Fanon's Sociogenic Approach to Antiracist Critique

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Abstract

I argue that Frantz Fanon's sociogenic approach to antiracist critique provides a productive model for political theorists. Rather than treat racism as an ahistorical phenomenon, his analyses of racialization return the problem of 'race' to the social. In this respect, I read Fanon as a materialist thinker, one whose immanent critique combines two methodological moments. First, Fanon conducts a genealogical analysis of racial orders, thereby denaturalizing and problematizing the practices, institutions, and discourses that (re)produce them. Second, he adopts an existentialist phenomenology that uncovers the lived experience of racialized subjects. In doing so, he discloses how racial hierarchies can displace both White and Black subjects from ethical relationships to themselves and their actions. I assert that Fanon's model of antiracist critique improves upon and corrects for the analytical pitfalls that bedevil both normative political theory and critical theory when it comes to 'race.' First, political theorists ought to follow Fanon in theorizing racisms as a problem for ideology critique, rather than as either epistemic mistakes or aberrations from egalitarian norms. While racisms do rely on mistaken ideas of hierarchical difference, they are both normal and normative in their contexts of use. Second, Fanon avoids falling back into a crude Manichean ontology that reifies racial categories and disconnects 'race' from other forms of social stratification like class or gender. Finally, Fanon provides a more nuanced conception of subject formation under racial oppression than many political and critical theorists do. He doesn't treat individual agency as an *a priori* capacity, but instead thinks it as a problematic in its own right. In this respect, I point towards how Fanon's reworked alienation critique might be productively deployed to understand how persistent exposure to anti-Black racism injures and disempowers Black people in the U.S. today.

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Contents

Introduction....**7**

'Race' and racism as problems for political theorists....12

The turn to immanent critique....15

Translating Fanon's sociogenic criticism to the U.S....19

Chapter 1

'Race' and ideology critique....**25**

Racism as epistemic injustice....27

Racism as ideology....38

Situating my account of racial ideology....47

Conclusion....53

Chapter 2

Racism and the problem of the human....**54**

Euromodern humanism and the 'coloniality of being'....56

Abstract liberalism and its shortcomings....61

Charles Mills and racial ontology....65

Towards an anti-racist humanism?....73

Conclusion....80

Chapter 3

Critical Theory and racial hierarchies....**82**

Foucauldian genealogy and antiracist critique....83

Foucault and subaltern resistance....87

Honneth and (racist) misrecognition....95

Honneth's white-washed critical theory....100

Conclusion....108

Chapter 4

Frantz Fanon and the sociogenic method....**110**

Fanon's commitment to the social....112

Fanon and the making of racialized worlds....117

Fanon and the making of racialized selves....125

Against Manicheanism....134
Conclusion....140

Chapter 5
Fanon's alienation critique and the U.S. racial order....**143**
Reworking the alienation critique....146
Fanon and racist reification....150
Fanon and Black alienation....157
Conclusion....166

Conclusion....**168**

Bibliography....**177**

Introduction

In this dissertation, I argue that political theorists ought to look to Frantz Fanon's work as a model for effective antiracist critique. A Martinican psychoanalyst and anticolonial thinker, Fanon is known for many things, most notably perhaps his fierce indictments of racial colonialism and the overt violence that it enacts on the colonized.[1] But what interests me most about his work is the method that he uses to analyze racial hierarchies. In my reading of Fanon, racialization is first and foremost a materialist concern. Racisms can only be understood within the sociohistorical contexts in which they emerge and function. In the colonial orders that he analyzes, 'race' is best conceptualized as a social and political accomplishment whose function is to segment out those communities who could be dominated, exploited, or killed. "The black problem is not just about Blacks living among Whites, but about the black man exploited, enslaved, and despised by a colonialist and capitalist society that happens to be white," Fanon writes.[2] Racial distinctions may rely on the myth of biological difference or essential types to naturalize social hierarchies, but there is nothing essential or natural about them. Throughout his oeuvre, Fanon contests the notion that there is any substantive or metaphysical basis to racial groups.[3] Instead, he stresses that they are best understood as existential parameters that particular racialized worlds place upon different types of people, on the basis of their visual appearance, ethnic background, and (often) proximity to social and economic capital.[4] In this respect, Fanon does not conceptualize racial categories primarily as sites of identification in a cultural or a genealogical sense. "The black man is not," he writes. "No more than the white man."[5] Racial identity, he argue, is best theorized as an existential phenomenon that is tied, as Stuart Hall puts it, to the taking up of a specific subject position within a racial order.[6] "Ontology does not allow us to understand the being of the Black man, since it ignores the lived experience," he notes.[7] Whether he is theorizing the Black man's existential anxieties in Martinique or the obstacles to indigenous resistance in Algeria, Fanon reveals the ways that 'race' functions as a regulative norm that limited how certain individuals were perceived and treated, desired or feared.

To accomplish this, Fanon deploys a "sociogenic" method for antiracist criticism. By sociogenic, he means that political theorists ought to map 'race' against the social formations that produces it, rather than rely on some abstract ontology of the human. Across his oeuvre, Fanon only makes a few notes about his own methodology. But in this thesis, I reconstruct two specific moments in his critical theory. First, Fanon adopts a genealogical approach that seeks to historically locate and denaturalize the racialized "second ontology" that regulates a society's social norms, practices, institutions, and imaginaries. And second, he offers an existential phenomenology of racial dehumanization to explore the lived experience of racial oppression. In doing so, he is able to diagnose the kinds of pathological

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[1] Trained as a psychologist and self-taught in Western (mostly French) philosophy, Fanon wrote on a range of issues and problematics. For a critical overview of Fanonian scholarship, see Henry Louis Gates Jr., "Critical Fanonism," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 3 (1991): 457-470, and Ato Sekyi-Otu, "Fanon and the Possibility of Postcolonial Critical Imagination," in *Living Fanon,* ed. Nigel C. Gibson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): 45-59. For insightful studies of Fanon, see Ato Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Jock McCulloch, *Black Soul, White Artifact: Fanon's Clinical Psychology and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Lewis Gordon et al., eds, *Fanon: A Critical Reader* (Blackwell Publishers, 1996); Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason,* trans. Laurent Dubois (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2017); and Nigel. C. Gibson, *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003).

[2] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 178.

[3] Racial identity, of course, is both ascribed and identified with, so it would be fallacious to think that, simply because there was nothing biologically or culturally *essential* about racial identity, that one could simply voluntarily assume the racial background of one's choice.

[4] For more on this view of racial capital and social fields, see Mustafa Emirbayer and Matthew Desmond, *The Racial Order* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

[5] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 206.

[6] Stuart Hall, "Subjects in History: Making Diasporic Identities," in *The House that Race Built*: *Original Essays by Toni Morrison, Angela Y. Davis, Cornel West, and Others on Black Americans and Politics in America Today*, eds. Wahneema H. Lubiano and Toni Morrison (New York: Vintage, 1999), 291.

[7] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 90.

or unproductive responses that racisms can inculcate in colonized subjects. Fanon alludes briefly to the importance of this analytical double vision in his introduction to *Black Skin, White Masks*. Although the objects of study in that text are the psychological attitudes cultivated under racial colonialism, he reminds readers that any effective diagnosis cannot lose sight of the social: "The true disalienation of the black man implies a brutal awareness of the social and economic realities. The inferiority complex can be ascribed to a double process: First, economic. Then, the internalization or rather epidermalization of this inferiority."[8] My decision to read Fanon's structuralist analyses in dialogue with his psychological writings is not without its detractors. Some critics, for instance, argue that Fanon abandons his earlier psychological focus in his more overtly political writings on anticolonial struggle. These commentators are certainly correct that he pays less attention to the alienation critique in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Yet I contend that Fanon's interest in the lived experience of racial domination, violence, and expropriation features throughout his career, especially if one situates his later political essays in the context of his psychiatric practice in Algeria. In this respect, his analyses of racist misrecognition in *Black Skin, White Masks* ought to be read alongside and in tandem with his more overtly materialist analysis of French Algeria in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Neither dimension of his critique can be disentangled from the other. As he says, "…reality requires true comprehension. An answer must be found on the objective as well as the subjective level."[9] When his texts are taken together as part of a dialectical whole, then, I argue that his work acts as a methodological exemplar for political theorists looking to tackle racialization without reverting to essentialized or crude ideas of racial difference.

The first step of a Fanonian critique looks at the discrete relations of force that constitute specific racial formations. Fanon, of course, does not describe his work as "genealogical," but I contend that his political analyses in particular share some key structural features with this sort of Nietzschean-inspired approach. He is committed to denaturalizing the limits of racialized seeing, knowing, and acting by returning 'race' to the realm of the socially contingent — and therefore of the revisable. In this sense, Fanon too is working in the critical tradition of Enlightenment thinking that Michel Foucault identifies in Kant's late essay, "What Is Enlightenment?"[10] Like the genealogist Foucault, Fanon attempts to disclose those social limitations that form the "given" at any given sociohistorical moment. When critical theorists make this conceptual shift, the question then becomes, "What are we?" Foucault notes. "Compare this with the Cartesian question, 'Who am I? As a unique but universal and unhistorical subject?'"[11] Like Foucault, Fanon looks to both the discursive and non-discursive forces that shape the "inert order of things" in racial orders like those of mid-century Martinique, imperial France, and French Algeria. On the one hand, he interrogates the forms of raciological reason and affect that explain the world on Manichean terms. On the other, he links those racial ideologies back to the institutions, practices, strategies of population control, and divisions of physical space that those racisms legitimate and naturalize. Unlike Foucault, Fanon turns his critical eye to Europe's practices of colonial dominion in the colonies rather than to its biopolitical governance of the White working classes in the continental metropole. In doing so, he highlights how pivotal violence — in both its state and vigilante forms— is to the construction and maintenance of a colonial project. "[C]olonialism is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties," Fanon writes. "It is violence in its natural state…"[12] Fanon's sociogenic critique also differs from Foucault in the sense that he is not afraid to advance more robust ethical indictments of the kinds of subjects that these colonial projects produce. His writings denounce Europe's perfidies, from

[8] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, xiv-xv.
[9] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, xv.
[10] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (1982): 777-795.
[11] Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 785.
[12] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* trans. Constance Farrington (London: Penguin, 2001), 48.

its racist ideologies of White superiority and Black inferiority to its strategic use of the massacre and the concentration camp to reassert political control over the Algerians. But Fanon does more than provide a moral critique of racist dehumanization. Although his work certainly makes those sorts of normative judgments, I argue that Fanon is more interested in a practically interrelated but analytically distinct problem — namely, the ethics of racial subject formation in colonial hierarchies. Beyond just indicting the violences that racial colonialism inflicts, he wants too to theorise the forms of subjective unfreedom that racisms can inflict upon the individuals subordinated by them.

This is where Fanon's decision to adopt an existential phenomenology comes in. After all, "race" is not an additive phenomenon that colors or shapes individuals *ex post facto*, after they have been constituted in discourse or interpellated into institutional apparatuses. Instead, White and Black subjects in these colonial regimes are always-already racialized. These are individuals whose desires and investments, habits and horizons for action are often delimited by the closed circuits of raciological thought and affect. Fanon insists on engaging with the first-person vantage point in order to analyze how racial orders make themselves felt on embodied subjectivities. This allows him to understand what kinds of being are made hegemonic in that conjuncture, which kinds of ethical harms they suffer, which political horizons are opened up and which are foreclosed. To theorize the phenomenology of Blackness in colonial and neoimperial contexts, Fanon draws on both his own lived experience as a Black man living in Martinique, France, and colonial Algeria as well as on academic debates in both French psychology and post-war French existentialism. But unlike many of these thinkers, Fanon insists on the importance of the social and the institutional — what he calls "external factors" — in shaping how individual subjects "become" certain kinds of empowered or disempowered selves.[13] As he puts it, "The social milieu is a constant presence; from the first minutes of its life, the infant is taken in hand by the social milieu."[14]

Fanon refuses to accept that subject formation can be understood through a structuralist analysis of the individual psyche. Instead, the social environment intrudes to shape — and at times obstruct — individual self-relation. Under racial colonialism, he argued, the colonized and the colonizer alike can develop pathological or otherwise distorted relationships to their own embodied selves. Their self-relation and their intersubjective ability to relate to raced Others are conditioned by what Fanon calls a "double narcissism"[15] in which they mistake the racialized encoding of their bodies for their being. This is why he describes both the White subject and the Black subject as alienated under White supremacy, the former by their obsession with their supposed superiority, the latter by their paranoia over their supposed inferiority. "The white man is locked in his whiteness," Fanon argues. "The black man in his blackness."[16] Fanon focuses in particular on how racial oppression can impact colonized subjects. When systemic, racist reification can affect how they feel about themselves, their actions, and their relations to others. It can displace them from normal or functional relationships to their own embodiment as their social visibility is overdetermined by their interlocutors' racial projections. These phenomenological analyses, I argue, can be productive when it comes to understanding how some colonized and racially oppressed subjects are disempowered by their discriminatory treatment, on the one hand, and how they might become wedded to forms of "cruel optimism"[17] that promise them affirmation at the expense of political solidarity, on the other.

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[13] Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* eds. Jean Khalfa and Robert J.C. Young, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018): 224.
[14] Frantz Fanon and Lilia Ben Salem, "The meeting between society and psychiatry," in *Alienation and Freedom,* eds. Jean Khalfa and Robert J.C. Young, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018): 521.
[15] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, xiv.
[16] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, xiv.
[17] Lauren Berlant devised this concept to effectively diagnose forms of affective investment that trap individuals within institutions, practices, and desires which work counter to their own flourishing. Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

Fanon, in particular, uses the phenomenological moment as the basis for a renewed alienation critique. He links the moral wrongs of racism to a broader ethical frame in which social critics can analyze how racialized subjects are pathologized under racial colonialism — or, to use his phrasing, how White and Black subjects become neurotically locked in their racial identities. In racial orders, Fanon demonstrates, White subjects typically function as mystifiers and mystified, while Black subjects are left mystified and voiceless (in White institutions). Pervasive and systemic exposure to anti-blackness can be traumatic for Black subjects — so much so that racisms can distort how Black people relate to themselves. In turn, White subjects continue to oppress and exploit Black Others while clinging fast to an actively produced and disingenuous naïveté.[18] Neither kind of racial subject is capable of standing in an ethical relation to their embodied selves under racial hegemony. This dooms them, on an existential level, to forms of intersubjective misrecognition that obstruct their ability to find common understanding and mutual respect. Fanon's analysis helps to explain why certain political struggles, compromises and solidarities might be foreclosed, even as they might appear to be in various actors' material "interests." As Fanon notes, "The greatest error, incidentally, would be to wager on some supposed institute and spontaneous solidarity [between exploited classes]. Colonialism, in its most perverse and condemnable aspect, manages to pit men against each other whom everything unites and that a shared oppression degrades."[19] Fanon's alienation critique also speaks to the more robust conception of social freedom that subtends his work. Unlike liberal thinkers who theorize freedom predominantly as the freedom to protect oneself or one's property from coercive interference, Fanon contends that some subjective attitudes too should be seen as "pathologies of freedom."[20] When individuals are controlled by obsessions, paranoia, anxieties, or compulsions that prevent them from determining their own way in the world, then psychologists rightly describe those people as "unfree." When those self-undermining attitudes have social rather than neurological causes, they become a problem for political theorists too. In this respect, Fanon offers a "nonsovereign" account of freedom — one that "integrates personal initiative with the intersubjective conditions of individual efficacy."[21]

In this thesis, I seek to make two interventions. First, I revise the interpretations of Fanon's work that have predominated in recent postcolonial criticism and critical race theory. Namely, I read him both as an ethical humanist and (even more importantly) as *materialist* thinker. For all his strident criticisms of European humanism and its "thin ethical precepts,"[22] Fanon never gave up on the possibility of a more emancipatory future in which humanism no longer functions as an exclusionary norm. As he wrote in the closing pages of *The Wretched of the Earth,* "Let us try to create the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant birth."[23] His humanist horizon is grounded in his negative critique of the "inhumane and inhuman" practices that characterise racial hierarchies.[24] In this respect, rather than being embarrassed by Fanon's humanism, I argue that it provides him with the normative concepts (i.e., domination, oppression, freedom, pathology, alienation, etc) to effectively challenge racist dehumanization.

[18] For more on this problem of White ignorance, see James Baldwin, *The Cross of Redemption: Uncollected Writings,* ed. Randall Kennan (New York: Vintage, 2011).
[19] Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom*, 565.
[20] Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* 497-8.
[21] Sharon R. Krause, "Frederick Douglass: Nonsovereign Freedom and the Plurality of Political Resistance," in *African American Political Thought: A Collected History,* eds. Melvin L. Rogers and Jack Turner, 116—141 (London: The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., 2021), 122.
[22] Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), 4.
[23] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 252.
[24] Stuart Hall, "Racism and Reaction," in *Selected Political Writings: The Great Moving Right Show and other essays,* eds. Sally Davison, et.al. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2017), 146.

But perhaps even more importantly, I read Fanon as a materialist thinker, rather than as a "global theorist" of racial oppression, as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. puts it.[25] By this I mean that Fanon always interprets 'race' as a product of specific practices, institutions, discourses, affects, technologies, spatial arrangements and modes of production. "Here it is a question of sociodiagnostics," he concludes.[26] In this sense, my theorization of Fanon shares more in common with the work of Paul Gilroy and Achille Mbembe than it does with Black existentialists[27] like Lewis Gordon or Afro Pessimists like Frank B. Wilderson.[28] Whereas these latter projects interpret his account of racist reification as a formal or ahistorical model through which to think encounters with racial difference and the Other, I contend that Fanon's theorization is in fact a phenomena that emerges out of a particular political context. He is committed to analyzing racisms as discrete social and historical facts, not in providing a general theory of Black alienation or racial exploitation.

