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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Resistance through re-narration: Fanon on de-constructing racialized subjectivities

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Frantz Fanon offers a lucid account of his entrance into the white world where the weightiness of the 'white gaze' nearly crushed him. In chapter five of *Black Skins, White Masks*, he develops his historico-racial and epidermal racial schemata as correctives to Merleau-Ponty's overly inclusive corporeal schema. Experientially aware of the reality of socially constructed (racialized) subjectivities, Fanon uses his schemata to explain the creation, maintenance, and eventual rigidification of white-scripted 'blackness'. Through a re-telling of his own experiences of racism, Fanon is able to show how a black person in a racialized context eventually internalizes the 'white gaze'. In this essay I bring Fanon's insights into conversation with Foucault's discussion of panoptic surveillance. Although the internalization of the white narrative creates a situation in which external constraints are no longer needed, Fanon highlights both the historical contingency of 'blackness' and the ways in which the oppressed can re-narrate their subjectivities. Lastly, I discuss Fanon's historically attuned 'new humanism', once again engaging Fanon and Foucault as dialogue partners.

Keywords: historico-racial and epidermal racial schemata; Fanon and Foucault; panoptic surveillance and racialized subjectivities; white gaze; decolonization; Fanon's new humanism

I. Introducing Frantz Fanon

David Scott (1999, p. 201), in his book, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism After Postcoloniality*, identifies what he calls the Fanonian 'narrative of liberation'. On Scott's interpretation, Frantz Fanon's work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, is a brilliant elaboration of the latter's version of an emancipatory narrative (i.e., 'narrative of liberation') in which we encounter 'a more or less structured story that progressively links (through such generative tropes as Repression, Alienation, Consciousness, Awakening, Resistance, Struggle, and Realization) a past and a present of Domination to an anticipated future of Freedom' (Scott 1999, p. 201). In this narrative, a 'teleological rhythm' unfolds as a subject or subjects struggle against 'a repressive power that denies the subjugated their essential humanity, and whose absolute overcoming constitutes the singular objective and destiny of the struggle' (Scott 1999, p. 201). As the plot thickens, we follow as the subject 'moves from alienated dehumanization to self-realization' and toward a postulated '"beyond" in which there emerges a new and unencumbered humanity' (Scott 1999, p. 201). Although I shall

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draw primarily from Fanon's text, *Black Skin, White Masks* rather than *The Wretched of the Earth*, the process of decolonizing colonized subjects elaborated in the latter work overlaps significantly with his account of the lived experience of the black in his former work.

Fanon recounts his own sufferings as a black other scripted by a racialized authoritative discourse. Born on 20 July 1925, and a native of the French colony, Martinique, Fanon belonged to a small group of black Martinicans afforded the opportunity to study at the Lycée (Ahluwalia 2010, p. 55). As Pal Ahluwalia notes, '[g]rowing up within the French system of education had a profound influence on Fanon', one designed to impress upon his mind the idea of a natural, even necessary connection between France and liberty 'that made every French colonial subject believe that they were linked inextricably to France' (2010, p. 55). Seeing himself at that time as one to whom the French slogan, *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, applied, Fanon decided to join the Free French Army in 1944 to fight against Germany. His wartime experiences brought about a crisis in his identity. In Martinique, Fanon had always thought of himself as French. However, when he joined the French Army, he encountered his first bitter taste of racism both from fellow soldiers and from the French population – in spite of the fact that he had been awarded the 'Croix de Guerre for bravery' (Ahluwalia 2010, p. 55).

Returning to Martinique and attempting to piece together his fragmented identity, Fanon decided to utilize the scholarships available for war veterans and thus went to study medicine first in Paris and then eventually at the University of Lyon (Ahluwalia 2010, p. 55). He defended his medical thesis in 1951 and then began his residency in psychiatry at the Hôpital de Saint-Alban (Ahluwalia 2010, p. 55). During this period of study, Fanon found himself in the midst of a community pierced with racial strife; yet, this was also a time when he was exposed to new political ideas. In October 1952 Fanon married Marie-Josèphe Dublé, and in the following year (November 1953) they moved to Algiers, where Fanon served as medical director of Blida-Joinville Hospital, Algeria's largest psychiatric hospital (Ahluwalia 2010, p. 55). While serving at this hospital, Fanon 'came into close contact with Algerians fighting for independence as well as French police officers, both victims of the colonial experience', and eventually joined forces with 'the Algerian freedom fighters in their struggle for independence from French colonization' (Ahluwalia 2010, p. 56).[1] Compelled by his conscience, given the atrocities he witnessed in Algeria, in 1956 Fanon resigned from his position as medical director of Blida-Joinville Hospital.[2] That same year Fanon wrote *Toward the African Revolution*, in which he highlights the complex role Algeria played in the French colonizing project.

> Algeria, a settlement transformed by decree into metropolitan territory, has lived under police and military domination never equalled in a colonial country. This is explained first of all by the fact that Algeria has practically never laid down its arms since 1830. But above all, France is not unaware of Algeria's importance in its colonial structure, and its obstinacy and its incalculable efforts can only be explained by the certainty that Algeria's independence would very shortly bring about the crumbling of its empire. Situated at France's gateway, Algeria reveals to the Western world in detail, as though in slow motion, the contradiction of the colonial situation. (Fanon 1969, p. 65)

In light of Fanon's active involvement with radical political movements, he was expelled from Algeria in 1957. Now known as a committed member of the National Liberation Front (FLN), Fanon was subject to several assassination attempts (Ahluwalia 2010, p. 56).[3] In 1960, he was diagnosed with leukemia and died the following year while seeking medical treatment in the United States.

As Ahluwalia underscores, 'Fanon's Algerian locatedness is critical' (2010, p. 57).[4] Employing Abdul JanMohamed's distinction between a 'specular' and a 'syncretic border

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intellectual', Ahluwalia categorizes Fanon as a specular border intellectual par excellence.[5] According to JanMohamed, while both types are border intellectuals in that 'they find themselves located between (two or more) groups or cultures, with which they are more or less familiar, one can draw a distinction between them based on the intentionality of their intellectual orientation' with respect to a particular culture (1992, p. 97). In contrast with the specular type, the 'syncretic border intellectual' is more '"at home' in both cultures', and 'is able to combine elements of the two cultures in order to articulate new syncretic forms and experiences' (JanMohamed 1992, p. 97). While equally acquainted with and knowledgeable of both cultures, 'the specular border intellectual' is not able to find a 'home' in either culture and operates in a liminal existence. Straddling multiple communities, 'the specular intellectual subjects the cultures to analytic scrutiny rather than combining them; he or she utilizes his or her interstitial space as a vantage point from which to define, implicitly or explicitly, other utopian possibilities of group formation' (JanMohamed 1992, p. 97).[6] Fanon, operating in his own 'interstitial space' and having experienced the contradictions of the colonial system, is compelled to challenge the Enlightenment's proclamation of 'the triumph of reason and the promises of the French empire that, at least theoretically, accorded to its colonial subjects the same rights as in the metropole' (Ahluwalia 2010, p. 41). Fanon's suspicions about the universal application of the French appropriation of Enlightenment-inspired narratives of progress and freedom for all eventually grew into discontent and disillusionment. As Fanon grappled with the 'absurdity of the colonial world' and its 'dehumanizing effects on the Algerian population', he began 'to consider the possibility of a new society in which both the coloniser and the colonised are transformed through a new humanism, one that is by no means the humanism of the Enlightenment' (Ahluwalia 2010, p. 54).[7]

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II. Fanon's schemata and the train episode

In his book, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon begins to sketch the borders of this new humanism by chronicling his own journey and struggle to carve out a new identity, theorizing and offering phenomenological and existential analyses of the construction and deconstruction of colonized subjectivities. As Fanon argues, a phenomenology of blackness – the experience of skin difference and of being the black other – becomes manifest only in the encounter with whiteness or, more precisely, the white imagination (2008, p. 89). That is, in a mostly black community in the Antilles, Fanon recalls that he was 'content to intellectualize these differences'; however, once he entered the white world and felt the weight of the 'white gaze', he experienced his otherness and became aware of racial attitudes which up to that point had not existed for him (Fanon 2008, p. 90). In chapter five of *Black Skin, White Masks*, entitled 'The Lived Experience of the Black', Fanon recounts his experience on a train of being 'fixed' by a white other – an other who happened to be a child who had already been habituated to see blacks as defined by the white imagination. As the child's refrain, 'Look! A Negro!'[8] crescendoed forth and came to a close with a fearful questioning of the 'Negro's' next move, Fanon not only experienced the gaze of the white other, he also began to see himself through the white gaze (2008, p. 91).[9]

> I cast an objective gaze over myself, discovered my blackness, my ethnic features; deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, fetishism, racial stigmas, slave traders, [...] Disoriented, incapable of confronting the Other, the white man, who had no scruples about imprisoning me, I transported myself on that particular day far, very far, from my self, and gave myself up as an object. What did this mean to me? Peeling, stripping my skin, causing a hemorrhage that left congealed black blood all over my body. Yet this reconsideration of myself, this thematization, was not my idea. I wanted simply to be a man among men. (Fanon 2008, p. 92)

As Fanon takes up the white view of himself, he experiences its all-encompassing reach. That is, his becoming a white-defined black other involved more than his present encounter with the child on the train; it involved also being swallowed by a past, a long tradition of white erasure and re-scripting of black history and culture. In other words, not only is his present fixed by the white other, but his past is fixed as well. This story of the Negro is so well-known that the unison refrain – 'cannibalism, backwardness, fetishism' – comes from a child, acting as a mouthpiece of the dominant culture, singing effortlessly of the black other's story as if reciting a schoolyard nursery rhyme.

