumulated capital. He notes that capitalist production presupposes the existence of

original capital or what he refers to as “primitive accumulation” (Marx 1954:703,710-712). Marx bases the notion of primitive accumulation on the complete separation of the producer from the products of his labour. Thus colonialism functions to strip the colonised from the products of their labour and thus serves the purpose of capital accumulation from which capitalist development in the metropolitan countries can take off. Marx notes, in *Capital*, that “the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production” (1954:703). I have here alluded to the notion of primitive accumulation insofar as it relates to colonial exploitation, the principle of separating the worker from the products of his labour works in the similar way in the capitalist countries themselves as Marx points out in the book. Similarly Fanon’s understanding of the economic rationale of colonialism is broadly Marxian in interpretation. In the colonies, Fanon observes, the products of the “native’s” labour are consumed not by the “natives” who produce them, but are consumed in the industrial countries. He notes that “[colonialism] contents itself with bringing to light the natural resources, which it extracts, and exports to meet the needs of the mother country’s industries, thereby allowing certain sectors of the economy to become relatively rich” (Fanon 1967:127).

Thus the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised is structured in such a way that it is always a material and an exploitative relationship. The exploitation is also based on the coloniser’s perception of the “native” as racially inferior, and therefore a potential object for economic exploitation.

1.1.1 Racism

Colonial rule in Africa depends on racial ideology. Race, under colonialism, functions ideologically according to which the division of society into Blacks and Whites, that is, between “natives” and human beings is determined. Thus race establishes a Manichean society consisting of separate schools and hospitals for Europeans and for the “natives”. Accordingly “The settler’s town is a well-fed town, an easy-going town;...a town of white people, of foreigners” (Fanon 1967:30). The “native” town on the other hand is described by Fanon as a “hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light...a town on it knees...wallowing in the mire” (1967:30). Fanon notes that “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” (1967:31). In essence a person’s material privilege, in a colonial system depends on his or her racial identity. Accordingly being white is associated with wealth while blackness with poverty. For this reason Fanon notes that in the colonies “The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich” (1967:31).

We have said that the division of society into Europeans and “natives” is mediated by race. But we are yet to fully appreciate the function of racism in dehumanizing the “natives”. Since colonialism is based on racial difference, racism therefore allows for a situation where the perpetrator of racism, the white man, to suspend ascribing human qualities to the “native” by reducing him to the level of an object. According to Percy More racism allows for a situation where the colonial masters can regard the “native” as an absolute other, even an enemy. Hence the black race is excluded because it is believed to be the “absolute Other, an enemy, a *swart gevaar*, against whom all whites must unite” (More 2008:51). Noting the racial binaries of colonial Manicheanism Fanon declares that the “governing

race” are those who hail from elsewhere and those who are racially different from the original inhabitants, “the others” (1967:31).

Since racism allows for the suspension of human qualities to the colonized, dehumanization through racism justifies for the settler the barbaric atrocities and the plundering associated with colonialism. To prove the point, Fanon observes that the settler mentions the “native” in animal terms. The settler speaks of the “native” in “reptilian motions, of the stink of the native quarter, of breeding swarms, of foulness, of spawn, of gesticulations” (Fanon 1963: 32-33). He further notes that when the settler wishes to fully describe the “native” he refers to the bestiary (Fanon 1967:33).

By reducing the “natives” to sub-human standards, through racism, this enables the colonizer to cling to Western ideals of liberal democracy, as Zahar observes, “while at the same time exploiting the natives in the most inhuman fashion” (Zahar 1974:19). This attitude on the part of the colonizer puts paid to the possibility of complementarity between races. It denies the possibility for conciliation and the achievement of a higher humanity. Noting these racial binaries Fanon remarks that “Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelean logic, they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous” (1967:30).

Percy More also regards racism as more than mere racial discrimination, but as power. According to More, if racism entails the practice of discrimination, then racism also entails the power to enforce discrimination. Taken from the point of view of the colonial system as whole, racism as an instrument of domination, “establishes and maintains exclusionary relations of superiority and inferiority...” (More 2008:51). It entails the power to control and dominate *over* the colonised group.

To have power on this basis is to have “power-over” the discriminated person or group. The implication for this is that within the colonial context, the distribution of power is highly asymmetrical between blacks and whites to the extent that the colonized person cannot be said to be racist in the manner we have just described. This is why Fanon at times uses the terms the “governing race” or the “dominant group” to refer to the colonizer. For Fanon restricts acts of racism to the colonizing race. It is also with this conception of racism as power that A. Sivanandan defines the term. As such racism “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 display of power and racial practices is shown through the use of force to keep the “natives” in line.

1.1.2 Colonial Violence

In the *Wretched of the Earth* Fanon notes that the dehumanization of the “natives” is mediated by sheer force. He notes that the encounter between the colonizer and the colonized “was marked by violence and their existence together – that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler — was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannon” (Fanon 1967:28). He further says that “In the colonies, the foreigner coming from another country imposed his rule by means of guns and machines” (Fanon 1967:31). Thus we see here that unlike in the West where legitimacy is obtained through soft cultural elements such as “moral teachers, counselors and ‘bewilders’” (Fanon 1967:29) who function to keep the masses in check, in the colonies government agencies do not seek to lighten oppression, but seek to escalate it through brute force. As Fanon puts it:

The intermediary does not lighten the oppression, nor seek to hide the domination; he shows them up and puts them into practice with the clear

conscience of an upholder of peace; yet he is the bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of the native (1967:29).

Fanon's assessment of colonial violence leads him to conclude that colonialism leads to dehumanisation. As it dehumanizes the "natives" and forces them to carry out purposes which are not of their own but those of the occupier, violence functions, simultaneously, to alienate the "natives" psychically and socially. Thus brutal violence—mediated by colonial racism—ensures the dehumanization and the alienation of the "natives". The colonizers will therefore instill onto the "native's" mind that the black or the "native" is not only the "corrosive element", but is also an embodiment of evil. As Fanon notes, the colonizers will propagate the idea that the "native" "represents not only the absence of values but the negation of values" (1967:32).

We have thus far noted how race based exploitation of the "natives" for metropolitan economic gains, through the use of violence and racism dehumanizes the black person. In the following section I shall examine how according to Fanon colonialism alienates the colonial subject as is detailed in *Black Skin White Masks*.

1.2 Alienation

In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon undertook to analyse the psycho-existential impact of colonialism on the colonized people, particularly the intellectual alienation of the Antillean society. In this endeavor Fanon observed that colonialism systematically corrodes the dignity of the black self while at the same time upholding Western values as was propagated by the Enlightenment thinkers. Over a period of time, and particularly among the "native" elites, this triggers the "natives" to despise their own cultures and adopt that of the colonizing country. But Fanon observed that as the "natives", particularly the French-

speaking *evolués*, abandon their culture and assimilate into the colonizing country's culture they become alienated. This is so in that while the *evolués* have accepted European values and patterns of behavior, the racially organised social structure of colonial society undermines and denies their full recognition and integration into white society. This creates serious psychological traumas on them since they become neither fully black nor white. This phenomenon is best revealed when the *evolués* emigrates to metropolitan countries where they discover that their manners and eloquence particularly in French cultural etiquettes count for nothing; that in the eyes of whites they remain savages, or "Negroes". As noted earlier this was also the case in Fanon's own experience when he went for his university studies in France.

Fanon notes that the black Antillean—who believes himself to be both a white and French man—will experience psychological disorders at the slightest contact with the white world (1986:143,148). In the colonial countries the cultural and economic domination of "natives" leads, among other things, to mental and intellectual alienation of the colonized person. While most colonized people will experience psychological traumas as the result of the physical and psychological abuse unleashed by colonialism, intellectual alienation tends to become more acute among the "native" elites who have become strongly exposed to colonial ideology as Zahar observes. This alienation results, among other things, from negative constructions of the "native" population's identities as savage and backward, which lead them to despise their original identities.

As an escape mechanism the alienated person abandons his own identity for that of the colonizer with the view to gaining recognition as a human being. By so doing he seeks to be recognized as a man among other men and not as a "native" or slave. Although Fanon

details different types of alienations, in this section I shall limit my discussion largely to intellectual alienation. Intellectual alienation is the type of alienation experienced largely by the “native” elites, particularly the French-speaking blacks in the Antilles for which Fanon directed *Black Skin, White Masks* to. Intellectual alienation points to the problem of an alienated person whose desire is not only to enjoy the white settler’s privileges but to become the white man himself. However Fanon points out in *Masks* that “there is every reason to think that the situation is the same in other colonies” (Fanon 1986:146).

As Fanon observed in his “native” Martinique, an island that fell into French colonial rule, intellectual alienation was more perverse on the island. This was due to French colonial policy of assimilation. Through its assimilation policy, France ensured that it did not only disfigure the cultures and the history of the “natives” but also sought to create French citizens out of them. It must be remembered that colonialism created and maintained artificial social hierarchies based on race and class. The more one evolved towards assimilating European or French values, the higher his social status in the hierarchy. In the Antilles the colonized Antillean – a black man – was made to feel as though he was not only French but white as well. As such this made him believe superior to other Africans such as the Senegalese. As Fanon notes, in the Colonial Army for instance, the Antillean served in the European unit while the African (Senegalese) served in the native unit (1967:20). This shows such divisions were reinforced by the colonial system.

Based on his study of Martiniquan society Fanon noted that before 1939, no Antillean thought of themselves to be a “Negro” or a black person (Fanon 1967:21). The Martiniquan believed that the Negro was a Senegalese and therefore lived in Africa. “Subjectively, intellectually, the Antillean conducts himself like a white man” says Fanon (1986:148). What

the colonised Antillean is ignorant of is the fact that for the coloniser all “negroes” (blacks) are savages: that according to the colonizer there are no good and bad Negroes. Noting this fact Fanon writes in the *Wretched* that

Colonialism, which has not bothered to put too fine a point on its efforts, has never ceased to maintain that the Negro is a savage; and for the colonist, the Negro was neither an Angolan nor a Nigerian, for he simply spoke of ‘the Negro’ (Fanon 1967:170).

Still of the Antillean, Fanon notes that when introduced to a group of white French intellectuals, the black will seek to assert himself as an equal through demonstrating his intellectual ability. “He will insist that attention be paid not on his skin colour but on his intellect” (1986:193). As an indication of alienation among Martiniquan society, many young men will accordingly be found, for instance, emulating French form of speech, recognizing of course “the *world* expressed and implied by that language” (Fanon 1986:18 my italics added). Fanon views this behavior instrumentally as a road for these young men towards recognition. He observes rather cynically that within the white dominated world “The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards” (1986:18). By accepting the culture of the mother country the Antillean expects his skin colour to be forgotten. This disappearance of skin colour allows them an opportunity to be recognized as French, and therefore men.

Such manifestation of neurosis is summed up by Fanon as based on the following logic: “If I order my life like a moral man [a white man], I simply am not a negro” (1986:192). This is because in the collective unconscious of the black people under colonialism, black is regarded as a corrosive element, resembling all that is evil. In his mind the Antillean employs the same logic as a white man: “black = ugliness, sin, darkness, immorality” (Fanon

1986:192). So by adopting the opposite of “black”, the Antillean believes he shall become white.

The black *evolués* living under race based oppression are ignorant of the fact that the black suffers differently to the lighter skinned races. In most cases light skinned races tend to receive better treatment than blacks. When comparing the experiences of the Jews and black people, for example, Fanon notes, following Sartre, that the two groups suffer differently from one another. Echoing Sartre, Fanon notes that the Jew suffers as the result of an “idea” or stereotype that others have given him (1986:115-6). Based on this idea the Jew, according to Sartre, is “perpetually overdetermined from the inside” (1986:115). Accordingly the Jew lives in fear that “his actions might correspond to the stereotype” (Sartre cited in Fanon 1986:115). Although Fanon concedes that the Jew will be persecuted for being a Jew, as it happened during the Holocaust, but since he is a white man, the Jew can remain unnoticed in who he is. “He [the Jew] is a white man, and apart from some rather debatable characteristics, he can sometimes go unnoticed” (Fanon 1986:115). Thus the Jew can escape persecution by concealing his Jewishness.

