

CHAPTER III

Fanon and Black Skin White Masks

This chapter is the first in a series that summarise Fanon's major works.

Background

In his autobiography Long Walk to Freedom Nelson Mandela describes the following scene:

While I was walking in the city one day, I noticed a white woman in the gutter gnawing on some fish bones. She was poor and apparently homeless, but she was young and not unattractive. I knew, of course, that there were poor whites, whites who were every bit as poor as Africans, but one rarely saw them. I was used to seeing black beggars on the street, and it startled me to see a white one. While I normally did not give to African beggars, I felt the urge to give this woman money. In that moment I realised the tricks that apartheid plays on one, for the everyday travails that afflict Africans are accepted as a matter of course, while my heart immediately went out to this bedraggled white woman. In South Africa, to be poor and black was normal, to be poor and white was a tragedy (1995: 219).

This psychological effect is one of the themes of Fanon's first book, *Peau Noir, Masque Blancs* written in 1952 when Fanon was 26. It was translated into English as Black Skin White Masks in 1967. Its original title was an 'Essay for the Disalienation of the Black' which he wanted to submit as his thesis in medicine. Post-war France underwent something of a Hegelian revival, Hegel's master/slave narrative was re-interpreted to a generation of French intellectuals like Jean-Paul Sartre and Jacques Lacan. Fanon was no exception. In the next two sections we shall examine Hegel's idea of the master and slave, particularly the dialectic of recognition and then Sartre's phenomenology as basis for understanding Fanon's text.

Another important source was Aimé Césaire and the *Négritude* movement, originally a literary movement of French-speaking black intellectuals. The movement, which influenced Africans as well as blacks around the world, located itself as a rejection of white Western domination. The term assumes a generalised consciousness among all black people of belonging to a black race. The writings of black intellectuals forged *Négritude*, which affirmed a black personality and sought to redefine the collective experience of blacks. A focus on black 'experience' and a praise of the black race were given expression. There is a rejection of Western rationalism for Black emotion and a romanticisation of Africa for example, the hierarchical West versus the 'classless' Africa. There was a range of views within the movement though there were two strands. Leopold Senghor, focused on Africa, particularly the virtues of the pre-colonial Africa that the West had destroyed. The other more universalistic strand was forged by Aimé Césaire. Césaire was Fanon's teacher and Fanon had worked with him in Césaire's election campaign as a communist deputy for Martinique. Césaire combined his interest in Marxism with the idea of *Négritude* as a mode of being and a colour consciousness that was both historical and psychological (Gendzier 1973: 41).¹

¹ There are other influences but as Fanon does not engage with them directly I will not discuss them here. Taylor (1989) develops the connection with Kirkegaard and Nietzsche.

Hegel and Recognition

Although a critique of Hegel occupies only half a dozen pages in Black Skin White Masks it is Hegel who informs Fanon's philosophical conscience. Hegel's 'Lordship and Bondage: recognition, reciprocity and struggle' in the Phenomenology of Mind influenced a whole generation of post-war intellectuals, by way of Kojève's lectures (published later as Introduction to the Reading of Hegel). These included Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jacques Lacan and Albert Memmi. What Fanon and other essayists on colonisation like Memmi, Anouar Abdel-Malek and Abdallah Laroui found in Hegel was the importance of the other-directed nature of colonial relations and the need to struggle to free oneself from externally defined definitions of self. Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind is an analysis of consciousness. He explores 'Lordship and Bondage' to find what makes self-consciousness possible. He argues that proto-consciousness cannot achieve self-consciousness by consuming objects since their absorption leaves it isolated. Self-consciousness requires another consciousness to 'recognise' it, and thus identity presupposes reciprocity. Hegel (1967: 231) says: 'They recognise themselves as mutually recognising each other.' This reciprocity is not necessarily egalitarian. Each accepts that they cannot achieve self-consciousness in isolation and thus the existence of the other is necessary for one's own existence. While this has egalitarian implications, one's desire for recognition by the other is tempered by the recognition that such dependence is also a threat to one's desires. Thus one seeks to block the other's emergence as a self that could be a threat but doing so would deny recognition to one's self. As this process unfolds, each proto-consciousness seeks to subordinate the other. Though this is experienced as mortal combat neither consciousness can achieve its goal of recognition if it actually kills the other, so the result is that one consciousness must enslave the other. Each achieving recognition by the other thus as Hegel says 'it is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained'. Ironically it is the slave that has the better grasp of the reality of the relationship as the master denies his dependency on the slave for recognition, while the slave cannot.

This metaphor, turned on its head, taken out of the realms of the Spirit, has concrete applications in the relations between people. Hegel's focus on consciousness that must objectify itself in labour as a necessary condition of its existence was developed by Marx into a theory of alienated labour located in capitalist social relations. That the theme of lordship and bondage would draw Fanon's attention given his interest in the coloniser/colonised relationship is hardly surprising. Fanon is more focused on the intellectual alienation than Marx. It is this intellectual alienation that causes the various frustrations and complexes that Fanon describes phenomenologically in Black Skin White Masks and which block insight into the nature of colonial social relations.

