

Dialectics of Oppression: Fanon's Anticolonial Critique of Hegelian Dialectics

by

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“If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive.”

—Audre Lorde

“For me, oppression is the greatest calamity of humanity.”

—Albert Memmi

Abstract

This essay argues that a more accurate reading of Fanon should reveal that he did not appropriate, but rejected Hegelian dialectics as a dialectics of oppression. Especially noteworthy is Fanon's observation that Hegel's dialectics consists of a form of oppression that perpetuates racialized violence against Black people through the ontological theorizing of exclusion—the exclusion from the zone of being. Hence, the essay concludes by defending the view that Fanon's discussion of violence is an inevitable mechanism for rupturing the ontological violence in Hegelian dialectics, which generates the crisis for recognition, and puts Fanon in opposition to Hegel.

Introduction: Being and Non-Being

In a recently published essay titled “Frantz Fanon’s Contribution to Hegelian Marxism,” Peter Hudis argues that Fanon’s insights in *Black Skin, White Masks (BSWM)* “instead of representing a departure of the dialectical tradition, represent a crucial extension and concretization of Hegelian dialectics.”¹ The rationale for this claim lies in the fact that Fanon cites a lot from, and appropriates, Hegel’s notable writings on dialectics to depict the condition of the Black human. As Hudis puts it, “while his [Fanon’s] discussion of Hegel in *Black Skin, White Masks* is well known, less recognized is that the entire book, as well as much of *The Wretched of the Earth* – in which Hegel is not even mentioned – is deeply rooted in Hegelian dialectics.”² It is clear from these assertions that this scholar was deeply entrenched in the project of a Hegelian (Eurocentric) reading of Fanon, so much so that some key elements of Fanon’s engagement with Hegel went unacknowledged. For instance, Hudis fails to mention the purpose and critical nature of Fanon’s engagement with the writings of Hegel concerning human consciousness and the axis of recognition between the subject and the object of consciousness. Although Hudis mentions that recognition, for Hegel as well as for Fanon, is about much more than acknowledging an individual’s formal equality before the law – it is instead a demand to be recognized for the *dignity and worth* of one’s being³ – he ignores the fact that Fanon’s insight is different from that of Hegel, especially Fanon’s diagnosis that the Hegelian “master-slave” dialectics institutionalizes racialized violence. That is, violence is *aufgehoben*, preserved, in the fundamental inequality of recognition: the “master” is recognized by the “slave” but does not reciprocally recognize the “slave”. Such inequality is institutionalized in the shape of domination, lordship and bondage.⁴

Fanon was very clear on this issue when he articulates in a crucial footnote in *BSWM* that “we hope to have shown that the master here is basically different from the one described by Hegel. For Hegel there is reciprocity; here the master scorns the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition but work.”⁵ The absence of reciprocity between the “master” (colonizer) and the Black “slave” (colonized) makes the Black “slave” focus his gaze on the “master” whereas the “slave” in the Hegelian dialectic focuses on the object of consciousness. The “slave” in Fanon’s critique of Hegel cannot focus on the object because he lacks recognition and as such is fixated on the “master”; this is the genesis of the conflict inherent in the process of recognition that leads to the internalization of inferiority for many Black people, in Fanon’s estimation. This is also a consequence of what Fanon rightly diagnoses as the absolute reciprocity that must be highlighted at the basis of Hegelian dialectic.⁶ What this implies is that the nature of Fanon’s engagement with Hegel’s dialectics is not co-extensive. Fanon was more interested in showing how Hegelian “master”-dialectics impedes the recognition of Black humanity and thus cannot be applied to the lived experience of Black people.