In this sense, my version of Fanonian critique reads his work in conversation with two "unorthodox" Marxist thinkers of the 20th century, Georg Lukacs and Antonio Gramsci. Like Lukacs, Fanon problematizes reification as a kind of social pathology.[29] Like Gramsci, Fanon strives for a nonreductive approach to thinking the relation between the economic base, on the one hand, and the political and ideological fields of struggle, on the other.[30] Military conquest and economic exploitation often precede the emergence of racisms, he points out, but racisms can take on a relative materiality of their own.[31] In this respect, I don't read Fanon within the conventional bounds of a Marxist historical materialism, but instead situate his critique in loose conversation with it. Ultimately, Fanon was more interested in the political and ideological dimensions of racial domination and anticolonial struggle than he was in the technical analysis of the mode of production in colonial societies. This Gramscian interpretation of Fanon, then, pushes back on attempts to read him primarily as a "Manichean" thinker of racial difference. In his writings, Fanon is clear that the White mystifier/Black mystified dyad that he uses to explain racist reification does not in fact make any metaphysical or ontological claims about racial subjects. Instead, he is highlighting how a particular racial schema — one that is ordered around a fundamental antagonism between two homogenous forces — can distort the possibilities of human and humane intersubjective relations in concrete situations. For all that the European colonizers worked hard to try to institutionalize this radical caesura in the human by building walls and passing citizenship laws, Fanon is clear that such racial projects fail to fully displace the humanity of Black Others. Instead, he analyses anti-Blackness as one (albeit, hegemonic) form of racialization produced through the European colonialism. And for all that Fanon doesn't dedicate much time to the specific problems facing Black and Arab women, he is well aware too that racialized subjects are plural and "composite" selves, constructed and positioned by cross-cutting discoursers of gender, ethnicity, class, and nation.

My second intervention, in turn, looks beyond the remit of Fanonian criticism. Namely, I demonstrate that this materialist account of Fanon's method provides a productive model for political theorists looking to critique contemporary racial hierarchies. This is, to a large extent, because Fanon's sociogenic approach avoids two of the key theoretical pitfalls that often bedevil critical thinking about 'race.' On the one hand, his analyses take the production of racial worlds and racial ideologies seriously, thereby avoiding the idealising abstractions that predominate in certain kinds of normative

[25] Gates Jr., "Critical Fanonism," 457.
[26] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, xv.
[27] For a good example of this Black existentialist reading of Fanon, see Lewis Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man: An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1995).
[28] Frank B. Wilderson, *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010).
[29] Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics,* trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1968), 84.
[30] Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince: and other writings*, trans. Louis Marks (London: Lawrence & Wishart, Ltd., 1957), 155-160.
[31] Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1964), 37-38.

political theory. On the other, his materialist attention to specific colonial conjunctures means that Fanon doesn't fall back into a quasi-ontological theory of 'race' that reifies the very racial divides that he wants to dismantle. As I will show in the thesis, neither abstract moral indictments of racism nor social criticisms grounded on an explicitly racial ontology will have the diagnostic acumen to separate out problematic practices, discourses, and institutional regimes. Instead, both methodological projects, each in their own ways, treat 'race' like a transhistorical and unchanging phenomenon divorced from other forms of social domination, disadvantage, and subject formation. As Ato Sekyi-Otu notes, "Fanon hints at something no less grave and seldom commented on: the perpetual enclosure, the restricted picture of the world which the 'racialization of thought' threatens to foist on us, the severe constriction of space and shapes of our moral and even political consciousness."[32] In this respect, regardless of whether one accepts the notion that my materialist reading of Fanon is the most faithful to his texts, I hope to show in this thesis that there are other reasons to prefer it. At a moment when White ethnonationalisms and neo-fascist politics are on the rise, finding a suitable method for critiquing neo-imperial formations (and the racial hierarchies they reproduce) without falling back into crude and simplistic ideas of racial belonging is an increasingly urgent task.

'Race' and racisms as problems for political theorists

For the political theorist, analyzing 'race' involves working on complex, shifting terrain. After all, racial orders are only ever metastable social formations. They rely on extensive labor — both material and ideological — to reproduce themselves, and the practices, institutional regimes, discourses, and "relations of force" that sustain racial inequality are open to either transformation or further entrenchment. Nor are markers of racial belonging always reliable points of ascription or identification. As Linda Martín Alcoff points out, a light-skinned Latina woman is read quite differently in a mostly White Floridian community than she is at with one of her Latino parent's families in Panama.[33] In this sense, racial cleavages and the identities that they produce are always-already sites of power, and these dynamics shape our practices of knowledge production, conditioning what we know and what we are predisposed to believe about racialized groups.[34] In recent years, social epistemologists have turned their attention to precisely this problem — namely, the disjunction between what individual knowers accept as "rational" and the social biases that corrode what and who they actually find intelligible and convincing. Thinkers like Miranda Fricker and Jose Medina have provided important insights into the epistemic failures that bedevil even well-intentioned knowers socialised under racial imaginaries. For example, they point out that many knowers can unconsciously devalue the credibility of racially stigmatised speakers. In turn, many oppressed subjects may find they face extra hermeneutical obstacles when it comes to rendering their experiences intelligible and convincing, especially for more privileged audiences. And yet, as I will show in Chapter 1, Fricker's theoretical approach remains too individualist and narrowly cognitive in its conceptual framing. Generally speaking, social epistemology construes racism and the prejudiced judgments it produces as a kind of cognitive mistake, one that can be repaired by asking individual knowers to simply be "better" or more open in their evaluations of others. Yet this sort of raciological reasoning is not an epistemic or moral aberration under White hegemony, but a regulative norm that conditions how individual subjects take up embodied positionalities within a broader social

[32] Sekyi-Otu, "Postcolonial Critical Imagination," 53.
[33] Linda Martin Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): 266.
[34] Tommie Shelby, "Racism, Moralism, and Social Criticism," *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research On Race*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2014, 57-74.

formation. When it comes to interrogating racial orders, the political prefigures both the epistemic and the ethical.

This is why I argue that antiracist critique should instead theorize racisms as a problem best tackled through ideology critique rather than through the more limited remedial efforts of Fricker's virtue ethics approach. By ideology, I mean the mental frameworks, narratives, concepts, affects, images, etc. that help individuals to make sense of their worlds. Ideologies, in this sense, are best analyzed as social and historical phenomena; they emerge out of particular modes of knowledge production and, as such, they are fundamentally entangled with but not reducible to power relations.[35] In Chapter 1, I argue that both Gramsci and Stuart Hall provide nuanced and sophisticated accounts of ideology that don't fall back into the crude Marxist trap of reducing the ideological to the ideas of the "ruling class" in any straightforward or mechanistic sense. This critical conception of ideology, I contend, is crucial for understanding racisms and how they function. For racial imaginaries are, in a certain sense, both true and false.[36] They do not reflect any biological or cultural essence that hierarchically differentiates the human, and yet these discursive classifications do delimit individual subjects' possibilities of judgment, desire, and action. As Hall notes, raciological discourses are "not [as] a question of what is true, but [of] what is *made* to be true."[37] In this respect, racisms both legitimate and reproduce social formations structured in racial dominance. They reflect not a mythic split in the human, but instead speak to the real practices of racial discrimination, perception, and violence that continue to shape the lived experiences of people in postcolonial societies like the U.S. Achille Mbembe describes this process of racialized consolidation in the imaginative topos as "calcification."[38] Once calcified, a racialized imaginary can set itself up as a sort of "second ontology" that overcodes bodies and social relations alike in racialized terms. This new form of racial common sense, then, helps to organize practices, institutions, imaginaries, desires, knowledge production, and the optics of visibility in a given social formation. Racial imaginaries, then, are in the business of naturalising or otherwise rendering inert and unquestionable the hierarchies that stratify and separate people on the basis of presumed ethnic, biological or cultural difference. The dialectical chiasmus implied by the phrase "raciological unreason," then, is more complicated and difficult to contest than social epistemologists like Fricker with their concepts of "identity-driven prejudice" presume.

As these racial "truths" are socially produced and maintained, almost all forms of antiracist criticism must begin first by "denaturing" their purported essentialisms and returning them to the discursive field in which they become meaningful. Yet that disclosure does little to dismantle the practical attitudes, habits, and ways of viewing the world that are racialized and which legitimate practices of racial inequality. This is not because knowers are duped or conned into some sort of false consciousness about racial identity, but because these racial distinctions are practically manifest and actualized in the worlds that individuals must negotiate. "It cannot be repeated too often that deconstructing 'races' is not the same thing as doing away with racisms," Gilroy adds.[39] Yet this is where so many normative critiques of racism and racial inequality leave us. In many versions of liberal humanism, like that of John Rawls, the fact "race" ought not to matter morally renders its facticity invisible socially.[40] At its most suspect, liberal theories of justice conflate a normative abstraction —

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[35] Stuart Hall, "The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees," in *Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chin, 24-45 (London: Routledge, 1996): 26.

[36] For a discussion of this "paradox" in ideology, see Rahel Jaeggi, "Rethinking Ideology," in *New Waves in Political Philosophy*, eds. B. de Bruin et al. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 66-71.

[37] Hall, "Subjects in History: Making Diasporic Identities," 290.

[38] Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, 40.

[39] Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2000), 251.

[40] Charles W. Mills, "Ideal Theory as Ideology," *Hypatia* 20, no. 3 (2005): 169. For a more extensive discussion of Rawls' analytical failures when it comes to theorizing 'race' and colonialism, see Charles W. Mills, "Decolonizing Western Political Philosophy," *New Political Science* 37, no. 1 (2015): 1-24.

the ideal of universal moral personhood — with an exclusionary and normalizing one — the fact of White (and until recently, male and propertied) personhood. But even in Anglo-American political philosophy that is sympathetic to anti-Black racism, scholars often move too quickly from the "non-ideal" terrain of racialized praxis to their formal blueprints for antiracist egalitarianism. They often either offer individualist indictments of racist actions, on the one hand, or look at structural patterns of racial inequality as instances of social injustice, on the other. Neither intellectual investigation, however, does much to think about the systemic nature of racialized praxis or the material effects that these hierarchies have on individual subject formation. In this respect, the Kantian approach to moral critique which focuses on the "ought" has little to say about the radical disjuncture between the public consensus around antiracist behavior and ongoing practices of racialized discrimination in societies like the U.S. today. It tends to focus on the political and moral consequences of racism rather than on the relations of force that make possible racial domination in the first place. By treating injustice or domination as a deviation from an existing moral norm rather than as the sociological 'norm' itself, applied ethicists and normative political theorists alike can indict social wrongs but they rarely can diagnose them. As I will argue in Chapter 2, contemporary political theory needs a more nuanced conception of 'race' and racism than the moralized version that predominates in Anglo-American political philosophy. Like Fanon, critics should reject the notion that 'race' operates *ex post facto,* whether on the plane of social structuration or on the plane of individual subjectivation.

Yet in their attempt to engage substantively with "the destructive impact of race thinking and racial hierarchy,"[41] political theorists too must be careful to avoid another analytical dead-end. Namely, I argue that some critical race theorists fall back into an essentializing interpretation of racial difference that posits the existence of racial categories as inert, self-evident entities rather than as contingent political phenomena. As I explore in Chapter 2, otherwise perspicacious critics of racial hierarchies like Charles Mills can end up reifying 'race' into a world-historical explanation for all forms of social inequality and domination. Mills, for example, attempts to theorize Euromodernity through the metaphor of a "racial contract" by which all White subjects agree to inferiorize and exploit nonwhite Subjects for their own economic and political gain.[42] The White oppressor/Nonwhite oppressed paradigm is too simplistic to account for the cross-cutting practices of social positioning that structure contemporary racial formations. In turn, I point out in Chapter 4 that Afro Pessimist thinkers like Frank B. Wilderson can end up conflating the structural positioning of many African American communities in the U.S. racial order with an ontological account of Blackness. Wilderson, for his part, argues that political theorists ought to focus in on Fanon's existentialist account of racism — and in particular, on the ways that encounter excommunicates the Black subject to the "zone of nonbeing."[43] While Wilderson's Afro Pessimism speaks to the trauma that many African American and Black diaspora subjects experience under White supremacy, his conceptual lens too conflates a socially produced and contextually specific phenomena — the African American's "social death" under chattel slavery — with an ontological one.[44] Reifying racial categories can lead to both bad diagnoses and bad politics, from the elision of other regimes of social stratification, including those of class and gender, to a naive account of emancipatory agency based around an "essential Black subject."[45] Gilroy too worries that such a politics, at worst, can fuel ethno-nationalist projects with authoritarian codes of belonging.[46] Regardless of how one feels about his concern with certain

[41] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 6.
[42] Mills, *The Racial Contract,* 32-40.
[43] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* xii.
[44] The concept of "social death" is Orlando Patterson's. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).
[45] Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities" in *Critical dialogues in cultural studies,* eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996), 444.
[46] Paul Gilroy, *Against Race*: *Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 6-8.

versions of Black nationalism, one need only look to the ways in which White ethno-nationalists have successfully weaponised the multicultural framework of "identity politics" to worry about such simplistic readings of racial identity and antiracist struggle.[47]

Both the idealization mistake and the reification mistake demonstrate the difficulties of escaping from the closures and dead ends that raciological thought creates. The latter mistake weds critics too firmly to the existence of the racial "is," the former to the projection of a deracialized "ought." Antiracist critique has to navigate between Scylla and Charybdis. On the one hand, social critics will need to retain an ethical sense of the human in a way that doesn't abstract away from the inhumane treatment and practices that produce certain subjects as inferior. On the other, they have to acknowledge the lived materiality of race without reinscribing the ontological mistake of racial categories at the heart of their inquiries. The methodological challenge is to disclose the ways in which people actually stand in relation to one another and themselves under concrete conditions *while* also remaining open to the fact that those social conditions of emergence are contingent. This is why I argue that political theory ought to adopt a particular methodology when it comes to diagnosing racial hierarchies — namely, that of immanent critique.

The turn to immanent critique

As an approach, immanent critique uses the moral commitments and norms already active within an interpretative community to interrogate that community's institutions, laws or practices.[48] Debating which normative principles ought to anchor our social institutions, practices and interactions only makes sense, critical theorists argue, when those discussions are embedded within a particular practical and ethical context that makes an ideal like equality or justice meaningful. In this sense, factual claims about the world are always-already framed by evaluative criteria, and evaluative judgments are predicated on certain implicit understandings of the social world. The task for the critical theorists, then, becomes diagnosing how social norms and moral norms can systematically undercut one another in discrete political contexts. Given that neither the sociological "facts" of racial formations nor the normative ideal of personhood provides a secure basis from which to advance antiracist critique, then, an immanent approach seems well-suited to diagnosing the dehumanisations inherent to racial hierarchies.

I consider six methodological commitments to generally distinguish immanent critique from other forms of political theorizing:

> (1) Immanent critique requires the theorist to take an embedded social perspective rather than adopting the transcendental stance of a supposedly "neutral" or objective observer.
>
> (2) It collapses, or otherwise sees as fallacious, the fact-value distinction posited by normative political philosophy.[49]

[47] For a discussion of how the discursive imaginary around racism, identity, and racial non-discrimination has been weaponized by Whites, see, for example, Michael Omi, "(E)racism: Emerging Practices of Antiracist Organizations," in *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness*, eds. by Birgit Brander Rasmussen et al., (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001), 268.
[48] For a careful discussion of what characterize immanent critique *qua* method, see Rahel Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms of Life,* trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 190-214.
[49] Amy Allen, *The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), xiii-xiv.

> (3) Immanent critique appropriates the normative surplus of a society's own ideals and ethical standards in order to contest its practices or institutions.
>
> (4) Immanent critique is disclosive in the sense that it can shift the terms through which the known becomes knowable — it is engaged in the process of producing new kinds of statements about the social order that we think we know.[50]
>
> (5) This sort of social criticism operates from negative indictments of existing injustice, oppression and domination rather than imagining, on more positive terms, what justice or equality would entail.
>
> (6) Immanent critique mobilizes a more robust account of freedom than many liberal political philosophers do, given that it is attuned not just to explicit forms of state coercion or violence, but also investigates how individuals can become alienated by pathological social orders.[51]

In this respect, critical theory ought to be well positioned to deal with the problems of racist domination and unfreedom.[52] Immanent critique ostensibly begins from states of injustice and seeks to diagnose the systemic and discursive forms that mystify these injustices as simply the "inert violence in the order of things."[53] The task for the social critic, in this understanding, is to identify instances of oppression, to explain how they are produced, and to point the way towards how they might be ameliorated. Critical theory is problem-focused, rather than principle-focused. This means that, as a method, immanent critique (at its best) reclaims an explicitly political approach to analyzing the power relations in ways that lend itself to antiracist struggle. A problem-centered approach to immanent critique serves as a better diagnostic tool for identifying the wrongs and harms that proliferate under dynamic, multi-faceted and systemic racial hierarchies. That is because of its analytical flexibility, its evaluative pluralism, and its commitment to the sociological specificity of injustice. "It is often little more than a gestural stance which persuades us to the misleading view that, because racism is everywhere a deeply anti-human and anti-social practice, that therefore it is everywhere the same — either in its forms, its relations to other structures and processes, or its effects," Stuart Hall writes.[54] Social criticism that aims to understand the why and how of racisms must do more than simply provide a normative objection. Many Black writers and activists have long worked within just this sort of critical tradition, even as they might not have embraced the term "critical theory" or offered a schematic defense of immanent critique *qua* method. But given that much of Black political thought is centered on the disjuncture that Euromodernity has opened up between its normative ideals of equal personhood and its dehumanizing practices of racial genocide, conquest, and expropriation, such an embedded and practical mode of criticism is almost unavoidable.