Hegel explains the need for recognition and it is important to grasp that Hegel assumes reciprocity:

The process then is absolutely the double process of both self consciousnesses. Each sees the other do the same as itself; each itself does what it demands on the part of the other, and for that reason does what it does, only so far as the other does the same. Action from one side would be useless, because what is to happen can only be brought about by means of both... They recognise themselves mutually recognising one another (Zahar 1974:15).

Hegel captures something essential in this account. The exploitation of others results in more than expropriating their labour but:

what was at stake in the process of depersonalisation was precisely the withholding of recognition of the consciousness, the Self, of the servant. It was the attempt to push servants beyond the pale where they could no longer even qualify for thinghood. Yet to have done this successfully would have destroyed the servant whom the master needed alive (Gendzier 1973: 26).

If the aim of the struggle is ‘recognition as an independent self consciousness’, then the process involved unravelling layers of imposed otherness. These layers were based on the historical relationship between blacks and whites which Fanon seeks to peel back in his text.

Sartre and Phenomenology

Another key text for locating Black Skin White Masks is Sartre’s Anti-Semite and Jew which served as something of a model. This work is in many ways a concrete application of the existential phenomenology of Sartre’s Being and Nothingness.² Recent psychoanalytic and postcolonial appropriations of the text neglect this strand. Sartre’s *L’Etre et la Néant* (translated as Being and Nothingness) written in 1943 explores the dynamics of human relations existentially. Behind the language of being-for-others and being-for-one’s-self lay an analysis of the problems of human relationships and the limits of human freedom that were to become central to Fanon’s thinking. Sartre’s concrete analysis of relations with others in terms of the ‘the look’ struck a chord with Fanon. Especially the ways in which the ‘look’ imposed an alien consciousness. It provided a language for Fanon to explore his experience as Sartre himself had explored the historical situation of Jews in his 1948 work *Reflexions sur la Question Juive* (translated as Anti-Semite and Jew).

The subtitle of Being and Nothingness is ‘An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology’. Sartre’s philosophy was labelled existentialism; he described its method as phenomenology. The founder of phenomenology was Edmund Husserl. Husserl developed his philosophy as a mechanism to explore consciousness both as subjectively experienced and as objectively structured. The first step was to describe the way the world appears to consciousness in an attempt to discover the assumptions presupposed by (but not in) conscious states. Phenomenologists call this process ‘bracketing’. This process is supposed to bring us closer to understanding consciousness by discovering the implicit assumptions. Husserl discovered that, for instance, time is experienced on two levels: clock time and ‘lived’ time. Lived time is an eternal ‘now’ while clock time is learned. Likewise there is mapped space and ‘lived’ space. Husserl saw this as grounded in the existence of an ego, a sense of the ‘I’ that was the basis of consciousness.

In his 1937 work ‘The Transcendence of the Ego’, Sartre took issue with this and developed his conclusions based on Husserl’s method. Sartre developed two ideas of consciousness - reflected and unreflected. Unreflected consciousness is ‘lived’ consciousness, an eternal now in which there is a stream of consciousness but no ‘I’. The self emerges only when actions become the object of consciousness. The self only exists when ‘I’ think about my-self, that is reflected consciousness. There is no ‘absolute ego’ as in Husserl but consciousness overflows the self, creating an effect Sartre labels ‘vertigo’ (for an example see Fanon 1967b: 203). To minimise the unbounded sense of spontaneity of unreflected consciousness the ego serves to disguise this spontaneity of consciousness since the lack of boundaries threatens the ego. Since the world has no meaning per se discovering the highly contingent relation of human being to the world, this freedom (and responsibility) is threatening. Thus we experience our freedom as anxiety.

In asking ‘what is human beings’ relation to the world?’ Sartre follows Heidegger in arguing that being-human-in-the-world *is* the question. Humans pose questions to the world. The world reveals

² The following account relies heavily on the work of Palmer (1995) and Gendzier (1973).

its being or non-being (i.e. nothingness) to us through our actions. For Sartre these actions are radically free or undetermined by the past. While the past has facticity - that is, events in the past cannot be changed - it does not cause events to occur. No actions are determined by the past or they are not strictly actional. While particular events may seem determining it is the meaning that humans give to these events that are the cause of a given response. The past is a selection of certain events that are labelled 'history'. When people act in predictable ways they are choosing an aspect of their past and projecting it into the future as a part of the 'self'. Freedom for Sartre is part of the structure of human being. Most people flee the anguish and responsibility of radical freedom. Hiding the truth from themselves, this lying to oneself Sartre calls 'bad faith'.

This idea of hiding the truth from oneself sounds a bit like the Freudian notion of the unconscious. Sartre rejects the Freudian notion of a censoring mechanism that acts to press elements into the unconscious as unsound. If such a mechanism is on the 'conscious' side of the line, then 'I' must be aware of the repression, and if it is on the unconscious side, then it could not act as a censor. The self is a product of the choices that we make. Freedom and responsibility are a fundamental to the human situation. Sartre argues we are condemned to be free. We must seek meaning in the world that is essentially meaningless. As humans we are the creators of the world, of our 'situation'.