The black person, on the other hand, suffers a racialised existence, or as Fanon puts it he suffers as the result of his “corporeality” (1967:163). This means that when the Jew can conceal his Jewishness, the black simply can’t: he cannot hide the fact that he is black for his skin colour is the most conspicuous manifestation of race. Through his own personal experience with metropolitan racism in France, Fanon came to the realisation that “I am the slave not of the ‘idea’ that others have of me but of my own appearance” (1986:116). So we see here that when the black man is lynched it is not necessarily because of a stereotype or idea that is already there but because of his appearance. That is to say, it is because of his

skin colour that he becomes a victim of racial hatred. The stereotype of being a savage is embedded, primarily on him being a *black person*. On this basis Fanon concludes that if the Jew is overdetermined from the inside, the black man is “overdetermined from without” (1986:116). This problem is best captured by Fanon when he writes that

But it is in his corporeality that the Negro is attacked. It is as a concrete personality that he is lynched. It is as an actual being that he is a threat (1986:163).

Based on this Fanon infers that in an anti-black world “the black man is not a man” (1967:10).

This problem of black (and Jewish) alienation adds another existential dimension to it. In an anti-black world, Fanon notes that the black person also encounters behavioral challenges in the development of his bodily schema when in the presence of a white man. As he puts it “Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity...The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty” (1986:110-111) when it comes to muscular or motor reactions. This problem manifests when the black encounters what Fanon calls the “white gaze”.

In his first book Frantz Fanon begins the chapter on “The Fact of Blackness” with these opening lines:

I came into the world imbued with the will to find a meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world, and then I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects (1986:109).

The conclusions that Fanon draws in this paragraph is in my view the result of what constitute the problem of the white gaze. The “crushing objecthood” (1967:109) that Fanon associates with the white gaze is itself the result of psychological disorders that emerge as the result of the colonized person’s experience with the colonial situation. It is

a concept that was developed by Sartre in his book *Being and Nothingness* from which Fanon draws significantly. Although the analyses of the impact of the look are similar, there are important differences between the two authors' analyses as I shall demonstrate below. I will begin by Sartre's analysis of the concept and then show how Fanon developed it.

For Sartre the behavioural problem of what he terms "the look" or the gaze of the other emerges as an objective ontological phenomenon that an individual experiences when being looked at by another. Sartre entitles his book *Being and Nothingness* as "an essay on the phenomenological ontology" which, in effect, is a study of the consciousness of being in the world. For Sartre, as it is for Fanon, the gaze of the other is an alienating or objectifying experience. The major premise of Sartre's argument is that human beings become conscious of themselves through the reflection they see of themselves in the other's gaze. This is because self-consciousness (what he refers to as being-for-itself) is at bottom a "nothingness". Although self-consciousness exists in some form or another it is because of this nothingness that self-consciousness is unaware of itself. Therefore the gaze of the other becomes alienating in that it is when we are being looked at that we become aware of ourselves and our presence in the world. "All of a sudden I am conscious of myself as escaping myself, not in that I am the foundation of my own nothingness but in that I have my foundation outside myself. I am for myself only as I am reference to the Other" (Sartre 1958:260).

Shame and pride become instrumental in the perception of self through the other as an object. Shame is necessitated by the realisation that all of a sudden I have become an object among other objects which the Other is "looking and judging" (Sartre 1958:261).

Being seen by the other not only objectifies and dehumanises one but also has the effect of disorienting one from his relation with the physical world. The one who is looked at discovers that he now cannot conduct himself normally. This is well put by Sartre when he writes that

But suddenly the alienation of myself, which is the act of being-looked-at, involves the alienation of the world which I organise. I am seen seated on the chair...[but the chair]...escapes me so as to organise itself into a new and differently oriented complex...in the midst of other objects which similarly have for me a secreete face (1958:263).

This passage indicates that alienation for Sartre occurs as an ontological and existential phenomenon. Alienation arises as a matter of one self-consciousness confronting another. For Sartre the alienated individual, the one who is being looked at, has a chance of disalienating himself. His alienation is not a permanent condition: he still remains with his possibilities. Sartre argues that the other as a look “is only that—my transcendence transcended” (1953:263) and therefore can be overcome. As shame and pride lead self-consciousness to the recognition of its object status, those same dimensions of the ego become instrumental in the re-establishment of the recognition self-consciousness. For, each self-consciousness strives toward a positive affirmation of self. “It is shame or pride which makes me *live*”, says Sartre, “not to know the situation of being looked at” (1958:263). Thus through shame and pride the individual, simultaneously, seeks to reverse his objectivity and reclaim his freedom.

For Fanon it is insofar as “the look” is alienating that he becomes interested in the concept. But what Fanon does is to adapt the concept to the colonial context, and by so doing introduces the racial element to it. His genius is to be able to anticipate the differences between the impact of the look within the colonial context, and the look as an

ontological phenomenon as in Sartre's case. Accordingly Fanon observes, in *Masks*, that the "native's" consciousness of himself before the white man becomes an alienated consciousness; it, as he puts it, becomes a "third-person consciousness" (Fanon 1986:110). "And then the occasion arose when I had to meet the white man's eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me". (1986:110). We can say here that he becomes burdened because the burdensome "unfamiliar weight" of the white man imposes itself on him and permeates his entire being. This is because the white man is synonymous with the entire colonial or power system that he represents. Thus the feeling of alienation by the colonized person is experienced through and within a power inflected context between the colonizer—a white man—and the colonized person. Because of this the glances of the "Other", the white man, introduces a reifying feeling on the colonized. Fanon writes that: "the glances of the other fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye" (1986:109). The notion of power is a crucial one in Fanon's argument. As we have seen above it is also one that sets him apart from Sartre.

While it is possible in Sartre's case for the individual to re-orientate one-self to the objective world, and confront the look of the other, for Fanon this is impossible under colonial domination, which as we have said is a domination of one race by another. We must remember that in Sartre's case alienation occurs between two self-consciousnesses regardless of race. As such it is not impacted upon by a system of power. Within the colonial system, on the other hand, a system of power and domination ensures the obedience of the colonized subject. It is therefore highly unlikely that the settler would be unsettled or alienated by the gaze of the "native", who he has enslaved anyway. For this reason Fanon argues that "The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the

white man” (1986:110). And the converse is false (Fanon 1986:110). In fact, the looking back by the colonized subject may even be seen by the coloniser as an act of insubordination, an act which could lead to serious disciplinary problems for the former. Thus Fanon’s cry that “All this whiteness that burns me...” (1986:114) is symptomatic of the white gaze syndrome which is embedded on the white power structure of colonialism.

Having observed Fanon’s understanding of black alienation, this leads us to the question: how then does Fanon conceptualise the disalienation of the black? This brings our discussion to Fanon’s theorisation of liberation.

1.3 Liberation: Violence as a Mode of Recovering the Black Self

Insofar as Fanon’s proposal for violent methods is concerned there seems to be tension between Fanon’s double roles as both a revolutionary as well as a humanist. In his book *A critique of revolutionary humanism: Frantz Fanon*, Richard Onwuanibe notes that Fanon combines the revolutionary element with humanism and describes Fanon as a revolutionary humanist. Having noted the deleterious impact of colonial violence on the dignity of the “natives” Fanon argued that counter violence by the “natives” was the starting point towards restoring the dignity of black self. In the chapter “Concerning Violence” in the *Wretched* Fanon invokes violence not only for the purpose of removing the colonial regime but also for its therapeutic impact on the colonized. Since Fanon conceives of colonialism as alienation he therefore argues that a violent catharsis by the colonized would help heal the wounds of colonialism. He says that “At a level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction, it...restores his self-respect” (Fanon 1967:74). While this may be so at an individual level, in the broader

scheme of things, however, Fanon proposed a political solution that would make possible for a healthy living for the colonized people. More on this in the third chapter.

Accordingly for Fanon violence operates at two interrelated levels: first at an individual level, secondly at a social level. At an individual level violence enables the individual to regain his confidence. It acts as a balancing mechanism to the violence of the coloniser. At a social level violence achieves to “explode(s) the old colonial truths” (Fanon 1967:117) and helps bring about a new social order or what Fanon sometimes call “radical mutations”. Both individually and at a social level the “natives”, through violence, create history as they rise against their colonial masters whilst at the same time claiming their humanity. As Fanon puts it: “the thing which has been colonized, becomes man in the process of freeing itself” (1967:28). Using the biblical words Fanon says that “The last shall be first and the first last” but this should come about through a “murderous and decisive struggle between the two protagonists” (1963:28), meaning between the colonizer and colonised.

In the *Wretched*, decolonisation, we are told, is a project of “complete disorder” (Fanon 1963:27). Decolonization works to bring about a new humanity or what Fanon calls a “new man” (1967:36). However in the initial stage the “native’s” counter violence appears as an irrational moment: it is at this stage not aimed at establishing a universal humanity. It is simply what Samira Kawash calls “violence of reversal” (1999:241). In Fanon’s own words “The native’s challenge...is not a rational confrontation of points of view...not a treatise on the universal...but the untidy affirmation of an original idea propounded as an absolute” (1967:31). It is also what he also calls the “replacing of certain ‘species’ of men by another ‘species’ of men” (1963:35).

But through violence the “natives” begin a journey of self-recovery and self-understanding towards the realization of their humanity. If colonialism had sowed the seeds of fear, despair and helplessness, in short alienation, violence comes to the “natives” as a sort of therapy. By striking a blow onto the colonizer, the “native” comes to realize that the settler, in fact, is no different to himself: he has the same red blood as he and that his white skin does not have any intrinsic value (Fanon 1967:35). Such realizations are revolutionary breakthroughs in the collective consciousness of the “natives”: they open up new avenues and new possibilities. If it is the settler who has brought the “native” into existence, who also perpetuates his existence as Fanon insists, then the violence of decolonization brings to an end not only the colonial concept of “natives” but the colonizer as well. Thus the destruction of colonialism and by implication, colonizer is *necessarily* the destruction of the colonized man for the two exists as opposites within the colonial system as Samira Kawash (1999:242) has observed.

I have alluded to the fact that although Fanon conceives of violence as an instrument for social transformation, he also saw it as a form of psychological therapy. This latter aspect sets Fanon apart from the parochial view of violence as conceived by the nationalist movements. The nationalist’s view is parochial in the sense that they conceived of violence as instrumental only in toppling the colonial regimes. This, in itself, was reinforced by their idea of seeing freedom as political independence and therefore formal. Little, if any, attention was placed on the alienating effects of colonialism on the colonized people. Through his training as a psychiatrist combined with his political activism, Fanon sought to combine the psychological with the political in bringing to life a complete human being.

1.3.1 Spontaneous Violence: its strength and Weakness

While Fanon endorses violence as a mode of recovering the black self, he is quick to caution that while spontaneous violence is necessary, it however needs to be controlled and brought in line with the revolutionary ideals of the anti-colonial movement. Otherwise it invariably leads to defeat. The chapter “Spontaneity: Its Strength and Weakness” in the *Wretched*, demonstrates Fanon’s concerns about misguided violence against the colonizer. He warns that “Racialism and hatred and resentment – ‘a legitimate desire for revenge’ – cannot sustain a war of liberation” (Fanon 1967:110). Thus violence needs to be qualified by politically educating the masses so that they are made to understand its political importance in relation to the revolutionary struggle.

Fanon argued that violence should be brief and to precise extent that it achieves its desired objectives. He points out that the war should be ended “not because there are no more enemies left to kill” (1967:113), but because the enemy has come to realize that its interests lies “in recognizing the sovereignty of the colonized people” (Fanon 1967:113). This is because the colonizer is not interested in a protracted war that depletes his resources, but to aims to profit from the colonial conquest.

Echoing Fanon, Gail Presbey stresses the importance of knowledge in the exercise of violence. Understanding the importance of knowledge in action Presbey is aware of the dangers that may arise if things are not explained to the masses. She maintains that “The immediacy of ‘muscles’ is a mirage; knowledge is needed” (Presbey 1996:292). Her metaphors on the violence of the colonized as analogous to surgery are important; in reference to Fanon she says that “Just as successful surgery is brief, and not a way of life,...revolutionary violence ought to be brief” (See Presbey 1996:292). From this it is clear that Fanon cannot be dismissed simply as an apostle of violence. His insistence on seeing

violence as an instrument to bring about a higher humanity makes it difficult to categorize Fanon either as either an apostle of violence or as a pacifist. In any case perhaps that is what makes him a mysterious figure.