Yet many academic Critical Theorists today look instead to an alternative intellectual constellation when it comes to theorizing immanent critique — namely, those philosophical traditions that tend to go under the label of "continental theory." In particular, many thinkers differentiate between

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[50] This is the more Nietzschean/Heideggerian aspect of critique. For an extensive argument about this often-overlooked aspect of critique, see Nikolas Kompridis, *Critique and Disclosure: Critical Theory between Past and Future* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006).
[51] Rahel Jaeggi, *Alienation,* trans. by Frederick Neuhouser and Alan E. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 23-27.
[52] Allen, *The End of Progress,* xiv.
[53] Pierre Bourdieu, et.al., *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 64.
[54] Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity," in *Essential Essays Vol. 2: Identity and Diaspora*, ed. David Morley, 21-54 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2019): 48.

German Critical Theory, as defined by the Frankfurt School, and the French strain of critical theory, which is most often linked to the work of Michel Foucault. These "European" projects, in turn, have long sought to link the specific conditions for subject formation back up to oppressive power hierarchies. Yet for all that Critical Theorists have sought to tackle regimes of domination, exploitation, and oppression within concrete Euromodern social formations, they have paid little to no attention to racial stratification.[55] As Mills warns, "…critical theory's failure to seriously engage with race — whether on the individual level of personhood (as in Kantian ethics) or at the social-systemic level of white supremacy (as in Hegelian/Marxist 'world-historical' theorizing) — has blinded it to its own whiteness."[56] When 'race' is introduced as a problem for social critique, it is often treated as little more than an isolated example or an addendum to the bigger social problem, that of late capitalism. This is a significant handicap for critical theorists operating today, given that 'race' remains one of the three structural cleavages that define Euromodernity and that the political formations they are interested in cannot be adequately understood without reckoning with their imperial afterlives.[57] In this sense, Critical Theorists working in either the French or German schools might well have much to learn from Fanon.

In particular, I argue that Fanon's sociogenic critique of racialization combines the strengths of — and corrects for the flaws in — both Foucault and the Frankfurt School thinker, Axel Honneth. In Chapter 3, I juxtapose two particular methods of immanent critique: the Nietzschean project of genealogical critique championed by Foucault and the Left Hegelian theory of social recognition proposed by Honneth. By contrasting these two divergent approaches to social criticism, I seek to illustrate what sorts of methodological choices are productive when it comes to identifying obstacles to ethical subject formation in racial orders — and which remove from view the very sorts of unfreedom that antiracist critics aim to indict. Foucault's genealogical critique of (Euro)modern subject formation seeks to denaturalize that which appears to be an essential and therefore immutable part of the "given." In doing so, Foucault reveals that the existing status quo was both shaped by certain arrangements of power —and that things could be otherwise. This is why Colin Koopman and Amy Allen describe Foucault's critical theory as a "problematising critique."[58] In racial orders, then, the genealogical approach appears well-suited to denaturalizing the racial ideologies and practices that constrain oppressed subjects and privileged subjects, albeit in different ways. His fierce indictment of Euromodern humanism too resonates with antiracist critiques like Fanon's and Césaire's, which see in the European defense of the "Human" only hypocrisy and exclusion. Yet Foucault's work has some serious shortcomings when it comes to antiracist criticism. I have two primary concerns. First, because of his Nietzschean anti-essentialism, Foucault is wary of providing any sort of universal or transhistorical normative principles that ought to regulate social relations. But without these sorts of robust ethical commitments, he paints different kinds of socialization with the same brush,[59] thereby leaving him without the conceptual tools needed indict racist dehumanization and domination. Second, he adopts an overly individualistic account of subject formation in his later ethical work. In his ethic of "care of the self," Foucault avoids his critics' earlier worries about a kind of sociological functionalism in his analyses that reduced the subject to the after-effect of power relations. Yet his theory of subjective resistance is profoundly atomistic and tethered to an aesthetic politics of "becoming otherwise" rather than a collective politics of creating another world. Such

[55] Edward Said first pointed out that "contemporary Frankfurt School critical theory, for the most part, remains all too silent on the problem of imperialism." Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994).
[56] Charles W. Mills, "Critiquing Critical Theory," in *Critical Theory in Critical Times: Transforming the Global Political and Economic Order,* eds. Penelope Deutscher and Cristina Lafont (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017): 235.
[57] For a helpful discussion of why political philosophers ought to take the imperial past and present of Europe seriously in their critique, see Gilroy, *After Empire,* 13-21.
[58] Colin Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 93-95. Allen, *The End of Progress,* 190-192.
[59] Thomas McCarthy "The Critique of Impure Reason: Foucault and the Frankfurt School," *Political Theory* 18, no. 3 (1990): 446.

analytical shortcomings may well stem from his preoccupation with the privileged Euromodern subject, and yet I contend that they provide substantive limitations when it comes to offering resources for antiracist theory.

By contrast, Left Hegelian thinkers like Honneth adopt an intersubjective model that does not see all sociality as the imposition of unethical control. As Honneth (rightly) stresses in his work, the social too can be the site of both intersubjective reason and individual freedom.[60] Individuals might be structurally overdetermined from the outside, Honneth argues, but they too possess the critical faculties to negotiate those limits and contest them. And in the right circumstances, they can experience themselves as fully autonomous and self-empowered *through* their relations with Others. To argue for this social conception of freedom, Honneth goes back to Hegel and his account of recognition. In particular, he argues that individuals require certain kinds of intersubjective acknowledgement from Others, both particular and general, if they are to become capable of moving through the world as autonomous subjects.[61] These forms of autonomy-enabling recognition, in turn, are embedded in key social institutions like the family, the democratic state, and the capitalist market. In this respect, Honneth argues, the point of social critique is not to indict all forms of sociality as dominating or constraining, but instead to identify which kinds of social relations (and institutions) inhibit individual freedom. His version of critique, therefore, aims less at disclosing the "dark underbelly" of the European Enlightenment than it does at reconstructing the normative principles that such a political project has, as of yet, still failed to fully realise.[62] The task for the social critic becomes two-fold: first, identifying the normative ideal that undergirds these key social institutions, and second, disclosing the ways in which existing practices fail to fully actualize the norms that they purport to uphold. Honneth's critical theory, then, is more normatively ambitious, more sociologically optimistic, and more committed to the possibilities of universalist ethics than is Foucault's. In this respect, his work seems to offer an advantage for antiracist theory in that his model of social recognition makes space for both a more nuanced ethical critique of existing practices and for the possibility of collective politics. And yet I contend that Honneth's work has its own serious shortcomings. On the one hand, he offers an overly simplistic account of individual agency that assumes away the epistemic, affective, and agential obstacles to political resistance. On the other, he adopts a Eurocentric social ontology that uncritically positions Euromodern institutions like the liberal representative state and the capitalist market as sites of freedom. In this respect, I argue that Honneth provides a vindicatory — and problematic — reconstruction of European social orders that selectively overlooks the region's historical entanglements with chattel slavery, racial colonialism, imperialism, violence, mass expropriation and exploitation, and war.

Fanon's sociogenic method, I argue, offers a more productive way forward for antiracist theorizing. As I will show in Chapter 4, his work combines elements of both the genealogical and Left Hegelian methodological strands in productive ways. Like the genealogists, Fanon is committed to disclosing how specific racisms operate in concrete contexts to produce pathological or unfree raced subjects. His project remains materialist and structural, attuned to the institutional matrices, discourses, and practices that racialize and oppress. But like Honneth, Fanon too borrows from a Hegelian account of intersubjective freedom to indict certain kinds of social pathology. His alienation critique, in particular, mobilises a similar concern over social misrecognition to critique how Black subjects are dehumanized and disempowered by racist imaginaries. Where Fanon differs from Honneth, of

[60] See Axel Honneth, *The Critique of Power: Reflective Stages in a Critical Social Theory* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT University Press, 1991).
[61] Koopman points out, to this effect, that he is in the business of pointing out "dangers" rather than providing normative criticisms of "defects." Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique,* 88.
[62] For an effective critique of the solipsism of Foucault's ethical work, see Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender, and the Self* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 164, 171-182.

course, is that he is less optimistic about the normative potentials inherent in Euromodern institutions. German Critical Theory sees in Hegel a model for thinking through the ethical life. By contrast, Fanon uses Hegelian frames to diagnose the racial neuroses that capitalism and colonialism have cultivated. His ethical vision is directed past Hegel, at the possibility of dismantling racial hierarchies and creating the conditions for the emergence of a new kind of human — one that has escaped the genocidal tendencies at the heart of European Enlightenment humanism. Read together, then, I argue that Fanon's existential phenomenology and his materialism enable him to critique the real conditions of racial subjectivation without falling back into a misleading racial essentialism that mistakes contingent, political and unstable differences for a primordial and authoritarian Difference.

Translating Fanon's sociogenic criticism to the U.S.

Although his critiques were directed at specific colonial conjunctures, from mid-20th century Martinique to Algeria during its anticolonial struggle, I argue that Fanon's method can be used as an exemplar for antiracist critique in racial orders far removed from his own lived experience and political concern. This attempt to read Fanon into a very different conjuncture does open up a serious objection. Namely, I have argued that his work is best read as a response to particular colonial orders, not as a "globalist" theory of all racial domination.[63] As he himself noted, "I am resolutely a man of my time."[64] If Fanon's analysis does emerge out of particular conjunctures and responds to the political problematics they make urgent, how far I can take his insights into racial subject formation when it comes to theorizing a sociohistorical context as different as that of the contemporary U.S.? Adopting Fanon's ethical diagnoses of racial pathologies under European colonialism to the contemporary U.S. is not a straightforward task. And yet I hope to suggest that it is a project that critical race theory — and social criticism more generally — could reap a significant amount from, theoretically and politically.

The racial order in the U.S. today is not the same as those which Fanon lived in and indicted. The Jim Crow regime, of course, bore obvious similarities to the "Manichean world" that Fanon diagnosed in *The Wretched of the Earth.* Up until the mid-20th century United States remained a White polity — if not exclusively in its overall demographic numbers, than in its fierce control of political membership, its grids of social and spatial segregation, and its racialized regimes of labor exploitation and expropriation.[65] But this is no longer "the Century of the Color Line," as Du Bois described it.[66] Analysing the changing shape of White hegemony in the contemporary U.S. is, of course, a significant enterprise, one that I have neither the space nor the disciplinary expertise to carry out in this dissertation. But I do want to highlight three major sociological and ideological-discursive changes that differentiate the current racial order in the United States from the mid-20th century contexts which preoccupied Fanon. First, compared to the strict hierarchical caesura that the French colonisers sought to institutionalise in Algeria — and which characterised the segregated United States until the 1960s — today's U.S. racial hierarchies are more porous than they used to be. The

[63] Gates, "Critical Fanonism," 459.
[64] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, xvii
[65] For a description of segregation and the coercive practices of racialization at work in the U.S. during the first few decades of the 20th century, see David Theo Goldberg, *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 70-74. For an account of how White violence worked to solidify the emergent white supremacist political order, see W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).
[66] W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1.

U.S. governing coalition is now in the business of manufacturing consent to a stratification order that privileges Whiteness yet allows for certain kinds of Black advancement. Yet as Imani Perry points out, the assimilation of such "racial remainders" into the upper echelons of American economic and status hierarchies has not changed the oppressive conditions that structure the lives of Black and nonwhite working classes and poor.[67] Second, the symbolic order that regulates how 'race' is figured, in sociocultural and psycho-affective terms, no longer treats Blackness as exclusively the site of the abject. As Gilroy points out, "the old blackness — too narrowly understood — as American abjection must yield to a new awareness of blackness as a prestigious sign."[68] Instead, a burgeoning global cultural industry has weaponised the Black body and its cultural brand in ways that provide sites of social esteem while also reinforcing existing practices of racialized economic extraction. And third, the privatised logic of neoliberal politics has taken a substantial toll on how U.S. political institutions and the mainstream social imaginary conceptualise racism and its remedies. In particular, it has displaced a more structuralist and historical reckoning with ongoing forms of racialized disadvantage. Taken together, I argue, all three of these conjunctural shifts complicate how political theorists ought to think about the reproduction of a racially oppressive status quo. In particular, they call into question the presumption that all attempts to assimilate nonwhite people into existing institutional apparatuses are ethically or politically desirable.

In this respect, the more primitive Manicheanism that Fanon indicts in French Algeria and in French Martinique has been largely displaced by a different kind of racial logic in the contemporary United States, one that remains hierarchical and exclusionary, but which has more space for intermediary racial positions and other ethnic minorities.[69] The White settler paradigm has gradually been challenged and destabilised by a precarious form of multicultural plurality, albeit one which remains vulnerable to the old demographic anxieties. Racisms are no longer embedded in the letter of the law, and the past 50 years has seen the consolidation of a more significant Black middle class and a select group of Black exceptionals who have risen to the upper echelons of economic, social and political capital in the United States. Rather than forcibly exclude Black and Latinx voters from the political process, the Democratic Party has recalibrated its electoral strategy on the support of majority-minority voters at a national level. (Whether that political strategy is anything more than tokenistic and self-serving on the part of a largely White Democratic infrastructure is, of course, a separate matter.) Yet at the same time, racial stratification has also proven more resistant to contestatory politics than antiracist activists and anticolonial thinkers might have predicted in the middle of the 20th century. This progressive racial picture is, at best, complicated by and, at worst, eroded by other trends: the precaritization of the labor market, especially for low-income workers and racial minorities; the skyrocketing inequalities in wealth and the ensuing state capture by economic elites; the austerity policy regime that has similarly cut back on welfare support and strengthened a regressive tax code; the evacuation of Black and Hispanic household wealth during the Great Recession and the housing crisis; the mass incarceration of Black and brown men and women through a punitive and militarised "War on Drugs" in the "war zones" of neglected urban centres; the weaponisation of White identity politics by self-serving political actors and the re-emergence of White fascist violence as a technology of fear; the new digitally mediated and decentralised networks of White ethnonationalist identity practices; a biopolitical regime of targeted neglect and predatory policing that further destabilised and drained resources from majority-minority communities; the racialization

[67] Imani Perry, *More Beautiful and More Terrible: The Embrace and Transcendence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 130-132.
[68] Gilroy, *Against Race*, 347.
[69] For the changing character of the U.S. racial order, see Howard Winant, "Racism Today: Continuity and Change in the Post-Civil Rights Era," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, no. 4 (1998); Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formations in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994); and Steven J. Gold, "From Jim Crow to Racial Hegemony: Evolving Explanations of Racial Hierarchy," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 27, no. 6 (2004): 951-68.

of immigration policy and the coercive "repatriation" and deportation initiatives targeted at Latinx communities; the spectacular commodification of the Black body as erotic physicality in a globalised culture industry; and the general turn towards a neoliberal ethic of personal responsibility that ideologically legitimated growing racial and class inequalities on meritocratic terms. Or as Gilroy commented, "things are both worse and better than they were in 1970."[70]

The racial order in the U.S. has become more permeable, fluid, and flexible, but no less hierarchical and oppressive for those Black and nonwhite communities positioned as its underclass. This is why, drawing on Gramsci, Howard Winant argues that the political order in the 21st United States has moved from a racial "war of maneuver" to a racialized "war of position."[71] A war of maneuver, in Gramsci's work, denotes a political struggle "between disenfranchised and systematically subordinated group and a dictatorial and comprehensively dominant power."[72] Both sides are clearly delineated and positioned in antagonistic terms. But in the "war of position," subordinated groups have won some footholds in the social and political formation from which they can make demands of those in power. Now the conflict encompasses the entirety of civil society; it is fought "in a protracted way, across many different and varying fronts of struggle."[73] This is a more fluid, more flexible racial regime than those indicted by Fanon for their rigid Manichean logics. It is less racially segregated in many respects, and yet more racially concentrated in those residential areas that are segregated. The state is no longer, if it ever was, the straightforward representative of coercive control and racial domination that it once was. Under this new Gramscian framework of intelligibility, then, White hegemony remains a concerted political project within the United States. But now the dominant political and economic coalition now must attempt to win the consent of some Black and other nonwhite communities to retain its hold on power. Today, the coercive mechanisms of racial control — those which use brute force to dominate, intimidate, threaten, brutalise, or kill Black people — are complemented by other forms of biopolitical governance in which the White settler state produces racial minorities as certain kinds of "subjects" whose assimilation to an unfair status quo is won through quasi-consensual means. This is where some aspects of Fanon's criticism — especially his prescient worries over the institutional assimilation of the "native" or indigenous bourgeois after independence to a capitalist order structured in European domination[74] — could provide instructive guidance for antiracist critique in the U.S.