A few paragraphs before his description of the train episode with the child, Fanon mentions Merleau-Ponty's corporeal schema and emphasizes the difficulties that a black person experiences in a white-scripted world due to his skin colour and the various meanings given to these and other embodied differences. In brief, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological project is in part directed against Descartes' mind/body dualism and Kant's geometricized view of space. As is the case generally in the phenomenological tradition, Merleau-Ponty rejects dichotomous divisions of inner and outer, subject and object that characterize much of modern philosophy.[10] The body is not an inert object (*res extensa*) among other objects that a thinking thing (*res cogitans*) comes to know.[11] Rather, according to Merleau-Ponty, the body 'is the vehicle of being in the world and having a body is, for a living creature, to be intervolved in a definite environment, to identify oneself with certain projects and be continually committed to them' (1962, p. 94). In this view, the body inhabits the world and is called forth by the immanent structures of things in the world.[12] To say that we are called forth by the structures of objects is not to say that we as embodied agents are affected merely passively by objects. As we encounter things in the world, we attend actively to them and choose how to act in response to their directives. Likewise, things and the world have their own integrity and are not constituted by Kantian *a priori* structures of space and time or categories of the understanding. As Merleau-Ponty explains,

> The world is there before any possible analysis of mine. [...] The real is a closely woven fabric. It does not await our judgment before incorporating the most surprising phenomena, or before rejecting the most plausible figments of our imagination. [...] The world is not an object such that I have in my possession the law of its making; it is the natural setting of, and field for, all my thoughts and all my explicit perceptions. (1962, pp. x, xi–xii)

Things in the world are infused with meanings and exhibit unity or what Merleau-Ponty calls 'style'. Style speaks of the distinctive characteristics of a person or thing distinguishing that person or thing from others. For example, when listening to a trumpet solo, jazz connoisseurs recognize immediately that the performer is Miles Davis rather than Dizzy Gillespie. Each musician has a distinctive style that makes him what he is – the way he pushes air through his trumpet, whether he plays staccato or legato phrases, how he chooses to place high notes, silences, and so forth. Style is neither reducible to a 'collection of perceptions' nor to laws which govern perceptions; however, once recognized and specified, it manifests a self-evidence 'which we feel no need to define' (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 327). As mentioned previously, things call out to us, and in our act of perception, which involves an active focus or attending, we respond to their directives. For example, by attending actively to Miles Davis's trumpet solo, instead of focusing on the rhythm section, we respond wilfully to what it has to say to us, allowing the rhythm section to recede into the background. Miles Davis's style, although distinguishable from the background or auditory field created by the other musicians, is nonetheless intimately connected to it and arises from within it.[13]

In addition, our embodied existence and relationship with the world are such that we are attuned to the world and adjust ourselves non-cognitively to its directives. For example,

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when someone whispers to us and we have trouble hearing what is said, we turn our ear toward the person unreflectively, 'tuneout' the announcements broadcast through the loudspeakers, and move closer so that we might hear what he or she is saying. As Merleau-Ponty explains, to have a body 'implies the ability to change levels [of perception] and to "understand" space, just as the possession of a voice implies the ability to change key. The perceptual field corrects itself and [. . .] I identify it without any concept because I live in it' (1962, pp. 292–293). In short, as Taylor Carman puts it, perception, then, is 'the body's intelligent orientation in the world' (2004, p. 71). Carman also provides a helpful explanation of the corporeal schema. As he explains, our perception is

> informed by what Merleau-Ponty calls a 'body schema' (schéma corporel), which is neither a purely mental nor a merely physiological state. The body schema is not an image of the body, and so not an object of our awareness, but rather the bodily skills and capacities that shape our awareness of objects. (Carman 2004, p. 70)

The corporeal schema, then, speaks of how we posture and conduct ourselves in relation to the world and its objects. The fact that we are free agents and not mere passive recipients caught in a causal nexus allows us to engage the world actively. Here Merleau-Ponty's account of perception as active rather than passive and his understanding of our comportment in the world by way of the corporeal schema highlight the body's free agency in its ability to both disclose and transform the historical world.[14] In so far as an embodied subject is able to step back from the phenomenal field, participate in and alter intentionally her historico-cultural horizon, she is free; in so far as her capacity for expression and her ability to reconfigure her own history and given context are denied, her freedom is significantly diminished and in some cases almost eradicated. Where the freedom described above is blocked or severely constrained, it is as if the subject is somehow entangled or enmeshed in her environment involuntarily, having no way to emerge and distinguish herself from the phenomenal field in which she finds herself.

Fanon, although appreciative of Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on our embodied being-in-the world, is ultimately unsatisfied with what he takes as the latter's overly generic schema and thus introduces his notion of an historico-racial schema as that which is imposed by the white other. For Fanon, Merleau-Ponty's inclusive, universal rendering of the corporeal schema does not account for the disparity of experience between whites and blacks in a colonized and racially oppressive context. As Jeremy Weate explains, '[i]n the interracial encounter, the White is able to participate in the schematization of the world, whilst the Black may not, for his skin difference closes down the possibility of free agency' (2001, p. 172). I do not interpret Weate to claim that free agency for the colonized black person is completely blocked; rather, I see his statement as speaking in a rhetorical key in order to foreground the reality of the way in which embodiment signifies differently, especially in a racially oppressive context.

As mentioned previously, Fanon emphasizes how the history of black people is simultaneously erased and rewritten by the white imagination. This revisionist history defines what a black person is – intellectually inferior, in need of a (white) master, culturally incapable of contributing something of value to (white, European) society and so on. The black person is thrown into this narrative (in medias res) with his part rigidly scripted and his subjectivity constructed according to the dominant culture's interpretation of his 'essence' and history. Although the colonized find themselves 'given' this (white) story, Fanon claims that a time comes when the subjugated – often through a specific, painful event in which they are confronted personally with racism – begin to accept and internalize the mythology.[15]

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Fanon's dramatic retelling of the train episode and the pre-theoretical racial assumptions apparent in the child's remarks about him and black people in general serves a twofold function. First, the narrative calls attention to the deficiencies of Merleau-Ponty's corporeal schema. For example, in a colonized context, if a black man leaned too closely toward a white woman in order to hear her utterance, his bodily comportment would be interpreted quite differently from a white man's.[16] The white man is free to adjust his bodily attunement in order to hear the white woman, whereas the black man is not. What should be an ordinary, non-cognitive bodily adjustment becomes for the black man a movement that must be scrutinized from as many perspectives as possible, lest the 'wrong' move cost him his life. This asymmetrical restriction of the black man's freedom to make bodily adjustments of this sort prevents him from developing a personal 'style' which would enable him to emerge and differentiate himself from the phenomenal field in which he finds himself.[17] Second, the narrative highlights the way in which phenotypic or so-called 'racial'[18] differences – given the dominant narrative's negative interpretation of these differences – result in the oppressed group living in what amounts, historically speaking, to a different world than the dominant group. Not only is the black person hindered in, for example, his or her personal intellectual development, but the black person's bodily comportment – spatial proximity to the white person, whether or not to make eye contact with the white person, and so forth – must be scrutinized constantly so as not to overstep the ever-moving, invisible boundaries of a constrained, paranoid existence.