1.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I undertook to examine Fanon's analysis and understanding of and the rationale of colonialism together with its impact on the colonized people. It emerged that while colonialism created artificial and race based hierarchies of superiority and inferiority complexes between the blacks and whites, it simultaneously established dependency relations between the colonizing power and the colonized country. Motivated by the material interests of the colonizing western nations this relation brought the raw materials based in the colonies within the grasp of the global capitalist system. As we saw Fanon was not merely concerned with detailing the economic and psychological alienation of the colonial encounter but more with finding solutions for the black man's alienation.

To this end Fanon recognized that the black man's disalienation would come about not through the coloniser's benevolence or concessions but through his own efforts and actions grounded in knowledge. Knowledge is imparted through the dialectical interplay between the leaders and the masses within the dialectic of the organization of the anti-colonial movement. In regards to action, violence plays an important part towards achieving the self-understanding of the people, it awakens the colonized peoples' consciousness in relation to the liberation struggle. Controlled violence is in line with Fanon's argument that it is through self-control and self-action that liberation could be obtained. As in Hegel's master-slave dialectic Fanon's insistence on violence shows that genuine liberation will not be handed down by the master to the slave but that freedom is worthy of dying for.

Unfortunately Fanon did not live to see a truly liberated African country in the manner that he had hoped for. Instead the parochial conception of liberation as the flag and the presidential palace, advanced by the nationalist leaders—advised by “experts” in the former colonial power coupled by the continuing relations of dependency between the colony and the former colonial power—have undermined the sovereignty and independence of the post-colonial state in Africa. This view of liberation has seen the post-independence State sinking into neo-colonialist practices, enthusiastically facilitated by the national bourgeoisie. Thus in the next chapter I will examine Fanon’s critique of the failures of the post-liberation state which he regards as a falsely conceived form of liberation. The critique will show Fanon as departing from the line of national liberation movements which had as their idea of liberation the removal of colonial regimes from government.

Chapter 2: False Forms of Liberation

Now, the ordinary native interprets these unfair promotions as many acts of sabotage, and he is often heard to declare: 'It wasn't worth while, then, our becoming independent...'

Frantz Fanon

If, as argued in the previous chapter, that Fanon's critique of colonialism is distinctive because of the emphasis that he places on alienation, then this will have implications for his conception of liberation. However his conception of liberation is developed against an existing conception held by nationalist movements. But what we need to do is ask the question: in what way is the nationalist movement's conception of liberation misleading?

The liberation movement's conception of liberation was, in the first place, narrow. It was narrow, in that, it conceived of liberation politically as independence. This conception of liberation was problematic, in that, it failed to take into account the deeper underlying nature of colonial relations between the colonizing power and the colony. Since this conception of liberation leaves unchanged the colonial structures that benefit imperialism, it only manages to reinforce the old colonial relations under the guise of national independence. It therefore creates a problem of a false sense of liberation. False because, although it manages to get rid of the colonial regime, it leaves intact the old colonial structures of oppression. With this in mind I will argue that Fanon's analysis do not only provide an understanding of post-independence state failures but can also help in understanding the social and political problems of our own contemporary societies in Africa. His critique of the post-independence state's failures is nowhere more present than in the

chapters “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness” and “On National Culture” of *The Wretched of the Earth*.

The *Wretched of the Earth* was written in 1961, when only a handful of countries had secured independence in Africa, more than thirty years before South Africa finally became a democracy. Although we have now entered the second decade of the 21st century, Fanon’s insights, in this book, have proved relevant for our own contemporary society plagued by ubiquitous corruption, bureaucracy, materialism and general political degeneration.

Fanon’s analysis show that the responsibility for the downward spiral of the nation state originates from the covert behaviour of the national bourgeoisie to secure economic gains, which it secures at the detriment of the whole nation. Its behavior is, however, closely linked to the influence of imperialist forces in the West. The economic links between the national bourgeoisie and the imperialist nations ensured a continued imbalance between the newly independent African states and the former colonial powers within the global economy. Thus in this chapter, I set out to examine the behavior of the nationalist bourgeoisie against the objectives of the national liberation movement. My objective is to answer the following question: how has the behaviour of the national bourgeoisie led to the creation of a false sense of liberation? This question will be examined insofar as the activities of the national bourgeoisie hinges on other political actors such as the national parties and the “native” intellectuals.

2.1 The National Bourgeoisie

In order to understand the basic character of false liberation we need to focus on the role Fanon ascribes to the national bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie in Africa, has its origin in the

colonial civil service. It therefore consists of the “native” elites who constitute the local agents of the colonial system. At the proclamation of independence, the national bourgeoisie moves to take over positions which are a legacy of colonialism. Its economic ambitions have, since independence, continued to undermine and compromise development within the nation state.

Unlike the settler bourgeoisie of the former colonial power, which the local bourgeoisie seeks to replace, the latter is characterized by a weak economic position. Its economic weakness is tied to the historical relations with the former colonizing power which has prevented it from playing a decisive role of creating material prosperity in society. The “native” bourgeoisie does not own any means of production: it exists as an appendage of the mother country bourgeoisie. Largely influenced by European ideas, it has a mimetic desire to enjoy the same privileges as the former colonial bourgeoisie. “We have seen that the native never ceases to dream of putting himself in the place of the settler – not of becoming the settler but of substituting himself for the settler” (Fanon 1967:41). Thus the national bourgeoisie seeks to enjoy the same economic privileges as the colonizer.

Fanon makes it clear that the nationalist bourgeoisie in the former colonies is characterized by a state of dependency. This is because the national bourgeoisie defines itself compradorially as intermediaries between the local economy and the metropolis, that is, as the “transmission line between the nation and capitalism” that “today puts on the masque of neo-colonialism” (1967:122). Among Fanon’s concerns with the nationalist bourgeoisie is not only the fact that this class is incapable of harmonizing social relations, nor that it fails to invest in the national economy, but also concerns the moral demise that has come to characterise this class. This is evinced by Fanon’s description of the nationalist bourgeoisie

as a sort of “greedy caste”, “avid and voracious, with a mind of a huckster” content to receive dividends that the coloniser hands out to it (Fanon 1967:141).

It is important to point out here that while Fanon makes use of the Marxist concepts such as “the bourgeoisie”, “the proletariat” etc. to the colonial context, that Fanon was, in fact, not an orthodox Marxist. However it is clear that Fanon, like Marx, understood that the alienation of “natives” was the result of modern industrial capitalism.

Racism belongs to the shameless exploitation of one group of men by another which has reached a higher stage of technical development.... The habit of considering racism as a mental quirk, as a psychological flaw, must be abandoned (1967: 38).

Although this passage exhibits Fanon’s Marxist leanings, what Fanon also does is to superimpose race onto Marx’s theory of labour alienation. In doing so Fanon is aware of the divergent economic conditions that exists in colonized countries vis-à-vis the industrial countries, particularly England within which Karl Marx wrote *Capital* and France which Fanon witnessed for himself.

In England industrialization had managed to create an elite class of individuals who had accumulated massive capital. Marx called this class the bourgeoisie. With it, industrialization also created a large pool of workers who sold their labour in the labour market for sustenance. Marx called this pool the proletariat or the working class. In the colonial countries, on the other hand, since colonialism did not build industry in the same scale as it did in Europe, there could not, therefore, have emerged a bourgeoisie in the same scale as in the industrialized countries; nor a working class. That is because these countries remained largely underdeveloped and dependent on the export of raw materials. Notwithstanding the divergence of economic conditions between the colony and the

metropolis Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, makes reference to four main “classes”: the national bourgeoisie, the proletariat, the lumpen-proletariat and the peasantry. But unlike Marx who placed revolutionary agency within the proletariat, Fanon placed this role on the peasantry and the lumpen-proletariat. This was inevitable in that the former colonized countries consisted largely of the peasant population. And since industrialization did not take place in the colonized countries as it did in Europe, there could not have developed here a bourgeoisie with the same economic strength as in the West.

Fanon’s introduction of race as underlying colonial exploitation of the “natives” by European imperialist nations demonstrates his originality within the Marxist tradition. Marxist theory is not necessarily concerned with issues of race but more with relations of production between the bourgeoisie (the owners of the means of production) and the proletariat. In the *Communist Manifesto*, for example, Marx and Engels point out that the history of the struggles between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, in the West, centers around the exploitation of the latter by the former. In the colonies, on the other hand, as Fanon points out, race is central to the production of labour. Here the ruling elite can also be distinguished by their skin colour. Accordingly those that constitute the middle class would be white and European, and the oppressed, black, African, Arab, Asian etc. Thus more often than not, in the colonial countries conflict tends to assume a racial dimension than say in the virtually, racially homogenous nations of the West.

However in the *Wretched* Fanon perceives the disjuncture between the national bourgeoisie and the people as being marred by the former’s commercial interests which it seeks to secure at all cost. In the aftermath of independence the national middle class is convinced by the former coloniser that it can advantageously “take over” the role previously played by

the former settler bourgeoisie (Fanon 1967:120). Lacking the necessary resources that could give it economic clout the national bourgeoisie cannot realistically assume the role of captains of industry. Thus the nationalist bourgeoisie, because it is itself underdeveloped, cannot in reality replace the settler bourgeoisie. Fanon notes that it is at the realization of this incapacity, at the dawn of independence, that the national bourgeoisie sends out “frenzied appeals” for help to the former colonizer (Fanon 1967:120). From the onset the national bourgeoisie is relegated into intermediary type of activities. It will therefore ensure that all transactions between the local economy and the multi-national companies pass through its hands.

He notes that during the last days of colonialism the nationalist leaders occupy a strategic position as “go-betweens” between the colonized people and the retreating colonialism. According to Fanon this affords them with an opportunity to negotiate favourable conditions for the people in the future state. But during this critical period of political transition the bourgeoisie commits treason. They commit treason, in that, they allow themselves to be corrupted by the forces of imperialism which presents them with irresistible opportunities to put their own personal economic interests at the expense of the whole nation.

Contrary to the behavior of the national bourgeoisie Fanon proposes that this class abandon its class narcissism and join forces with the masses in their quest for freedom. The implication for this proposal is that the national bourgeoisie ought to stifle its nature as a bourgeois class and free itself from the shackles of capitalism. He says that

Now, precisely, it would seem that the historical vocation of an authentic middle class in an under-developed country is to repudiate its own nature in so far as it is bourgeois, that is to say in so far as it is the tool of

capitalism, and make itself the willing slave of that revolutionary capital which is the people (1967:120).

He further says the national bourgeoisie

ought to consider as its bounden duty to betray the calling fate has marked out for it, and to put itself to school with the people... (1967:120).

Although this is the most important feature in Fanon's critique of the national bourgeoisie's behavior, it is not argued for in any detail. It is not clear for instance as to what Fanon proposes as the alternative to the national bourgeoisie and how it could become the "willing slaves" of the revolution. Nevertheless Fanon's proposal is based on the conviction that the national bourgeoisie does have the freedom to extricate itself from being the tool of capitalism and to become part of the revolution. I argue that his conception of freedom is broadly affected by Sartrean existentialist philosophy.

In Sartre's philosophy, consciousness is decisive towards the realization of freedom. For Sartre consciousness confronts reality freely, that is, without essence. His conception of freedom is based on the view that "existence precedes essence" or that human subjectivity as opposed to mechanical forces, is the starting point (Sartre 1947:15). It therefore suggests the freedom of consciousness. It means that although an individual may find himself subjected to external power or control, self-consciousness is itself always free. Hence self-consciousness, for Sartre as it is for Fanon, is the starting point towards the realization of one's freedom. Thus since self-consciousness is free, this opens up possibilities from which freedom of the body can be realised. It is in this sense also that Fanon conceives of freedom.

Against the objectification of man, in *Masks* Fanon says that:

All I wanted was to be a man among other man. I wanted to come lithe and young into a world that was ours and to help build it together. But I rejected all immunization of the emotions. I wanted to be a man, nothing but a man (1986:112-3).

In relation to the conduct of the national bourgeoisie, we can conclude therefore that Fanon wants them to take ownership of the responsibility for their actions. This means that they ought not to allow their actions and the destinies of their countries to be determined elsewhere other than within their own countries.