To be clear, I do not have the space in this doctoral thesis to conduct a Fanonian critique of the U.S. racial order, in even a limited sense. Such a project would require much more analysis — and many more pages — than I have pulled together here. What I offer in my final chapter, then, are gestures towards why such an endeavour of cross-cultural translation might be a worthwhile exercise. In particular, I argue that Fanon's critical concepts of reification and alienation could productively intervene in contemporary discussions about 1) Black disempowerment in the face of systematic racism, and 2) Black middle-class co-optation into a White governing coalition (and the deleterious psychological and political consequences that can result from such an assimilation). As I show in Chapter 5, his phenomenology of racist dehumanization provides a vital account of how the persistent and mundane exposure to racist expectations, either through majority-White institutions or the broader White-centric culture industry, can exhaust Black people to the extent of compromising their physical and mental health. As numerous medical studies have now documented,

[70] Paul Gilroy, "Black in the Union Jack?" public panel, *The Royal Society of Literature,* British Library, 12 Nov. 2019.
[71] For a fuller discussion of this transition, see Howard Winant, "Racial Dualism at Century's End," in *The House That Race Built: Original Essays by Toni Morrison, Angela Y. Davis, Cornel West, and Others on Black Americans and Politics in America Today*, eds. Wahneema H. Lubiano and Toni Morrison (New York: Vintage, 1999), 87-115.
[72] Winant, "Racial Dualism at Century's End," 91.
[73] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 38.
[74] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 115.

racism takes a serious toll on the human body, depleting its reserves and eroding individuals' motivation to participate in political life. In this respect, I argue that Fanon's nonsovereign account of freedom helps political theorists to tackle a wider range of obstacles to Black self-determination and antiracist politics in the contemporary U.S. than many liberal accounts, which remain fixated on the structure-agency debate.

In turn, Fanon's indictments of Black bourgeois alienation — and the desire for White recognition that it can inculcate — might speak to the depoliticising tendencies of corporate multiculturalism in the U.S. today. Over the past 30 years, the neoliberal turn has created new "diversity" projects in North American corporations and other social institutions that assimilate many Black subjects and other nonwhite communities to a status quo that exploits their "racial capital,"[75] on the one hand, while also continuing to dominate and exclude the poor and working classes.[76] Symbolic representation isn't wholly unimportant, of course, but when it comes without real power or capital, then it is often little more than the commodification of Black bodies for the continuation and legitimation of business as usual.[77] As Gilroy notes, "This enhanced visibility does not mean that the black body is imaged in postures or roles that would be chosen as a means to articulate or complement black political interests."[78] The push for racial recognition too can be a dead-end for both White and Black subjects alike when it forecloses a more serious reckoning with how capitalism and the biopolitical state operate *through* racial differences to segment, isolate and win over disparate populations. Today's globalized forms of racial stratification — and the neo-imperial relations of dependency, expropriation, and neglect that instantiate — seem to reveal just how prescient Fanon's warnings about neo-colonial relationships proved to be.

That said, I certainly do not want to suggest that an alienation critique — whether Fanonian or not — can explain how the United States racial order continues to reproduce itself along exploitative, exclusionary, and often deeply inhumane lines. The blame for the ongoing "plague"[79] of 21st-century racism lies with the White governing coalition and its passive supporters among the White middle-class. I think a Fanonian sociogenic critique would have useful things to say here too, both about the strategic formation of cross-class White alliances and the performative politics of racial deflection that characterize so much of White liberal discourse today. His careful analyses of colonial governance and its necropolitical techniques of population control might also help to further explain the rapid growth of the carceral state in the U.S. over the past 40 years. And Fanon's insights into how Arab women were used as a political prop to justify French settler colonialism in Algeria might resonate with the ways the U.S. military-industrial complex defended its neo-imperial interventions in the Middle East on the grounds of "protecting Arab and Afghani women." In future work, I would hope to explore some of these avenues for future research and critique.

Throughout this thesis, I focus predominantly on Fanon's analyses of White and Black subjectivation under racial colonialism. But this is not to say that other racialized subject positions are not important for diagnosing the U.S. conjuncture. After all, the U.S. is no longer a racial order organized primarily around the White/Black divide.[80] Nor could its complex histories of racialization ever be fully explained through that narrow dyadic schema. Most notably, such a binaristic picture overlooks the foundational racialization of the U.S. settler project — that of indigenous dispossession and

[75] Emirbayer and Desmond, *The Racial Order,* 109.
[76] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 137.
[77] bell hooks, *Writing Beyond Race: Living Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 161.
[78] Gilroy, *Against Race,* 214.
[79] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 36.
[80] For a cautionary note on the dangers of reducing 'race' to the White/Black binary, especially in the U.S., see Linda Martín Alcoff, "Afterword: The Black/White Binary and Antiblack Racism," *Critical Philosophy of Race* 1, no. 1 (2013): 121-24.

genocide.[81] Over the past few decades in particular, migration from Latin America, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia and parts of Africa have shifted the demographic picture of the U.S. population in stark ways. Some White people in today's uneasy multicultural society may still be caught in dreams of White purity, but the nation that they live in will never be "White" in the ways that they presuppose. The emergent forms of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab racism, the ongoing racialization of Latinx migration across the southern border, and the partial incorporation of various Asian elites into the labor market but not into social imaginaries and the culture industry as anything more than racist caricatures — these distinctive racializations often vary in form, not just in degree, Alcoff tells us.[82] Any comprehensive and concrete analysis of the U.S. racial formation today won't be complete without a relational look at these plural racisms and their entanglement with neoliberal capitalism, on the one hand, and the U.S. workfare/carceral regime, on the other. In this respect, I am using this particularly conflictual relation between White and Black Americans as a case study, rather than as an exhaustive or representative model of all forms of racialization. As Fanon reminds us, there may be some similarities between the experiences of racism, but the objective conditions and problems that distinctive racial groups must reckon with in discrete historical conditions often vary.[83] If I were to engage in a Fanonian critique of U.S. racisms in future work, I would adopt a more pluralistic lens.

I focus on White/Black racial differentiation in the U.S. as an example for a few reasons. First, the U.S. racial imaginary that positions racial subjects is still oriented towards Whiteness and away from Blackness.[84] There are many forms of racialization operative in the U.S. conjuncture today, yet those symbolic categories too are made meaningful by their relation to Whiteness and Blackness as oppositional poles.[85] Second, the U.S. racial order was created in a large extent to control the labor and bodies of Black people.[86] And it still reflects that biopolitical project[87] in its racialized labor markets and exploitative debt economy; its legislative apparatus and the careful use of redistricting and constituency management to displace the power of certain voters; its strategies and mechanisms of population control; its carceral regime and the subpersonal status that regime effectively creates; its municipal governance and the communities to which it injects resources and those from which it extracts. These racialized apparatuses might capture other nonwhite subjects and even some poor Whites in their dragnets,[88] but they first took shape as strategic responses to politically and economically ascendent Black communities. And finally, Black communities are often the first to experience the adverse effects of broader social and material transformations. For example, when the U.S. manufacturing sector began to send its stable blue-collar jobs overseas, Black workers were the first and hardest group to be hit.[89] When the state cuts back on its welfare programs and social supports, Black communities are often the first to be resource-deprived and yet also the first to be targeted by local police for increased fines and court fees.[90] Black Americans are often the canary in the coal mine, to speak, for other racial minorities and vulnerable groups.

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[81] For a comprehensive overview of indigenous peoples' relation to U.S. settler colonialism, see Roxane Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014).
[82] Alcoff, "The Black/White Binary and Anti-Black Racism," 122.
[83] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 172-3.
[84] Perry, *More Beautiful and More Terrible,* 6-8.
[85] Emirbayer and Desmond, *The Racial Order*, 16-17.
[86] Indigenous genocide and land dispossession were also key parts of the United States' White settler project. Yet given largely to the success of those genocidal aims, the U.S. political order and its institutional regimes largely took shape in response to the Black population, which was larger and whose labor was pivotal to the early capitalist economy. For more on the indigenous perspective of the United States' settler conquest, see Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Boston, Beacon Press, 2014).
[87] Perry, *More Beautiful and More Terrible*, 34-37.
[88] Angela Davis, *Abolition Democracy: Beyond Empire, Prisons, and Torture* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005), 51.
[89] Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro, *Black wealth, White wealth: A new perspective on racial inequality* (New York: Routledge, 2006).
[90] For a detailed insight into how the Ferguson Police Department in Missouri deployed these racialized practices of surveillance, predation, and extraction on Black residents in response to budget cuts, see the U.S. Department of Justice – Civil Rights Division, *Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department*, Washington D.C., 2015, https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/ferguson_police_department_report.pdf (accessed 2020/08/12)

Racial stratification may operate differently today, but it remains a constitutive part of Euromodern social orders from the U.S. to post-imperial Europe to postcolonial societies in the Caribbean, Asia, Africa and Latin America. In this dissertation, I seek to reinvigorate Fanon's insights for a new political moment and for a more robust kind of social critique. But I also do so aware of the limitations, both epistemic and ethical, that my own subject position places upon me as a political theorist. As a White North American woman from a middle-class family, I too have been socialised into the mainstream racial imaginary, with all its predispositions towards anti-Blackness. For most of my life, Whiteness has been both normal and normative. Time and time again, I have been forced to acknowledge the mystifications, blind spots and empathetic closures that have prevented me from seeing racial domination in the U.S. for what it is. In that respect, I am grateful to the people, texts, and conversations that have sparked these disclosures. And I am all too aware that I will never be able to overcome the epistemic shortcomings that my lived experience as a White person produces. Instead, in this dissertation as in my daily life, I remain committed to the difficult work of questioning and reflecting upon my own interpretative judgments, tacit ontological frameworks, affective investments, and ethical values. In that sense, my work here is fallible and seeks to invite further dialogue and contestation, more so than it seeks to pronounce a way forward for all political theorists who aim at antiracist criticism. Fanon has proven a key touchstone for me, as a thinker and a profoundly committed practitioner of anticolonial struggle, in my own reckoning with the racial afterlives of European and North American imperial conquest. I hope to show that other critical theorists might find his work equally productive for destabilising their own racialized perspectives and for encouraging them to take the modern problem of racial stratification seriously.

Chapter I
'Race' and Ideology Critique

'Race' is a historically unstable concept, even though it presents itself as an inert and essential division between human types. The demarcations of 'White' and 'Black' only *appear* to be natural types in White settler societies like the United States. But they are in fact artifacts of certain kinds of material and ideological practices. Processes of racialization constitute the stigmatized Other as a distinctive type of human being, one that is essentially inferior, incapable, deviant, immoral.[1] The disjunction — between the ontological irrationality of the 'race' idea and the practical 'functionality' of its classificatory distinctions, between moral rejections of 'race' and practical reliance on racial classifications — presents a key explanatory problem for antiracist critique. Radical Black political thought has long analyzed how White supremacy produces its own forms of raciological unreason. Political theorists, however, have largely ignored the problem of racial imaginaries until quite recently. For all that leftist thinkers working within European political theory problematized the social production of knowledge,[2] they have largely failed to ask questions about how racialization structured the Euromodern world or its ideological resources to any sustained degree. Or they have reduced 'race' to an epiphenomenal facet of capitalist class relations, to little more than an ideological strategy that the owners deploy to fragment and divide the workers.[3] Over the past few decades, social epistemologists and other philosophers have begun to turn to this problem of how social hierarchies, including racist ones, can corrode how knowledge is produced and communicated between differently positioned subjects.[4] Following on from the work of feminist standpoint theorists, philosophers like Miranda Fricker and Jose Medina have argued that widespread racial prejudice can cause epistemic failures that have grave ethical and political consequences.[5]

In this chapter, I argue that thinkers like Fricker focus too narrowly on individual knowers at the level of communicative interactions without integrating those epistemic failures into a broader structural framework of social power. Fricker's accounts of epistemic dysfunction, while helpful to a certain extent, remain too individualist and cognitive to account for racialized discourses and their political consequences. This is a problem not unique to Fricker. Social epistemologists often end up framing racism and racialized epistemic dysfunction as if they represent troubling aberrations from epistemic and moral ideals rather than examining them as regulative social norms. Instead, I contend that the problem of 'race' and racialized knowledge production is best tackled by returning to a critical concept of ideology. But rather than adopt the crude and overly economistic accounts of ideology that circulate in certain forms of Marxism, I instead look to the work of Georg Lukacs, Antonio Gramsci, and Stuart Hall for conceptual inspiration. All three thinkers attempted to theorize the *subjective* dimensions of ideology in relation to the *objective conditions* of social life that made particular ways of seeing, knowing, and evaluating into controlling norms.[6] When interpreted in this practical-materialist way, I argue, it becomes clear that 'race' functions as an ideological category. It produces

[1] See Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason;* Gilroy, *Against Race;* Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks;* and Stuart Hall, *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation,* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2017), among others.
[2] The Marxist tradition has long assumed that the 'realm of ideas' both reflected and was entangled with existing power hierarchies, which those social imaginaries then helped to stabilize. This, of course, was encapsulated in Marx's concept of ideology.
[3] Mills, "Critiquing Critical Theory," 240. See also Lucius Outlaw, "Toward a Critical Theory of 'Race'" in *Race and Racism,* ed. Bernard Boxhill (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).
[4] For an effective overview and typology of this social epistemology work, see Linda Martin Alcoff, "Epistemologies of Ignorance: Three Types," in *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance,* eds. Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 39-58.
[5] See Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) and Jose Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[6] For a probative discussion of both these thinkers' conceptions of ideology and how they fit into the longer tradition of Marxist ideology critique, see Jan Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology: The Powers of Alienation and Subjection* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

and stabilizes social imaginaries that are epistemically and ethically suspect and yet also are, to a certain degree, socially functional. By functional, I mean that 'race', at an individual level, offers a set of practical distinctions that regulate how individual subjects understand and act in the world. As Fanon points out, "The racist in a culture with racism is therefore normal."[7] At a structural level, in turn, I claim that racialized imaginaries continue to stabilize and reproduce racial hierarchies, in part through naturalizing practices of racial domination and in part through "manufacturing the consent" of subordinate groups to the existing political and economic apparatus.[8]

I argue that antiracist critique is better served by this materialist reading of concrete racisms than it is by the more depoliticized conception of anti-Black prejudice that predominates in the social epistemology literature. A profound amount of work — both discursive and material — has gone into making this partitioned imaginary of the human into a regulative norm in White settler states. At issue here are both the traditional centers of knowledge production and circulation, including the academy, public-facing political discourses and the culture industry, but also the architectures of social orders that determine the sphere of appearance for Black subjects. By this, I mean that racial orders police the kinds of places and spaces in which Black communities are made visible to White publics — whether that be the ghetto, the prison, the street corner.[9] What ought to trouble political theorists, however, is not just that these racialized grids of intelligibility are ideological, but that they track certain kinds of social hierarchies that disproportionately open Black and brown bodies to an entire host of wrongs — including oppression, domination, exploitation, expropriation, unfreedom, and violence. In Euromodernity, 'Blackness' marks out the infrahuman who can be coerced and disposed of without punishment. Like any form of social hierarchy that operates both through coercion and consent, racialization too involves the promulgation of forms of knowing and unknowing, of visibility and opacity, of investment and disinvestment, that work to naturalize and reinforce these forms of domination. As Lukacs pointed out in his critique of commodity fetishism, these objective relations can produce distortions at the *subjective level* that lead individual knowers to mistake the realm of immediate appearances for essences, or the nature of things.[10] Similar, racial imaginaries work to overcode existing forms of inequality with claims of essential difference. "The process of transforming people of African origin into Blacks, that is, into bodies of extraction and subjects of race, largely obeys the triple logic of ossification, poisoning, and calcification," Mbembe notes.[11] Under my account, ideology critique involves thinking through how "race" works through specific institutions to stabilize existing power hierarchies by removing the wrongs they inflict from easy contestation or broad-based political dissensus.[12]

I begin first by outlining how social epistemologists like Fricker have approached the epistemic problems posed by systemic racism. I will then demonstrate the pitfalls that this more individualist take on racialized knowledge production presents before arguing that a Gramscian-inspired concept of ideology offers a better path forward for antiracist criticism.

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[7] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 40.
[8] Stuart Hall points out that Gramsci's concept of hegemony and its emphasis on the "manufacturing of consent" can helpfully explain a number of cross-class alliances in racial regimes. For example, he notes the coalition between White capitalists and White workers has also worked to co-opt "the colored strata or 'tribal' blacks—in the strategy of forging alliances against the mass of rural and industrial blacks." Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 37. See also, Hall, "The Problem of Ideology," 29.
[9] On the importance of enframing for the visual, see Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2016).
[10] Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness,* 84, 93.
[11] Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, 40.
[12] Hall, "The Problem of Ideology," 34.

Racism as epistemic injustice

In recent years, social epistemologists have turned their attention to the ways in which social hierarchies can produce defective ideological resources and deficient knowers. Generally speaking, social epistemologists seek to demonstrate that an individual's social positionality influences her epistemic practices in some form. On this view, then, racism constitutes a kind of widespread epistemic pathology. In this section, I look predominantly at the work of Miranda Fricker, who has attempted to theorize both the agential and the structural aspects of unethical knowledge production. Fricker catalyzed a renewed interest in the ways that social hierarchies can inflict epistemic harms on marginalized or vulnerable knowers with her book, *Epistemic Injustice*. In the text, she differentiates between those epistemic obstacles that operate on the structural, macro-level of differentiated group knowledges and those that interfere at the interactional, micro-level of individual knowledge exchange. Fricker characterizes these two distinct categories of epistemic harm as hermeneutical injustice and testimonial injustice, respectively.[13] The former focuses on the asymmetrical hermeneutic resources available to epistemic subjects for making their lived experiences intelligible. The latter encapsulates the ways that individuals can be harmed as knowers when interlocutors unfairly devalue their epistemic authority in testimonial exchanges. Fricker's work, while not without its criticisms, offers an insightful look at how social epistemologists frame, diagnose, and think about remedying the harms that racism produces. I first reconstruct her account of epistemic injustice in relation to racialization before turning to the ways in which I find both Fricker's — and the approach of many social epistemologists more broadly — to be analytically and politically inadequate for the entrenched and systemic dynamics of racialized thought and practice.