Reflecting upon his own and others' negative experiences of embodied difference in a racialized context, Fanon develops his historico-racial schema as a corrective to phenomenology's failure to acknowledge that a black person has a world quite differently than a white person. In addition, Fanon also elaborates what he calls a 'racial-epidermal schema'. Whereas the historico-racial schema brings to light the historical contingencies and interpretative manoeuvrings constituting the narratives imposed upon blacks, the racial-epidermal schema speaks to the sedimentation of the so-called 'black essence'. In other words, once the new narrative of what it means to be black has become naturalized – fixed in the social consciousness and incorporated in the authoritative discourses as well as the cultural and legal practices – the black essence is born.[19]

III. Interiorization of the white gaze

Once we transition to the racial-epidermal schema, the all-pervasiveness of the white gaze functions similarly to panoptic surveillance, keeping the black person under constant inspection.[20] Though speaking of the incarcerated, Michel Foucault's depiction of the inmate as 'the object of information, never a subject in communication' is a fitting description of the situation of black colonized subjects vis-à-vis their white colonizing counterparts (1995, p. 200).[21] As was the case with Fanon's account, the racial-epidermal schema rigidifies and blackness is essentialized via authoritative discourses, legal injunctions, and the establishment of various socio-political apparatuses and practices ensuring that the asymmetrical power relations remain one-sided and fixed. Similar to the Panopticon's ability to 'disindividualiz[e] power' and distribute it through various socio-political institutions and technologies, Fanon's schemata point to the systemic racial structures of a colonized society.[22] The disciplinary practices and apparatuses constituting colonialism, though not identical to the disciplinary practices and institutional mechanisms Foucault describes, nonetheless share close family resemblances with 'a machinery that assures dissymmetry, disequilibrium, difference' (Foucault 1995, p. 202). The racial-epidermal schema, broadly construed to include these grid-like 'disindividua-

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lized' power relations, enables even the most vulnerable and innocent members of society – the child on the train – to be an instrument of as well as an active participant in the authoritative, racialized discourses and apparatuses. Even if we grant that the child, because of his lack of cognitive development, is an unwilling or non-culpable participant in furthering racism and racial discourse, nonetheless, the effect – un-reflective racism in children – is a reality that confronts the black other on a daily basis and forces him to experience his phenotypic differences via the distorted perspective of the white other.

Describing his own encounter with the 'white gaze', Fanon writes, 'I am overdetermined from the outside. [. . .] The white gaze, the only valid one, is already dissecting me. I am fixed. Once their microtomes are sharpened, the Whites objectively cut sections of my reality' (2008, p. 95). Fanon's body, particularly his ever-present, always exposed black skin, 'overdetermined', dissected, and pieced together out of white-constructed meanings, takes on a life of its own. This hewn-together, socially constructed self eventually internalized by the colonized subject functions like a reverse shadow whose form establishes the boundaries of one's being while simultaneously obscuring future paths. As the encounter with the child continues and the refrain sounds once again, 'Look, a Negro! Maman, a Negro!', the mother, somewhat nervously, says, 'Ssh! You'll make him angry. Don't pay attention to him, monsieur, he doesn't realize you're just as civilized as we are' (Fanon 2008, p. 93).

Given the significance in the colonial project of 'culture' and determining who is and who is not 'civilized', it is instructive to examine briefly what some of the more well-known European philosophers have written on these topics. As Kant, Hegel, and other Western philosophers have asserted, the Western tradition, for which white European culture becomes the surrogate, is the standard for determining whether a nation has a culture or could possibly become cultured and civilized, and thus appear on the world historical stage at all.[23] For example, Kant, paving the way for Hegel, claims that true history begins with the Greeks and that non-Greek peoples are validated only through contact with the Greeks. On Kant's estimation, the (non)histories of non-Greeks are simply 'terra incognita', an amorphous X, lacking (Western) form and thus unable to manifest as intelligible. He then turns to the Jews to illustrate how a nation may enter a state of historical and cultural recognition.

> This happened with the Jewish nation (*Volk*) at the time of the Ptolemies through the Greek translation of the Bible, without which one would ascribe little credibility to their isolated records. From that point forward (if this beginning has been properly ascertained) one can pursue its narratives. And thus with all the other nations (*Völkern*). (Kant 2008, p. 118)

In his lectures on the philosophy of history, Hegel takes up this same line of thinking; however, in order to justify his position, he provides an elaborate narrative in which Geist's presence or absence indicates whether a nation has historical, cultural, or socio-political significance.[24] One might go as far as to claim that the mother's remark to Fanon has its own genealogical history which is consonant with the Western philosophical tradition; her awareness of this history matters little. Approached in this manner, echoes of Hegel's depiction of Africans as cannibalistic can still be heard in the child's cry, 'Maman, the Negro's going to eat me' (Fanon 2008, p. 93).

All of these discourses – whether philosophical, (pseudo)scientific, or idle chatter on the train – comprise the many pieces of Fanon's constructed self. Once the authoritative (white) discourses about blacks solidify and are dispersed through various institutions, power relations, and formal as well as informal communication networks, black subjugation takes root. The external aspect of this subjugation is socio-political in nature

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and is often manifest overtly, for example, in discriminatory legislation and unequal educational, employment, and housing opportunities. The internal aspect comes when the black person can no longer bear the weight of the white alienating gaze and finally internalizes the narrative. To return to Foucault's metaphor, when the black person breaks down and accepts the white mythos, there is a genuine sense in which panoptic surveillance is no longer needed.[25]

In short, Foucault's account of the effects upon incarcerated persons – those constantly seen but never seeing – is analogous to the experience of blacks in a colonial or similarly racialized context. Aware of his subjection 'to a field of visibility', the prisoner takes upon himself 'the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection' (Foucault 1995, p. 203). In other words, external power, whether expressed in physical presence or physical force, becomes, practically speaking, superfluous. When the gaze has been internally inscribed, ongoing incarceration characterizes the prisoner's existence.

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IV. Resistance through (re)narration: Fanon and Negritude as 'strategic essentialism'

In Fanon's description of his self-fragmenting descent, he draws attention to the sense of powerlessness he felt in a colonized context wherein mis-recognition by the white other was the norm. Even so, Fanon acknowledges the black person's agency or active participation in the present unfolding of this already-given white-scripted history. For example, his statements, 'I transported myself' and 'gave myself up as an object' acknowledge Fanon's agency, his own active involvement in accepting the white mythology (Fanon 2008, p. 92). This wilful decision, no doubt strained and made under psychological and emotional pressure from the dominant society, proves harmful to Fanon; nonetheless, this ability to choose, to act as a free (yet greatly constrained) agent highlights the fact that the black person in a colonized or similarly oppressive context is in reality not a mere res, a thing determined from the outside and lacking genuine freedom. Fanon, in fact, makes numerous statements affirming his freedom – a freedom that involves his ability to re-narrate his subjectivity and to refuse to be shackled by a pre-given white narrative.

> I find myself one day in the world, and I acknowledge one right for myself: the right to demand human behavior from the other. And one duty: the duty never to let my decisions renounce my freedom. [. . .] I am not a prisoner of History. I must not look for the meaning of my destiny in that direction. I must constantly remind myself that the real leap consists of introducing invention into life. In the world I am heading for, I am endlessly creating myself. (Fanon 2008, p. 204)[26]

These declarations in no way undermine Fanon's schemata, particularly his account of the coming-into-being of a socially constructed black essence once the racial-epidermal schema has been solidified. This is the case because neither the construction nor the subsequent establishment of 'blackness' is a necessary occurrence. Rather, as contingent inventions, they can be re-invented. Consequently, Fanon's agonized cries of alienation throughout *Black Skin, White Masks*, although genuine and intensely felt, should not be interpreted as despairing last words. Rather, he calls the agent to action, to refuse to be a 'prisoner of [white-scripted] History' and to create and live a new counter-narrative.

As Fanon understood acutely, there are of course many ways one can actively resist the dominant discourse. However, the very ability to resist presupposes an agent with volitional and rational capacities. Although employing a different grammar, Fanon, like

Foucault, did not view power relations – even extremely oppressive power relations – and human freedom as mutually exclusive.[27] A colonized person's ability to develop his or her personal and communal possibilities can, and, no doubt, is hindered significantly in racialized and oppressive contexts; however, for any form of resistance to emerge and to be actualized, the ability to act freely and intentionally against external, other-imposed constraints must remain. Granting this, significant emancipatory upshots are gained, namely, the always open possibility, for instance, of rewriting one's subjectivity or joining forces with others to engage in more systematic resistance tactics. In addition, as both Fanon and Foucault stress repeatedly, even though our own subjectivities are constituted in part (both positively and negatively) by others, the present social order is not a necessary order; rather, it is historical and contingent, open to alteration and even transformation. Fanon's writings and his life devoted to the cause of decolonization and the quest for true *liberté*, *égalité*, *fraternité* attest to his passionate faith and hope that genuine transformation is possible.