However, in an apparent, albeit unsuccessful, attempt to defend Hegel against the critique of Fanon, Hudis provides a somewhat bewildering explanation on why Hegel possibly snubbed the consciousness and the lived experience of the “slave” in his dialectics. Hudis states that when the “master-slave” dialectic “is viewed in terms of race, we get a very different *result* from what Hegel describes. Regardless of what Hegel did or didn’t know of the history of Black slavery and the revolts against it, such as the Haitian revolution, it is clear that the historical context of Hegel’s master/slave dialectic – more correctly translated as ‘lordship and bondage’ – is the ancient and medieval world, in which slavery was *not* based on race.”⁷ This explanation fails in two important respects: it ignores the prevalent notion of race in Hegel’s context of writing and Hegel’s anthropological assumptions in his *Philosophy of History*.

In the *Philosophy of History*, Hegel wrote comprehensively about the world in terms of geo-spatial territories and human hierarchies while employing the ethnological views of race about Black people especially in late 19th and early 20th century Germany. In fact, Hegel demonstrated a knowledge of slavery based on race while providing a justification of “Negroes” who are enslaved by Europeans and sold to America as something based on the absence of any formalized ontological category and weak moral sentiments among Negroes. Which in his estimation, is function of the fact that “Negroes” (Black people in more contemporary usage of the term) are outside of the realm of consciousness and as such can be reduced to a ‘thing’ and ‘object’ of no value.⁸ As Hegel affirms, “it is the essential principle of slavery that man has not yet attained a consciousness of his freedom, and consequently sinks down to a mere Thing—an object of no value.”⁹ He would later elaborate on this in *The Phenomenology of Mind* and *The Philosophy of Right* in terms of the attainment of Absolute spirit and the expression of consciousness as the ultimate marker of being human or a human being.

Thus, Hudis’ claim that Hegel’s “master/slave” dialectic is constructed upon a notion of slavery not based on race is patently false when we consider Hegel’s own racist assertion that “Africans [Black people] exhibit the most reckless inhumanity and disgusting barbarism”¹⁰ and his assertion that:

In Negro life the characteristic point is the fact that consciousness has not yet attained to the realization of any substantial objective existence—as for example, God, or Law—in which the interest of man’s volition is involved and in which he realizes his own being. This distinction between himself as an individual and the universality of his essential being, the African in the uniform, undeveloped oneness of his existence has not yet attained; so that the knowledge of an absolute Being, an Other and a Higher than his individual self, is entirely wanting. The Negro, as already observed, exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality—all that we call feeling—if we would rightly comprehend him; there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character.¹¹

This is where Hegel's anthropology reflected what I am referring to in this essay as a dialectics of oppression—a system of dialectical racialized violence that reduces an entire race of people (African people¹²/Black people) to the realm of nothingness or a “thing”—an object of no value. Especially noting his submission that “what we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature.”¹³ Hegel contrasted this debased characterization of Black people, with the European, who he thinks of as the Absolute spirit who has attained consciousness through reason and is able to declare his Being by avowing thus: “I am I, my object and my essential reality is ego; and no one will deny reason this truth.”¹⁴ Here, Hegel centers the power to define who is Being and who is non-Being essentially in white Europeans. This goes to show the brutal nature of Hegelian dialectics. As brutal as the writings of Hegel cited above appears, it is not really astounding when we take into consideration the fact that this was the predominant white supremacist notion of race between late 19th and early 20th century Germany,¹⁵ which was the context of his writing. It is the notion of race that portrayed a low level of development for a primitive, barbarian “Negro”, which gave rise to a feeling of Western superiority, above all else. Thus, Hegel's adaptation of such anthropological assumptions about being and reason, consciousness and non-being in the *Philosophy of History* laid the groundwork for what he would later develop as a theory of human (white European) consciousness in the *Phenomenology*. This is why Fanon sees the whole system of Hegelian dialectics, which is based on such racialized anthropological assumptions about Being, as the concretization of colonialism—a dialectics or phenomenology propagating alienation. Fanon then introduced the bifurcation: the colonizer and the colonized to rupture the fundamental assumptions of Hegelian dialectics. In what follows, I will explore Fanon's analysis of Hegelian dialectics as a form of racialized violence which necessitates a violent counter-response. This, in turn, explains why Fanon should not be read as a Hegelian but as a demolisher of Hegelian dialectics.