Fanon endorses Sartre's thesis that every man is fully responsible for what he and what he chooses for himself, and that as each chooses for himself he also chooses for others. This means that each is responsible not only for his individual actions but also for human kind as a whole. That means that any of our individual acts has a moral implication on the behavior of others. He argues that "in creating the man that we want to be, there is not a single one of our acts which does not at the same time create an image of man as we think he ought to be" (Sartre 1945:20). That is because Sartre assumes that in choosing a course of action, man always chooses that which is good over evil. For that which is good for us is good for all (1945:20). This view of freedom, tied to responsibility impacts on Fanon's thinking about what ought to be the behavior of the "native" bourgeoisie in this instance. That although imperialism militates against them in various ways, ultimately their destiny depends on them.

It is in this sense that Fanon believes that the elite position occupied by the "native" bourgeoisie in the former colonies puts them in a unique position to act in ways that could change the lives of masses. There is no excuse for them to think that they are somehow immune from the duty to act outside of responsibility. Just like the rest of humanity, they cannot escape the feeling of anguish that comes with an act of responsibility. According to Sartre one cannot, for instance, shrug their shoulders in the belief that their individual actions do not have a bearing on others. When it comes to acts of passion, for instance,

Sartre asks the following question: what would happen if everybody looked at things in an individualistic way without taking into account the impact on the whole of humanity? From this he concludes that there cannot be an escaping of responsibility, unless one does so out of dishonesty, as a form of bad faith.

Fanon does not treat the notion of freedom systematically and as a separate theme as Sartre does. But it is without doubt that his conception of freedom has remnants of Sartrean existential philosophy, sketches of which are found in both *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth* as mentioned earlier. In *Masks*, particularly in the chapter "The Fact of Blackness" the notion of responsibility for one's freedom runs through that entire chapter. There Fanon urges the black man to rise above racism and claim his own destiny. He says that "since it was impossible for me to get away from an *inborn complex*, to assert myself as a BLACK MAN. Since the other hesitated to recognize me, there remained only one solution: to make myself known" (Fanon 1986:115). Thus for Fanon, freedom is tied to self-assertion. In the *Wretched*, Fanon's invocation of violence in response to the violence of the colonizer together with his call for the national bourgeoisie and the intellectuals to join forces with the masses in revolt, are some of the indications of Fanon's awareness of this notion of freedom tied to responsibility.

So any form of oppression or bondage is according to Fanon a temporary state leading towards freedom. But since the bourgeoisie has allowed itself to be swept away by the global currency of capitalism, its conduct can be interpreted as an act of inauthenticity: a refusal to honour its responsibility. This situation, of course, undermines the efforts that the national liberation movement has made in removing colonialism and makes a mockery of the freedom thus obtained.

During the period of political transition the middle class reneges on the people's hopes and dreams for genuine liberation. It does so by adopting an indifferent attitude towards the plight of the nation. It appears that its class conservatism has made it intransigent in so far as the material and spiritual needs of the nation are concerned. For this reason Fanon proposes, as we have noted above, that this national bourgeoisie commit class suicide.

Although it is not clear how the national bourgeoisie should assist the revolution, Fanon insists that it is pointless to disengage them in regards to the demands of the revolutionary struggle. He points out that it ought to put at the people's disposal the intellectual and technical capital that it has gained whilst training at colonial universities. But unfortunately for Fanon this is not the path that the bourgeoisie chooses. As we have noted earlier, it takes the only easy way out of the situation; that is, it chooses to profit from the economic situation that colonialism has created. This is candidly captured by Fanon when he writes that:

But unhappily we shall see that very often the national middle class does not follow this heroic, positive, fruitful and just path; rather, it disappears with the soul set at peace into the shocking ways – shocking because anti-national – of a traditional bourgeoisie, a bourgeoisie which is stupidly, contemptibly, cynical bourgeoisie (1986:120-121).

It is clear that Fanon wants the national bourgeoisie to cross-over and join the ranks of the people. Fanon does not only want certain individuals with this class to join the revolution but the whole bourgeoisie class.

The idea of class suicide was also used by Amilcar Cabral and Karl Marx. Marx, for example, observed that during the proletarian revolution, certain members of the ruling class, cross-over to join the revolutionary class. For Karl Marx it is during the period of instability, at the moment when the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, that a part of

the ruling class cuts itself adrift to join the proletarian class (Marx and Engels 1967:91). For Marx and Engels this process of dissolution within the ruling class, in effect the dissolution within the whole society, is precipitated by a period of tumult and violence which detaches some members of the ruling class to join the proletarian revolution. Unlike Fanon, for Marx it is certain individuals within the ruling class that cross-over to join the revolutionary class whereas Fanon wants the whole “native” bourgeois class to dissolve. For Fanon this class must dissolve because it lacks economic power. This is evident when Fanon writes that “that section of the nation which annexes for its own profit all the wealth of the country” (1986:134) – insofar as it is bourgeois, must be completely rejected. He says that it “must be stoutly opposed” not only because it slows down the growth of the national economy but because it is “good for nothing” (1986:141).

According to Marx and Engels the bourgeoisie’s cross-over does not occur in a theoretical vacuum, but occurs as the outcome of an understanding of the movement of history. They are of the view that this “portion of bourgeois ideologist ... have raised themselves to apprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole” (Marx & Engels 1967:91) and have therefore taken matters upon themselves to join the revolutionary class. According to the authors, only the proletariat is the true revolutionary class, the only “class which holds the future in its hands” (Marx & Engels 1967:91). This is because while the other classes decay before the capitalist mode of production, the proletariat, on the other hand, “is its special and essential product” (Marx & Engels 1967:91), and therefore the only class capable of transforming the oppressive relations that capitalism has introduced.

Although Fanon adopts a similar view with Marx and Engels in so far as what the bourgeoisie ought to do, he differs from them insofar as the location of revolutionary

agency is concerned. While the latter locate this role within the proletariat, Fanon locates agency chiefly within the peasantry. This renders Fanon's approach dialectical—as opposed to imposing Marxist dogma—in that he locates revolutionary agency precisely from the peasant conditions reproduced by the colonial system.

It is for this reason, contrary to some versions of Marxist theory that Fanon argues against the bourgeois phase in underdeveloped countries. In line with Marxist theory since 1917, Fanon bases his conclusion on his conviction that 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 1986:140-141). Since the national bourgeoisie lacks the necessary economic power, Fanon says that the bourgeois phase in underdeveloped countries should be “skipped” (1967:140). He thus rejects the Marxian interpretation of history that sees history as following an *a priori* path towards communism of which the bourgeois phase is a necessary condition. Fanon wants the question of the bourgeoisie phase to be confronted from the context of the particular historical conditions of the revolution, not in objective thought. This is particularly prudent in that the economic conditions of underdeveloped countries, does not permit for the development of a large scale bourgeoisie in order to make it play its proper role.

Fanon also notices that when these leaders are asked about the economic programme of the future state they are calling for, they are found unable to reply. This is because the economy has always developed beyond the limits of their grasp. Colonialism has ensured that the nationalist bourgeoisie remains ignorant of the economy. Thus, over and above economic weakness the bourgeoisie remains with only an abstract and approximate understanding of their country's economy and its potential. Its role in the national economy

is therefore highly circumscribed. In order to continue profiting while the national economy stagnates, it uses its strong influence in government and other sectors to continue plundering the national resources.

Fanon observes that in some of the newly independent nations democracy is compromised from the very beginning. Economically powerless and ideologically bankrupt, the bourgeoisie, made buoyant by its class dominance, chooses for itself what seems the easiest solution to politically organize the nation, it chooses the single party regime (1967:132). However, the single party regime is not intended to advance the interests of the whole nation but manages to centralize power. Thus the single party regime serves to consolidate power in the hands of the few. Fanon notes that taking into account its weak moral character, its lack of economic power as well as knowledge of state institutions, the national bourgeoisie will prove incapable of fulfilling even the barest essentials of state obligations; namely meeting the nation's material needs, safeguarding its freedom and justice. In other words the bourgeois state fails to inspire confidence in the nation. On the contrary, the state, through its various functionaries, manages to instill a state of constant fear in the minds of the people. For these reasons Fanon concludes that "The single party [regime] is the modern form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, unmasked, unpainted, unscrupulous and cynical" (1986:132). However this is not the end of the story; for the roots of political degeneration run deep and wide.

In the first analysis we learn that the nationalist bourgeoisie comes into power on the basis of a narrow nationalism. This nationalism is underpinned by its desire to rid the country of European colonisation. On its own there is nothing wrong with ridding the country of the forces of oppression. However the bourgeoisie will accordingly insist that the most pressing

program is to “nationalize” or “Africanise” not only the state but the economy as well. But we observe that such clamoring for nationalization is not intended to bring the various men and women together into harmony, but to exclude them. As Fanon puts it: “To them, nationalization quite simply means the transfer into native hands of those unfair advantages which are a legacy of the colonial period” (1967:122). He observes that the nationalist bourgeoisie will not stop until it has taken over everything.

In order to entrench its grip on power and the economy Fanon notes that the national bourgeoisie makes use of sectoral divisions within the country. He notes that the narrow nationalism of the national bourgeoisie becomes tinged not only by tribal fanaticism but also with religious and national chauvinism. Accordingly the economic and social ills of the country will be represented to the masses of the people, by their leaders, as stemming from the presence of foreign nationals in the country who, as Fanon puts it, “hamper them in commercial matters or in administrative posts” (1967:126). He says that “If the Europeans get in the way of the intellectuals and the business bourgeoisie of the young nation, for the mass of the population in the towns competition is represented principally by Africans of another nation” (1967:126). He observes that this tendency from the national bourgeoisie arises out of the anxiety to place in its hands “the power held hitherto by the foreigner...” (1967:126). The masses of the people therefore also present similar demands as the bourgeoisie. But Fanon notes that these are confined within certain territorial limits (Fanon 1967:126).

Fanon notes that tribal attitudes tend to emerge whenever the bourgeoisie has failed to harmonise social relations and to extend its vision of the world sufficiently to the people (1967:127). And since colonialism has developed certain parts of these nations and

neglected others, federalism quickly gathers momentum and triumphs. In certain countries of “Black Africa”, Fanon observes that members of parliament, sometimes even ministers, will not shy away from pointing out that the nation’s danger is no longer presented by reoccupation by European colonialism for instance, but by an “eventual invasion by those vandals of Arabs coming from the North” (1967:131). Not knowing any better, the people rally behind their leaders in expelling foreigners.

This section on the behavior of the national bourgeoisie highlights some of the causes of the regression of the nation state in Africa. In their pursuit of economic gains and power they bring about the degeneration of national consciousness and undermine the development of the nation state. It also shows that in pursuing its economic objectives the national bourgeoisie works in tandem with the nationalist leaders and the parties. Thus in the following section we will examine how the political party functions as an instrument of the bourgeoisie within the nation-state.

2.2 The Political Party

The political party forms a critical place in Fanon’s analysis of political degeneration. According to Fanon prior to independence the party functions as a platform for the free flow of ideas from the party level right up to the level of government. But with the arrival of independence certain elements within the bourgeoisie vie to intercept this democratic process. They move to wield power and influence from within the party machine, and in the process bar the “upward thrust” (Fanon 1967:32) of the people’s democratic will. This creates a situation whereby the party becomes an implement of the hands of the national bourgeoisie. As Fanon puts it “Objectively, sometimes subjectively” (1967:138) the party becomes the “accomplice of the merchant bourgeoisie” (1967:138). Accordingly the

nationalist bourgeoisie will convince the nationalist leaders that for economic development to take place in an underdeveloped country, an authoritarian form of government is a necessity (Fanon 1967:146).

The national bourgeoisie, through the party and the government, “ensures that the people are hemmed in and immobilised” (Fanon 1967:138). As an extension of the government, the party helps the government to immobilise the people. By working through the party and the government, the national bourgeoisie gives the impression that it wants to work with the people. But its objectives, insofar as it is the tool of capitalism, shows that it, in fact, intends to work against them. This is because the bourgeoisie has economic interests which it does not share with the rest of the population. Ultimately it’s bewildering behaviour, not only does it disenfranchise the people, but robs them of the opportunity to actively engage in the process of nation building.