While recognizing that colonization and the construction of colonized subjectivities are contingent creations and hence malleable, Fanon nonetheless understood that the process of decolonization and renarrating new, positive identities and conceptions of 'blackness' would take time and would proceed in stages. As Ahluwalia observes, Fanon's complex relationship to the Negritude movement can help us to make sense of his strategy to move beyond the 'Manichean structure' of a colonized world (Ahluwalia 2010, p. 58). Given space constraints, my discussion of Negritude movement – particularly Negritude in its Césairean inflection – and its influence on Fanon, is limited and cursory.[28]

In an interview with René Depestre found at the end of *Discourse on Colonialism,* Césaire describes Negritude as 'a resistance to the [French] politics of assimilation' (2000, p. 88); it was the creation of a third way, a way beyond the false dichotomy of a civilized European world and a barbarian African world. For Césaire, Senghor, and other Negritude writers, the struggle for a positive African identity was a 'struggle against alienation', and '[t]hat struggle gave birth to Negritude' (Césaire 2000, p. 89). In light of the degrading, demeaning constructions of blackness internalized by Antilleans, Césaire recognized the need both to deracinate the negative Eurocentric depictions that the colonized had come to accept, and to recapture and reinvigorate the term *nègre* with positive, life-affirming, and culturally significant connotations. As Césaire explains, Antilleans had come to associate shame with the term *nègre*; consequently, they sought 'all sorts of euphemism for Negro; [. . .] That's when we adopted the term *nègre*, as a term of defiance. [. . .] There was in us a defiant will, and we found a violent affirmation in the words *nègre*, and negritude' (2000, p. 89). Because blacks had been forced to live a white world, as Césaire puts it, in an 'atmosphere of rejection', they came to see themselves as inferior (2000, p. 91). As a result, Césaire was convinced that blacks must create a new identity for themselves, an identity affirming the concrete reality and beauty of their phenotypic differences: black skin must not be seen as a sign of negativity, ugliness, evil, and so forth. Along the same lines, black history must be reconceived, or rather discovered through black eyes and reinterpreted to the world, as 'a history that contains certain cultural elements of great value' (Césaire 2000, p. 91). In short, Césaire states, 'we asserted that our Negro heritage was worthy of respect, and that this heritage was not relegated to the past, that its values were values that could still make an important contribution to the world' (2000, p. 92).

Unquestionably, Fanon greatly admired his former high school teacher, the political activist and poet extraordinaire, Aimé Césaire. In fact, Césaire, influenced not only Fanon's own thinking about the need to develop a positive, black social identity, but this bard of black poetry and prophetic prose helped to inspire countless young Antilleans, as

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Foucault would say, to imagine themselves otherwise. Fanon, however, did more than merely drink deeply from Césaire's intellectual well; he likewise put his teacher's ideas into practice, albeit in a distinctively Fanonian way.[29] Negritude was, after all, a movement concerned with bringing about social change. 'Negritude was a theory that promoted praxis toward the end of transforming [various socio-political, cultural, and economic] aspects of African life worlds in the best interests of persons of African descent' and beyond (Rabaka 2009, p. 171). Like Césaire, Fanon was a Pan-Africanist, and although his version of Pan-Africanism often brought him into conflict with activists of various stripes,[30] nonetheless, he shared with the Negritude writers a desire to recover African values and to share those values with the world.

However, as Rabaka observes, although 'Negritude [...] was the very foundation upon which Frantz Fanon developed his discourse on decolonization', from the beginning 'Fanon was not an uncritical disciple of Cesairean Negritude' (2009, p. 171). In other words, Fanon's appreciation of the movement was not without misgivings and, at times, sharp criticisms. For example, through the influence of his brother, Joby, Fanon came to see Césaire's 'cultural nationalism' as promoting a 'vanguardism and top-down' approach that he would later attack in his book, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Rabaka 2009, p. 171).

Here it is important to mention Jean-Paul Sartre who, in addition to Césaire, likewise impacted Fanon's thinking. Sartre developed his particular version of Negritude in distinction from Senghor and Césaire's and yet in critical dialogue with their respective projects. Here too Fanon's relation with Sartre is just as complicated as his relation with Césaire. For example, although reluctantly, Fanon concluded that some (but not all) aspects of Sartre's critique of Negritude ought to be taken seriously.[31] As Memmi explains, Sartre had argued that Negritude was a weak phase in the black emancipatory struggle; consequently, Negritude is reduced to a moment of negativity (Memmi 1971, p. 255).[32] Fanon agrees that Negritude is a response to the violence of colonization; however, he does not agree that Negritude is mere negativity. Consequently, I find Memmi's criticisms of Fanon overly severe and driven too much by his particular psychological reading of Fanon's failure to return to his West Indian roots. On my interpretation, Fanon's relation to the Negritude movement and his acceptance in part of Sartre's critique is ambivalent and more multilayered than Memmi is willing to grant.[33] On the one hand, Fanon chides Sartre's view of Negritude for having forgotten that 'the black man suffers in his body quite differently from the white man' (2008, p. 117).[34] On the other hand, Fanon's agreement with Sartre's assessment that Negritude was a phase through which one must pass rather than abide, might be interpreted as something akin to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notion of 'strategic essentialism'.[35] According to Spivak's account, the subjugated group, in order to move beyond binaries such as colonized/colonizer, develops an essentialist identity to promote group pride and unity, to advance and achieve specific, socio-political goals, and to foster healing. This stage thus has a decidedly therapeutic function; once its purposes are accomplished, it (qua essentialist narrative, not qua positive social identity narrative) is altered and expanded in order to address new historical contexts and conflicts; hence the denomination, strategic essentialism. In other words, Fanon can reject essentialized notions of blackness and still affirm the crucial aspects of Césairean Negritude – the development and continued fostering of a positive, black, social identity, a non-repetitive 'return' to and ongoing reappropriation of African values, and a revolutionary call to decolonization and a historically attuned humanism.[36]

In other words, a Fanonian strategic essentialism affirms the reality of black identity as a social reality constructed for specific purposes by black subjects under particular historical

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constraints and contexts. The first-stage of the strategy demands a response, which qua first in the long process of identity deconstruction and reconstruction must stand in the starkest terms possible; thus, Fanon accepts a variation of the Hegelian–Sartrean dialectic – Negritude as a dialectical opposite to its thesis, white supremacy.[37] Fanon's dialectic, however, is more historically attuned, as it takes very seriously the differences between black and white embodiment not only in the world but in the (post)colonial world. Recognizing that the stages will look different as one moves from the colonial to the postcolonial world (and beyond), Fanon understands that this first-stage binary construction qua essentialist discourse must be reconfigured to address adequately the varied and ever-changing socio-historical contexts. As strategic essentialism's therapeutic function has its effect, the group will eventually move to an increasing more complex view of its identity as a social construction, which by its nature is something more than a binary opposite reactionary discourse. This historical movement allows the political, philosophical, and cultural insights gained over time – whether through the Negritude writers or from other quarters, including those Europeans with whom the group critically engaged – to be taken up and reharmonized to meet the group's present needs at this later stage of development.

With my sketch of Fanon's recognition of something like Spivak's strategic essentialism, coupled with Fanon's acceptance of Césaire's non-static notion of return and the need to create a positive black identity given the psychological violence exacted on the colonized, we can counter David Scott's criticism of Fanon. According to Scott, 'the Fanonian story licenses too unreflective an idea of an essential native subject' (1999, p. 205). More specifically, Scott points to Foucault's rejection of the 'repressive hypothesis' as elaborated in *History of Sexuality*, volume 1.[38] In broad strokes, according to the repressive hypothesis, in order to find our true, deepest self and thus lead a felicitous life, we must acknowledge sexuality and our repressed libidinal desires as constituting our core identity. In light of these claims, it is imperative that we liberate ourselves sexually in order to allow what and who we are to manifest itself fully. Foucault is suspicious not only of this particular account of a repressed sexual identity, but also, to use Scott's term, of any 'narrative of liberation' thus formulated. Addressing this very issue, Foucault explains,

> I have always been somewhat suspicious of the notion of liberation, because if it is not treated with precautions and within certain limits, one runs the risk of falling back on the idea that there exists a human nature or base that, as a consequence of certain historical, economic, and social processes, has been concealed, alienated, or imprisoned in and by mechanisms of repression. According to this hypothesis, all that is required is to break these repressive deadlocks and man will be reconciled with himself, rediscover his nature or regain contact with his origin, and reestablish a full and positive relationship with himself. (2001a, p. 282)

As Foucault makes clear a few lines later, he is not dismissing or negating liberatory endeavours *per se*; after all, he acknowledges and affirms throughout his writings subjugated groups who have struggled for freedom from oppression. In the present context, for example, he clarifies his previous comments, emphasizing that he is 'not trying to say that liberation as such, or this or that form of liberation, does not exist: when a colonized people attempts to liberate itself from its colonizers, this is indeed a practice of liberation in the strict sense' (Foucault 2001a, p. 282). While acknowledging genuine struggles for liberation, such as those he witnessed in Tunisia, Foucault wants to guard against the notion that once the oppressive or repressive forces are removed, individuals can then be reconciled with their nature or originary self.

According to Scott, Fanon's narrative is a variation on the 'repressive hypothesis' theme applied to the colonized, wherein the latter are redeemed via a return to their 'native' identity. '[T]he idea is that the colonized are alienated from a harmonious

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identity; that this alienation is fostered by colonial institutions that repress the colonized self and prevent the colonized people from achieving a higher and unifying consensus' (Scott 1999, p. 204). Not only does Scott worry that Fanon's account of liberation 'too often presupposes the metaphysical idea of an essential nature, an essential human foundation that is prior to the imposition of the historical repression', (1999, p. 206), but he likewise maintains that Fanon's understanding of power – because, in Scott's view, cast as primarily repressive – is fundamentally at odds with Foucault's emphasis on the productive side of power. In other words, Scott interprets Fanon's narrative of liberation as focusing chiefly on developing strategies and actions that remove oppressive power from the colonized so that 'the self that has been long alienated is restored to itself; the split of alienation, of division, is healed' (1999, p. 206).