Fanon's Diagnosis of Hegelian Dialectics as Racialized Violence

Dialectics, in the crudest sense of its Hegelian formulation, is about power. More specifically, it is about who has the power to determine who is human and who is subhuman. Hegel used his system of dialectics to theorize about the axis of being and the logical structure of self-consciousness in terms of “master-slave” dialectics. In *The Phenomenology of Mind* Hegel writes that “consciousness furnishes its own criterion in itself, and the inquiry will thereby be a comparison of itself with its own self; for the distinction, just made, falls inside itself. In consciousness there is one element for an Other, or, in general, consciousness implicates the specific character of the moment of knowledge. At the same time this “other” is to consciousness not merely for it, but also outside this relation, or has a being in itself.”¹⁶ Now, the recognition of consciousness, and lack of this thereof, constitutes a cardinal problem in Hegelian dialectics of a life-and-death struggle between pure consciousness which conceives of being-in-itself and that which stands outside of ‘pure consciousness’, and outside its existential relations. Thus, there is a collision between presumptive self-certainty of total independence and the confrontation with the other.

The presence of the other is experienced initially as a loss of self. This is intolerable and prompts a response. On the one hand, each has to make its self-certainty manifest to the other, and, on the other hand, each seeks to compel the other to recognize this subjective certainty. These two dimensions coincide because compelling the other to recognize one's self-certainty means putting one's own existence at risk, and the willingness to place oneself at risk shows one's transcendence of nature, i.e., one's merely natural existence. Consequently, a life-death struggle ensues. Each seeks to cancel the other as a means of preserving its original certainty and identity.¹⁷

Hegel believes that "reason"¹⁸ plays a pivotal role in the process of how the self-consciousness of the Absolute spirits (European spirits) develops into full consciousness; in fact, it is what makes recognition possible for being-in-itself. According to Hegel,

Reason takes its stand on the self-consciousness of each individual consciousness: I am I, my object and my essential reality is ego; and no one will deny reason this truth. But since it rests on this appeal, it sanctions the truth of the other certainty, viz. there is for me an other; an other *qua* ego is to me object and true reality: or since I am object and reality to myself, I am, only so by my withdrawing myself from the other altogether and appearing alongside it as an actuality.¹⁹

He then goes on to elaborate on this by avowing that:

Consciousness will determine its relation to otherness to its object in various ways, according as it is at one or the other stage in the development of the world-spirit into self-consciousness. How the world-spirit immediately finds and determines itself and its object at any given time, or how it appears to itself, depends on what it has come to be, on what it has come from, or what it already implicitly and inherently is. Reason is the certainty of being and all reality. This its inherent nature, this reality, is still, however, through a universal, the pure abstraction of reality.²⁰

The essential problem with this Hegelian dialectic expressed above, which Fanon points out, is that it does not pertain to Black people. Black people were already excluded from the category of being and rationality based on Hegel's anthropological conclusions or assumptions in *Philosophy of History*. The Black human, who in Hegelian conjecture/imagination is a debased form of a human, not entirely different from an animal, is devoid of "reason;"²¹ this makes it impossible to talk about such people in relation to consciousness. This explains why Fanon, in *BSWM*, asserts that in Hegel's system, "a Black man is not a man."

There is a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an incline stripped bare of every essential from which a genuine new departure can emerge. In most cases, the black man cannot take advantage of this descent into a veritable hell.”²² What Fanon is pointing out here is the racialized violence inherent in the Hegelian system of dialectics and the European system of colonialism which damns Black people’s souls to ‘a veritable hell’, a damnation of Blackness to the realm of non-being. Fanon understands this struggle that ensues between the self and the other that emanates from Hegelian dialectics in terms of the oppressive entanglement between the colonizer and the colonized to be a racialized form of violence.