Testimonial injustice and anti-Black silencing

Fricker's idea of testimonial injustice explains how identity-driven social prejudices can intervene in concrete epistemic exchanges. In testimonial exchanges, Fricker argues, hearers necessarily must evaluate whether other speakers and their claims are worthy of belief.[14] Such evaluative judgments of other speakers rely upon stereotypes that associate kinds of people with knowing or ignorance, trustworthiness or deceit, reliability or incapacity.[15] These unsound social stereotypes can be mistakenly applied to stigmatized speakers, corroding their epistemic standing. Importantly, Fricker stresses that these evaluative judgments of testimonial credibility involve both reflexive and pre-cognitive, but habitual responses. Individuals often make judgments about others' credibility that might seem to be unmediated by social content, but these evaluations still rely on tacit understandings of what sorts of speakers are believable and trustworthy.[16] Such distorted credibility judgments, Fricker claims, can mean that hearers give a particular testimonial utterance less authority than it ought to have or that they fail to register the utterance entirely — effectively silencing the speaker and preventing the transmission of knowledge.[17] Fricker describes these testimonial distortions as not just epistemically incorrect but as unethical. They represent a special kind of wrong. The prejudiced deflation of an individual's credibility hinders her a knower; it strikes at the heart of what it means to be a person.[18]

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[13] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice,* 1.
[14] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice,* 60.
[15] Social identity therefore becomes relevant as a heuristic device. Anthony K. Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 67-69; Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice,* 32.
[16] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice,* 37
[17] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice,* 28.
[18] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice,* 145.

Aspects of Fricker's work on testimonial injustice are instructive for understanding how stigma can silence Black and brown speakers at the level of dialogic encounters. Fricker, in fact, uses an example of an anti-Black credibility devaluation in *Epistemic Injustice.* She deploys an example from Harper Lee's novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird,* in which a White attorney is defending a Black man accused of raping a White girl before an all-White jury in the Jim Crow South. Even though the lawyer, Atticus Finch, presents empirical evidence that contradicts the White victim's testimony, the White jury finds it hard to believe the word of a Black man over that of a White woman and convicts Tom Robinson, thereby sentencing him to death. In this scenario, she argues, anti-Black racism was so robust that it prevented White knowers from believing Tom Robinson's testimony.[19] Black knowers like Robinson are systematically undercut and devalued in racist societies, particularly in institutional contexts in which testimony is a constitutive part of knowledge production. Fricker's model of testimonial injustice, therefore, provides one explanatory mechanism for thinking through how anti-Black prejudice[20] can silence and distort people of color at the level of interpersonal interactions.[21]

Fricker, of course, is not the first to identify the oppressive impact that racist stereotypes can have on Black subjects. Black feminists have long criticized how White understandings of Black women have oppressed them and constrained their capacities for self-expression, and at times, self-understanding. Patricia Hill Collins examined how Black women are also regularly subjected to controlling negative stereotypes.[22] Black women are presented as either de-sexualized, degendered workers or as hyper-sexualized prostitutes, as ideal domestic help in White households or as uncontrollable and deviant Black mothers. This can prevent Black women from both experiencing themselves on their own terms and from expressing themselves to differently positioned Others. Lorde indicts more than just explicit stereotypes that inferiorize Blackness. She also problematizes what she calls the "mythical norm" of the White, male, cisgender, heterosexual, and middle-class subject that undergirds Americans' background assumptions about individual personhood. In both explicit and implicit ways, she claims, social imaginaries foreground a certain privileged notion of the human, and individuals whose social identities and positionalities differ from that mythic norm are often excluded from both the realm of intelligibility and of moral concern.[23]

Other social epistemologists have recently sought to broaden Fricker's concern with the testimonial devaluations that can be visited on stigmatized speakers. They point out that there are many other explanations for how social power can distort individual subjects' epistemic practices.[24] Flawed cognitive norms, polarizing affective attachments, practices of inattention and insensitivity, controlling social narratives that make certain claims unintelligible or unimaginable, the normalization of particular speakers and epistemic standards as authoritative in certain sites of knowability, the material and social hierarchies that award different degrees of epistemic capital — all of these factors can influence how knowledge is produced, to whom it belongs and to whose benefit it operates.[25] Thinkers like Medina, Alison Bailey, and Shannon Sullivan have argued the socially advantaged

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[19] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice,* 37

[20] Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity,* 197.

[21] Alison Bailey, "Strategic Ignorance," in *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance,* eds. Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 88.

[22] In *Black Feminist Thought,* Patricia Hill Collins focuses on four racist archetypes that have largely been projected on Black women in ideological and damaging ways: that of the mammy, the matriarch, the welfare queen, and the sex worker. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

[23] Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Ten Speed Press, 2013), 116.

[24] For example, Danielle Allen has argued that successful deliberation between two differently positioned subjects requires first a degree of interpersonal trust — an affective relationship that is often foreclosed in racist societies across lines of social difference. See Danielle Allen, *Talking to Strangers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[25] Bailey, "Strategic Ignorace," 80; Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 18, 76-77; Alcoff, "Epistemologies of Ignorance," 49-50; Elizabeth Spelman, "Managing Ignorance," in *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance,* eds. Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 122.

subjects also suffer from epistemic disadvantage, even as those forms of unknowing bring them political benefits. Medina argues that privileged knowers tend to overestimate their own epistemic capacities because they are less likely to encounter epistemic friction[26] — the cognitive and affective snags that force people to critically reflect on their beliefs. Bailey, in turn, stresses that White knowers in the United States occupy this contorted epistemic posture in which they "do not know and do not wish to know" about Black suffering, to such an extent that they adopt a willful and ethically compromised naïveté.[27] Sullivan looks at how privileged subjects can interpret certain kinds of sufferings as fundamentally separate from their own affairs and actions, as somehow not their concern. What all too often follows from this cultivated interpretation of spatiotemporal distance is a politics of epistemic disinterest and moral divestment.[28]

These analyses all demonstrate, in contextually specific ways, how rigid social hierarchies can influence individual knowers into forms of misbelief and unethical judgment. And crucially, they do so without making recourse to a conspiratorial view of ruling elites brainwashing the vulnerable. They latch onto explanatory mechanisms that can both account for epistemological mistakes without requiring a puppet master, so to speak, who is behind the scenes pulling strings. Like Fricker, they understand these mistakes to be, in some sense, a predictable (if not defensible) response to a broader set of symbolic and structural conditions. In this respect, social epistemologists are working to fill an important theoretical gap that many historical materialists either overlook or fill with a crude account of false consciousness. All too often, as critics have long pointed out, structuralist analyses of knowledge production (and the kinds of domination that they help to stabilize) neglect the realm of individual agency. They tend to treat individual subjects as passive vessels for the imprints of structural and symbolic forces, as ideological dupes.[29] What social epistemologists seek to give us, I contend, are ways to theorize how individual agents — endowed with certain (albeit limited) capacities for reflexive reasoning and evaluative judgment — can still fall prey to the social "traces" that have shaped their embodied subjectivities and their practical contexts of action, without sacrificing their critical faculties. Social epistemology, in this respect, brings back into view the action-theoretical level of individual agents in ways that both enable us to talk about epistemic responsibility and ethics with any weight.

And yet I also find this sort of work to be quite limited in its ability to theorize the structural dimension of situated knowledges. Social epistemologists all too often fail to substantively reckon with the sociological conditions that delimit individual subjects' possibilities of knowing and evaluating in the first place. For social epistemologists like Fricker, the field of power relations is not itself an area of analysis. Instead, they begin at the interpersonal level, adopting a phenomenological approach to understanding how individual epistemic subjects negotiate a pre-structured "givenness." In this sense, the social hierarchies that determine which subjects are socially privileged and which are not, the hermeneutical practices that consolidate certain knowers' experiences into socially available concepts and which neglect others, all take place off stage. This is why Fricker continually makes reference to the forms of social identity prejudice which "track" structural inequalities. The level of structuring institutions, practices, and discourses functions as a sort of dehistoricized sociological *a priori*, which then filters in as a sort of corrosive force to compromise otherwise functional epistemic interactions. But she provides no conceptual tools with which to analyze these

[26] Medina, *Epistemology of Resistance,* 49-50.
[27] James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (London: Penguin, 2004), 10.
[28] Shannon Sullivan, "White Ignorance and Colonial Oppression, or why I know so little about Puerto Rico," in *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance,* eds. Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 153-172.
[29] Hall, "The Problem of Ideology," 31; Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology,* 7.

practices of knowledge production as social phenomena entangled with — if irreducible to — power relations.[30]

We can see how these theoretical shortfalls play out by once again looking to Fricker's work. Her theorization of testimonial injustice depends on a simplistic understanding of how prejudice operates. Anti-black prejudice figures here as a sort of interiorized problem of aberrational individual psychology. Fricker frames anti-Blackness as simply some sort of "social input" that then disfigures otherwise functional epistemic interactions. Yet within racist orders like the United States, there is no regular epistemic norm against which we can measure or account for the "devaluation" that anti-Black imaginaries inject into epistemic subjects' interior reasoning processes. Racialized stereotypes, images and affects cathect and shape our interpretative judgments in complicated ways. These judgments of who belongs and who doesn't, which people are antagonists and which are allies, rely on a more expansive racial ideology than simply the distrust of and contempt for Black people.[31] Not least of which are ostensibly race-neutral concepts like 'inner city' or 'welfare recipient' that continue to stabilize White hegemony, racial narratives that privilege Blackness as a site of an exotic or supra-human Other, affective investments in whiteness and White solidarity,[32] and legitimate responses to White racism that give rise to unproductive understandings of Black nationalism.[33]

The reproduction of racial inequalities in the United States today owes much less to the issue of implicit bias or subconscious forms of prejudice than people might think, Imani Perry argues. It is less that knowers continue to make racist evaluations of Others at a pre-reflective, non-cognitive level, and more than they make racialized judgments at a reflective level in ways that they don't see as morally or epistemically problematic. Republican lawmakers attempt to dilute the electoral power of the Democratic base by redistricting Black voters into concentrated areas.[34] Police departments deploy more officers per capita in majority-minority urban neighborhoods because "that is where the most crime takes place."[35] Bank employees target the Black middle class for subprime mortgage loans because they are "riskier investments" than their White middle-class counterparts.[36] It is not that all of these lenders or police chiefs or Republican lawmakers are committed to the notion that Black people are subhuman. (Many very well are, of course.)[37] It is that the hermeneutic expectations that accompany Blackness into these discrete scenarios makes the racist decision *appear* to be a rational and unprejudiced choice.

To focus solely on the problem of individual anti-Black stigma, then, will miss out on other ideological mechanisms of racialization. This more narrowly psychological understanding of racial prejudice too fails to provide much in terms of an antiracist politics. All too often, "[o]n the cognitivist account it remains the individual's thinking or reasoning that is in error, not the very tools that our language and culture provide us in order to think," Sally Haslanger points out.[38] Under such an

[30] "No ideological conception can ever become materially effective unless and until it can be articulated to the field of political and social forces and to the struggles between different forces at stake." Hall, "The Problem of Ideology," 41.
[31] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 77-78.
[32] The White working class have bought into socialized understandings of whiteness in ways that assure them some degree of social status but which often frustrate their own struggles against White-owned capital. See David Roediger, *The wages of whiteness: Race and the making of the American working class* (London: Verso, 2007).
[33] See Michael Dawson, *Black Visions, The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 85-134.
[34] David Daley, "'Worth this Investment': Memos Reveal the Scope and Racial Animus of GOP Gerrymandering Ambitions," *The Intercept,* 27 Sept. 2019, https://theintercept.com/2019/09/27/gerrymandering-gop-hofeller-memos/.
[35] For a discussion of policing and "crises" over Black men and other racialized deviants, see Max Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles: Race, Resistance, and the Rise of the LAPD* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2018). For a similar analysis of Britain, see Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: the cultural politics of race and nation* (London: Routledge, 2002).
[36] Tomson Nguyen and Henry Pontell, "Fraud and Inequality in the Subprime Mortgage Crisis," *Sociology of Crime, Law and Deviance* 16 (2011): 3-24.
[37] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice,* 83-85.
[38] Sally Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," *Res Philosophica*, Vol. 94, No. 1, 2017, 9.

approach, eliminating racism from epistemic interactions would simply requires rooting out those explicit antiblack beliefs from individuals' cognitive commitments.[39] In her work, Fricker turns to virtue ethics to explain how this might be the case. She argues that individual knowers must first train themselves to do this ex post facto by adjusting their credibility assessments "upwards" to account for these sedimented anti-Black biases.[40] Over time, these new credibility-inflated judgments of Black speakers will become habitual, almost as if a good knower has developed a better "epistemic norm" for themselves on an individualist basis.[41]

There are reasons to doubt that such ethical re-training would ultimately be successful if knowers continue to live under racist social imaginaries and negotiate racialized institutions. A White knower may have been able to stave off their usual credibility deflation in certain cases, but those anti-Black expectations lay dormant in the background. It only takes a minor slip-up on the part of the Black speaker (or the introjection of a perceived threat to the White knower's ego) for the entire force of the negative stereotype or imaginary to return. As Fanon notes, White people will often see and trust a Black doctor, whose credentialed expertise seems to cancel out their Blackness. And yet that doctor is walking a precarious line. One false move, and the White patient remembers and introjects his "racial self" back into their judgments of his intelligence and capacity. These forms of racial common-sense, we might say, remain sedimented into the popular consciousness, and as Gramsci would point out, they can easily be reactivated into new forms and interpretative responses.[42]

But even if Fricker were right and conscientious knowers could work on their interpretative predispositions in this way, her theoretical project is largely limited to a set of narrow ethical questions about what it means to become a "better" knower in an unjust world. Such an idealist account of knowledge production relies on a "voluntarist" logic that separates out the content of ideas from their social and material institutionalization in a particular conjuncture. As Fanon points out, "It is... not as a result of the evolution of people's minds that racism loses its virulence."[43] A virtue ethicist approach to racisms leaves intact — and largely unchallenged — the racialized recognitional order that reads Blackness as inferiority, laziness, stupidity, deviance, repugnance.[44] It asks hearers to trust Black speakers (or female speakers) not because of their social identity but despite it. Not only are remedies for testimonial devaluations unstable if the collective hermeneutic resources still inculcate racially pejorative ways of seeing others, but stigmatized speakers will suffer from the adverse effects of their symbolic, aesthetic and cultural subordination in other ways. The voicing of prejudice is never simply just an isolated ethical insult; it takes on its power because of the wider interpretative schema that explains and legitimates other forms of violence, domination, and exploitation under the banner of that prejudice.[45] Unmaking the relationships of epistemic domination that precipitate testimonial injustice will ultimately require wholesale revisions to and deconstruction of the dominant social imaginary.[46]

Certainly, Fricker acknowledges the limitations of a virtue-based account of epistemic responsibility in *Epistemic Injustice* and notes that additional work will need to be done on the political level.[47] My criticisms are less geared towards invalidating her entire project but are instead aimed at revealing what is missing, conceptually and critically, from narrowly individualist accounts of racialized

[39] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, "Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation," *American Sociological Review,* vol. 62, 1997, 467-468.
[40] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice,* 91.
[41] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice,* 98.
[42] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 58.
[43] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 35.
[44] Emirbayer and Desmond, *The Racial Order,* 106.
[45] Gautam Bhatia, *Offend, Shock or Disturb: Free Speech under the Indian Constitution* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016), 164.
[46] Medina, *Epistemology of Resistance,* 289.
[47] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice,* 177-178.

judgment and action. I am intending more to point towards a deep-seated methodological flaw in the social epistemology literature — one which often skews the kinds of sociological analysis that these thinkers draw on. Theorists might find it helpful to analytically separate off more narrowly "epistemic" questions from the sociological grounds that underpin them — this is, after all, what abstraction does as a methodological enterprise. But to treat the "realm of ideas" as something that can be practically separated from the contexts of articulation and circulation in which they become meaningful guides to action and understanding is to fall back into an "ideological" orientation towards the practice of theorizing itself.[48] Social epistemologists all too often approach the issue of social knowledge production first and foremost as an epistemic problem for individual knowers. This distorts how they understand racisms and what sorts of strategic responses they propose for contesting racial imaginaries and the racist practices they inform. In particular, it leads them to overemphasis the "falsity" of such racist beliefs and to presume that "unmasking" or revealing their epistemic pretensions will necessarily eliminate or undo racialized forms of practical consciousness. The social epistemologist, in this framework, then assumes "the function of revealing the 'truth' about social conditions" to an unenlightened (and unintentionally racist) public.[49] What is required in racial stratification orders, therefore, is an account that is much more structural and materialist — one that focuses on practices, institutions, and discourses and asks how they naturalize racial inequality in ways that contribute to its reproduction, at both the level of individual actors and at the level of racializing regimes.