The relation to others is characterised by Hegel as desire. For Sartre too humans confront the world as desire. This desire can never be gratified, to take in the whole world and to be the source of its meaning is only possible for a god. The self becomes an 'original project' for Sartre manifested in the totality of acts. This project though, is always fluid and undetermined by acts in the past. The phenomenological method of studying a person's 'original project' Sartre called 'existential psychoanalysis' the goal of which is for the individual to discover the initial project that constitutes them. Fanon attempts to do this but needs to peel back layers, not of an embedded self but layers of imposed otherness.

Sartre rejects the Freudian unconscious because knowledge and consciousness are different. Reflected consciousness can provide understanding, but we must *know* what we understand and this can only be the case if experience is correctly conceptualised. I can only understand my 'original project' if I can understand it in the light of 'being-for-others', which is why an individual is not in a privileged position in relation to their self. The goal of existential psychoanalysis then is a recognition that the attempt to be god, to be a centre of your existence has to be reconciled with 'being for others'. Self knowledge involves recognising in one's situation the confrontation with the freedom of others, of recognising the conflict inherent in that relationship and recognising one's responsibility for it. The goal is not so much a cure as in Freud but a grasping of the possibilities of the self.

The influence of Sartre's project on Fanon is fundamental. Fanon is critical of Sartre, nevertheless, Sartre provides an underlying set of existential assumptions and phenomenological methods that are part of the way Fanon explores the issues in Black Skin White Masks. The next section traces these themes into Fanon's first published book.³

³ In the following outline the discussion of Chapter Four, which is a critique of Octave Mannoni's book on the psychology of colonisation, has been deferred to the following chapter which focuses on Fanon's critique of colonial psychiatry.

Outline of Black Skin White Masks

The introduction opens with a quotation from Césaire's Discourse on Colonialism that refers to the millions of colonised people injected with fear and inferiority. Fanon raises the question 'what does the black man want?' because he says the black is not really a person; they live in a 'zone of non-being' (p. 8).⁴ The world positions them by defining humanness as 'whiteness' and thus the world seems to confirm the superiority of white people. Whites believe themselves superior to blacks and Blacks want to prove themselves the equal of whites. To counter this inferiority complex Fanon seeks, in good clinical fashion, to do a 'lysis of this morbid body' (p. 10). Arguing that 'only a psychoanalytic interpretation of the black problem can lay bare the anomalies of affect that are responsible for the structure of the complex', he goes on:

The analysis I am undertaking is psychological. In spite of this it is apparent to me that the effective disalienation of the black man entails an immediate recognition of social and economic realities. If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process:
-primarily economic;
-subsequently, the internalisation - or, better, the epidermalisation - of this inferiority (p. 11).

Fanon immediately notes, however, that Freud's phylogenetic approach (itself an improvement on earlier constitutionalist approaches) is too individualistic. A sociogenic approach is required to understand the 'massive *psychoexistential* complex' that arises when the black race encounters the white 'civilisation' (p. 12). It is Antilleans that he has in mind but by extension any colonised people.

In Chapter One 'the Negro and language' Fanon argues that language is the place to start for in speaking, one exists for the other (p. 17):

The problem that we confront in this chapter is this: The Negro in the Antilles will be proportionally whiter - that is, he will come closer to being a real human being - in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language. I am not unaware that this is one of man's attitudes face to face with Being. A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language (p. 18).

For 'natives' the trip to the Metropole confers status, one develops a whole new 'way of being'. They shun Creole and colonial accents, lest it is seen as 'jabbering'. Fanon remarks with more than a hint of irony 'the psychoanalysts have a fine start here, and the term *orality* is soon heard' (p. 27). Black people assess each other's language and skin colour, for a West Indian to be mistaken for an African is an insult. While one may acknowledge that races are equal, Fanon seeks not prove it but to 'help the black man [sic] free himself of the arsenal of complexes that has been developed by the colonial environment' (p. 30).

⁴ The problem of masculine pronouns in Fanon's work is a difficult one. Given that it was written before the feminist critiques of sexist language it is perhaps understandable. Bhabha (1986: xxvi) dismisses the charge of sexism as 'facile' but more to the point is to examine the ways its use misleads Fanon's analysis. At times 'he' does refer to both sexes but at other times it elides the gendered character of processes Fanon seeks to describe. These shall be noted prior to a fuller discussion of Fanon and gender in Part Three.

Language expresses social relations, Fanon notes that white people of all classes who speak to blacks as children or in a form of pidgin. While there is no necessary intention to insult on the part of the white speaker it is precisely this lack of recognition that is the issue:⁵

It is just this absence of wish, this lack of interest, this indifference, this automatic manner of classifying him, imprisoning him, primitivising him, decivilising him, that makes him angry (p. 32).

Language serves as a means of keeping others in their place. Lack of mastery of the language is evidence of the Black's lack of culture and explains the striving of contemporary Negroes 'to prove the existence of a Black civilisation at all costs' (p. 34).