In fact, Fanon sees Hegelian dialectics as a concretization of Western hegemony and the apogee of the intellectual violence exhibited by the colonists against non-Europeans (the colonized). This is why he asserts in *BSMW* that “as long as the black man remains on his home territory, except for petty internal quarrels, he will not have to experience his being for others. There is in fact a “being for other,” as described by Hegel, but any ontology is made impossible in a colonized and acculturated society. Apparently, those who have written on the subject have not taken this sufficiently into consideration.”²³ This is one of the sections of this text where Fanon is censuring Hegelian dialectics for its racialized violence against Black people—the racialized violence coded in a vicious ontological theory that makes colonialism possible. However, Fanon brilliantly decodes this by arguing that Hegel’s racialized ontology excludes the lived experience of the Black human. According to Fanon, “in the *weltanschauung* of a colonized people, there is an impurity or a flaw that prohibits any ontological explanation; this ontology does not allow us to understand the being of the black man, since it ignores the lived experience. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man.”²⁴ What Fanon says here elucidates the crisis of being precipitated by the Hegelian system of dialectics which functions on a violent racial ideology that characterizes the white human (colonizer) as the norm of what it means to be human and the Black human as the exception. In this instance, the racial ideology assumes a special function and becomes in fact an indispensable instrument in ensuring the cohesion of the colonial system, which is based on violence. The superiority of the colonizers, manifesting itself through brute force and legitimized in their own view by the alleged racial inferiority of the “natives”, is acknowledged by the oppressed themselves through the process of alienation.²⁵

One important point that Fanon brings to the fore in *BSWM* is that this racialized violence of Hegelian dialectics alienates the Black human from their own experience and shuts off the possibility of recognition. Although Hegel says that “this dialectic process which consciousness executes on itself—on its knowledge as well as on its object—in the sense that out of it the new and true object arises, is precisely what is termed Experience”²⁶, Fanon describes it as “the dialectic that introduces necessity as a support for my freedom [which] expels me from myself.”²⁷ This shows clearly Fanon’s rejection of the assumptions of Hegel’s dialectics, which makes him anti-Hegelian rather than Hegelian. Fanon makes it clear that his rejection of Hegelian dialectics centers on the fact that the element of recognition is lacking in the relationship between the white “master” and the Black bondsperson/“slave”.

Although the white human accepted the “Negro” when they abolished slavery, no true emancipation has taken place since the “Negro” did not emancipate himself: Historically, the “Negro” steeped in the inessentiality of servitude was set free by their “master”. They did not fight for their freedom.²⁸ This notion of “fighting” for one’s freedom which epitomizes struggling against colonial hegemonic superstructures and substructures becomes very crucial in Fanon’s thoughts on how to break away from or rupture the Hegelian dialectics of oppression which undergirds European colonialism in African territories.

The Struggle for Recognition and the Necessity of Violence in Fanonian Meditations

“Dirty nigger!” or simply “Look! A Negro!”

I came into this world anxious to uncover the meaning of things, my soul desirous to be at the origin of the world, and here I am an object among other objects.²⁹

This quotation, excerpted from Fanon’s discussion of “The Lived Experience of the Black Man” in *BSWM*, marks his radical departure from Hegelian dialectics.³⁰ Here, Fanon points out the objectification of the “Negro” in the white gaze which makes recognition impossible. But the objectification he speaks about here is not merely the objectification of Black bodies in the phantasmagoric white imagination as fictive symbols but a total devaluation of the “Negro”—the negation of being. A total dashing of the Black human’s hope or aspiration to be elevated to the realm of being or the realm of the human. Thus, Fanon sees Hegel’s idealized system of consciousness and Absolute spiritism as the banishment of the “Negro” to racialized violence like slavery, dehumanization, alienation, and all other forms of colonial exploitation. Hegel’s system therefore reflects a struggle for recognition which is simultaneously a struggle for existence/being between the zone of being (occupied by white European colonialists) and the zone of non-being (occupied by Black people/African people). This struggle then necessitates the use of violence because the only way Black people could gain recognition as human is to impose themselves on the colonialists who have excluded them from the realm of being. This is what Fanon refers to when he asserts that a human is human only to the extent to which s/he tries *to impose him/herself* on another “man in order to be recognized by him. As long as he has not been effectively recognized by the other, it is this other who remains the focus of his actions. His human worth and reality depend on his recognition by the other.”³¹ The notion of “imposition” that Fanon speaks about here, where the excluded self has to impose itself on the other to gain recognition, signals a volatile racialized conflict.