In order to avoid this Fanon argues that the mingling of the political party with government ought to be avoided. The question that follows from this is that: how then does Fanon conceive of the separation of the party and the government? In the first instance Fanon notes that the party ought to be an instrument in the service of the people where the people themselves decide policies for the government (1967:149). But in order to bring about this outcome Fanon proposes that the party has to cease being the domain of the elites whereby government bigwigs and some regime dignitaries may have separate meetings in the capital. Contrary to this Fanon urges that: “The party should be decentralized to the extreme” (1967:149). This means that political activity should be decentralized to the remote parts of the country where the majority of people live. The implication for party leaders is that the majority of the leading members of the party ought

to leave the capital and settle in the countryside. “The leading members of the party ought to avoid the capital as if it had the plague” says Fanon (1967:149). It is only through such decentralization that the masses could have a chance at a meaningful participation in building their own nation and that the neglected regions of the country could be brought to life.

The separation of the party and the government is for Fanon crucial in achieving these political objectives. Thus the party ought to play its role in heightening the consciousness of the people. For Fanon this is a political imperative for which national progress is embedded. “The party is not an administration responsible for transmitting government orders” (Fanon 1967:151). On the contrary the party ought to be the “direct expression of the masses” (Fanon 1967:151). Moreover the party ought to be an organism through which the people themselves exercise their authority in freely expressing their will. For Fanon this has an added advantage of preventing covert elements within the party from using it as the ladder towards achieving private ends.

But instead of embracing the expression of popular discontent as Fanon observes, the party forms a screen between itself and the people and shuts the channels of communication. In Algeria, for instance, the FLN divided the movement into two categories: the party and the people. The former would do work for the latter (Prashad 2007:123). Instead of decentralising the party, the leaders ensured that decision making was centralized. Instead of promoting national unity and awakening the consciousness of the whole nation, party leaders, worked to suppress it. As Fanon had noted, these events are superseded by a descendance into pre-colonial tribal attitudes. Through tribal factionalism, the leaders therefore organize an ethnic take-over of the party as gateway to government. The result is

that government ministers, ambassadors are all chosen from the same tribe as the president. The tribe will profess to represent the whole nation. Obviously these actions are not without enormous political ramifications. As Fanon observes such actions bring rise to ethnic and regional sentiments within the nation state. Certain regions, particularly those rich in mineral deposits become more inclined towards detaching from the rest of the country. For example in the Congo Kasavubu proclaimed self-governance for the mineral rich Katanga region while in Nigeria Ojukwe proclaimed independence of the oil rich state of Biafra.

The underlying causes of political degeneration here can be premised on the bourgeois idea that the masses are incapable of governing themselves. The rise of authoritarianism can be seen as intertwined with this very idea of seeing the masses as a blind and incoherent force. Fanon made it his task to show this idea as based on false assumptions. More succinctly it shows the ruling elite's objectives of governing the nation-state without the interference of the people. In Algeria, the FLN was quite conspicuous for its stance against the broader political participation of the masses within a multi-party political system. The 1963 Constitution declared Algeria a one-party state ruled by the FLN. Ahmed Ben Bella, later president of Algeria, favoured the creation of an elite party, while his political rival Mohammed Khider (who was later assassinated in Spain in 1967), opted for an inclusive party. After independence was proclaimed, the FLN moved to demobilize the Algerian people and put paid to all the hopes for radical social democracy which had been envisaged in the 1964 Charter of Algiers.

The 1963 Constitution of Algeria, promulgated two years after Fanon's death, is testimony to the FLN leader's desire to centralize power. According to this constitution all political

parties, parties that had been involved in the anti-colonial activism prior to independence, except the FLN, would be abolished. It further elevated the president—whom at the time was Ben Bella—to the sole formulator of state policy (Prashad 2007:123). Instead of heeding Fanon's cautious advice, the FLN bestowed the energy of the Algerian Revolution onto a single man. In another attempt to abolish the multi-party system, the FLN advanced the view that the existence of a number of political parties frustrates the national interest, in that, it allows for the articulation of particular interests to organize into different pressure groups. To this end the FLN pronounced that there should only be one party that would be able to organize existing interests into a coherent whole (Prashad 2007:123). The argument put forward was that this strategy will enhance democracy and national cohesion, in that, democracy would now take place within this single party, the FLN.

As the ensuing events showed this was mere political rhetoric on the part of the leaders, never to materialize into anything substantive. For instance, the FLN swiftly moved to crack down on its political rivals. Of these included the Communist Party of Algeria and the Parti de la Revolution Socialiste which were at some point in line with the leftist agenda of the FLN during the days of struggle, as Prashad points out. My dwelling on the Algerian experience is not intended to characterize the Algerian exception but to highlight a trend that was gaining momentum among the nation states that were being born in the 1960s.

The demobilization of the masses raises some questions on the nation state's approach to development. It appears as though the ruling elites had no ambiguities about the direction the state should take with regards to development. In Algeria, as was the case elsewhere in many parts of Africa, the state undertook to approach development bureaucratically. Little

if any attention was given to bringing the diverse opinions of the people on board, people who had been instrumental in bringing the national liberation movement into power.

From the foregoing discussion it is clear that the bureaucratic state in Africa failed to enlighten the masses, to make them realize that public business is, in fact, the business of the people. According to Fanon enlightenment of the masses entails an ongoing process of politically conscientising them. It entails making people aware that everything depends on them; that if the nation moves forward, it is due to them; that if the nation stagnates, it is because of them too (1967:159). To achieve this stage of political consciousness requires national self-understanding. Fanon places the responsibility for this function in the hands of the leaders. Party leaders therefore, ought to open the people's minds, and to allow for the birth of the people's intelligence. Quoting Césaire, Fanon argues that political education means "to invent souls" (1967:159). Political education entails bringing about what Fanon calls a "new man".

So we can see here that for Fanon political education cannot be a temporary thing, or be reduced to a single event as when the party gathers scores of people for a rally in the period nearing the elections. But against such superficiality, Fanon says that "we often believe with criminal superficiality that to educate the masses politically means a long political harangue from time to time. We think that it is enough for the leader or one of his lieutenants should speak in a pompous tone about the principle events of the day for them to have fulfilled this bounden duty to educate the masses politically" (1967:159). From this we can see that there cannot be quick-fix solutions to political education.

As proof of the success of political education, Fanon relies on Algeria as a case in point. He notes that if care is taken to educate the masses properly and with the language that they

can understand, that the people are, in fact, quick to grab on. But if you use difficult concepts understood by university graduates then it can easily be proved that the masses need to be managed from above (1967:152). He notes that if a considerable period of time is taken in explaining to people, the time lost in explaining is recovered in the actual execution of the plan. The most important thing is that “People must know where they are going, and why” (1967:156) says Fanon. He insists that the future remains bleak as long as the consciousness of the masses remains rudimentary.

Fanon thus urges African politicians to have clear ideas about the situation of their people. But this clarity, notes Fanon, “must be profoundly dialectical” (1967:156). By dialectical Fanon means the awakening of the people’s consciousness through the interplay between them and the politicians in order to improve their conditions. The relation between the masses and the politicians must be dialectical in the sense that social transformation and progress must be the outcome of the heightened level of consciousness from the masses. In this regard Fanon uses the example of building a bridge. He says that: “If the building of the bridge does not enrich the awareness of those who work on it, than that bridge ought not to be built...The bridge should not be ‘parachuted down’ from above” (Fanon 1967:162). On the contrary it should emerge as the result of the people’s own efforts. It is only thus that for Fanon the people can come to an understanding of themselves and appreciate their freedom.

It is clear that Fanon rejects the tendency to instill unquestioned reverence of the party on the masses by their leaders. For Fanon the only sacred principle that ought to be promoted is that of respect for human dignity and recognition. This principle, for Fanon, entails the creation of space for people to be able to express their will in a democratic manner which

ought to be created by the political party. Accordingly Fanon remarks that respect for this principle, and not some abstract formalism, is the only guarantee to salvation. This brings our discussion to the role of intellectuals.

2.3 The Native Intellectuals

The project of national consciousness is rendered almost impossible without the involvement of intellectuals. Fanon attached tremendous importance to the role played by intellectuals in relation to the anti-colonial movement. Within the organization of the revolutionary movement it happens at times that party militants and leaders, talk, for whatever considerations, in an impassioned tone but without imparting new knowledge to the masses. This mystifying behavior has the danger of creating a culture of passivity. For this reason the function of intellectual elaboration is for Fanon, rendered indispensable. The role of intellectuals is rendered indispensable in that they are able to give intellectual elaboration where others can't or have chosen to overlook this imperative. Thus the intellectual's involvement in the liberation movement ensures that the dangers of intellectual stagnation or regression are minimised and that the nation marches forward in an enlightened fashion.

For Fanon the intellectual's role can best be understood within the context of the organization. Fanon had a particular understanding of the "organization". He understands it in epistemic terms as a framework for "intellectual communication and exchange...as responses people draw on as they reflect on their revolutionary experience" (Gibson 1999:7). Accordingly Fanon sees the rise in the people's level of consciousness as brought about, among other things, by the interaction between the people and the intellectual who

puts his intellectual resource in the service of the people; aiding them to reach their self-understanding.

In *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon refers to two types of “native” intellectuals: the militant and conservative intellectuals. The former are more radical in their approach insofar the revolutionary struggle against colonialism is concerned. The latter are conservative in that they adopt a disengaged or indifferent attitude towards the national struggle. The militant intellectual, on the other hand, is depicted as an agent of change who puts his intellectual expertise at the people’s disposal in their march towards national liberation. As such Fanon posits the militant intellectual (sometimes referred to as the radical intellectual) as an “element of the contradiction” who continually raises the contradictions of colonial life as knowledge toward action (Gibson 1999:3). Fanon argues that these contradictions help “explode the old colonial truths and reveals unexpected facets, which bring about new meanings and pinpoints the contradictions camouflaged by these facts” (Fanon 1967:117).

As avatars of European values, the conservative intellectuals have been made to think in Manichean ways: for instance they dream of enjoying the same privileges as the beneficiaries of the colonial system do. But since the conservative intellectuals embody two identities: culturally Eurocentric while racially black, they find themselves in a moral dilemma. Within the Manichean and racially divided colonial society they find themselves alienated.

Fanon observes that the conservative intellectuals—“cultured individuals of the colonized race” (1967:168)—at bottom seek to attach themselves to the people. But they go about this in the wrong way. They direct their endeavors to inventorying the cultural particulars of the oppressed people. Fanon observes that these actions are well anticipated in the former

colonial power and that they achieve nothing in dismantling the colonial system. Negritude was one such intellectual movement that sought to present a counter humanism to the pejorative stereotypes stemming from western humanism.

The exponents of Negritude spoke an antithetical language to Western humanism and its racism. Because of the alienation and the pejorative stereotypes about blacks and their histories, Negritude viewed the past as the *source* and inspiration that ought to inform future endeavors in the fight for national liberation and against black alienation. They sought to discover the past achievements of black civilizations. In Fanon's words they wanted to prove, or to "demonstrate that a Negro culture exists" (1967:167). And since colonialism had dismissed the entire black race as backward and savage, Negritude also adopted a universal standpoint, similar to colonialism, in addressing the problems of black oppression.

Fanon had a distrust for both of these approaches. Through its backward cultural gaze and the adoption of a "universal standpoint" (Fanon 1967:170,173,176), Negritude ended up essentialising black experience. Fanon viewed the return to the past as irrational (1986:123) and as an ineffective weapon with which to base the movement as an antithesis to the deleterious effects of European humanism towards black people. He thought that the attempt to discover the pristine past of black civilizations and cultures or the "source" reinforces the stereotypes of blacks as 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 1986:129). For the colonial nations, these become instrumental in dismissing the black man's claims for freedom.

As regards the achievements of black civilizations, he viewed the priding of oneself with the past as futile. The attempt to seek salvation in past achievements of black civilizations only

worked at an abstract level. It did not take into account the daily realities of black existence.

Fanon says that

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 (1967:168).

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 ineffectual stance towards black liberation. According to Fanon the battle for national liberation ought to be national and therefore particular, and not continental or universal.