To make him talk pidgin is to fasten him to the effigy of him, to snare him, to imprison him, the eternal victim of an essence, of an *appearance* for which he is not responsible (p. 35).

The first response is to react, for a Black assimilated to French culture he wants to insist on the rupture with home, and reacts to the attempt to re-enclose him in his blackness (p. 36).

In Chapter Two 'The Woman of Colour and the White Man' Fanon moves on to explore other types of relations - from language to love. Fanon sees love as a 'gift of self'. Here mutual recognition occurs not in language but in strengthening each other's assumptions and is implied in authentic relationships. Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* described love as frustration because his analysis focused only on dishonesty and inauthenticity; but authentic love, mutual regard and recognition are possibilities for Fanon.

Fanon says that his chapter is:

devoted to the relations between women of colour and the European, it is our problem to ascertain to what extent authentic love will remain unattainable before one has purged oneself of that feeling of inferiority or that Adlerian exaltation, that overcompensation, which seem to be the indices of the black *Weltanschauung* (p. 42).

The chapter is essentially a bitter denunciation of the first-person autobiography by Mayotte Capécia called *Je suis Martiniquaise* which Fanon uses to explore the psychology of black women in relation to European men. He sums it up as a 'sermon in praise of unhealthy behaviour' (p. 42).⁶ In the book, Fanon argues that there is a dynamic of Black inferiority that the author takes for granted. She knows that her white partner sees her as inferior but she seeks him as her lord. She seeks in him a piece of the whiteness that will make her more human. Fanon locates Capécia's work in the Martinican society that he too grew up in, a world that is Manichean, 'a world of white or black, that is the question' (p. 45).⁷ For Capécia white represents beauty, black the earth. She is proud that she has some white blood from her white grandmother. She notes that this was not as common as a white grandfather. Fanon seizes on this to note that:

Since he is the master and more simply the male, the white man can allow himself the luxury of sleeping with many women. This is true in every country and especially in colonies. But when a white woman accepts a black man there is automatically a romantic aspect. It is a giving not a seizing (p. 46).

⁵ Sartre makes a similar point in *Anti-Semite and Jew*: 'The liberal, when he met a Jew, was free, completely free to shake his hand or spit in his face...but the Jew was not free to be a Jew' (p. 77).

⁶ Here I follow Sharpley-Whiting (1998: 40) who argues that the French word '*malsain*' is inaccurately translated in the Standard English translation as 'corruption' (i.e. 'a sermon in praise of corruption'). This is also more in keeping with Fanon's clinical focus.

⁷ The allusion here is to Shakespeare's Hamlet: 'to be or not to be'.

At least this is how it is perceived in the alienated consciousness of Antilleans. Fanon calls this process of seeking out a white lover, Capécia insists that she could only love white men, a 'kind of lactification' (p. 47). He links this to the rules and regulations that govern the choice of a lover in Martinique - the whiter the better to escape the 'pit of niggerhood'.

Fanon asks how can Negroes overcome their quasi-phobic behaviour. He turns for the first time to a specific psychoanalyst, Anna Freud, and her concept of ego withdrawal that serves as a defence mechanism. Fanon (1967a: 51) argues 'ego withdrawal as a successful defence mechanism is impossible for the Negro' instead one seeks recognition from the white world. Capécia does the same. The white is ontologically good, requiring nothing to have dignity, while the black man or woman is existentially problematic.

Fanon goes on to look at Abdoulaye Sadjí's story *Nini* as further evidence of the inferiority complex. Fanon notes that there are two types: the Negress and the mulatto. The first seeks to become white, the second both to become white and to avoid slipping back (p. 54). In the story a black man's proposal and expression of love for a mulatto are spurned. He is black; it is an outrage that he should ask her. Never mind that he is graduate and an accountant and she is a stenographer, she is 'almost white' and so 'one must apologise for daring to offer black love to a white soul' (p. 56). Eventually the police reprimand our suitor. Sadjí also points out that the dream of every Martinican woman is to marry a white European. If this happens then recognition is bestowed on her and she is able to join the white world.

Finally, in Paul Morand's story *Magie Noire* there is a similar pattern. When asked why she is not interested in black men she explains that Blacks are savage in the sense of unrefined. When it is shown that many may be her superior, she retorts that they are ugly and besides she is free to choose her husband. Fanon links this to Anna Freud: if you remove the ego's defences by making them conscious the result is to weaken the ego and advance the pathology (p. 59).

In summary, Fanon concludes that:

This work [ie *Black Skin White Masks*] represents the sum of the experiences and observations of seven years; regardless of the area I have studied, one thing has struck me: The Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation. Therefore I have been led to consider their alienation in terms of psychoanalytic classifications. The Negro's behaviour makes him akin to an obsessional neurotic type, or, if one prefers, he puts himself into a complete situational neurosis (p. 60).

Fanon goes on that there is nothing psychotic, as opposed to neurotic, in Negro behaviour, though at times the agonising conviction of one's lack of recognition is dealt with by drunkenness or seeking positions of authority over whites. He draws freely on psychoanalytic terminology as is appropriate to a 'clinical study'.