A quick example should begin to illustrate where the social epistemology literature's diagnoses of racism fall short. In the United States today, a group of Asian American students are suing Harvard University over what they describe as unconstitutional racial bias in the school's admissions process. They argue that the university's admissions procedures are race-conscious in ways that unfairly discriminate against Asian American applicants.[50] To prove their cases, they have brought evidence of the differential academic profiles that successful Asian American applicants possess in contradistinction to either White, Latinx or Black students who received acceptances. But the lawyers for the plaintiffs have also revealed evidence of clear anti-Asian bias and stereotyping within the admissions process itself. They argue that the admissions officers have used a vague "personal rating" through which to devalue Asian American applicants. In this sense, they allow certain stereotyped understandings of Asian Americans to infect their judgment and to devalue these otherwise outstanding students' standing in the admissions process.

These assessments of Asian American students are clearly prejudiced and unfair. Under Fricker's framework, they exhibit the same sort of epistemic and ethical wrong that she describes in her model of testimonial injustice — i.e., credibility devaluations of another person that result from unfair identity-driven prejudice. And yet what the Asian American plaintiffs are indicting and the solutions they call for are deeply misguided and would actually serve to further entrench racial hierarchies in the United States, albeit with a larger slice of elite university places carved out for upper middle-class Asian students. Affirmative action programs were designed, after all, not to eliminate racial prejudice in higher education's admissions processes, but instead to remedy long-standing inequalities that have left Black students without access to these institutions — first by law, then by de facto social praxis, and now by a consolidation of resources and educational capital in White communities. As numerous commentators have pointed out, the protected classes of Harvard admittance that should rightly be

[48] Lorna Finlayson, "On Mountains and Molehills: Problems, Non-problems, and the Ideology of Ideology," *Constellations,* vol. 22, no. 1, 2015, 135-146.
[49] Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology,* 82.
[50] Hua Hsu, "The Rise and Fall of Affirmative Action," *The New Yorker,* 5 Oct. 2018, accessed online, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/10/15/the-rise-and-fall-of-affirmative-action.

problematized on racial grounds are not those that allow for greater inclusion of other racial minorities but those which ensure that White students from privileged backgrounds can still attend at higher rates. Both the practice of legacy admissions and of giving special consideration to student athletes and applicants with ties to big donors might be, on their face, race-neutral policies but they practically serve to further consolidate a White elite student body.

At a foundational level, using instances of anti-Asian bias to dismantle affirmative action and race-conscious admissions practices fails to read these racialized stereotypes against a broader structural picture of how 'race' intersects with the higher educational system as a whole.[51] Racial prejudice emerge from hierarchical social orders, and it often works to further sediment forms of White hegemony. But not all instances of racial bias are functionally driving the reproduction of the racial order in the same way. In this case, racist stereotypes are preventing relatively well-off Asian Americans from gaining admittance to the most elite of the United States' elite schools. But even without a Harvard acceptance letter, they go onto similar elite institutions and will have access to the economic and social capital that such a class status enables in America today. Those who will truly be harmed by this attack on race-conscious decision-making are members from racial minorities who don't have access to resources and are now forced to compete on an academic terrain for which they are both underprepared and more likely to face racial and class-driven prejudice. Social epistemologists do not have the diagnostic tools to separate out these instances of racist bias that are certainly unethical and epistemologically invalid at an individual level from those racialized judgments that also contribute to the stabilization of oppressive racial orders. Fricker does, of course, attempt to theorize the structural plane of collective knowledge production. But as I explore in the next section, her conceptualization of these epistemic distortions — what she terms 'hermeneutical injustices' — also leaves a lot to be desired in that they adopt a narrowly linguistic account of communication.

Hermeneutical injustice and racist concepts

To address the structural level of collective meaning-making in social hierarchies, Fricker develops the concept of hermeneutical injustice. The collective interpretative resources available in a given social order tend to privilege dominant social actors' attempts to understand their worlds. In this respect, they can also harm less advantaged knowers by failing to provide ideas and narratives that help them to make sense of their own experiences. An individual suffers a hermeneutical injustice, Fricker contends, when "some significant area of one's social experience [is] obscured from collective understanding owing to a structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource."[52] A broader practice of hermeneutical marginalization prevents knowers from marginalized social backgrounds from contributing on equal terms to the collective pool of knowledge. This limited access to the shared acts of meaning-making often results in semantic gaps, zones of social unintelligibility that can prevent marginalized individuals from making sense of their own experiences and subjectivities. Hermeneutic marginalization on its own does not constitute a normative wrong. "The hermeneutical inequality that exists, dormant, in a situation of hermeneutical marginalization erupts in injustice only when some actual attempt at intelligibility is handicapped by it," Fricker contends.[53] These interpretative gaps can have harmful consequences for marginalized knowers, from the epistemic to the ethical. To illustrate her point, she argues that we can interpret the emergence of

[51] The nonprofit group behind the Harvard lawsuit is strategically manipulating this conceptual disjunction around 'race' to exploit the Left's antiracist stance and turn it into grounds for eliminating affirmative action.
[52] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice,* 159.
[53] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice,* 160.

the concept of sexual harassment in just this way. In the 1970s, a woman named Carmita Wood was groped and regularly propositioned by her male boss at work. He discounted these behaviors as "harmless flirting" when she complained, but the stress of fending off his lewd advances eventually led Wood to quit her job. The unemployment benefits office, in turn, refused her claim because she had left for voluntary reasons. As Fricker puts it, it was only afterwards, once the concept of sexual harassment had taken hold in the feminist movement, that Wood could explain, both to herself and to others, why her discomfort with her boss' behavior was legitimate and worthy of redress.[54] In extreme cases, individual knowers can internalize these misleading interpretations of their experiences in ways that lead them to conform with others' expectations of who they are and what they might be experiencing.

Fricker spends less time explaining how her conception of hermeneutical injustice might be productively applied to racial orders. But it is easy to see how the marginalization of Black and brown people in the collective production of meaning has had damaging consequences on what they could express convincingly to differently positioned Others. Black activists and intellectuals have regularly worked to articulate concepts that better parse and frame the experiences they face at the hands of White people and White-dominated institutions. For example, the ideas of "institutional racism," "micro-aggression," and "White fragility" have all emerged from Black social movements as they sought to problematize practices and structures that generally passed unremarked in White social imaginaries. What appeared to White knowers to be simply the order of things — residential segregation, ongoing forms of White privilege in schools and the labor market, racist policing — was revealed to be institutionalized patterns of White dominance. What White subjects thought of as for coincidental or happenstance mistakes — calling a Black friend by the wrong name or telling a Black woman that she is being "too angry" when she tries to discuss something with you — were reframed as forms of mistreatment and racial discrimination.

Yet Fricker's account of hermeneutical injustice is limited in that it undertheorizes how social power can corrupt the kinds of interpretative resources available in given conjunctures. It may apply helpfully to some key cases like Wood's, but there are many more instances of hermeneutical distortion and obstruction that Fricker's conceptual apparatus cannot identify or critique. Part of the problem, as several commentators have noted, is that Fricker views hermeneutical inequality in terms of hermeneutical lack.[55] She compares these semantic gaps to holes in the ozone layer that happen to make certain people more vulnerable to epistemic obstacles.[56] But as Collins and Lorde have demonstrated, racisms don't oppress Black and brown knowers by withholding concepts and linguistic resources that speak to their experiences; they do so by promulgating unfair stereotypes, controlling narratives, and negative affects that limit their ability to confidently inhabit their racial identities as equals. More worrying is that Fricker isolates hermeneutical distortion to the linguistic plane — she conceptualizes these injustices as inhering at the abstract level of concepts, ideas, and other propositional inputs. Raymond Williams criticized many literary critics and philosophers of language for forgetting that language too is a material phenomenon; it takes a material form when it is put into use.[57] "People tend not to think of [language] in that way because they cut out the process, they go straight from the thing in the head to the thing in somebody else's head," Williams notes. "Whereas I think most people who work with this material are very aware that this is a productive

[54] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice,* 151-152.
[55] Medina, *Epistemology of Resistance,* 97.
[56] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice,* 161.
[57] Emirbayer and Desmond, *The Racial Order,* 253.

process."[58] Fricker treats hermeneutical resources as if they were simply ideas that passed from one head to the other.

This cognitivist focus on "ideas in the head" leads her into two problems. First, she tends towards an elitist conceptualization of knowledge that overlooks how subaltern knowers make their voices heard without the need for abstract concepts. Expressing oneself in general and impersonal terms is not a natural epistemic capacity but a learned skill that is taught to varying degrees, depending on one's social background. This approach overlooks pragmatic and narratively anchored forms of knowing.[59] For example, a character in one of Zora Neale Hurston's novels declares that the Black woman is the "mule of the world."[60] This is, in certain extents, an image that functions as a conceptual device to illustrate the particular social subjugation and economic exploitation that Black women face in racial orders. But it remains at the level of particularity, attuned to the sociological context out of which it emerges and becomes a meaningful statement. The instances in which people lack the semantic tools to evaluate and make sense of their shared experiences are fewer and farther between than Fricker would have us believe. In this respect, Fricker reduces the epistemological to the limited plane of what Gramsci would call "philosophical" discourses — i.e., all those coherent, systematized, and clearly articulated programs of thought that emerge out of technocratic institutions. In doing so, she negates the important role that common sense and other popular forms of knowledge play in the setting up of limits around what can be thought, said, evaluated, and articulated.[61] When we take into account these popular sites of subaltern meaning-making, however, Fricker's account of hermeneutic injustice needs to do more work as to why certain interpretations don't get taken up by the broader public. More often than not, Collins points out, the oppressed are aware of the shared and social nature of their suffering without needing a new concept or academic discourses to do the interpretative work for them.[62] What they may be less clear on is how to structurally situate their experiences of exploitation, say, within a broader framework of institutions, state apparatuses, and discourses.

Nor is a concept's existence within a social imaginary a guarantee that an individual using it will achieve interpretative success. There is a second question here about whether a particular speaker can deploy that concept with interpretative legitimacy in a particular context of enunciation.[63] A knower might be well aware of the concept of depression and what it means — low mood, low energy, negative and self-defeating thoughts, lack of will to engage with others or carry out basic tasks. And yet they might, for whatever reason, be unable to deploy that conceptual apparatus to explain and understand their own experiences. Even when one knower does appropriate a particular concept to explain her own experiences, there is no guarantee that she will receive the same interpretative uptake from others. Language, after all, is structurally open-ended and multi-vocal; its codes are open to a multiplicity of interpretations, and there is no guarantee as to how a given utterance will be heard.[64]

The second problem is that Fricker mistakes what ought to be a pragmatic question — that of what a given conceptual frame enables certain speakers to do or say — for a symbolic question — that of what certain ideas or narratives mean. Concepts might seem straightforward, like a set of linguistic chips that we can exchange and pass around, but they tend to mobilize entire interpretative

[58] Raymond Williams and Daniel Williams, "Marxism, Poetry, Wales: Interview with Poetry Wales," *Who Speaks for Wales? Nation, Culture, Identity* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 2003) 84.
[59] Axel Honneth, *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 87.
[60] Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (New York: Harper Paperbacks, 1998), 16.
[61] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 43.
[62] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought,* 8.
[63] Thanks to Daisy Porter for pushing me on this point.
[64] Hall, "The Problem of Ideology," 40.

constellations of narratives, images, affects, and associations that can vary, depending on which social positionality an individual knower takes up. This extends, too, of course to individuals' capacities for moral reasoning and the expressive obstacles that marginalized knowers might face when it comes to articulating their political grievances. As Hall notes, "The degrees of symmetry — that is, the degrees of 'understanding' and 'misunderstanding' in the communicative exchange — depend on the degrees of symmetry/asymmetry (relations of equivalence) established between the positions of the 'personifications,' encoder-producer and decoder-receiver."[65] These interpretative equivalences, Hall points out, don't only rely on shared symbolic resources, but also on the social positioning that conditions how each knower is likely to decode a given message. When we start to conceptualize hermeneutical obstacles within their concrete contexts of enunciation, then the problematic shifts from that of vocabularies — what we have the words to describe — to that of meaningful utterances — what we can say to whom about what and how we are heard.

Another of Hall's texts proves instructive here. In *Policing the Crisis,* Hall et.al. discuss how certain abstractions are often decoded differently by knowers depending on their socioeconomic class. In 1980s Britain, they point out, both working-class and middle-class British people put great stock in the concept of "merit." Yet what each social group understood by the idea was different. Working class people, they pointed out, tended to associate it with hard work, whereas wealthier elites interpreted merit as claims related more directly to intellectual capacity and special skills. This interpretative divergence enabled both class segments to agree with general statements about what role merit ought to play in the social distribution of benefits and burdens, without running into class conflicts over what the capitalist labor market actually rewarded. Similarly, this model explains why White and Black subjects interpret the police in divergent ways. White communities often think of the police as keepers of the peace, as allies, as defenders. Whereas Black subjects, particularly those in hyper-surveyed neighborhoods, see the police in a very different light: as protectors of White people and White property at the expense of Black safety, as a source of harm and abuse, as an existential threat to be summoned only as a last resort.[66] The interpretative differences here owe to the differences in these subjects' social positioning (and the kinds of vulnerability that bestows), but also to the different forms of collective story-telling about the police that predominate in these two racial groups. Now this is not to assert that an individual's racial identity or class background necessarily or mechanistically "creates" certain ideas about, say, the police in their heads. But it is instead to highlight a "tendential relation" between occupying a particular subject position under a racialized carceral regime and being socialized within a hermeneutic community for whom the police have long symbolized certain things. As Hall points out, "it is not necessarily a form of vulgar materialism to say that, though we cannot ascribe ideas to class position in certain fixed combinations, ideas do arise from and may reflect the material conditions in which social groups and classes exist."[67] James Forman Jr. makes a similar argument when he suggests that part of the reason that the civil rights movement in the U.S. didn't mobilize against the mass incarceration crisis until recently owes to the *middle-class character* of its most active members. For all that they may still be targeted by racist policing, the Black middle class has not had the same experiences with imprisonment and the broader carceral regime as the Black poor and the Black working classes. The movement's understanding of "Black interests," then, was built off of a one-sided and partial interpretation of the primary sources of racial domination in the U.S. today.[68]

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[65] Stuart Hall, "Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse," in *Essential Essays, Vol. 1: Foundations of Cultural Studies,* ed. David Morley (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2019), 260-261.
[66] Simone Brown, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness.* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2015), 8-10.
[67] Hall, "The Problem of Ideology," 41.
[68] James Forman, Jr. "The Black Poor, Black Elites, and America's Prisons, " *Cardozo Law Review* 32, no. 3 (2011): 791-806, 801-802.

Concepts become meaningful when they help to organize practical distinctions in common-sense situations. At the level of consciously held beliefs, a Black person might denote a person whose genealogical descent is tethered to the African continent and whose physiology reflects certain key traits, the most prominent of which is often skin color. And yet at the level of practical action, Blackness all too often serves as an indicator that signifies a job applicant is less qualified or that a pedestrian is likely to be ferrying drugs.[69] Within racial orders, the figures of the Black man (and of the Black woman) delineate certain forms of practical distinctions between types of subjects. Social critique must therefore take into account both the material architectures and institutional complexes that makes visible certain bodies and the hermeneutic imaginaries that make those bodies meaningful in certain ways. This is especially true in racial hierarchies. As Fanon notes, White racial imaginaries have "epidermalized" the Black subject in the sense that his very presence is reduced to his dark skin. Race' appears as if it is incontrovertible, natural, marked onto bodies before they can speak or represent themselves.[70] Under this reading, Blackness is not simply a personal or group characteristic; it maps an entire constellation of images, affects, and narratives that regulate what knowers can imagine about and do to certain people. This is why we should think of problematic hermeneutical resources not primarily in terms of "bad ideas" but as a set of materially instantiated ideological practices.[71] Theorists like Fricker go wrong, therefore, when they situate their critiques of certain ideological resources at the general level of its semantic availability. This totalizes what is a contradictory, conflictual and multivalent field of ideological discourses into an expressive social whole where meanings are presumed to be equally accessible, available, and useful.[72]

On the whole, Fricker's account of epistemic injustice provides a promising look at how individual knowers can be, so to speak, "taken in" by racist imaginaries. But her work — like that of many other social epistemologists seeking to understand how pathological forms of knowledge production operate — is worryingly limited. Both her theorizations of testimonial injustice and hermeneutical incapacity construe racism primarily as an epistemic problem — as a series of aberrational judgments with immoral consequences. She shares this mistake with many other social epistemologists and thinkers who have sought to address so-called "epistemologies of ignorance." This is not to say, of course, that the social epistemology literature is wholly incorrect or misguided. What I am claiming is that the questions that Fricker and others are asking are simply not as pivotal to the critique of racial orders as some might suppose. They are working on only one half of the puzzle — namely, the degree to which the social context interferes with individual reflexive judgment. These explanatory mechanisms need to be supplemented and situated within a more critical structural analysis of how the ideological interacts with economic and political processes to dominate, exploit and exclude certain groups for the benefits of others.[73] Without being able to relate the individual instances of epistemic injustice back up to the social hierarchies that first created them, I argue Fricker and others cannot distinguish between more isolated incidents of flawed judgment and those wrongs which are directly related to and functionally involved in the reproduction of racial oppression.