While Fanon seem satisfied by the revolutionary role played by the radical intellectuals, it is with the conservative intellectuals where his concerns are in the *Wretched*. While he shows that the radical intellectual acts in ways that crystalises the people's self-understanding in relation to the liberation movement, the conservative intellectuals, on the other hand, tend to channel their energies to the abstract ideals of the "native" population's sufferings. Unlike the radical intellectuals who seek to extend their view of the world to the whole nation, the conservative intellectuals tend to be more politically ambivalent. Fanon therefore wants these intellectuals to be geared towards the political realities of the anti-colonial movement; he wants them to commit to the immediate conditions of colonial oppression.

Although he wants concrete commitment from the conservative intellectuals, Fanon nevertheless understands that their tearing themselves away from the present to discover the past cultures of the colonized people, as something to pride about, that this process is necessary in fostering psycho-affective changes in the being of the intellectual who suffered tremendous alienation under colonialism. He says that "This tearing away, painful and difficult as it may be is, however, necessary. If it is not accomplished there would be serious

psycho-affective injuries and the result would be individuals without an anchor, without a horizon, colourless, stateless, rootless—a race of angels” (Fanon 1967:175).

Although it is not explicitly stated in his writings, it is however implicit that Fanon’s approach towards politics is underpinned by the philosophy of praxis. In this regard his approach to political philosophy resonates with that of Karl Marx and Antonio Gramsci. An understanding of what praxis entails will shed light on how Fanon wants the “native” intellectuals to conduct themselves in relation to the struggle for national liberation.

According to Antonio Gramsci, philosophy is a social activity in which political ideas are generated through the extension of critical intellectual activity to the movement (See Gramsci 1971: 321). Gramsci conceives of intellectuals not in terms of the intrinsic nature of their intellectual activities but more in accordance with their social functions. Accordingly he defines the philosophy of 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). As we can see here Gramsci adopts a dialectical relationship between the intellectual and the movement. He wants to move away from the notion of seeing intellectuals as a distinct social category independent of class.

Gramsci distinguishes between two *groups* of intellectuals: the traditional and the organic intellectuals. The traditional intellectuals mainly perform the usual functions such as that of lawyers, teachers, philosophers, scientists etc. The organic intellectuals, on the other hand, are understood by Gramsci in a hegemonic sense as those who act to propagate a particular

conception of the world, and therefore seek to sustain it. Their success is measured by the extent to which it achieves to disseminate its propaganda in the various facets of society.

A broad parallel can be found in Fanon's discussion of the intellectuals. Fanon, like Gramsci, wants the "native" intellectuals to become an enlightening element of the organisation of the mass movement against colonialism. The enlightenment is with the view to heightening social contradictions in such a way that possibilities for their transcendence become immanent.

Indeed, understanding very well the contradictions associated with colonial oppression, Fanon argues that the intellectual first needs to become aware of his estrangement from the people (1967:182). It is out of the awareness of his estrangement from the masses that the intellectual can be able to bring out colonial social contradictions. Seeing from this perspective, it becomes clear that Fanon does not allow for any form of mystification. He associates liberation with the full awareness of social realities. His views in this regard differ from those of the nationalists.

For the nationalists mystification is deemed necessary for the sake of liberation. Their form of mystification is opposed or is counter to the colonial regime's mystification. Thus for them political education ends once independence is proclaimed. This is the time when the masses know who to vote for. For Fanon, on the other hand, all mystification is an obstacle to liberation. He believes that true liberation is based on as clear as possible awareness of reality. For Fanon political education never ends. Thus party intellectuals ought to aid the masses by heightening their level of consciousness so that they can achieve self-understanding as a people.

In order to understand Fanon's disavowal of the conservative intellectual's erratic ways, we need to examine the issue from the context of Fanon's understanding of culture and violence. For Fanon there is a symbiotic relationship between the violence that takes place during the process of decolonization and cultural change. According to this view, during the revolution, culture and tradition become unstable, and in the process undergo transformation. So by seeking to emphasise the preeminence of culture, the conservative intellectual, *ipso facto*, negates the direction of history of the people and falls into blind alleys. It is for this reason, according to Fanon, that the intellectual runs the risk of being irrelevant to the nation.

As mentioned above, Fanon does not necessarily dismiss the potentially positive role of the conservative intellectuals. But he suggests that rather than delve onto the past of the nation, the intellectual should use the past insofar as it invites and commits him into action and hope (1967:187). Clearly distancing himself from the "poets of negritude" Fanon argues 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).

So we can see from these lines that Fanon's injunction is clearly the call into action. And it is precisely this point that Fanon shares with Césaire. "Start something!" says Césaire (Cited in Fanon 1986: 96). As we shall see below, action for Fanon is not an arbitrary exercise in self aggrandizement but is grounded in knowledge.

Like Gramsci's organic intellectual, Fanon wants the conservative intellectuals to change their ways and act in ways that opens up new possibilities towards the restoration of the black-self.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined Fanon's critique of the roles played by the bourgeoisie, the political party and the "native" intellectuals. It was shown that their behavior, taking into account the assumption of the people during the days of struggle for national liberation, has only managed to bring about what I referred to as false sense of liberation. I argued that the assumption of independence struggle, that is to say, its ideology was the attainment of complete liberation and freedom. But these aspirations have, at least since independence, proved to be elusive. The implication of this phenomenon is that liberation movements in Africa have, at least to date, failed to bring about palpable change in the lives of men and women of Africa who still suffer from hunger, illiteracy, diseases etc. in other words liberation movements have failed to bring about radical changes that would bring about respect to what many have called decolonisation in Africa. The responsibility for this downward spiral was placed on the dishonesty and obscurantism of the three actors, as identified by Fanon. This was of course not without the recognition of the economic imbalances that exist particularly between the "formerly" colonized world and the colonizing powers.

In order to put an end to subordination and realize genuine liberation, Fanon's appeal to these players is for them to abandon their class conservatism and to become the willing servants of the people. According to Fanon liberation would come about if people's consciousness is elevated in such a way that they are able to reach an understanding of

themselves as a people. Moreover this process of political consciousness is necessary in that without it, the people may develop a social consciousness which may imperil national cohesion. For Fanon it is only by the combination of social and political awareness by the masses, acted upon by the middle class, the intellectual and the party leaders that the nation can move forward.

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Chapter 3: Dialectical Humanism

For Europe, for ourselves and for humanity, comrades we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man.

(Frantz Fanon)

Central to Fanon's revolutionary project is the creation of a universal humanism. As we saw in the previous chapters Africans, together with other Third World regions, had through the colonial encounter experienced alienation and dehumanisation. Western colonialism, largely influenced by Enlightenment ideas sought to build a humanism which not only excluded Africa and other Third World regions but was built on that exclusion. This exclusion legitimized racism and the exploitation of people in these regions. Seeing such injustices, which were a ubiquitous feature of the colonial system, Fanon posited a counter humanism to that of Europe. Through his conception of decolonisation Fanon thought that decolonisation would put to an end not only the notion of the colonized man but morally recreate Europe itself. He believed that by shattering the colonial world the colonised would be on their way to self-creation which, dialectically, would bring Europe back to the level of humanity, away from colonial barbarity. Thus for Fanon, decolonization is part of the dialectic which leads to a higher humanity.

In the "Preface" to *The Wretched of the Earth* Sartre makes mention of the fact that through Fanon, "the Third World finds *itself* and speaks to *itself* through his voice" (Sartre 1967:9). He then urges his fellow European counterparts to listen to Fanon's voice with the view that it would arouse shame among them. And shame, "as Marx said, is a revolutionary sentiment" (Sartre 1967:12). Fanon was not concerned with arousing shame amongst

Europeans but more at conscientising his African comrades in their fight for national liberation. Rather than being preoccupied with moral appeals to Europe, as Sartre does, Fanon was more concerned with guiding his comrades from colonial slavery to the realisation of their full humanity.

On this aspect of Fanon's project Sartre writes, in the Preface to the *Wretched*, that "Fanon is the first since Engels to bring the processes of history into the clear light of day" (Sartre 1967:12-13). Through his revolutionary humanism, Fanon sought to extend the processes of history, history as made through struggle, to the black or the colonized people. These are a people which, according to Hegel in his *The Philosophy of History*, were beset by historical inertia.

The current chapter will examine Fanon's proposals to prevent the emergence of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and help put the masses of the people back at the center of political processes. I will show this to be part of Fanon's larger project aimed at privileging the underclass and the restoration of black self that remained suppressed under colonialism.

To this end Fanon proposed a number of practical solutions. These included the nationalization of the retail trade, the army, political education and the democratization of the political party. I have already touched on some of these in the previous chapter so in the current chapter I will focus more on the nationalization of the retail trade and the army. This should be read as part of Fanon's cautious advice to African leaders who were fighting for the liberation of their people. The remainder of the chapter will focus on Fanon's preoccupation with the restoration of black self, in other words his humanism. There it

would become clear that Fanon conceived of the black's disalienation as coming into being in a dialectical fashion.

3.1 Privileging the Underclass: Nationalisation

In order to curb the regression of the state along neo-colonialist lines Fanon urges African governments to nationalize the trading sector. As we saw in the previous chapter, after the proclamation of independence the "native" elites move to occupy positions which were previously held by the colonial bourgeoisie in its exploitation of the local economy. "It considers that the dignity of the country and its own welfare require that it should occupy all these posts" (Fanon 1967:122). Therefore in order to avoid the emergence of the national bourgeois dictatorship Fanon makes various concrete proposals.

Cautiously he says that "If the government wants to bring the country out of its stagnation and set it well on the road towards development and progress, it must first and foremost nationalize the middle man's trading sector" (1986:144). But in saying so Fanon is aware of the corruption they may ensue if this sector is placed in the hands of government officials. So in order to avoid corruption and bureaucracy he therefore insists that nationalisation of this sector ought to be democratic. This means placing the control of this sector in the hands of the masses in the form of cooperatives. He says that "Nationalising the intermediary sector means organizing wholesale and retail cooperatives on a democratic basis" (Fanon 1967:145). This requires giving the people some political education and getting them interested in "the ordering of public affairs" (Fanon 1967:145). This approach is in line with Fanon's conviction that everything should depend on the people, that if the nation moves forward, it should be due to them. Nationalization, therefore, ought to take on a strictly democratic aspect.

It is important to note here that Fanon's call for nationalization is at odds with that of the national bourgeoisie. The latter's conception tends to be narrowly concerned with their own class interests; based on stepping into the shoes of the former colonial bourgeoisie and as such has nothing in it for the masses of the people. He says that for the national bourgeoisie "nationalization quite simply means the transfer into native hands of those unfair advantages which are a legacy of the colonial period" (1967:122). Contrary to the nationalist bourgeoisie's conception of nationalization, which it deems as "Africanisation", Fanon views nationalization broadly as aimed at bringing dignity onto the lives of the masses languishing in poverty

By political education Fanon does not mean a situation where the leaders want to be "supported by the people in the action that they are taking" (Fanon 1967:145). On the contrary, Fanon has in mind a situation where political education is geared towards raising the people's level of consciousness. Although Fanon does not expand on these formulations, what is crucial is to see how each process—nationalisation, democratisation and decentralisation—is dialectically linked to others towards conscientising the masses.

It is for this reason, of the need to build a national consciousness, that Fanon insists on the army being nationalized. He argues that the army should not be organized as an autonomous body. This means that the army "should not include any professional soldiers" (Fanon 1967:163), and the size of permanent officers "should be reduced to a minimum" (Fanon 1967:163). On the other hand, the size of the militia should be increased. He argues that the army, by virtue of its national appeal, could provide space for building national consciousness and instill national patriotism. The army could also function as a check against the emergence of tribal or ethnic sentiments. Taking into account Fanon's emphasis

on building national consciousness and his humanism, the emergence of the neo-colonial state arises as an anomaly where in

National consciousness, instead of being the all embracing crystallisation of the innermost hopes of the people, instead of being the immediate and most obvious result of the mobilization of the people, will be in any case only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been (Fanon 1967:119).

So in order to avoid the pitfalls of national consciousness Fanon urges African leaders to have a clear understanding of the social situation of their people. Only by prioritising their needs and raising their level of consciousness could there be progress in their lives. Anything other than that politics remains a project of mystifying the people.

It is important to note that in Fanon's political project the way out of the social and political quagmire is not presented as a single moment such as his call for the nationalization of the intermediary sector and the army. On the contrary his approach to disalienation can be viewed as forming part of his broad objective towards black disalienation. His engagement with the lived experience of the black is evident, among other places, in his interpretations of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962) and his views on the change in behavior in relation to Western medicine and the radio in the book *A Dying Colonialism*.