In Chapter Three 'The Man of Colour and the White Woman' Fanon explores the inverse situation - the black man's desire to be white, to achieve recognition via a white woman. He acknowledges Hegel in this, but notes that Hegel did not deal with the desire to be acknowledged 'not as *black* but as *white*'. Fanon opens with an existential phenomenological description of the neurotic desire for recognition by a white woman:

I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness. When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilisation and dignity and make them mine (p. 63).

This time he uses a semi-autobiographical novel by René Maran *Un Homme pareil aux autres* [A Man Like Others] and the character Jean Veneuse. Veneuse is black and French, an introvert and thinker, ashamed of his blackness, unaccepted as a European but repudiated by blacks. He is loved by a white woman but needs authorisation, a white man to say 'take my sister'.⁸ He finds such a one but there is one condition for recognition, the denial of blackness. Veneuse's white friends tell him: "you have nothing in common with real Negroes. You are not black; you are 'extremely brown'." Veneuse fears that this is not true, he is not one of 'them' but one of the Negroes who have only one thought 'to gratify their appetite for white women' (p. 69).

The aim for Fanon is to make possible a healthy encounter between black and white. Novels like *Un Homme pareil aux autres* turn out not to show how Maran is like other men but assume an 'organic unhealthiness' (p. 80). Fanon's summary though is odd saying that Veneuse's skin colour is *not* a significant favour in his neurosis:

Jean Veneuse is a neurotic, and his colour is only an attempt to explain his psychic structure. If this objective difference had not existed, he would have manufactured it out of nothing (pp. 78-9).

Veneuse is an intellectual who retreats into a world of ideas. This book is really the study of a neurotic who happens to be black. He is not an example of black-white relations; he needs to be emancipated from his infantile fantasies and to overcome his alienation from his fellow Negroes. Fanon's odd conclusion earlier is clarified when he argues that it is not skin colour per se that creates neurosis. Once one's colour is accepted as a flaw then neurosis and the 'quest for white flesh', the desire to be the other and the hierarchy of colour are a logical outcome. This 'solution' to one's sense of inferiority is part of the problem. He closes saying that 'we shall see another solution is possible. It implies a restructuring of the world' (pp. 81-2).

In Chapter Five Fanon moves away from neurotic relations across the black/white division to look at the 'lived experience of the black.'⁹ In this chapter, a version of which had been earlier published in *Espirit*, Fanon performs a phenomenological analysis of the experience of blackness that is quite moving. It contains what is probably Fanon's most quoted description:

'Look a Negro!' It was an external stimulus that flicked over me as I passed by. I made a tight smile.

'Look a Negro!' It was true. It amused me.

'Look a Negro!' The circle was drawing a bit tighter. I made no secret of my amusement.

'Mama, see the Negro! I am frightened!'

Frightened! Frightened!

I made up my mind to laugh myself to tears, but laughter had become impossible.

(pp. 111-12)

Here Fanon describes phenomenologically the experience of being caught by the look of the other. He repeatedly tries to capture the experience of racism, the *subjective* experience of being an *object*, of what it is like to be 'sealed into that crushing objecthood' (p. 109) and denied recognition. Fanon recalls that as long he is among people of colour, his 'being-for-others' is not a problem, but in a colonised society it is deeply problematic. One cannot understand black oppression

⁸ Here is one place where Fanon's universal masculine is misleading. He overlooks the gendered nature of the process of recognition here. The black Maran seeks a white woman but his recognition occurs in the eyes of (white) men. This is taken up in the discussion of gender in Part Three.

⁹ This is a better translation - the English translation calls the chapter 'The Fact of Blackness'.

ontologically but only relationally. Situations of oppression erase one's sense of self. Contact with the white European world sees black inferiority manifest itself. Apart from the physical imposition the colonial matrix reconfigures relations of inferiority on black minds and bodies. Fanon explores this destruction of the colonial self with the concept of the look. In the above quote he describes the moment of being caught by the look of a young boy. He elaborates the experience further as he feels that even his smallest movements, like lighting a cigarette, are subject to observation resulting in:

A slow composition of my *self* as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world - such seems to be the schema. It does not impose itself on me; it is, rather, a definitive structuring of the self and of the world - definitive because it creates a real dialectic between my body and the world (p. 111).

There is no point to seeking a serum that will allow black people to whiten themselves, to throw off their 'corporeal malediction' because:

Below the corporeal schema I had sketched a historico-racial drama. The elements that I used had been provided for me not by 'residual sensations and perceptions primarily of a tactile, vestibular, kinaesthetic, and visual character' but by the other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories (p. 111).

These stories illustrate the role of historicity: 'the corporeal schema crumbled, its place taken by a racial epidermal schema' (p. 112).

Denied recognition as white, there remains the strategy of asserting oneself as a black man. This proves impossible. In Anti-Semite and Jew Sartre sees Jews as 'overdetermined from within' afraid of the stereotype others have of them, however, Fanon says, unlike the Jew who can go unnoticed because they are white:

I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the "idea" that others have of me but of my own appearance. I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am fixed. Having adjusted their microtomes, they objectively cut away slices of my reality. I am laid bare. I feel, I see in those white faces that it is not a new man who has come in, but a new kind of man, a new genus. Why, it's a Negro!