Foucault, in contrast, because he stresses the productive aspect of power – as Scott puts it, the ways in which power 'produces a reorganization of subjectivity and a reorganization of the games of truth rather than a repression of essential ones' – approaches emancipatory concerns with a different set of questions. Scott then enumerates examples of typical Foucauldian-type questions: 'What is the relation between the colonized/postcolonized subject and the games of truth into which s/he is inserted, through which s/he has been produced as a colonized/postcolonized subject? What are the apparatuses, disciplines, and institutions through which colonial/postcolonial subjectification has been enacted?' and so forth (1999, p. 206).

On the one hand, Foucault writes at a later socio-historical moment and undoubtedly comes to the subject matter with a different set of questions, as he utilizes his own distinctive archaeological and genealogical methodologies. On the other hand, Fanon, as we have seen, is acutely attuned to the social construction of colonized subjects via hegemonic discourses, institutional apparatuses, and panoptic-like surveillance technologies. In light of these overlaps, we ought not conclude that Fanon failed to grasp the productive side of power. Rather, given Fanon's historical context, namely, the fact that he wrote as a black other in a colonized 'Manichean' world seeking to decolonize subjugated bodies and souls, it makes sense that he would lay stress on the oppressive side of dominating power relations. Nonetheless, his writings evince a keen awareness of how the colonial system produces not only colonized subjects but colonizers as well, and Fanon sees the need for re-formation for both types of socially constructed subjects. I do, however, agree with Scott regarding the difference between Fanon's explicit appeals to some kind of universal human nature to ground his moral claims and Foucault's guardedness and at times seeming antipathy to such claims.[39]

V. Fanon and Foucault on humanism and rejecting the 'blackmail' of the Enlightenment

Fanon's affirmation of a common nature uniting all humans motivates (in part) his desire to articulate a new, more inclusive, 'race'-conscious humanism, something much different from the Eurocentric humanism(s) promoted by the Enlightenment yet not completely severed from the latter either. Fanon's experiences as a black other in white, colonial, 'Manichean' world, as Ahluwalia points out, 'created the conditions that necessitated the new humanism', which 'was not a radical break with Enlightenment humanism, because of the way in which he drew on Marxism and existentialism'; even so, Fanon became increasingly aware of the need to expand, deconstruct, and revise the previous categories 'because the issue of race problematized Marxist universalism' (Ahluwalia 2010, p. 62). As many scholars have noted, the term 'humanism' has many meanings and variants; yet, a common thread in most

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descriptions of humanism is an appeal to some universal, shared human nature, structure, or set of capacities distinguishing humans from other animals and thus granting them a unique dignity and worth. Disagreements ensue, as one can imagine, over which capacities to include, how to define those capacities, and how to define and specify 'human nature'. In addition, historically speaking, various humanisms or humanistic strains have been taken up by religious and socio-political movements – from American Christianity in the Antebellum period to the European colonizing project to Stalinism – touting equality and liberty for all while simultaneously exploiting and even exterminating those scripted as inferior, subhuman, or a threat to 'progress'. Given its unsavory historical track record, one can understand the post-modern suspicion of humanistic grand narratives.

Nonetheless, might it be possible and worthwhile to recover certain humanistic themes, improvising and reharmonizing them in a more historically attuned multi-key composition whose final movement continues to be written? Once again, it is helpful to bring Fanon and Foucault into conversation. In the closing section of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon underscores the need for the colonized subject to be future-oriented and to actively reject the white mythos while creatively carving out a new present. For Fanon, given his Algerian context, this included promoting physical violence and outright war if need be in order to pave the way for a new humanism in which no man or woman would be subjected to an enslaved or colonized existence.[40] Yet, his advocacy for violence was never glorification of violence;[41] rather, it was understood as analogous to the violence that must be performed in surgery in order to remove or at least halt the spreading of disease so that healing may begin.[42] In other words, because of the entrenched, systemic, oppressive character of colonialism in which the world of the colonized is transformed into a normalized lawless space, Fanon believed the decolonization phase could only be accomplished through violence, that is, through an armed struggle for liberation.[43] Commenting on the instrumental role of violence in Fanon's thought, Ahluwalia writes, '[c]olonialism forces violence to become a cleansing agent which has the cathartic effect of creating a new identity both at the individual and collective levels' (2010, p. 64).[44] Even if one – and I place myself in this camp – ultimately remains committed to non-violent forms of revolution, one must at least make every effort to grasp, or better, to feel in some way the bloody history of Algeria where men, women, and children were massacred en masse repeatedly for the sake of Europe's 'mission'.[45] Fanon, no doubt, felt the burden of that history, and its carnage convinced him that violence – at least with respect to Algeria's part in the unfolding drama – was the required passageway through which the colonized must travel in order '[f]or Europe, for ourselves and for humanity, [. . . to] make a new start, develop a new way of thinking, and endeavour to create a new man' (Fanon 2004, p. 239).[46]

At this point, it is instructive to engage Foucault's reflections on his own relationship to the Enlightenment in order to highlight later several commonalities between his and Fanon's critical yet not dismissive attitude toward this complex socio-political, philosophical movement. In his essay, 'What is Enlightenment?', Foucault describes how his historical or critical ontology is different from, yet indebted to, the Enlightenment 'event'. As he explains, his project 'rooted in the Enlightenment' is a 'type of philosophical interrogation' which 'simultaneously problematizes man's relation to the present, man's historical mode of being, and the constitution of the self as autonomous subject' (Foucault 2001b, p. 312). This is a concise summary of what I have labelled the 'double-construction' of subjects, which Foucault seeks to hold in tension rather than reduce to one side or the other. (We see this same awareness of the 'two sides' of subject-construction in Fanon.) Foucault goes on to state that his connection with the Enlightenment tradition is not in

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terms of 'faithfulness to doctrinal elements but, rather, the permanent reactivation of an attitude – that is, of a philosophical ethos that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era' (2001b, p. 312). Rather than accept the 'blackmail' of the Enlightenment – an either/or false dichotomy stating that one must either remain within Enlightenment rationalism or become a critic of the Enlightenment and 'its principles of rationality' (Foucault 2001b, p. 313) – Foucault rejects this dichotomy and opts for a different path.

> We must try to proceed with the analysis of ourselves as beings who are historically determined, to a certain extent, by the Enlightenment. Such an analysis implies a series of historical inquiries that are as precise as possible; [...] they will be oriented toward the 'contemporary limits of the necessary', that is, toward what is not or is no longer indispensable for the constitution of ourselves as autonomous subjects. (Foucault 2001b, p. 313)

Here Foucault admits that those living post-Enlightenment are nonetheless shaped by the effects of that socio-political, cultural, philosophical, and institutional event. In other words, he acknowledges that an event from a past episteme (the Classical episteme of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) can and does shape the subjects of a subsequent episteme (the modern episteme of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). The 'determinism' he mentions is of course historical, contingent, and thus mutable. Our task as free (and I would add, rational) beings then becomes to investigate, analyse, and expose those limits that have been presented and accepted as necessary. Fanon wholeheartedly agrees.

Foucault then criticizes what he views as a conflation of the (European) Enlightenment-event and (European versions of) humanism. The latter, humanism, he characterizes as a 'set of themes' emerging periodically, 'over time, in European societies' and 'always tied to value judgments' (Foucault 2001b, p. 313). Foucault observes that humanism as a concept is too vague, having multiple contents in different periods and having been employed and claimed by a wide range of groups – for example, Christians, Marxists, and Stalinists alike have carried out programmes of social 'reform' under the banner of humanism. Yet, he adds, '[f]rom this, we must not conclude that everything which has ever been linked with humanism is to be rejected, but that the humanistic thematic is in itself too supple, too diverse, too inconsistent to serve as an axis for reflection' (Foucault 2001b, p. 314). Though the first part of Foucault's statement is itself vague, we may plausibly interpret it to mean that not everything characteristically or commonly associated with humanism – fighting for workers' rights, prisoners' rights, patients' rights, upholding the dignity of human beings, speaking out against various forms of socio-political and economic exploitation of humans, and so forth – ought to be neglected or jettisoned. Such an interpretation coincides with Foucault's own leanings as manifest in his writings on the prison and medical industries.