Racisms — and the epistemic failures they proliferate — are more material, dynamic and systemic than the social epistemology literature makes them out to be. They are embedded in a complex matrix of institutions, systemic practices, and discourses that connect their racializing images of the Other to power hierarchies. Racialized hierarchies are first and foremost a political problem, not a moral or

[69] Perry, *More Beautiful and More Terrible,* 29-32.
[70] Alcoff, *Visible Identities,* 196.
[71] Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," 1–22.
[72] Rehmann, notably, advances a similar critique of Lukacs' account of reification as presuming "a homogeneous unity without any frictions and contradictions." Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology,* 80.
[73] Robin Celikates, "Beyond the Critical Theorists' Nightmare: Epistemic Injustice, Looping Effects, and Ideology Critique," draft paper presented at "International Summer School in Critical Theory," Humboldt University Berlin, 15-20 July 2018.

even an epistemic one. The U.S. racial divides are not a problem of individual bad character — although that certainly still abounds — but of an entire state and market apparatus that relies on the systematic exploitation and marginalization of Black bodies for the privileging and protection of White bodies. No Good Samaritan can unmake that. No formal provisions of racial inclusion and legal equality — if left without active enforcement mechanisms that target racialized practices — will be enough to repair the damage of centuries of racial oppression and neglect. This is why I contend, in the next section, that antiracist critique requires a concept of ideology to tackle the cultural and ideological forms that reproduce racial inequalities.

Racism as ideology

As a concept, ideology is notoriously slippery and has been deployed in various ways to explain different sorts of sociological or political problems. Ideology can be said to refer to "the mental frameworks—the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation—which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works," as Hall puts it.[74] Yet in his chapter on the different varieties of ideology studies, Raymond Geuss notes that political thinkers today tend to use the term in either a positive, negative or descriptively neutral sense.[75] For positive accounts of ideology, thinkers generally speak about how certain bodies of thought can bring together or consolidate certain kinds of beneficial political practices and coalitions. Descriptively neutral conceptualizations tend to treat various ideologies as a sociological phenomenon, i.e., as a set of commonly shared beliefs, values, and presuppositions about the world that inform how certain knowers will judge and act.[76] A critic might be able to evaluate an ideology for its epistemic qualities — how accurately does it capture material relationships in the social formation — and for its sociological purchase — what sorts of politics does it enable or foreclose. But these assessments are not of and in themselves normatively inflected; neutral accounts of ideology see them as imaginative resources out there in the world, but they are not too concerned with how these ideas relate to or foster social domination in any necessary sense. Many of these first two approaches to thinking ideology tend to view ideologies as akin to a specific worldview, which may be shared by an entire social milieu or just by certain social collectivities and actors.

In negative conceptions of ideology, by contrast, imaginative resources are dialectically entangled with social oppression. In this view, these ideological resources emerge out of power hierarchies, on the one hand, and then help to stabilize those relations of force by naturalizing or otherwise legitimating them, on the other.[77] Knowledge production, within this view, is never a simple epistemic exercise in searching for truth or understanding, but it is fundamentally entangled with the workings of social power. "The *problem* of ideology is to give an account, within a materialist theory, of how social ideas arise," Hall notes.[78] In this conception, ideology is normally co-extensive with a given social formation, where individual subjects might stand in different relations to these symbolic discourses and their terms of visibility. The ideological, in this materialist account, works at a deeper level than what certain kinds of political actors espouse as their "distinctive" worldview. This negative

[74] Hall, "The Problem of Ideology," 25.
[75] Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 4-25.
[76] Michael Freeden's work offers one such example. Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
[77] Hall, "The Problem of Ideology," 26.
[78] Hall, "The Problem of Ideology," 25.

or critical tradition of ideology critique is most commonly associated with Marxist historical materialism.[79] Marx argued that the ideological was, in a certain foundational sense, dependent upon and precipitated out of the material conditions of social existence. Throughout his work, however, he doesn't say much explicitly about how to think the nature of this relationship between the ideological and the material. But he generally claimed that ideological resources represented a kind of "necessary fiction" that obstructed individual knowers — particularly the proletariat — from apprehending the exploitative nature of their labor and the domination they faced from the capitalist class.[80] Later Marxists have taken up the challenge of thinking how capitalism conditions and sets certain limits on the cultural sphere of what can be said and thought. Their readings have diverged, depending in part on how much social determinism they attribute to the level of structures, both material and symbolic. But Geuss argues that theorists who wield this negativist conception of ideology tend to combine three key characteristics in their theorization:[81]

1. An ideological form of knowledge is, at one and the same time, both true and false.[82]

2. Ideologies arise out of oppressive social contexts — not as coincidence, but as a form of knowledge that corresponds to and helps to consolidate those practices of domination.

3. Ideologies remain functionally entangled with domination in the sense that they somehow contribute to or help to stabilize existing power hierarchies.[83]

It is my claim that racism should be understood as an ideological assemblage in this negative sense. In particular, I argue that political theory should adopt a materialist and pragmatic conception of ideology in order to critique racial orders. To do so, I draw on the insights of Marxist (and Marx-inspired) thinkers like Lukacs, Gramsci, and Hall to develop an ideological account that moves past a limited focus on "mistaken" racial beliefs.[84] Reading racism in this narrow epistemic way tends to treat the "unmasking" of racist propositions as the be-all-end-all of antiracist critique. In actuality, what social theorists will have to do is understand how racialized habits have become embedded within practical consciousness and why these racialized imaginaries continue to hold so much appeal for so many people, even those who are ostensibly committed to antiracist egalitarianism. As Hall points out, what is interesting about ideologies is not necessarily what is false or falsifiable about them, but what about them appears to be true or productive for helping certain individuals make sense of their world.[85] Racisms, of course, are intimately related to ongoing practices of domination, exploitation, inferiorization, marginalization, violence, and neglect. It is this social and structural relation to power that warrants analyzing racial imaginaries, then, as a problem of ideology. When we do so, I contend, we can see that racisms can be said to meet all three of Geuss' criteria for a negative conception of ideology.

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[79] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1998), 35-36.
[80] Some have interpreted Marx's theorization of ideology as if the economic base exerted direct causal influence over the level of collective hermeneutical resources. In this sense, "the ruling ideas of every age are the ideas of the ruling elites," as Marx wrote in *The Communist Manifesto*. Many social theorists have critiqued this interpretation of Marxism as too crudely materialist. Yet it is unclear whether Marx actually espoused such an economistic account. Marx's own political writings give us reason to believe that he too saw the social production of knowledge as a material phenomenon whose functional interrelatedness to capitalist hierarchies needed to be theorized as a complex problem in its own right.
[81] Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory,* 13.
[82] Jaeggi, "Rethinking Ideology," 66-67.
[83] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 42-43.
[84] None of these thinkers were general theorists of "ideology" per se but finding a more sophisticated conception of ideology was vital to each of their respective projects.
[85] Hall, "The Problem of Ideology," 41.

'Race' as an epistemological problem

Adorno described ideologies, paradoxically, as both true and untrue at one and the same time.[86] Ideologies are true in that they reflect and arise out of the worlds that they seek to describe, but they are false in that they represent a distorted kind of understanding of how those worlds operate and what sorts of ethical harms they distribute. There is something about the production of ideologies that is ethically dysfunctional, even as the kinds of statements and interpretations that these ideologies make possible do in fact correspond to something "objective" out there in the world. At a structural level, these ideological resources precipitate out of and help to regulate certain institutional apparatuses. At an individual level, they appear practically meaningful and, at times, as rational ways to negotiate their social worlds. It is not that individual knowers are "conned" or "duped' by ruling (capitalist) elites, but that the structural positioning that these individual subjects occupy is conditioned to such an extent that these forms of appearance are, in some sense, "objective," within their contexts of articulation.

'Race' is an obvious example of an ideological phenomenon that is both true and false in this way. Racial categories are epistemically suspect in the sense they are based on unsound and demonstrably illegitimate propositions of human difference. And yet they are true to the extent that they continue to act as a regulative social norm that determines the conduct of individuals and institutions alike in racial orders. As Ian Hacking reminds us, simply asserting that a social fact is in fact a *social* phenomenon does little to explain how it became a material condition that appears to limit or otherwise condition how we understand and act in the world.[87] These racialized narratives, images, and concepts, therefore, can on one level be indicted for corroding individuals' capacities as epistemic subjects and yet, on the other, seem to respond to the systemic imperatives of a racial order that fiercely conditions what can be said or acted upon.[88]

In racial stratification orders, 'race' functions not as a set of objective truths about human types, but as a "regime of truth" which delimits what can be said to be true or obvious about human beings. A regime of truth, in the Foucauldian sense, doesn't reflect the Real but instead constitutively produces what can be said to be real in a given social formation.[89] Racial distinctions might not have an ontological grounding, but they become truthful as utterances made in material contexts structured in racial domination. As Hall notes, "race is indeed a sociohistorical concept, not a transhistorical discourse grounded in biology…the biological trace still functions even when it's silent, but now, not as truth, but as the guarantor of the truth."[90] Within racial orders, these sorts of imaginaries naturalize 'race.' They give it the veneer of an objective and epistemically legitimate facticity, rather than construe it as a contingent phenomenon — a political artifact whose origin and function are intimately related to practices of inferiorization and separation. In a Lukacsian sense, then, I worry about the fetishism of the racial "sign" — the ways in which racial differences can appear as cause of racism, rather than as its metastable product.[91] Racisms work to distort individuals' relations to

[86] Adorno writes that "truth and untruth are always intertwined" in ideologies. Quoted in Jaeggi, "Rethinking Ideology," 66.
[87] Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction Of What?* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999), 11.
[88] Hall, *The Fateful Triangle,* 42-44.
[89] Eric Voegelin, "The Growth of the Race Idea," *The Review of Politics*, vol. 2., no. 3, Jul. 1940, 284.
[90] Hall, "Subjects in History," 290.
[91] Yet unlike Lukacs, I don't want to presume that all individuals stand in a similar relation to racial imaginaries, nor are they similarly incorporated into viewing such racial habits as normal and normative. In this respect, Rehmann points out, Lukacs' account of ideology tended to elide both moments of uneven social development and the "heterogeneity and contradictoriness of everyday consciousness." Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology,* 80.

themselves, to others, and to their social world by taking what is a produced and overdetermined phenomenon — that of racial differentiation — and reifying it into the natural and "inert order of things." In this respect, I treat racism (and the ideological mystifications that it produces and relies upon) as a social pathology, in much the same way that Timo Jütten argues that Lukacs does.[92]

Racism as a genetic phenomenon tied to European colonialism and chattel slavery

Racialization is a profoundly Euromodern problem, one tied to early modern Europe's projects of conquest, colonization, enslavement, and the industrial management of enslaved and indentured labor in its colonial holdings.[93] There is no doubt, then, that the genesis of 'race,' to use Geuss's conditions, is morally repugnant and remains politically fraught today. To be clear, color prejudice, misogyny, and practices of Othering have characterized many, if not most, societies. But the construction of racial classifications mobilizes a distinctive logic — one that ontologizes these visible corporeal differences into a separate and inferior species of beings, united by and overdetermined by the logic of their genealogical descent. These types of subhuman appear to constitute an Other in a stark and ineradicable sense. No conversion or developmental process will change the fact that they are of a separate ontological status.[94] "Constituting a world apart, the part apart, Blacks cannot become full subjects in the life of our community," Mbembe writes. "Placed apart, put to the side, piece by piece: that is how Blacks came to signify, in their essence and beyond all speech, the injunction of segregation."[95] This newly metaphysical Difference, in turn, serves to legitimate and enable certain kinds of domination, exploitation and violence against those bodies within the transatlantic slave markets. As an idea, 'race,' isn't just epistemically precarious. It marks the site of a profound historical wrong.

Within the Euromodern conjuncture, Blackness has a particular historical trajectory — one that is intimately linked to the violences of Atlantic chattel slavery. The Black Other emerges as the practical solution to a particular set of material and political problems that afflicted the new European extraction colonies. In need of cheap labor that could be dominated and disposed of at will to work the new plantation holdings, Europeans turned increasingly away from indentured White labor and towards importing Black Africans as slaves.[96] Black slaves were cheaper to provide and could be worked harder and more brutally than Whites. They didn't have to be replaced after seven years or so. They were easily identifiable if they tried to escape. They had no community or resources upon which to draw in order to foment resistance. In a structural sense, stolen Africans were the population that could be the most easily exploited, dominated, and killed with impunity. Racialization is that which links, both logically and practically, the "central issue of the human" to the "orders of domination among human beings [and] their various exploitative and extractive relationships with nature."[97]

This new kind of social and political relation, however, had to be institutionalized. What began as a mixed labor market with various contractual relationships between European capital and their

[92] Timo Jütten, "What Is Reification? A Critique of Axel Honneth," *Inquiry* 53, no. 3 (2010): 235-56, 249.
[93] Goldberg, *The Threat of Race,* 329.
[94] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003), 265-266.
[95] Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason,* 46.
[96] For the White slave owners' thinking around slave management and the "desirability" of using Black African enslaved labor over other laborers from other groups, see David Roediger, *Class, Race and Marxism* (London: Verso, 2019), 101-114.
[97] Paul Gilroy, "'Where every breeze speaks of courage and liberty': Offshore Humanism and Marine Xenology, or, Racism and the Problem of Critique at Sea Level," *Antipode* 50, no. 1 (2018), 10.

variously exploited labor segments was increasingly consolidated into a legal divide between enslaved Black labor and 'free' White labor. Historians and critical race scholars have looked at the development of an entire juridical apparatus whose laws, practices, and punishments codified this caesura in the human.[98] This involved overcoding the Black body with a unique set of political and legal restraints that would differentiate it from other forms of exploited labor and from other bodies. The disciplinary regime was increasingly organized around policing this divide between White labor and Black labor, whether free or enslaved. Black subjects were restrained in where and what they could do, whose company they could keep, what sorts of activities they could engage in. Their testimony had a different weight in courts of law; their deaths were treated like losses of White property rather than as crimes against persons.[99] And anti-miscegenation laws increasingly criminalized marriages between Whites and Blacks, thereby making it easier to disentangle which children were property and which were people. These new racial relationships shaped the material world in their own image.

In the early days of racialization, the European settlers struggled to distinguish between who could be enslaved and who could not. Or, to put it more accurately, who was Black and who was not. Without any real metaphysical grounding, the European colonists created a new classificatory system that sat uneasily atop a broad spectrum of human difference. This is where the two distinctive logics that undergird the 'race' idea emerge, namely at the intersection of the visual and the genealogical. In the United States, 'race' became tied not simply to one's visual appearance — skin color, hair type, nose shape — but was importantly grounded in a particular understanding of matrilinear descent. Under new legal definitions, even a drop of "Black" blood excluded an individual from whiteness and the protections of personhood. This was largely to ensure that White plantation owners could solidify the caste barrier between Whites and Blacks who were often intimately related. And it shows how the production of racial categories was as much an engendering project[100] as it was an epidermalizing one. In this sense, the racialized apparatus treated Black women as little more than "breeders" whose bodies were always-already sexually available, whereas White women became the symbolic status of White racial purity itself. Their sexuality, in turn, was fiercely policed, and the figure of the sexually aggressive Black man becomes a symbolic threat to the entire White social order.[101]

Focusing on the role that Black women played within chattel slavery speaks to an important practical distinction in the construction of the Black Other. It was the abuse of Black women who turned the slave form from simply another kind of unwaged and unprotected labor into a specific kind of human capital. Perhaps most importantly for White plantation owners, enslaved African labor could produce new labor value simply by being forced to have children, who were automatically deemed slaves themselves through the emergent principle of matrilineal descent.[102] Black women of childbearing age commanded much higher prices on slave markets; evidence of a slave's sterility effected a marked depreciation in her value. Notably, economic historians have attributed the decline of the transatlantic slave trade not to increased moral consciousness and organizing among Whites for abolition, but

[98] For a careful mapping of this racial formation and its entanglements with White capital, see W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York, Free Press, 1998).
[99] Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013), 226.
[100] For discussions of engendered racism, see, for example, more recent work by Shatema Threadcraft, *Intimate Justice: The Black Female Body and the Body Politic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) and Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (New York: W.W. Nortion & Company, 2019) as well as older work from Hazel V. Carby, "White Woman, Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood"in *Black British Feminism: A Reader,* ed. Heidi Safia Mirza (London: Routledge, 1997), 45-53; Lorde, *Sister Outsider;* Collins, *Black Feminist Thought;* and essays in Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, and Toni Cade Bambara (eds.), *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* 2nd ed. (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1983).
[101] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 142.
[102] For a discussion of the importance of enslaved Black women's reproductive capabilities, see Ned and Constance Sublette, *The American Slave Coast: A History of the Slave-Breeding Industry* (Chicago, Lawrence Hill Books, 2016).

instead to lobbying pressures from White plantation owners who were in effect breeding their own slaves for market and wanted to control supply.[103] As Black feminist Saidiya Hartman points out, the founding image of White supremacy has long been the figure of the lynched Black man, but it could have just as easily been the figure of the raped Black woman.[104]

Out of these hegemonic institutional and discursive practices emerges a new type of being — the Negro, the Nègre, the Black Other.[105] This is not a new kind of human subject in any ontological or essential sense, but in a practical-existential one. It is about asking not what something is, but what a subject can do and become in a given political conjuncture. Under chattel slavery and other forms of racial capitalism, Black subjects become Other because of the practices that treat them as such and the discourses that explain and legitimate those practices. Mbembe argues that the Black subject, as an existential type, is defined by three kinds of relations during chattel slavery: "the Black slave is at once object, body, and merchandise," Mbembe writes.[106] It is easy to see how Black bodies functioned as tool during chattel slavery. For the slave owner, they were in effect forms of constant capital in the sense that they cost a set amount to purchase and then they added value in a regular sense to the production process until they were worn out. This was the enslaved African as little more than a machine, an input to the laboring process. But slaves also took on the role of the money form in plantation society. They were in and of themselves a kind of exchange value that could be traded and circulated.[107] Many Southern plantation owners were in fact cash-poor because most of their wealth was in fact stockpiled in the bodies of the slaves themselves. And then the Black subject became first and foremost a form of stock, a living embodiment of the property relation, a commodity that could be speculated upon and insured.[108] Even White working-class communities abroad could participate. As historians have uncovered, many White British subjects owned shares of slaves, whose labor value would provide a certain return on their investments. Black women's bodies, in effect, became a source of this human capital, and yet they too were property with no rights over their children to speak of. Under Enlightenment notions of private property, White owners could dispose of their property as they willed.