Shame. Shame and self contempt. Nausea. When people like me, they tell me it is in spite of my colour. When they dislike me, they point out that it is not because of my colour. Either way I am locked in an infernal circle (p. 116).

Turning to other Negroes also proves no solution. They themselves reject him, they too are fleeing blackness, neurotically seeking whiteness.

Fanon charts a series of affects and anecdotes caused by these observations. The fear of being a *black* doctor carrying the aspirations of the whole race, praised highly but in fear that one mistake will prove one's ontological inferiority. Trying to rationalise and understand the hatred of the other Fanon realised that, like the Jew, so much of what is thought of Negroes is predetermined. They are seen first as cannibals and slaves and then as humans but always as outsiders to the white world.

Searching for a black history and culture was another solution *a la* Senghor. Since Reason did not help, perhaps unreason held the key. A culture embodying unreason, emotion or rhythm might serve as a basis for identity, for security and acceptance, but it too turns out to be a 'white' construction. Blacks are identified with emotion and with a 'lost' nature. They embody the nature

that whites have lost. There is at least some recognition; Negroes are the source of some values. However, white people see this as a stage they have transcended. The recovery of a black history does offer a 'valid historical place'. It allows the assertion of oneself as a black person, to assert one's history against the whites, yet this is not a haven:

Every hand was a losing hand for me. I analysed my hereditary. I made a complete audit of my ailment. I wanted to be typically Negro - it was no longer possible. I wanted to be white - that was a joke. And, when I tried on the level of ideas and intellectual activity, to reclaim my *Negritude*, it was snatched away from me (p. 132).

By none other than Sartre, who saw that if the goal was the realisation of a society without races then *Negritude* was a phase, necessary but temporary, not the goal. This shattered Fanon's 'unreflected position':

Still in terms of consciousness, black consciousness is immanent in its own eyes. I am not a potentiality of something, I am wholly what I am. I do not have to look for the universal. No probability has any place inside me. My Negro consciousness does not hold itself out as a lack. *It is*. It is its own follower (p. 135).

Looking at different examples Fanon argues *contra* Sartre that the Negro suffers in his body differently to the white person.

In the final two chapters Fanon explores the 'psychopathological and philosophical explanation of the *state of being* a Negro' (p. 13). In Chapter Six 'The Negro and Psychopathology', Fanon begins his discussion with family relations. Using Lacan's definition of the family as 'psychic circumstance and object' Fanon points out the difficulty when this is applied to non-Europeans. He observes that in civilised countries 'the family is a miniature of the nation...A normal child that has grown up in a normal family will be a normal man'. While it may be plausible to locate neurosis in some childhood trauma in the European context, no such psychic trauma explains the Negro's inferiority complex. The normal Negro 'having grown up within a normal family, will become abnormal on the slightest contact with the white world' (pp. 142-3). So how can classical psychoanalysis explain Negro psychopathology?

One possible alternative is Carl Jung. Fanon does not mention Jung's overt racism (Bulhan 1985: 75f) but while Fanon draws freely on Jung's concepts of introversion, archetypes and word association tests, he is also critical. Fanon states that without the collective unconscious nothing can be understood. It is important to be wary when Fanon does this because he will often qualify these absolute statements later, radically challenging the original assertion. Since there is no evidence of a trauma causing psychic disturbance, Fanon argues that the answer lies in 'collective catharsis'. In every social collective there must be a channel for aggression that is specific to that society. From an early age boys read adventure stories of whites versus niggers, cowboys and Indians and so on and even the Black schoolboy does the same, identifying with the white hero as he does so. Insofar as the anti-hero personifies the id then this and the family structure shapes consciousness as subjectively 'European'.

Unlike the European, the Negro is pulled in two directions by the family that socialises him as black and by society that talks of "our ancestors the Gauls." Fanon contends that for the Negro the myth of whiteness is solidly established as long as his existence is limited to his home environment 'but the first encounter with a white man oppresses him with the whole weight of his blackness.' While all individuals must be socialised, in the case of Europeans psychic conflicts are unconscious while for blacks the psychic drama is played out consciously and this creates guilt. The key issue is that

‘the Negro’s inferiority or superiority complex or his feeling of equality is *conscious*’ not unconscious as in psychoanalysis (pp. 145-50).

The differing experience of Negroes and Europeans means that there needs to be a ‘dialectical substitution’ going on in the heart of psychoanalysis to explain black socialisation. There are two intertwined parts: (A) a psychoanalytic interpretation of the life experiences of black people and (B) a psychoanalytic interpretation of the Negro myth. This opens up a series of critical observations on psychoanalysis.