This is what Fanon means when he asserts that only conflict and the risk it implies can, therefore, make human reality, in-itself-for-itself, come true.”³² Fanon seems to suggest that the extent of the imposition of one’s existence on an-other ultimately becomes the measure of humanity; in other words, one can only be human if one ensures that one imposes oneself on an-other successfully. But the problem with this suggestion is that the other is not willing to grant that recognition. Thus, making oneself known, in this dialectical process, especially in Fanonian meditations, takes on a violent character.

It is noteworthy that the lack of recognition in the Hegelian “master-slave” system was made possible by the colonial logics that relegates Black folks to the classification of subhuman. Upon this supposition, Fanon goes on to assert that “whereas I was the one they should have begged and implored, I was denied the slightest recognition? I made up my mind, since it was possible to rid myself of an innate complex, to assert myself as a BLACK MAN. Since the Other was reluctant to recognize me, there was only one answer: to make myself known.”³³ What this implies is that since the “master” (colonizer/colonist) would not recognize the consciousness and humanity of the colonized (particularly Black folks in Martinique), then Fanon opines that something radical and explosive has to happen. In order to overcome their subhuman condition, the colonized, according to Fanon, must confront the total negation to which they are subjected by another negation. They must confront violence with violence. Force can only be resisted and transcended with counter-force.³⁴ This means that anti-colonial struggle is an inevitably dirty and violent process. Although in *BSWM*, Fanon laid the groundwork for the contemplation of violence as a strategy to gain recognition in an imperialistic world, he would fully develop this idea on the necessity of violence as a method of anti-colonial struggle in *The Wretched of the Earth*. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon describes this process of confrontation between the colonist and the colonized occasioned by Hegel’s “master-slave” dialectic when he avers that “the colonist and the colonized are old acquaintances. And consequently, the colonist is right when he says he “knows” them. It is the colonist *who fabricated and continues to fabricate* the colonized subject.”³⁵ The fabrication that Fanon refers to here is the fabrication as an “inferior” being/subhuman, and it is by this very means of negating the humanity of the colonized (Black people) that the colonist derives his/her validity in the colonial system.

Fanon then argues that violence is a necessary tool that the colonized subject must utilize in order to move out of the zone of non-being or the position of liminality *fabricated* in the colonial logics of the colonial dialectical system. Within such colonial logics, “the ‘native’ is declared impervious to ethics, representing not only the absence of values but also the negation of values.”³⁶ What Fanon is highlighting here is the fact that violence is already embedded in the colonial logics which is already in operation within the Hegelian system of dialectics—essentially referring to the negation of being. Once a human being (as in the case of Black people in Fanon’s reference) is described as being outside the realm of conscious recognition as in Hegelian dialectics, it communicates the idea that such a “thing” can be fiddled with as any other material object.

This idea is suffused with violence because it invariably opens up such a being to all forms of race-based violence and homophobic atrocities. Fanon regards such homophobic atrocities as an expression of the supremacy of white values—values of Being. He opines that the supremacy of white values was laced with violence with such venom that the victorious confrontation of these values with the lifestyle and beliefs of the colonized impregnated them with aggressiveness³⁷—as a counter measure. It is upon this basis that Fanon goes on to conceive of violence as a counter-response to the violence inherent in Hegelian dialectics as the mechanism through which “the ‘thing’ colonized becomes a man through the very process of liberation.”³⁸ Colonial logics as well as colonialism, Fanon argued, was a system of violence, brought about and sustained by a ‘great array of bayonets and cannons’ and by the psychological degradation of the “native” by the settler. In creating a particular conception of the colonial subject, it dehumanized and alienated the latter. To bring an end to this Manichean struggle, violence was essential because the colonized human finds his/her freedom in and through violence. Violence for Fanon was an intrinsic good rather than a means to an end because it served as a cleansing force which—through the overcoming of the oppressor—allowed for acts of self-authentication. The violence directed at the colonizer was no less than the colonized affirming and reconstructing him/herself.³⁹