As regards medicine Fanon was of the view that although it was a western concept and introduced in Algeria at the same time as colonialism, he argued that western medicine could still be utilized in Algerian society in order to uplift the lives of men and women there. He notes also that since medicine was introduced in Algeria at the same time as racialism that "Western medical science, being part of the oppressive system has always provoked in the native an ambivalent attitude" (Fanon 1965:121) towards medicine. Before the revolution the "natives" perceive western medicine as part of the oppressive system, in

such a way that the doctor is always perceived in the same way as the police or the army. Speaking of the doctor's visit to the *douar* Fanon says that "The doctor who arrives in this atmosphere of general constraint is never a "native" doctor but always a doctor belonging to the dominant society and very often to the army" (1965:121). Thus the relation of trust between the doctor and patient is non-existent in the colonies.

Under colonialism the doctor is, as Fanon puts it, "both technician and a colonizer" (1965:127). But Fanon argues, perhaps because of his partial objectivity as an outsider to the Algerian situation, that medicine could be of huge benefit to "native" Algerians despite its being part of the oppressive system. He says that "When the discipline considered concerns man's health, when its very principle is to ease pain, it is clear that no negative reaction can be justified" (1965:121). It is during the rebellion that the "native's" attitude towards western medicine begins to change. This is a dialectic that results from the contradictions of colonial medicine. During the revolution peoples' habits and attitudes undergo radical transformation in such ways that new possibilities are created. Fanon argues that it is during the period of struggle that peoples' attitudes towards medicine are transformed and made to embrace the medical technique that will enhance life. It is during the revolution that western medicine is stripped of its colonial notions and adapted to the needs of Algerians.

In a similar way, Fanon thought that the radio too could be adapted to the social needs of the people. Prior to the revolution the radio represented French presence and French culture in Algeria. Thus for the "natives" switching on the radio meant "allowing the coloniser's language to filter into the very heart of the house...Having a radio meant accepting being besieged from within by the colonizer" (Fanon 1965:92). However the

appropriation of the radio by the revolutionary forces in order to organize and inform the people introduces dialectical changes into the revolution. The revolution mediated by *The Voice of Fighting Algeria* brought the various fragments of the revolution into unity and in the process brought about new possibilities. As Fanon puts it the radio, in essence, “brought the nation to life and endowed every citizen with a new status” (1965:96). This brief demonstration shows that nationalization does not constitute a single moment towards disalienation but like medicine, the radio and political education, forms part of Fanon’s larger political project aimed at privileging the masses or what he calls the wretched. It demonstrates Fanon’s project, both as psychiatrist and politician, as always geared towards putting the wellbeing of the marginalized classes at the centre of political processes.

I have pointed out that Fanon’s recommendations were meant as *preventative* measures in order to avoid a lapse into neocolonialism rather than being aimed at overthrowing the national bourgeoisie dictatorship once it has been established. The absence, in Fanon’s theory, on measures to cure the nation state from the sclerosis of the national bourgeois dictatorship marks a sore point in Fanon’s political project. Indeed some of Fanon’s scholars (McCulloch 1983 and Zahar 1974) have noted this omission in Fanon’s theory. Insofar as my knowledge goes Fanon was of the view that since the nationalist bourgeoisie in Africa was economically weak the bourgeois phase in Africa will, therefore, “not last indefinitely” (1967:140). It is therefore important that Fanon’s recommendations should be read with this in mind. Perhaps convinced of the temporality of the bourgeois phase in Africa Fanon did not deem it necessary to focus his last book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, to dealing with the question of averting the bourgeois dictatorship once it had been established.

Nevertheless Fanon's omission of this important aspect of his project creates a huge gap in his critique of post-liberation failures in Africa.

Noting this absence Jock McCulloch observes that having coherently described the pitfalls of the neocolonial state under the dictatorship of the national bourgeoisie, Fanon leaves completely unanswered the question of how the national bourgeoisie ought to be dethroned. He says that "Fanon's theory leaves completely unanswered the question how, once established, a dictatorship of the national bourgeoisie is to be overthrown. It is the absence of an answer to this question, more than any other single factor, which determines the status of Fanon's theory" (McCulloch 1983:184). Although McCulloch is scornful of Fanon for having omitted such an important theoretical aspect, he acknowledges that Fanon was mainly concerned with the preventative rather than the curative aspects in his approach. He says beyond the description of the bourgeois dictatorship "Fanon outlines the means by which the rise of such dictatorships may be *prevented*, and stresses the necessary ordering of national affairs in the spheres of economic, cultural, social and military activity to achieve that end" (1983:184). McCulloch could have pointed out that such measures ought to be put in place before the rise of national bourgeois dictatorship.

It must however be noted that Fanon had very little time to finish the *Wretched*. Having been diagnosed with leukemia he knew that his time to finish the book was short. As seen above his optimism for the downfall of the national bourgeoisie state is based on his assessment that its tenuous hold on power will not last. This is because the bourgeois class faces internal contradictions and will therefore be devoured by its own contradictions. For Fanon this is the period when the people realize that: since "nothing new has happened

since independence was proclaimed” (Fanon 1967:142) then everything needs to be started anew.

3.2 Creating a New Humanism

Fanon conceived of the restoration of the black self, and by implication the creation of a new humanism, as coming into being dialectically through the process of decolonization. As we saw earlier Fanon conceives of decolonization as a complete rupture with the colonial system and by implication its racial binaries. If colonialism entails the enslavement of man by another as Fanon points out, then the violence of decolonization by the colonised shatters not only the colonial world but in the process conscientises and raises the individual’s self awareness in relation the revolutionary struggle. By adopting violence and becoming the moving force of the revolution, the “native” becomes conscious of the risk to life that freedom entails. Through the rupture with the colonial world the “natives” begin to transcend colonial binaries and in the process becomes self-acting. By rupturing with the colonial world the “natives” begin a historical journey towards recreating himself. This is what Fanon calls creating a new humanism.

It is generally implicit in his writings that Fanon is undertaking a humanist project. But there instances where it comes out explicitly. In *Masks* he points out that the project he is engaged in is one that “is haunted by problems of love and understanding” (1986:10) of human needs, “This new humanity cannot do than define a new humanism both for itself and for others” (1967:198). The two comments demonstrates Fanon’s project as one that is concerned with love and human dignity. The implication for decolonization is that its success will be measured by the extent to which it brings back dignity in the lives of the formerly oppressed “natives” and in the process creates a new human world for the West.

Thus decolonisation for Fanon is not represented by the presidential palace or the new flag, as the nationalists thought.

It is crucial to note here that Fanon did not think that the new humanism was to emerge from Europe. He believed that Europe must be rejected not only because it speaks hypocritically of humanism and man whilst murdering everywhere, but also because Europe has ceased to be the centre of ideas. As Fanon saw it Europe had gone morally bankrupt and that the source of a new humanity was to emerge from the Third World itself. He says "Today we are present at stasis of Europe. Comrades let us flee from this motionless movement where gradually the dialectic is changing into a logic of equilibrium" (1967:253). Rather than wasting time mimicking Europe Fanon urges his comrades to leave Europe and focus on building this new humanity on their own. He says that "That same Europe where they are never done talking of Man...today we know with what sufferings humanity has paid for every one of their triumphs of the mind. Come then comrades, the European game has finally ended; we must find something different" (Fanon 1967:251).

According to Nigel Gibson, one who generally writes to elucidate and defend Fanon's position, the dialectic of liberation has never exclusively belonged to Europe anyway, and as such needs to be delinked from her. Echoing Fanon, Gibson posits the view that Europe has become antidialectical (2003:193). He locates Europe's moral decadence to Hitler's concentration camps in Nazi Germany. For him Hitler's concentration camps gave notice that Europe was no longer the site of ideas for liberation. "Hitler's concentration camps gave notice that the idea of Europe as the site for the human project had come to an end" (Gibson 2003:193). As such the dialectic of liberation had to be sourced elsewhere other than Europe.

It is equally important to note that while Europe had perpetrated untold sufferings on a world scale, that Fanon did not propose retribution for her. On the contrary his idea of a new humanity includes Europe itself. Fanon was careful to point out that neutralising Europe does not entail replacing her with another Europe. On the contrary he pointed out that although Europe's spirit of imperialism had set humanity backwards, for humanity to "advance a step farther" the Third World has to come up with new discoveries (1967:254). He explains that "Humanity is waiting for something other from us than such an imitation, which would be an obscene caricature" (1967:254). From these lines Fanon proves that he did not advocate for punishment for Europe's crimes. But by so doing he departs from the line of his earlier intellectual influence, Aimé Césaire.

Contrary to Fanon, Aimé Césaire thought that a nation that colonises and dehumanises calls for its own punishment. As Césaire puts "a nation which colonises, that a civilization which justifies colonization — and therefore force — is already a sick civilization, a civilization that is morally diseased, that irresistibly, progressing from one consequence to another, one repudiation to another, calls for its Hitler, I mean its punishment" (1972: 18).

Moving a step further than Césaire, Fanon posited an ideal which centered around the realization of mutual recognition between blacks and whites, and not punishment. In *Masks* he argues against this very idea and regards as "miserable" those who harbor racial hatred. He argues that "In the absolute, the black is no more to be loved than the Czech, and truly what is to be done is to set men free" (1986:11).

3.3 Decolonisation as Restoration of the Black Self

I have thus far juxtaposed Fanon's idea of humanism in relation to western humanism but we are yet to fully understand its intended impact on the colonised black person. In the first instance Fanon's new humanism, at least as presented in the *Wretched*, is tied and dependent on the success of the decolonization process, mediated by conscious action. By completely rupturing with colonialism and by politically educating the masses, Fanon thought that decolonization would amount to a "veritable creation of a new man" (1967:28). With the glare of "history's floodlights" (Fanon 1967:28) on the "natives", Fanon thought that decolonization would elevate the black man from the status of object towards the realisation of his manhood. Decolonisation, argues Fanon, is a project that is rooted in man and his human needs. In the words of Nigel Gibson "The extent to which the masses continue to play a central role in the postcolonial society determines the success of — indeed defines Fanon's new humanism" (Gibson 2003:195). Fanon's emphasis on the need to prioritize and put ordinary citizens at the centre of politics marks another point of difference between his conception of the post liberation state and that of the national bourgeoisie. For the latter is constituted by a handful of "native" elites who's eyes are mostly fixated on the former colonial power, who has granted it independence, rather than being concerned with the people they lead.

Thus genuine liberation is something that each citizen can experience in a liberated political community. In *Revolution* Fanon argues that the liberation of the nation is accompanied by the liberation of the individual. Liberation for Fanon does not only manifest at a national level but also becomes visible at a social level, as when the individual realises his own agency. Individual liberation therefore does not follow national liberation as a *post hoc*

phenomenon. “An authentic national liberation” Fanon argues, “exists only to the precise degree to which the individual has irreversibly begun his own liberation” (Fanon 1967:103).

Based on his revolutionary humanism Fanon thought that although decolonization as a form of social transformation was necessary, he also believed that social change alone was inadequate in fostering a new man. For the disappearance of the colonized man to occur, change in the social and economic structures of society, Fanon insisted, needed to be accompanied by direct intervention at an ideological level. Only through such interventions does Fanon think that a colonized people can irreversibly triumph in their fight against colonialism

In *Revolution* Fanon singles out, not colonialism but the “absence of ideology” as the greatest danger that threatens Africa. This comment came just after he had been on a reconnaissance trip through Mali in order to assess the possibility of opening up a front on the Algerian South Western border in order to supply that front. Fanon says that “Colonialism and its derivatives do not, as a matter of fact, constitute the present enemies of Africa. In a short time this continent will be liberated. For my part, the deeper I get into the cultures and the political circles, the surer I am that the great danger that threatens Africa is the absence of ideology” (1967:186).

This comment highlights Fanon’s concerns about the need for ideology. The events of post-independence appear to have confirmed Fanon’s concerns about the lack of ideology among African liberation movements. He therefore argues that there must be, “as well an economic programme, ‘an idea of man and the future of humanity’” (Cited in Nursey-Bray 1980:140). Hence his first priority as Nursey-Bray observes, is to return human dignity to “all citizens, fill their minds and feast their eyes with human things, and create a prospect that is

human because conscious and sovereign men dwell there in” (1980:140). Thus, although social transformation is important: direct intervention at an ideological level is key towards the realization of the dignity of the colonised.