In relation to (A) Fanon notes that the early Freudians did not consider the Negro in their work. The key psychoanalytic concept the Oedipus complex, ‘is far from coming into being among Negroes’ (p. 151-2). Again Fanon asserts the need for psychoanalysis only to offer a critique that shows that it is relative to a European context, if not misleading. He argues instead ‘we can say that every neurosis, every abnormal manifestation, every affective erethism in an Antillean is the product of his cultural situation’ (p. 152). Thus neurosis does not have the unconscious roots that psychoanalysis assumes:

When the Negro makes contact with the white world, a certain sensitising action takes place. If his psychic structure is weak, one observes a collapse of the ego. The black man stops behaving as an *actional* person. The goal of his behaviour will be The Other (in the guise of the white man), for The Other alone can give him worth. That is, on the ethical level: self esteem (p. 153).

In relation to (B) psychoanalysis posits the Negro as a phobogenic object. This may be true but Fanon asks why? Even if phobia has its origins in some kind of childhood trauma why is the Negro ‘chosen’ as a phobic object? Fanon discusses in some detail the whole sexual mythology surrounding Negroes as sexual athletes, the fear and sense of inferiority this generates in whites, even though it is known to be a myth.

Fanon seeks to locate the phenomena of Negrophobia as Sartre had explored the fear of the Jew. He notes first the close association of the Negro with the biological (p. 161).

Racists seek to sterilise Jews but to castrate Negroes:

The Jew is attacked in his religious identity, in his history, in his race, in his relations with his ancestors and with his posterity; when one sterilises a Jew, one cuts off the source; every time that a Jew is persecuted, it is the whole race that is persecuted in his person. But it is in his corporeality that the Negro is attacked. It is as a concrete personality that he is lynched. It is as an actual being that he is a threat (p. 163).

Fanon goes on that civilised white people project their desires onto the Negro and thereby begin to act ‘as if’ the Negro really had them. There are two sides: an intellectual one and a sexual one. The Jew wants wealth and power. ‘The Negro symbolises the biological danger; the Jew, the intellectual danger.’ Negrophobia then is a fear of the biological. Thus unconsciously ‘Negro’ is associated with the animal, violence and rape. Having collected numerous examples Fanon proceeds, following Jaspers, to find the meaning. Fanon asks ‘can the white man behave healthily towards the Black man?’ This is a pseudo question inasmuch as Europeans deal with the *image* of the Negro not reality. For them the Negro *is* a penis, is a beast (pp. 165-70). Again Fanon elaborates this mythology - the stories of women sent mad by black lovers, of white men’s fear that women will not return if they take a black lover.

Fanon notes that not all Negroes are the same. This is true, they are scattered throughout the world, there is little unity between them but the point is that wherever they go they are first identified as Negroes. Though its manifestations vary 'we can now stake out a marker. For the majority of whites the Negro represents the sexual instinct (in its raw state). The Negro is the incarnation of a genital potency beyond all moralities and prohibitions' (p. 177). This myth shows up in psychoanalysis. Fanon outlines the orthodox psychoanalysis of the fantasy 'a Negro is raping me' as an example of the myth. He shows how speculations about female sexuality drawn from the Freudian corpus that are used to buttress the idea of Negro as genital and evil. Most disturbingly though as Sartre had described in *Anti-Semite and Jew*, anti-Semitism comes to infect the Jews themselves. Likewise the danger in *Negritude* is that blacks come to believe what others have said about them, albeit now claiming it as positive, perhaps revolutionary.

Fanon then returns to Jung and the collective unconscious. Having earlier said that without it we can understand 'absolutely nothing' he clarifies that he is not talking of Jung's Lamarckian notion but:

The collective unconscious, without our having to fall back on our genes, is purely and simply the sum of prejudices, myths, collective attitudes of a given group...The collective unconscious is not dependant on cerebral heredity; it is the result of what I shall call the unreflected imposition of culture (pp. 188, 191).

So Fanon reads Jung's notion with a sociogenic twist but can Jung clear up the question of why in Europe the black man is a symbol of evil? Fanon notes that Jung 'wanted to go back to the childhood of the world, but he made a remarkable mistake: He went back only to the childhood of Europe' (p. 190). This misses an important transference, a projection of European psyches onto others thus like the Anti-Semitic Jew:

It is normal for the Antillean to be anti-Negro. Through the collective unconscious the Antillean has taken over all the archetypes belonging to the European. The *anima* of the Antillean Negro is almost always a white woman. In the same way, the *animus* of the Antilleans is always a white man (p. 191).

Fanon himself admits that 'I am a white man. For unconsciously I distrust what is black in me, that is, the whole of my being'. Blacks are socialised to enslave themselves to a white cultural imposition (p. 192).

Fanon summarises the process:

One can understand why Sartre views the adoption of a Marxist position by black poets as the logical conclusion of Negrohood. In effect what happens is this. As I begin to recognise that the Negro is the symbol of sin I catch myself hating the Negro. But then I recognise that I am a Negro. There are two ways out of this conflict. Either I ask others to pay no attention to my skin, or else I want them to be aware of it. I then try to find value for what is bad - since I have unthinkingly conceded that the Black man is the colour of evil. In order to terminate this neurotic situation, in which I am compelled to choose an unhealthy, conflictual solution, fed on fantasies, hostile, inhuman in short, I have only one solution: to rise above this absurd drama that others have staged around me, to reject the two terms that are equally unacceptable, and, through one human being to reach for the universal (p. 197).