The colonized, who have made up their mind to make such an agenda into a driving force, have been prepared for violence from time immemorial. As soon as they are born it is obvious to them that their cramped world, riddled with taboos, can only be challenged by out and out violence.⁴⁰

Fanon’s advocacy of violence in this instance is not a cacophony of irrational murderous vendetta but a strategic tool for overcoming the negation of being established by the colonial logics/dialectics, especially Hegelian dialectics which fuels such psychological degradation that Fanon talks about extensively in *BSWM*. For Fanon, the violence inherent in the colonial logics of the Hegelian system leads to neurosis for Black people, and this gives rise to the need for a kind of existential substitution that is a part of the achievement of decolonization⁴¹—a substitution of one “species” of humankind by another. The substitution is unconditional, absolute, total, and seamless; the need for this change exists in a raw, repressed, and reckless state in the lives and consciousness of colonized men and women.⁴² It was crucial for Fanon to critique Hegelian dialectics for Fanon to fathom the extent to which colonial peoples were the victims of a situational/existential neurosis, a socially constructed yet very real situation of degradation, inferiority and exploitation that they had internalized. This was the underlining premise of Fanon’s engagement with Hegel. As a psychologist and intellectual, Fanon had looked after patients in Algeria during the war of liberation against France, a period during which he traced the social origin of this neurosis to the racist attitude of white colonial society towards the Blackness of African people.

For Fanon the racism—on a material and particularly on a psychological level—denied the colonial subject his/her freedom and authenticity as a human being by reducing him/her to an object forced to live in a state of inauthenticity. The racial hierarchy at the heart of the colonial system relegated those subjected to colonialism to the status of subhuman.⁴³ This explains why Fanon affirms that the system of colonial logics/dialectics is not really about ‘rationality’ or ‘consciousness’; it is about the clash of opposites. Thus, “challenging the colonial world is not a rational confrontation of viewpoints. It is not a discourse on the universal, but the impassioned claim by the colonized that their world is fundamentally different. The colonial world is a Manichaeian world”⁴⁴—a world of conflicting opposites. This class of opposites, a crisis of existence between whiteness and Blackness, must, in the words of Fanon, “include violence.”⁴⁵

Conclusion

In this essay, I have argued that Fanon is not Hegelian as some recent commentators would have us believe. My position stems from a critical reading of the arguments Fanon offered in *BSWM* and *The Wretched of the Earth* which shows Fanon’s rejection of Hegelian dialectics as a system of racialized violence that is essentially focused on the creation of an ontological category that ultimately condemns Black people to the zone of non-being. Fanon dealt the final blow to Hegelian dialectics when he advocated violence to escalate the crisis of recognition between the white human and the Black human. So, when Hegel says that “the living substance is that being which is truly subject, or, what is the same thing, is truly realized and actual (*wirklich*) solely in the process of positing itself, or in mediating with its own self its transitions from one state or position to the opposite,”⁴⁶ he is referring to the existential relationship that exists in the “master-slave” dialectic that only recognizes the humanity, rationality, and superiority (both racial and ontological) of white European violent colonizers. Thus, the absolute reciprocity that Fanon emphasizes as the foundation of the Hegelian dialectic appears impossible in the world of Black and white relations⁴⁷ which is why he strongly rejects this form of dialectics as a system that relegates Black people to the level of animals. Thus, it is only when Hegelian dialectics is understood as a colonial construct, which is based on violence against, and the rejection of the humanity of, the unrecognizable (Black being or) “other”—non-European absolute spirits—, that we can fully appreciate the deep ways in which Fanon should not be read as a Hegelian but as a destroyer of Hegelian dialectics. Going by the critical analysis in this essay, to read Fanon as a Hegelian is not only disingenuous but also a testament to the lack of appreciation of the deep roots of Fanon’s critique of Hegelian “master-slave” dialectics.