By emphasizing the importance of ideology in creating a new man Fanon is making a similar point as the revolutionary Che Guevara. Guevara was aware that bourgeois social ideology can outlive the process of social transformation. Thus intervention at an ideological level was for Guevara necessary in fostering a new man. He states that “To build communism, a new man must be created simultaneously with the material base” (Cited in Nursey-Bray 1980:141).

What distinguishes Fanon from Guevara is that Fanon does not prescribe in specific terms the nature of the new ideology as Guevara does. While this may appear as a shortfall and somewhat self-defeating, I argue that this is in fact in line with Fanon’s philosophical approach to existential concerns. Through his existentialist outlook, Fanon thought that solutions to man’s problems ought to emerge from the particular material reality that gives rise to those problems in the first place. Following Sartre, Fanon thought that it is the material conditions that determine theory, and not the converse. Sartre had argued that “existence precedes essence” (1947:15). What Sartre means by this is that man does not come to the world with predetermined essences. Man only defines himself through the choices that he makes. He is “nothing else but what he makes himself” (Sartre 1947:18). In a similar way Fanon begins *Masks* by telling his readers that “I do not come with ultimate truths. My consciousness is not illuminated with ultimate radiances” (1986:9). He further says that “Man is motion towards the world” (1986:41). By insisting on the immediate, as these lines show, Fanon is trying to avoid falling into the trap of uncritically adopting

objective maxims which, whilst not based on particular material reality, are nonetheless supposed to be universally true.

From this we can see that Fanon rejects a kind of theorization that is abstracted from the lived experience of reality. He lambasts intellectuals whose theoretical work has become an end in-itself. Against intellectual narcissism he says that

A permanent dialogue with oneself...where intellectual work became 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).

Fanon's commitment to the immediate and his rejection of abstract thought makes him to reject mechanistic explanations of actual historical events and behaviour. As he saw it social revolution is not brought about through objective or mechanical forces, but is brought about subjectively through human agency. Although he concurs with Marx that "We proceed from an economic fact of the present" (Quoted in Pithouse 2003:120), Fanon departs from him insofar as the latter was led to conclude that social transformation occurs naturally as necessitated by social contradictions that necessitate change from one form of production to another. Pithouse sums this up when he says that "Marxism ended up replacing a transcendent God with transcendent History" (2003:120). Fanon's rejection of mechanistic explanations leads him, in *Revolution*, to declare 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" (1967:173). Concerning decolonisation Fanon further declares 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 (1967:170).

Thus we observe here that Fanon is consistent in placing the black person or the colonized at the centre of political processes. He brings to light the idea that if indeed the nation is to move forward, it is through the action of the “natives” themselves that such a movement can occur. His insistence on prioritising the wretched of the earth is based on the importance he places on human dignity as key in realising the black self. This brings us to Fanon’s understanding of recognition in fulfilling human dignity.

3.4 The Colonised and Recognition

Marx and Engels open *The Communist Manifesto* by declaring that the “The history of hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (1967:79). Fanon proceeds from the premise that the history of mankind, particularly of the colonized people, consists of adversities with which humanity has to overcome in order to achieve freedom and recognition. According to Richard Onwuanibe (1983:13-14) this means that mankind has suffered from the lack of universalisation and deprivation of human dignity. At the heart of Fanon’s project is the desire to attain human dignity for the colonized “natives”. Recognition and freedom are regarded by Fanon as key in the drive towards the universalisation of human dignity for the colonized who have been relegated to the lower rungs of humanity and colonial bondage. As a human problem, recognition forms a key part of Fanon’s revolutionary humanism.

As we shall see below Fanon conceives of the processes leading towards the recognition of the colonized people as occurring in a dialectical fashion, revealing inner contradictions and coming up with efforts to resolve them. By advocating for the universalisation of recognition and human dignity to the dehumanized “natives” Fanon is, in effect, extending the processes of history, history being made through struggle so as to include the black or

colonized people. By so doing Fanon puts himself in the same line as the great world philosophers who have employed dialectical reasoning in understanding human problems of which Hegel and Marx, in the West, are good examples in the modern period. In fact, Fanon's conception of recognition as connected to human dignity is, to a large extent, derived from Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. While this is so there are nevertheless, important differences in the two authors' methods.

Hegel's intention in the *Phenomenology* is to describe the evolution of consciousness or Spirit in the course of human development. It is particularly in the section of the master and slave dialectic that Hegel provides an acute analysis of the dynamics of self-consciousness. This provides the model for Fanon's dialectic. Fanon's project is an attempt to extend the notions of freedom, recognition and human dignity to the black or the colonized people who have been dehumanized through violence and racism under colonialism. However rather than locating the development of consciousness within the master and slave dialectic, Fanon, as we shall see, locates it within the colonial context. Thus the following discussion will, in some detail, explore how each of the two authors conceives of the dialectic of recognition.

In Hegel's philosophy recognition is something that each consciousness desires. However recognition is, for Hegel, the product of historical struggle. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel argues that "Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged" (1977:111). In other words self-consciousness finds self-worth insofar as it is recognised as a unique and autonomous individual. This means that we are able to carry out conscious acts insofar as others are

made to recognize those acts as outcomes of an autonomous self and as a being existing in its own right (“for-itself”) (See Nash 1988:12).

For Hegel recognition does not happen automatically as when one consciousness decides to recognize another consciousness. Recognition and freedom always results from the process of struggle, a struggle to the death. That is, it is through staking one’s life in the struggle to the death that freedom can be won. This is because while each self-consciousness is certain of itself, it is not so of the other self-consciousness. Since it is not certain of the other and its intentions, the other remains a threat to itself. Thus “it’s self certainty has no truth” (Hegel 1977:113). In order to establish its certainty Hegel contends that the two self-consciousnesses must engage in a struggle.

They must engage in this struggle for they must raise their certainty of being *for themselves* to truth, both in the case of the other and in their own case. And it is only through staking one’s life that freedom is won; only thus is it proved that for self-consciousness, its essential being is not [just] being, not the *immediate* form in which it appears, not its submergence in the expanse of life, but rather there is nothing present in it which could not be regarded as a vanishing moment, that it is only pure *being-for-itself* (Hegel 1977:14).

As we can see here freedom for Hegel consists in going beyond the “immediate form” of existence, that is, beyond the mere certainty of self in the immediate into having your own being and your actions recognized in the world as your own and not determined by the other. This means that we have values such as freedom and recognition which we regard as more important than life itself.

However the struggle to the death does not necessarily entail the elimination of the other. Each is dependent on the other for recognition to occur. The one who emerges victorious in the struggle becomes the master whilst the vanquished becomes the slave. Thus the latter

will exist insofar as he performs services for the former. Although the slave may still be recognized as a human being “he has not attained to truth as an independent self-consciousness” (1977:114) and is therefore deprived of his being-for-itself.

Recognising the importance of freedom and recognition in forming a complete human being Fanon appropriates Hegel’s analysis of the development of self-consciousness and adapts it to the colonial situation. However, he rejects an analysis of the development of self-consciousness for the colonized as confined within Hegel’s master and slave dialectic. This is because the Hegelian dialectic does not refer to bondage as backed up by power as is the case with colonial oppression. This is similar to Sartre’s analysis of the gaze of the other discussed in the first chapter. Since bondage in Hegel is not affected by a system of power, Fanon says of the Hegelian dialectic that “There is not an open conflict between white and black” (Fanon 1986:217). In line with his humanism Fanon prioritises the importance of reciprocity in human relations. He argues that each consciousness “wants to be recognized as a primal value without reference to life, as a transformation of subjective certainty (*Gewissheit*) into objective truth (*Warheit*)” (Fanon 1986:218). This struggle for recognition overcomes the existence of superior and inferior classes. His interpretation of Hegel as we shall see below clarifies the point. Although conflict becomes a central feature for Hegel, Fanon observes that at the heart of Hegel’s dialectic, there is “absolute reciprocity” (1986:217) that humanity can tap in to. He says that

At the foundation of Hegelian dialectic there is an absolute reciprocity that must be emphasized. It is in the degree to which I go beyond my own immediate being that I apprehend the existence of the other as a natural and more than natural reality. If I close the circuit, if I prevent the accomplishment of movement in two directions, I keep the other within himself. Ultimately, I deprive him of this being-for-itself (Fanon 1986:217).

Hence for Fanon reciprocity, freedom and recognition constitute the salient features of human dignity and therefore ought to be accorded to each human being. However Fanon anticipates the possibility of the other being reluctant to reciprocate. "He who is reluctant to recognize me opposes me" says Fanon (1986:218). Thus it is only when the other refuses to "recognize me" that I am compelled to engage in a struggle to claim recognition for myself. "In a savage struggle I am willing to accept convulsions of death, invisible dissolution" (Fanon 1986:218).

Without dwelling much on the Hegelian dialectic it suffices for me to say that the slave remains with a chance of rising above servitude towards regaining his humanity. This occurs through the anguish endured as the result of the work he has to perform for the master and his daily contact with reality in which he transforms the tools at his disposal to achieve his purposes. This is also the case with Fanon's analysis of the situation of the colonized. Reduced to the level of slaves by colonialism, Fanon argues that it is through struggle that the "natives" can attain to their freedom and recognition. Fanon is not so much opposed to a kind freedom that is willingly granted by the other (the colonial masters) without the colonized themselves having to fight for it, but thinks that freedom so achieved is not real freedom. For Fanon it is when the colonized themselves act upon their oppressive conditions that they come to appreciate the cost of freedom.

By insisting on the need to fight, Fanon has in mind the impact that action has on consciousness. In his scheme of things there is a dialectical interplay between action and consciousness. Thus by insisting on the colonized people's to be self-propelled in their march to freedom Fanon anticipates the disentangling of the colonized peoples' minds and the burst of their consciousness. These are revolutionary breakthroughs for a people who

had become accustomed to only receiving orders and not being made to think on their own under colonialism. Hence the project of raising the level of the “natives” consciousness in the process of social transformation is described by Richard Pithouse, a project within a project. “Men change at the same time that they change the world” says Fanon (1965:30). Thus contrary to the idea that an outsider, say a philosopher, may intervene by importing a new theory in determining the direction of dialectical movement, Fanon argues for a dialectical movement whereby the form and content of the movement is itself determined by the immediate concrete reality in space and time. This demonstrates the importance that Fanon places on freedom and recognition that is grounded in conscious action.

When insisting on freedom as the product of consciousness Fanon also has in mind the dangers to human dignity that may arise if freedom and recognition are granted without there being a challenge to human dignity once inferiority and superiority complexes have set in. Historically this was the case with the French-speaking blacks particularly in the Antilles. Since black people there have defended French values, values which are not of their own, and fought for inclusion into white, French society, these people, according to Fanon, have not attained genuine liberation in the manner I have described above. Their assimilation into French society is described by Fanon when he says that they have simply “went from one way of life to another, but not from one life to another” (1986:220). He further bemoans the fact that “From time to time he [“the French-Negro”] has fought for Liberty and Justice, but these were always white liberty and white justice; that is, values secreted by his masters” (Fanon 1986:221). As Fanon perceptively observes these people, instead of demanding their freedom and becoming self-actional, they were acted upon by

their French colonial masters. They, therefore, have no sense of the cost and anguish that freedom entails.

Having diagnosed the Antillean blacks as suffering from the white mask neurosis Fanon believes that it is by asserting their existence that the Antilleans can become free again. They need to feel the “anguish of liberty”. Only thus will the Antillean’s white mask come off. For it is in struggle that a new humanism, according to Fanon, has a chance to triumph. The riddance of the colonized personality and the ushering of the new man, according to Fanon, require individuals who have the courage to take their destinies into their own hands. He declares in *Masks* that man is “Yes to life, Yes to love. Yes to generosity. But man is also a *no*. *No* to scorn of man. *No* to degradation of man. *No* to exploitation of man. *No* to the butchery of what is most human in man: freedom” (Fanon 1967:222). For Fanon it is through such maxims and affirmations that the restoration of the black self can materialise.

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