It is Césaire that spells out that the problem of Negroes is not a Negro problem. It is the problem of exploitation by colonial capitalism that makes it impossible for the Negro to live like a human

being (p. 202). The recognition of the Negro undermines the pretensions of a racist French culture masquerading as universal. Fanon refuses to accept the black or white, either/or choice, but seeks a genuine universalism.

In Chapter Seven 'the Negro and Recognition' Fanon pursues his inquiry with the first of the 'Left' Freudians, Alfred Adler. Here 'the Negro is comparison' (p. 211). Antilleans constantly compare themselves to each other in terms of skill, success and blackness. Everything is done for the other, not as part of healthy communication as in Adler, but in the sense of looking to the other for validation. In looking at this the Antilleans' inferiority complex is part of the social structure, not explicable with Adler's 'individual' psychology:

The Martinican is and is not a neurotic. If we were strict in applying the conclusions of the Adlerian school, we should say that the Negro is seeking to protest against the inferiority that he feels historically. Since in all periods the Negro has been an inferior, he attempts to react with a superiority complex (p. 213).

While overcompensation and inferiority are Adlerian ideas that can be applied to Negroes, Fanon's use is only superficially related to Adler's:

The Martinican does not compare himself to the white man *qua* father, leader, God; he compares himself with his fellow against the pattern of the white man. An Adlerian comparison would be schematised in this fashion:

Ego greater than The Other.

But the Antillean comparison, in contrast, would look like this:

-----White-----
Ego different from The Other

The Adlerian comparison embraces two terms; it is polarised by the ego. The Antillean comparison is surmounted by a third term: Its governing fiction is not personal but social (p. 215).

Adler's response to a Negro's dream of becoming white would be to explain the neurosis that arises from such comparison. For Adler one can recognise that one is not greater than the other and be resigned to your assigned space. However, Fanon says:

I will not say that at all! I will tell him, "the environment, society are responsible for your delusion." Once that has been said, the rest will follow of itself, and what that is we know. The end of the world (p. 216).

In the second section of the chapter entitled 'The Negro and Hegel' Fanon uses the position of Negroes to evaluate Hegel's master/slave dialectic. In this struggle for recognition there comes a point in which one is enslaved but each recognises the other. As Hegel says: 'they recognise themselves as mutually recognising each other' but this is not the case with Negro slavery in which there was no open conflict. 'One day the White Master, *without conflict*, recognised the Negro slave but the former slave wants to *make himself recognised*' (p. 217).

Hegel requires that there be a reciprocal recognition. In Hegelian terms it is necessary to risk one's life to achieve recognition. Fanon's controversial views on the role of violence find their precursor in comments like 'historically, the Negro steeped in the inessentiality of servitude was set free by his master. He did not fight for his freedom' (p. 219). The black person contented themselves with thanking their liberators. Fanon concludes that:

For Hegel there is reciprocity; here the master laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition but work. In the same way, the slave here is in no way identifiable with the slave who loses himself in the object and finds in his work the source of his liberation.

The Negro wants to be like the master.

Therefore he is less independent than the Hegelian slave (pp. 220-1, note 8).

He notes that the quest for disalienation varies. For doctors it is intellectual separation from European culture, for labourers it is exploitation of one race by another.

Fanon continues:

I do not carry innocence to the point of believing that appeals to reason or to respect for human dignity can alter reality. For the Negro who works on a sugar plantation in Le Robert, there is only one solution: to fight. He will embark on his struggle, and he will pursue it, not as a result of a Marxist or idealist analysis but quite simply because he cannot conceive of life otherwise than in the form of a battle against exploitation, misery, and hunger (p. 224).

Fanon says that he has tried to show how in a sense Negroes make themselves abnormal and that the white person is a victim and perpetrator of a delusion. Blacks, Fanon refers to himself, are just as much a part of the culture of the world - its achievements and history - as whites are. It is not the time to discover some hidden past or some ancient black culture to give life meaning and the end of racism a value. Turning towards the war in Vietnam Fanon notes, putting aside racist stereotypes, that 'the Vietnamese who die before the firing squads are not hoping that their sacrifice will bring about the reappearance of the past. It is for the sake of the present and the future that they are willing to die' (p. 227).

In Chapter Eight 'By Way of Conclusion' Fanon opens with a quotation from Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire* to the effect that social revolution requires that the 'dead bury the dead', forgetting the past and looking to the future for inspiration. Disappointingly though Fanon closes with a series of aphorisms that reflect the brilliant though still fragmented nature of his insights. He knows that action is necessary, that a 'black' truth is partial. He knows that the role of intellectual is not to prove that blacks are not inferior or to avenge past wrongs. He has no right to hate white people or to be grateful. He states that:

I find myself suddenly in the world and I recognise that I have one right alone: that of demanding human behaviour from the other.

One duty alone: that of not renouncing my freedom through my choices
(p. 229).

In this statement we have briefly the Hegelian theme of the importance of recognition by the other, of existential ethics and of freedom as themes but it does not go far enough as will become clearer in his psychiatric work in the next chapter