Notes and References

¹ Peter Hudis, “Frantz Fanon’s Contribution to Hegelian Marxism,” *Critical Sociology*, 43(6), 2017, p. 865.

² *Ibid.* 867.

³ *Ibid.* 686.

⁴ Robert R. Williams, “The Concept of Recognition in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit,” in Alfred Denker and Michael Vater, Eds. *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, New York: Humanity Books, 2003, p.72.

⁵ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, New York: Grove Press, 1952, p.195.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁷ Peter Hudis, p.869.

⁸ G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, J. Sibree, Trans., The Colonial Press, 1900, p.96.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹² Hegel was not hiding the colonial underpinnings of his ideas so much so that the 1900 rendition (2nd edition) of his *Philosophy of History* was published by an outfit named: “The Colonial Press”. On the basis of his assumptions and thoughts of African people [Black people] as subhuman, Hegel generally excluded Black people from the realm of the universal spirit. As he says on page 93 of this text, “the peculiarly African character is difficult to comprehend, for the very reason that in reference to it, we must quite give up the principle which naturally accompanies all *our* ideas—the category of Universality.” It is also quite interesting to note that upon this exclusion of Black people from universality of the absolute spirit, Hegel emphasizes the double bind of colonialism: (1) colonization by taking over the so-called barbaric peoples’ territories and (2) Annexation of the civilized parts of Africa as belonging to Europe. He says this on page 92 of the text where he writes that “the second portion of Africa is the river district of the Nile—Egypt; which was adapted to become a mighty center of independent civilization, and therefore is as isolated and singular in Africa as Africa itself appears in relation to the other parts of the world.

The Northern part of Africa, which may be specially called that of the coast-territory (for Egypt has been frequently driven back on itself, by the Mediterranean) lies on the Mediterranean and the Atlantic; a magnificent territory, on which Carthage once lay—the site of the modern Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. This part was to be—must be attached to Europe: the French have lately made a successful effort in this direction...” The reference to French colonialism in Africa that Hegel makes here is quite telling given the fact that it is this brand of colonialism that Fanon so strongly criticizes in *BSWM*.

¹³ Because Hegel thinks of African people or Black people generally as primitive and incapable of expressing ‘rational consciousness,’ whatever elements of development that was recorded in Ancient Egypt, at the time of Hegel’s writings, should be ascribed to the European world (a world of the truly Absolute Spirits where the Being-for-itself flourishes). Hegel poignantly writes, “at this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it—that is in its northern part—belong to the Asiatic or European World.” See G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, J. Sibree, Trans., The Colonial Press, 1900, p.99.

¹⁴ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, Trans., J.B. Baillie, vol.1., New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910, p.226.

¹⁵ Peter Martin’s *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren: Afrikaner in Geschichte und Bewusstsein der Deutsche* (Black Devil, Noble Moor: Africans in history and awareness in Germany) is one primary source of reference on the idea of race within the historical milieu of 19th century Germany. Martin’s book was the pioneering work that charted the evolution of Black-white dichotomies in German culture since the Middle Ages. In this book, the author traces what he calls a fundamental change in the general image of Africa and its people after 1648. More encounters with African people from little known (i.e., to German culture) parts of the continent introduced new aspects of African people: the picture of the cultivated “oriental moor (Aithiops)” which was complemented by images that portrayed a low level of development, a primitive, barbarian “Negro”, which gave rise to a feeling of Western superiority. On this trajectory, anthropology and philosophy begin to locate the Black/African human very low in the hierarchy of species. See Peter Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren: Afrikaner in Geschichte und Bewusstsein der Deutschen* (Hamburg, Germany: Hamburger Edition, 2001), pp.4, 83.

¹⁶ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 84.

¹⁷ Robert R. Williams, pp.70-71.