For Foucault to criticize the term 'humanism' simply because its meaning changes over time seems completely inconsistent with his general theoretical commitments. Is it not the case that 'madness', 'criminal', and countless other concepts change in relation to their historical context (episteme), institutional 'affiliation', and function within differing discursive communities? Assuming an affirmative answer, I contend that what Foucault takes issue with is the ever-changing notion of humanism functioning 'as an axis for reflection' (Foucault 2001b, p. 314). A few pages later, for example, he enumerates specifically the three axes 'whose specificity and whose interconnections have to be analyzed: the axis of knowledge, the axis of power, the axis of ethics' (Foucault 2001b, p. 318). No doubt, knowledge, power, and ethics are also context specific and manifest different meanings in different discursive disciplines and *epistemai*. Yet, there is something more basic about these concepts structurally speaking. That is, whatever they

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mean in a particular historical period, they occupy a fundamental place in each episteme and exert a wide-reaching influence over the body politic, shaping who we are individually and collectively. These three axes play a central role in Foucault's 'historical ontology of ourselves', which, as he maintains, must answer the following questions: 'How are we constituted as subjects of our own knowledge? How are we constituted as subjects who exercise or submit to power relations? How are we constituted as moral subjects of our own actions?' (Foucault 2001b, p. 318).

To be clear, in no way do I mean to suggest that Foucault embraces openly a traditional humanism entailing the acceptance of some shared, transhistorical, transcultural quality, qualities, or essence. Because Foucault holds that the Enlightenment-event brought with it – even as it simultaneously failed in some ways to take advantage and develop this insight – an awareness of its own 'historical consciousness' (Foucault 2001b, p. 314), he is suspicious of humanisms that staticize some (preferred) quality or qualities of human beings and then refuse any philosophical (or other) interrogation of those petrified, alleged essences.

Foucault's advocacy of a critical ethos via an historical ontology of ourselves takes its cue from Kant and the latter's interest in exploring our limits; however, Foucault's concern is not with discerning what epistemological limits we must take care not to exceed. Rather, his concern with limits has to do with analysing critically what 'is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory' to see whether these alleged immovable and transhistorical givens (i.e. limitations) are in fact 'singular, contingent, and the products of arbitrary constraints' (Foucault 2001b, p. 315). In other words, Foucault's version of critical philosophy involves adopting an ongoing attitude of interrogation of alleged givens; for if these limitations turn out to be historically constructed and imposed for socio-political, economic, or other norm-producing ends, then a transgressive act might be precisely what is needed to allow us to imagine ourselves otherwise than we are. In sum, Foucault seeks 'to transform the [Kantian] critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible crossing-over [*franchissement*]' (2001b, p. 315).

Foucault's critical project, as he himself explains, is not transcendental in the Kantian sense but thoroughly historical, genealogical, and archaeological. Elaborating how his methodological approaches, as well as how his aims differ from Kant's, Foucault states that his version of criticism does not seek to make 'metaphysics possible' or to make metaphysics a science; rather, it involves an historical analysis of 'the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying' (Foucault 2001b, p. 315).

Foucault then highlights his amended archaeology, or what I one might call his expanded archaeology, which, as he explains, does 'not seek to identify the universal structures of all knowledge [*connaissance*] or of all possible moral action, but will seek to treat the instances of discourse that articulate what we think, say, and do as so many historical events' (2001b, p. 315). Here he underscores the historical, contextualized character of his investigations, which is also to admit that knowledge unearthed via his expanded archaeology is partial, historically restricted, and thus always open to revision. From the many discursive events it analyses, archaeology proceeds synchronically, extracting historical conditioning rules (historical *a prioris*), to which genealogy, operating diachronically, provides a fitting counterpart. Genealogy's task – at least one of them – is to retrace the various contingencies that have shaped us in order to open up a new space for self-(re)formation or constituting ourselves anew. In sum, Foucault's critical philosophical ethos '[seeks] to give a new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of

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freedom' (2001b, p. 316). Once again, we find significant overlaps in Foucault and Fanon, namely, both are concerned with unmasking the historical, contingent, and socio-political character of subject-formation, which is all too often disguised as necessary and universal.

By connecting what I have said above regarding Foucault's critique of humanism with his promotion of local rather than global projects for socio-political change, we can highlight additional consonant as well as dissonant places with respect to Foucault's complex response to humanism vis-à-vis Fanon's view. As Foucault himself states, he is for local transformations 'which concern our ways of being and thinking, relations to authority, relations between the sexes, the way we perceive insanity or illness' and so forth (Foucault 2001b, p. 316). Given Foucault's predilection in his writings to side with the marginalized, we want, as I suggested earlier, to add to his general statements about local transformations examples such prisoners' or workers' rights. However, is this a legitimate Foucauldian move, or does it require Foucault to make certain metaphysical commitments that he finds unsavory?

As we have seen, Foucault believes in and prefers 'these partial transformations' noted in the previous paragraph; however, he is suspicious of global 'programs for a new man', which have been used by various groups to exploit, manipulate, and even attempt to eradicate those portrayed as foreign, other, or enemy. In light of these statements, we may conclude that it is humanism as an ideology, as a grand over-arching metanarrative that Foucault disavows passionately. His comments do not suggest a complete rejection of the concerns for the marginalized and oppressed with which humanism is commonly associated. Nor does his critical philosophical attitude downplay the importance of freedom. His project, in fact, requires free beings with rational capacities. 'I shall characterize the philosophical ethos appropriate to the critical ontology of ourselves as a historico-practical test of the limits we may go beyond, and thus as work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings' (Foucault 2001b, p. 316). Yet, Foucault, in contrast to Fanon, is reticent to accept the idea of human rights as necessarily linked to some kind of universal, transcultural human nature. For Fanon, who presupposes a shared nature common to all humans irrespective of 'race', ethnicity, gender, and so forth, it follows that all humans possess certain rights which should never be violated. For example, because human beings are free agents in a way different from all other animals, they ought not to be treated as things. To do so is to violate one of their fundamental rights qua human beings. Foucault assumes a minimalist metaphysical position in that his account takes for granted that humans possess rational and volitional capacities. However, as I read Foucault, even if he were to make explicit his minimal metaphysical commitments, he would not want to claim that certain fundamental rights follow naturally or necessarily from these rational and volitional structures. Rather, I imagine that he would allege that whatever rights appear in our archaeological and genealogical analyses of an historical episteme are specific to the particular socio-political institutions and cultural practices of that episteme. If these observations are correct, then it signals a significant philosophical dissonance between the two – a philosophical dissonance, which for Foucault, has the potential to undermine his otherwise insightful, penetrating socio-political insights.[47]

Returning to Fanon, his vision throughout his works was underwritten by a call to human solidarity, a challenge to both blacks and whites and to all human beings to 'move away from the inhuman voices of their respective ancestors so that a genuine communication can be born' (Fanon 2008, p. 206). Uninterested in debates as to which 'race' was superior and which inferior, Fanon asks, '[w]hy not simply try to touch the other, feel the other, discover each other? Was my freedom not given me to build the world of you, man?' (2008, p. 206). Like Foucault, Fanon refused to accept contingent, historically

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formed narratives as universal and necessary truths. Nor was Fanon content to succumb to the 'blackmail' of the Enlightenment. Note, for example, the ambivalence in his largely negative description of Europe's mixed contributions to human history:

> The Third World must start over a new history of man which takes account of not only the occasional prodigious theses maintained by Europe but also its crimes, the most heinous of which have been committed at the very heart of man, the pathological dismembering of his functions and the erosion of his unity, and in the context of community, the fracture, the stratification and the bloody tensions fed by class, and finally, on the immense scale of humanity, the racial hatred, slavery, exploitation and, above all, the bloodless genocide whereby one and a half billion men have been written off. (Fanon 2004, p. 238)[48]

Rather, Fanon sought to transform and re-form a truly universal humanism appreciative of all cultures, embracing the 'reciprocal relativism' of each for the purpose of mutual enrichment and genuine *fraternité* (Fanon 1969, p. 44)[49] – humanism as a symphony composed of many cultural voices, each of which has a distinctive part contributing to the beauty of the whole (ongoing) composition. Fanon's historically sensitive humanism neither turns a deaf ear to the cries of lives lost to the colonial project, nor chases frantically after 'European achievements', 'increased productivity', or a nostalgic return to nature (2004, pp. 237, 238). Fanon's quest began and concluded with a call to 'reexamine the question of man', 'to invent a man in full, something which Europe has been incapable of achieving' (2004, pp. 237, 236).[50]

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Notes

1. Ahluwalia (2010) stresses the significance of understanding not only Fanon, but Sartre, Camus, Derrida, Cixous, and a host of other 'border intellectuals' in relation to their Algerian ties, both literal and metaphorical.
2. Fanon published his letter of resignation in his work, *Toward the African Revolution*. Here are a few relevant excerpts: '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 depersonalization. What is the status of Algeria? A systematized de-humanization. It was an absurd gamble to undertake at whatever cost, to bring into existence a certain number of values, when the lawlessness, the inequality, the multi-daily murder of man were raised to the status of legislative principles. The social structure existing in Algeria was hostile to any attempt to put the individual back where he belonged' (Fanon 1969, p. 53).
3. As Robert Young points out, although Fanon 'took no part in the FLN military campaigns, apart from organizing a new supply route through Mali in 1960', he did 'play a significant part in the international political campaigns which the FLN, more than the French themselves, realized was of almost equal significance to the physical struggle' (Young 2001, p. 277).
4. For a quite different reading of Fanon's identification with Algeria, see Memmi, 'La vie impossible de Frantz Fanon'. Memmi interprets Fanon's association and attempt to become Algerian as part of his failure to accept and to return to his West Indian roots. 'Son vrai problème en vérité n'était ni comment être français ni comment être algérien, mais comment être antillais' (Memmi 1971, p. 272). ('In reality, his true problem was neither how to be French, nor how to be Algerian, but rather how to be Antillean'. My translation).
5. Memmi likewise comments on Fanon's homelessness. However, once again, Memmi's reading focuses on what he understands as Fanon's psychological motivations for his actions. According to Memmi, once Fanon decided that he could neither be French nor West Indian, he sought solidarity with the Algerian struggle for liberation. However, when the Algerian movement became too nationalistic for Fanon, he had nothing left but to postulate the vision of a new, universal humanity. As Memmi puts it, '[p]our achever cette fuite en avant, pour résoudre son drame, que lui restait-il, sinon de proposer un homme totalement inédit, dans un monde totalement reconstruit?' (1971, p. 248). ('In order to complete this leap forward to

resolve his personal drama, what was left for him, if not to propose an utterly new human being, in an utterly reconstructed world?' My translation).