¹⁸ Reason for Hegel is the definitive source of consciousness which creates presentational thought in the Absolute Spirit, and this is what marks the distinction between the self and the other. As Hegel puts it: “since reason is all reality in the sense of the abstract “mine,” and the “other” is an externality indifferent to it, there is here affirmed just that sort of knowledge of an “other” on the part of reason, which we met with before in the form of “intending” or “meaning” (*Meinen*), “perceiving,” and “understanding,” which grasps what is “meant” and what is “perceived”.” See. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, Trans., J.B. Baillie, vol.1., New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910, p. 231. Hegel further expounds on this in *Philosophy of Right* where he claimed that what is rational is actual and what is actual is rational (inverse abstraction of Absolute spiritism); and this notion of rationality is crucial for the Absolute spirit’s apprehension of the world because “the great thing is to apprehend in the show of temporal and transient the substance which is immanent and the eternal which is present. For since rationality (which is synonymous with the Idea) enters upon external existence simultaneously with its actualization, it emerges with an infinite wealth of forms, shapes, and appearances.” See, T. M. Knox, Trans. *Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942, p.10.

¹⁹ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p.226.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Here, the common aphorism “when the black man walks into the room, reason walks out” is apposite.

²² Fanon, *BSWM*, p. xii.

²³ Ibid., 89.

²⁴ Ibid., 89-90.

²⁵ French assimilation policy is a case in point. Although it claimed to be non-racial in its basic assumptions, it offered only relatively few people the opportunity of rising from the level of “natives” to the status of human beings though a process of Europeanization, i.e., complete alienation from their own history and culture. See Willfried F. Feuser, Trans. *Frantz Fanon: Colonialism and Alienation*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974, pp.13-14.

²⁶ Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p.86.

²⁷ Fanon, *BSWM*, p.114.

²⁸ Willfried F. Feuser, Trans. *Frantz Fanon: Colonialism and Alienation*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974, p. 16.

²⁹ Frantz Fanon, *BSWM*, p.89.

³⁰ The difference between the bondsperson/“master” relationship in Hegel and the Black/white relationship in Fanon is of fundamental importance: In Hegel the “slave” turns away from the “master” and turns towards the object. Here the “slave” turns towards the “master” and abandons the object. What is decisive for the absence of reciprocal recognition between the white human the “Negro” is the fact that no struggle has taken place between them. Fanon quotes Hegel: ‘the relation of both self-consciousness is in this way so constituted that they prove themselves and each other through a life-and-death struggle. The individual, who has not staked his life, may, no doubt, be recognized as a person, but he has not attained the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness. See Willfried F. Feuser, Trans. *Frantz Fanon: Colonialism and Alienation*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974, p.16.

³¹ Frantz Fanon, *BSWM*, p. 191.

³² *Ibid.*, 193.

³³ *Ibid.*, 95.

³⁴ Sebastian Kaempf, “Violence and Victory: Guerrilla Warfare, ‘Authentic Self-Affirmation’ and the Overthrow of the Colonial State,” *Third World Quarterly*, 30(1), 2009, p.140.

³⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York: Grove Press, 1963, p.2.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁹ Sebastian Kaempf, p.131.

⁴⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p.3.

⁴¹ Fanon started *The Wretched of the Earth* by describing decolonization as a violent event because it is an encounter between two congenital antagonistic forces that in fact owe their singularity to the kind of reification secreted and nurtured by the colonial situation. Their first confrontation was colored by violence and their cohabitation. He goes further to say that in its bare reality, decolonization reeks of red-hot cannonballs and bloody knives. For the last can be the first only after a murderous and decisive confrontation between the two protagonists. This determination to have the last move up to the front, to have them clamber up (too quickly, say some) the famous echelons of an organized society, can only succeed by resorting to every means, including of course, violence. See Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York: Grove Press, 1963, pp.2-3.

⁴² Ibid.,1.

⁴³ Sebastian Kaempf, p.

⁴⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p.6.

⁴⁵ Fanon provided a footnote in this section of the book where he re-affirmed that he had demonstrated in *Black Skin, White Masks* the mechanism of this Manichaeian world. Ibid., 3.

⁴⁶ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 16.

⁴⁷ Nigel C. Gibson, *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003, p. 34.