6. JanMohamed (1992, p. 97) lists W.E.B. du Bois, Richard Wright, and Zora Neale Hurston as examples of specular intellectuals and playwright Wole Soyinka and novelists Salman Rushdie and Anton Shammas as examples of syncretic intellectuals.
7. See also Gibson (2003). Gibson argues, on the one hand, 'Fanon contested the European liberal humanist view of the *subject*'; on the other hand, unlike many postmodern thinkers, Fanon 'did not abandon the concept of the subject nor that of subjugated knowledge' (2003, p. 7).
8. The French text reads, '*tiens un nègre*', which can also be translated, 'Look! A Nigger'. Perhaps various English translations have presented a kinder, gentler version, thus concealing the 'sting' produced by the child's repeated utterance. I have focused my analysis on Fanon's critical engagement with Merleau-Ponty; however, Fanon is also throughout this chapter engaged in critical dialogue with Jean-Paul Sartre. For a detailed explanation of the ways in which Fanon takes up Sartrean concepts and schematics for his own purposes, see Sekyi-Otu (1996), especially pp. 65–72.
9. See also van Leewan (2007), 296 ff. Van Leewan discusses the 'gaze' from the perspective of the racist in order to give an account of the motivational structure of racism. In addition, van Leeuwen's essay offers several practical anti-racism strategies (see especially 2007, pp. 303–5).
10. On Merleau-Ponty's account, 'there is no inner man, man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself' (1962, p. xii).
11. The body, rather than an object for an 'I think' to grasp, 'is a grouping of lived-through meanings which moves toward its equilibrium' (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 177).
12. See also Merleau-Ponty for a discussion of how our body inhabits the world and how our bodily experience of movement 'provides us with a way of access to the world and the object' (1962, p. 162).
13. For a discussion of sensations belonging to certain fields, see Merleau-Ponty (1962, p. 351).
14. Fanon describes with ironic overtones Merleau-Ponty's account as follows, '[a] slow construction of my self as a body in a spatial and temporal world seems to be the schema. It is not imposed on me; it is rather a definitive structuring of my self and the world' (2008, p. 91).
15. In Fanon's words, '[d]isoriented, incapable of confronting the Other, the white man, who had no scruples about imprisoning me, I transported myself on that particular day far, very far, from myself, and gave myself up as an object' (2008, p. 92). See also Memmi (1971). As Memmi explains, an oppressive racialized relation, such as the slave/master or colonized/colonizer relationship, 'réclame que le Noir renonce a lui-même comme Noir. [. . .] l'un des résultants de cet effort contre nature est, à côté de la guerre menée par le Blanc contre le Noir, une guerre livrée par le Noir a lui-même, conséquence de la première, et peut-être plus destructrice encore, car elle est entreprise de l'intérieur et sans répit' (1971, pp. 252–253). ('[. . .] demands that the Black renounce himself as Black. [. . .] one of the results of this straining against nature is – next to the war waged by the White against the Black – a war, which is a consequence of the first, fought by the Black against himself. This second war is perhaps more destructive than the first, because it is undertaken internally and continues relentlessly'. My translation).
16. See also van Leewan's discussion of bell hooks's phrase, 'the white control of the black gaze' (2008, p. 58).
17. Of course, the asymmetry in view here applies to black women as well but with different dynamics and potentially different (bodily) consequences.
18. As to my personal position on race, I situate myself within the racial constructionism camp, which denies any form of biobehavioural racial essentialism yet considers race an important social reality worthy of our discourse, study and continued reflection. For a helpful discussion of three dominant positions on race in contemporary race theory, see Mallon (2006).
19. On the movement and interpretation of Fanon's schemata, I concur with Weate's analysis, which characterizes the racial epidermal schema as 'a later stage in psychosomatic disintegration and alienation' (2001, p. 174). Weate goes on to discuss the movement to the epidermal schema as Fanon's attempt to trace a 'genealogy of racial essentialism' (2001, p. 173).
20. By the phrase 'white gaze' I have in mind the white mythological narrative as manifest in the cultural consciousness and systematically expressed (both consciously and unconsciously) in the cultural institutions, practices, and ethos of a given society.

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21. Although Foucault has been criticized for 'gender blindness', and, as Pal Ahluwalia puts it paraphrasing a criticism by postcolonial scholar, Robert Young, for a seemingly 'calculated absence of the colonial world in his work', Ahluwalia argues that Foucault's time in Tunisia and the distance it provided for critical reflection on French culture, as well as his engagement with the Iranian revolution, affected Foucault's project profoundly, compelling him to speak and write in a more explicitly ethico-politic key. See, for example, Ahluwalia (2010), especially pp. 145–153.
22. See, for example, Fanon's critique of Mannoni in chapter four of *Black Skin, White Masks*. Contra Mannoni's claims, Fanon draws attention to the fact that the very 'structure of South Africa is a racist structure' (2008, p. 68). David Scott describes Fanon's account of the all-pervasiveness of colonial power in the latter's book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, as 'constitut[ing] a total regime of systemic and systematic brutality, occupying simultaneously physical and psychological space, inscribing its effects in the very organization of desire of the colonized. It is a form of power, that is, moreover, resistant to reason, and therefore to negotiation' (Scott 1999, p. 203).
23. See also Nigel Gibson (2003), chapters 1 and 2. As Gibson observes, '[c]olonial thought, from travel literature of the nineteenth century to administrative and psychological services of the twentieth, was built on Enlightenment categories embellished by imperial scientism' (2003, p. 6).
24. Robert Bernasconi has devoted several essays to the study of Hegel and his Eurocentrism. See, for example, Bernasconi (1998, 2000).
25. See Weate (2001), p. 176. See also, Fanon (2008), p. 92.
26. Fanon goes on to say, '[t]he density of History determines none of my acts. I am my own foundation. And it is by going beyond the historical and instrumental given that I initiate my cycle of freedom' (2008, p. 205).
27. See, for example, Foucault (1982). In this late essay, Foucault provides a lucid discussion of his understanding of power relations and how they presuppose free subjects.
28. For a detailed analysis of Césaire and the Negritude movement, as well as Césaire's influence on Fanon, see Rabaka (2009), chapters four and five. See also Bouvier (2008, 2010).
29. See, for example, Bouvier (2010), especially 146–150. Among other things, Bouvier discusses Fanon's complex understanding of the role of violence in the process of decolonization, noting how Fanon draws upon Césairean-inspired images and metaphors as he develops his own distinctive 'radical' project.
30. See Rabaka's discussion on Fanon's Pan-Africanism (2009, pp. 167–168).
31. See, for example, Sartre (1948), especially p. xli. In addition to his claim that Negritude is a 'weak stage' [*le temps faible*], an antithesis in the dialectic of which 'white supremacy is the thesis' [*la suprématie du blanc est la thèse*] and that which 'exists for its own destruction' [*est pour se détruire*], Sartre also claims that Negritude is intended as a preparatory stage for the ultimate synthesis, namely the 'realization of a human in a society without races' [*réalisation de l'humain dans une société sans races*] (1948, p. xli; my translation). As Rabaka points out, particularly with respect to the idea of a postracial society, Sartrean Negritude is at odds with both Césaire and Senghor's articulations of Negritude. See, for example, Rabaka (2009), chapter four, 'Aimé Césaire and Leopold Senghor: Revolutionary Negritude and Radical New Negroes', especially pp. 112–119. Rabaka also underscores how Sartre and the (white) Marxists generally speaking have failed to see the connection between capitalism and colonialism and capitalism and racism, whereas Césaire and other black radicals, having lived an exploited existence, refuse to make colonialism and racism secondary issues (2009, see especially pp. 116–119).
32. Regarding Sartre's influence on Fanon, Memmi writes: '[Sartre] déclarant que la Négritude n'est jamais que le temps faible dans la dialectique de libération du Noir. Fanon a fortement été impressionné par Sartre, jusqu'a la fin de sa vie, [...] Et lorsque, dan Orphée noir, Sartre a tente de réduire la Négritude a sa négativité [...] Fanon en a été bouleverse; il a eu le sentiment d'avoir été expulse de lui-même. Il a ce sentiment, il est bouleverse, mais il accepte les conclusions de Sartre' (1971, p. 255). ('[Sartre] declared that Negritude was nothing but the weak stage in the dialectic of Black liberation. To the very end of his life, Fanon was greatly impressed by Sartre, [...] And when, in 'Black Orpheus', Sartre attempted to reduce Negritude to its negativity [...] Fanon was shattered; he has the experience of having been expelled from himself. He has this experience; he is shattered, yet he accepts Sartre's conclusions.' My translation).

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33. Ironically, aspects of Memmi's critique of Sartre, on my reading of Fanon, are harmonious with Fanon's own position on Sartre. For example, Memmi states that even if one concedes Sartre's point about Negritude as a negative phase in the dialectic, one must still understand the historical and embodied significance of this phase. See, for example (1971, p. 256). Bouvier (2010, especially p. 90) likewise captures some of the ambivalence of Fanon's relation to Sartre's thought.
34. Fanon makes similar remarks earlier in the chapter. For example, before quoting a long paragraph from 'Orphée Noir', where Sartre elucidated his view of Negritude as a weak stage that must self-destruct, Fanon writes, 'I wanted to be typically black – that was out of the question. I wanted to be white – that was a joke. And when I tried to claim my negritude intellectually as a concept, they snatched it away from me. [. . .] We had appealed to a friend of the coloured peoples, and this friend had found nothing better to do than demonstrate the relativity of their action' (2008, pp. 111, 112). For a more detailed discussion of the tense yet fecund relationship between Fanon and Sartre, as well as their theoretical and socio-political similarities and differences regarding decolonization, see Jules-Rosette (2007), especially pp. 276–281.
35. See, for example, Spivak (2006, p. 205). Cf. Memmi (1971). Memmi's assessment of Fanon's relation to Negritude is cast in a mostly negative light and for the most part does not seem to allow for the possibility of Fanon understanding the movement along the strategic lines I have outlined in this chapter. According to Memmi, after first showing great excitement about Césaire's project, Fanon became an ardent critic of the movement (1971, see especially p. 254).
36. One aspect of this historically attuned humanism is manifest in an acute concern for and solidarity with the oppressed. Given the ways in which, under the banner of various 'humanisms', so many 'others' have been exploited, enslaved, and slaughtered, such concerns and sensitivities regarding the violent subjugation of one group by another are crucial for the redemption of humanism and its ongoing transformation into what I like to speak of as its 'symphonic' variation. That is, the new humanism I understand Fanon, improvising upon certain themes set forth by the Negritude writers, to develop is well-described as a symphonic humanism. In other words, analogous to a symphony, the contributions of each culture are seen as valuable because of their unique contributions to the beauty of the whole. In such an arrangement, a delicate balance is maintained between identity and difference as the various parts contribute toward common goals advancing human flourishing. However, intolerable dissonance sounds when one part (i.e., one culture) seeks to reduce all others to its own voice, a unison voice allowing no variation, improvisation, or syncopation.
37. See also Gibson (2003). According to Gibson, '[f]or Fanon, active resistance was the first stage toward self-discovery, and he was well aware that in its early stages anticolonial action was an inversion of colonial Manicheanism and remained within its framework' (2003, p. 13).
38. See Foucault (1990), especially pp. 17–49.
39. Even so, as I mentioned in passing earlier, Foucault's account of power relations, resistance tactics, and self-(re)narration presupposes at least some common, universal, trans-historical capacities, namely, rational and volitional capacities. See, for example, Foucault (1982, 2001a).
40. As Fanon puts it, 'I was committed to myself and my fellow man, to fight with all my life and all my strength so that never again would people be enslaved on this earth' (2008, p. 202).
41. Contra claims by critics such as the notable Hannah Arendt that Fanon makes violence an end in itself, David Macey contends that '[t]he violence Fanon evokes is instrumental and he never dwells or gloats on its effects. [. . .] The ALN was fighting a war and armies are not normally called upon to justify their violence' (2002, p. 475). For a similar argument against Arendt's conclusion, see also, Young, (2001, p. 281). Gibson (2003, especially pp. 103–126) likewise argues against the now common view of Fanon as an apostle of violence. See also, Jules-Rosette (2007, especially p. 277) for an analysis of Fanon and Sartre's position on the use of violence. For a defence of Fanon's theory of violence as 'self-defensive anticolonial violence', see Rabaka (2009), pp. 194–199.
42. Ahluwalia develops this analogy between colonialism and disease, relating it to Fanon's medical training and his strategy for decolonization. See, for example, Ahluwalia (2010, pp. 63–66).
43. As Fanon's writings attest, the Algerian struggle for liberation was no doubt his concrete working paradigm. See also, Macey (2002), especially the chapter entitled, 'The Wretched of

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the Earth'. Given the atrocities committed against the Algerian people, Macey draws attention to the appropriateness of Francis Jeason's book title, *L'Algérie hors la loi* (2002, p. 476).

44. For a critique of Fanon's reasoning for the alleged 'necessary' moment of violent confrontation on the part of the colonized and an argument in favour of non-violent forms of resistance in the tradition of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., see, Kebede (2001), especially pp. 554–562. As Kebede observes, '[v]iolence has more to do with animality than humanity. The affirmation of the human by way of violence, which is the value of the colonizer, is what the colonized should strongly reject. Because colonizers are acting like beasts, there is no reason to aspire after their values. Instead, one must refuse to become beasts like them. [...] Viewed from this necessity of cleansing the colonized soul of the accumulated anger, Negritude's appeal to the particular essence of the Black soul appears as a protection against colonial contaminations, as an attempt to preserve a measure of human countenance in a world disfigured by violence' (2001, p. 559).
45. Macey catalogues several vivid examples of the long history of violence carried out by the French on the Algerian people. See, for example, Macey (2002, p. 476).
46. Many scholars, including Memmi (1971) have criticized Fanon's involvement with the Algerian revolution, claiming among other things that Fanon could not possibly identify authentically with Algerians since he was neither Algerian nor Muslim. Against a second critical claim that in the case of Algerian colonization Fanon's crucial notion of *l'expérience vécue* ('lived experience') fails to yield the analytical results desired 'because the Algerian does not experience colonialism on the basis of corporeal identity', Gibson argues that 'the importance of lived experience of the body-subject is not reducible [...] to an essential identity' (2003, p. 10). Gibson then adds that in his later work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon also expresses corporeal difference 'spatially', analysing the effects on the colonized of forced living in terrorized spaces (2003, p. 10).
47. If we want to end on a consonant rather than dissonant note, we might point out that both Foucault and Fanon are critical of 'Man', that is, 'Man' as sovereign subject and originator of all meaning; however, when we harmonize Fanon's critique with Foucault's, the particular 'Man' in view just may turn out to be equivalent to white, European imperialist imposed qua norm. If so, then that particular subject construction is indeed worth putting to rest.
48. Another passage highlighting this same begrudging acknowledgment of positive aspects of Europe is the following: '[a]ll the elements for a solution to the major problems of humanity existed at one time or another in European thought. But the Europeans did not act on the mission that was designated them' (Fanon 2004, p. 237). Fanon, of course, continued to draw upon (not uncritically) the insights of Sartre, Hegel, Merleau-Ponty, and numerous other European thinkers. See also, Young (2001), pp. 274–283, especially p. 276. Differentiating Fanon from other Anglophone and Francophone Marxists, Young writes: 'He [Fanon] always remained intellectually centred in Paris, and never resisted European thought as such, as much as he resisted European domination of the colonial world. A product of the western-educated elite, Fanon used the resources of western thought against itself' (2001, p. 276).
49. In the final chapter of his book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon expresses similar sentiments: 'we do not want to catch up with anyone. But what we want is to walk in the company of man, every man, night and day, for all times. It is not a question of stringing the caravan out where groups are spaced so far apart they cannot see the one in front, and men who no longer recognize each other, meet less and less and talk to each other less and less. [...] if we want humanity to take one step forward, if we want to take it to another level than the one where Europe has placed it, then we must innovate, we must be pioneers' (2004, pp. 238, 239).
50. As Young emphasizes, we must avoid flattening Fanon's complex, multilayered view of Europe, in particular the European intellectual tradition. Referencing Fanon's closing remarks in *The Wretched of the Earth* issuing a call to leave Europe behind, Young reminds us that 'Fanon's own theoretical formulations remain European in orientation, above all towards Sartre', who 'was one of the very few European philosophers and intellectuals who made the issue of colonialism central to his work' (2001, p. 281).

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