This emergent racialized category of the subhuman is inscribed in somatic terms; it produces an entire perceptual field in which deviant bodies are marked out as hypervisible and overdetermined with meaning. "My blackness was there, dense and undeniable. And it tormented me," writes Fanon.[109] These visual codes are then stabilized and legitimated through discourses that seek to ground them as "objective" social facts. This is what Paul Gilroy refers to as a "raciology" — the entire ideological project of making sense of 'race' as a material distinction out in the world.[110] Without metaphysical grounding, thinkers of 'race' have advanced a number of different explanatory frameworks for understanding the differences that make a difference between raced bodies.[111] What began as a theological rendering of difference between the White European and the "uncivilized" native in the New World and in Africa was eventually superseded by a biological account that sought to explain political and social differences through the lens of supposed differences in anatomy.[112] When

[103] David Richardson, "The Ending of the British Slave Trade in 1807: The Economic Context," *Parliamentary History* 26, no. 4S (2007): 127-40.
[104] Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of subjection: Terror, slavery, and self-making in nineteenth-century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 100-101.
[105] Gilroy, "Offshore Humanisms," 8; Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason,* 40; Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 92.
[106] Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason,* 79.
[107] Caitlin Rosenthal, "Capitalism when Labor was Capital: Slavery, Power, and Price in Antebellum America," *Capitalism: A Journal of History and Economics* 1, no. 2 (2020): 296-337.
[108] For a version of this argument, see Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery and the Philosophy of History*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).
[109] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 96.
[110] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 46.
[111] Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason,* 32.
[112] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being," 306-7.

combined with a suspect form of Social Darwinism, these racial logics spurred a new set of racial sciences dedicated to measuring, quantifying, and describing all of the physiological differences that had developed between the superior White race and the lesser black and brown races. Craniology, phrenology, ethno-psychiatry – each of these empirical disciplines set out to prove that human bodies possessed different capacities based on their racial type. In this respect, for all that Blackness has emerged out of a distinctive economic and political formation in transatlantic modernity, the discourses and forms of knowledge that sought to "explain" African inferiority too worked to ground other accounts of "inferior" racial types. At the level of the natural and human sciences, this work of studying "race" as an object was inherently linked to a plural account of distinctive groups set in relation, rather than assimilated to a White/Black divide.

Raciological reason, then, clearly fits the first two conditions that Geuss outlines for a negative conception of ideology. The division of the human into essentialized racial types marked by biological or cultural differences is clearly epistemically suspect. And the genesis of modern racial thinking can be directly traced back to Europe's brutal conquest and proto-industrial exploitation of the Americas.[113] Few political theorists today would dispute either of these claims. But what is, for some thinkers, more controversial is whether these racist ideas about the infrahuman meet Geuss' third condition — that they are still functionally involved in the reproduction of racial inequalities in places like the United States or Europe. For conservative commentators like Thomas Sowell, the ongoing persistence of racial disparities is best explained not through the continued salience of anti-black racism, but instead through cultural pathologies endemic to Black communities that prevent them from taking advantage of the opportunities, both economic and political, available to them.[114] But even some liberal thinkers have stressed that contemporary racial orders rely more on the sedimentation of past wealth inequalities than they do on active practices of racial discrimination or racialized expropriation.

Both of these argumentative positions, then, accuse critical race theory of falling back into the "genetic fallacy." Antiracist thinkers conflate the morally checkered origins of 'race' with its present social functioning in problematic ways. As Geuss points out, ideas, concepts, and imaginaries are dynamic. They are regularly rearticulated into new social contexts and imbued with new meanings. [115] What might have begun as a rigidly exclusive norm of moral personhood in Enlightenment Europe has since been expanded into a more emancipatory concept of universal equality that includes women, people of color, and children.[116] (Or so the argument goes.) But this preoccupation with the "genetic fallacy" is overblown when it comes to analyzing racial ideologies. This is not to say that the kinds of racist thinking that were hegemonic in the past remain so today, nor that racisms function in the same way under late capitalism than they did in the hey-day of European high imperialism. But racist institutions and ideological practices alike accumulate inertia, as Hall points out.[117] They have become entrenched at a deep level to delineate what sorts of judgments, actions, and resistances are possible in particular conjunctures. To simply note that many scientific discourses have rejected the biological or cultural basis of racial divisions — which today is not guaranteed, as the genomics literature has shown — does not mean that such racial ideas and racialized forms of seeing the world have been disinterred from the level of individuals' practical consciousness. As Gramsci points out,

[113] Goldberg, *The Threat of Race,* 329.
[114] See, for example, Thomas Sowell, *Controversial Essays* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2002).
[115] A clear example of this sort of worry can be mapped in the conservative appropriation of the antiracist concept of "nondiscrimination" in the contemporary United States. Desmond S. King and Rogers M. Smith. "'Without Regard to Race': Critical Ideational Development in Modern American Politics," *The Journal of Politics* 76, no. 4, 958-71.
[116] For an extended discussion of this moral-discursive shift, see Axel Honneth, *Freedom's Right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life,* trans. Joseph Patrick Ganahl (Chichester, England: Polity Press, 2014), 275-281, 308-313.
[117] Hall makes a similar argument about the difficulty of disarticulating long-sedimented ideological relations when he discusses the possibilities of establishing a progressive nationalism in the U.K. Hall, "The Problem of Ideology," 43.

popular beliefs can act with a material force at the level of political relations, given that they delimit how individuals interpret and respond to certain events.[118] This is why social critics must pay attention to what Gramsci called "common sense,"[119] or what Fanon might call the "social unconscious."[120] By this, I mean the sedimented traces of collective meanings, narratives, affects, and symbols that form the hermeneutic "background" for discrete social groups within a concrete conjuncture. Ideology critique, therefore, is aimed precisely at this problem in today's racial orders – namely, at disclosing how both overt and submerged forms of raciological thinking contribute to the practices that reproduce racial domination. As I argue in the next section, not only is such racist thinking far from dead, but it still legitimates contemporary practices of racial domination and naturalizes racial hierarchies.

Racism and the functional reproduction of racial hierarchies

In the 21st century, raciological reason remains a salient part of the collective hermeneutic resource in postcolonial contexts, from the African, Asian and Latin American postcolonies to former White settler states to the European metropole. But as Gilroy points out, the "scientific" bases for these racial distinctions has shifted since Darwinian-inspired accounts of racial determinism. Today, social scientists and cultural commentators have largely abandoned the old anatomical narratives of racial type in favor of newer explanatory modes that focus on "culture" or "civilization."[121] This includes diagnoses of racial inequality that blame Black culture as "lazy," Black families as "dysfunctional," Black women as too domineering and not maternal enough, Black women as having too many children, rap music as too violent and instilling bad values.[122] In turn, the growing force of genetics over the past two decades has seen the re-emergence of racialized schemas that take their impetus from the biological, albeit this time at a nanoscopic level rather than an anatomical one.[123] Racial differences are once again tied to the deterministic logic of natural descent. These genetic differences might not be visible to the naked eye, but they are once again read as essential: they delimit what kinds of bodies people inhabit, what sorts of diseases they might be predisposed to get, what sorts of capacities they might be expected to have. As Fanon decries, "[racial science] inscribed on my chromosomes certain genes of various thickness representing cannibalism... Science should be ashamed of itself!"[124]

Perhaps even more importantly, ideas of racial difference still provide regulative norms for differentiating between kinds of people in societies on a practical level. Even without metaphysical grounding, 'race' continues to make a material difference in how individuals are perceived, evaluated, understood, treated, and valued.[125] Blackness may no longer be solely associated with inferiority, disgust, contempt and danger, but as Gilroy notes, these exceptional narratives of Black athleticism and suprahuman capacities can be just as problematic, especially when they provide tokenistic forms of acknowledgement without bringing real changes in Black communities' political power.[126] Regardless of whether or not individuals accept the notion that a Black subject is an inferior being or a White European a superior one, they continue to move through a racialized world in which all sorts of normative expectations revolve around "seeing races." People from diverse racial backgrounds

[118] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 157. Hall echoes this theme. Hall, "The Problem of Ideology," 39.
[119] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 42.
[120] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 124.
[121] Gilroy, *Against Race,* 25.
[122] Perry, *More Beautiful and More Terrible,* 17-18.
[123] Gilroy, *Against Race,* 47-48.
[124] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 100
[125] Hall, *The Fateful Triangle,* 44.
[126] Gilroy, *Against Race,* 214.

participate in this sort of racial etiquette all the time, from acknowledging their "White privilege" to exhibiting solidarity with other Black people in a majority-White space. Under the current social technologies of racial perception, there is no such thing as moving through the world as if one were "blind" to the differences that these epidermalized racial markers make.

To be clear, individuals adopt race-conscious habits, desires, and judgments of themselves and others not because they are "duped," but because that practical know-how is a crucial part of acting in racial orders. In turn, those individuals who advocate for an interpretive posture of "race-blindness" or pretend to "not see race" are performing a political sleight-of-hand that denies the facticity of racial perception in order to avoid the reparative burdens that such a situation would place in particular on White communities and the state. In part, what makes 'race' such a difficult phenomenon to expose and contest is that its ideological work is hidden behind the visual. As knowers, we are predisposed to give primacy to what we can see with our own eyes; the power of the visible is such that it appears to be obvious, essential, natural, immediate — even though an entire social architecture goes into the production of that visibility. "The human sensorium has had to be educated to the appreciation of racial differences," Gilroy notes[127] Identities that are marked on the body prove particularly difficult to dislodge from the social gaze.[128] The fact of race appears before us as ready and incontrovertible. Simply declaring that racial distinctions have no metaphysical grounding does little to contest the ways that 'race' is a regulative social fact in the contemporary United States or elsewhere. An individual who chooses to change his cognitive beliefs about what racial differentiations do or don't signify cannot so readily change the perceptual habits, evaluative judgments and empathetic orientations that lie below the surface of cognitive reflection.[129] For all that they are learned, these forms of racial visibility mark out the social limits of the comprehensible. To fail to see racial distinctions, in these conjunctures, is to be a dysfunctional knower.

In the U.S. racial order, then, I contend that racial ideology largely works in two substantive ways to stabilize its racial hierarchies.[130] First, it provides and explains visible practical distinctions that both individuals and institutions use to differentiate among which kinds of subjects can be considered equal and worthy of concern and which can be exploited, dispossessed, intimidated, violated, or killed. In the U.S. racial order, as in many other racialized contexts, power hierarchies often work through racial segmentation to exploit and dominate populations.[131] It is helpful to distinguish between two interrelated political logics at work here. On the one hand, racial orders work to produce certain kinds of raced subjects, who are existentially conditioned to live in distinctive ways. This is what Foucault attempted to capture within his concept of the biopolitical – a mode of governance that sought to foster and manage life at the scale of populations.[132] On the other hand, the racialized state apparatus also subjects the racial remainder of its population to what Mbembe calls "necropolitics."[133] In these situations, he adds, racism intervenes to separate out those populations who can be disciplined, dominated or killed from those whose life the state seeks to foster and regulate. Biopolitical racism works at a structural level, organizing and entrenching a fundamental

[127] Gilroy, *Against Race,* 42.
[128] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 89.
[129] Emirbayer and Desmond, *The Racial Order*, 106.
[130] Here I want to be careful to avoid the functionalist narratives of world-systems thinkers like Niklas Luhmann who can only theorize the ideological as that which legitimates the existing power structure. Racial ideologies are more contradictory, open-ended, and dynamic than such a linear and mechanistic picture exists. Their racialized codes and affects, too, tend to take on a life of their own, sparking different kinds of erotic investment and paranoid obsessions that cannot be attributed to strictly "functional" concerns.
[131] As Stuart Hall explains, Black and brown communities — particularly among the working classes — are often relegated to the role of surplus labor. Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 50-51.
[132] He contrasts this to older forms of political sovereignty in which states used the spectacle of execution and punishment to impress upon their subjects the extent of their coercive power and legitimacy. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1977), 7-12, 22-23, 28-30.
[133] Mbembe adds to and complicates Foucault's conceptualization of biopower by reading it into colonial orders. See Achille Mbembé, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 11-40.

injunction between the human and the subhuman.[134] Colonial orders, therefore, are both the site of biopolitical management and of necropolitical domination.

Second, racialized ideologies naturalize those racial differences so as to remove racist judgments and actions from view. In this respect, they operate not through providing "false beliefs" about the existence of racial inequality, but instead, as Hall might say, they give us a "one-sided" and misguided explanation for the very visible differences between racial groups.[135] They obscure the social nature of racial inequality by portraying it as somehow natural or deserved. These ideological resources frame Black suffering as either isolated instances of racist wrongdoing or as legitimate consequences of Blackness itself. As Perry and other social scientists point out, the ongoing materiality of racial inequality in conjunctures like the United States is not necessarily a surprise; what matters, then, is how the racial imaginary frames and interprets these inequalities. Given the naturalizing fallacy at the heart of the 'race' idea itself, it becomes all too easy to read the kinds of disadvantage that afflict Black communities as problems endemic to Blackness itself. Emirbayer and Desmond note how even sympathetic social scientists can fall into this reification trap when they treat 'race' as an independent variable in their analyses, as if belonging to a minority group had some independent causal force of its own rather than simply marking out a complex site through which power operated.[136] The problem then doesn't lie with anti-Black racisms and White hegemony; it appears to emanate from the Black subject's "inferior nature," with the "dysfunctional" Black family, with Black people's "innate laziness," with the "violent excesses" of Black street culture. In this respect, raciological thinking can delimit what sorts of sufferings are visible and seen as worthy of redress as well as affect the political imaginaries and strategic coalitions that appear possible. On this account, then, contemporary ideas around 'race' continue to sanction practices of racial inequality and racist domination — and they ought to be challenged on that basis.

Situating my account of racial ideology

In my framing, "ideology" ought to be analyzed as a site of political contestation, rather than as a totalizing force that renders people into the passive consumers of elite narratives.[137] I am not contending that individuals continue to "believe" in racial thinking because they have been duped. As Lorna Finlayson quite rightly points out, these arguments mistake the question that ideology seeks to answer and therefore set up an overly reductive interpretation of ideology-as-false-consciousness.[138] Generally speaking, the oppressed aren't happily acquiescing in their own suffering, she points out. The problem is that they simply do not have the resources or the collective coordination to overturn what are serious imbalances in power and capital.[139] Instead, my conception of ideology seeks to explain how ideas, concepts, narratives and affects shape individuals' practical fields of action in ways that reproduce racial hierarchies. In doing so, I have drawn explicitly on Gramsci and Hall, both of whom move Marxist theory away from treating ideology as a mere matter of "ruling-class interests" and toward analyzing it as a field of struggle, contestation, and contradiction

[134] Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976,* eds. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey, (New York: Picador, 2003), 80-84.
[135] Hall, "The Problem of Ideology," 36.
[136] Emirbayer and Desmond, *The Racial Order*, 3-5.
[137] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 45-46.
[138] Finlayson, "On Mountains and Molehills," 135-6.
[139] Finlayson, "On Mountains and Molehills," 138.

in its own right.[140] Such an approach to ideology returns the problem of knowledge production to the plane of historical concreteness. And it offers a more complex account of how ideas, both elite and popular, intersect with the relations of force that stabilize particular governing coalitions — but without relying on mechanistic or elitist narratives of the oppressed as "dupes."[141] As many critics have pointed out, such a vulgar reading of "ideology" is obviously false, given that it wildly overstates the epistemic authority of the bourgeoisie and denies the possibilities of interpretative resistance among workers, the middle classes, and other class segments without control over the means of production. To equate the collective hermeneutic resources generated in a social formation with the objective pressures imposed by the means of production is to overlook the productive agonism of the public sphere and its diverse sites of cultural exchange.[142]

Counter to what critics like Michael Rosen allege, then, to carry out ideological critique is not an impossible or paradoxical task.[143] It does not require that an "enlightened theorist" acquires access to a "truth" that mere mortals cannot perceive. Instead, I argue that critics and everyday actors alike can find moments of critical reflexivity from within their social worlds — largely because the forms of life that they seek to analyze are not all-encompassing, homogenous totalities.[144] These ideological frameworks are riven with contradiction, ambiguity, and oppositional or subversive readings. Embodied subjects stand in different relations to the social imaginary and the forms of hegemonic and subaltern knowledges that it produces in ways that enable different interpretative possibilities.[145] As Hall notes, the Gramscian accounts admits too to "the plurality of selves or identities of which the so-called 'subject' of thought and ideals is composed."[146] Rather than standing over and above the plane of cultural meaning-making, the critic too is immersed in this agonistic interplay of discourse as yet another participant. In this respect, the critique of racial ideologies requires a degree of epistemic humility. For political theorists too are socialized into racial orders and internalize these problematic forms of racialized judgment and imagining. This is particularly vital for me as a White American, whose social and epistemic habits were largely formed in a rigidly racialized social milieu. There are limits to what I as a White knower can imagine and understand about the phenomenological experience of anti-Black racism, even as I read and speak with other people who routinely suffer it. Even as I work to be critically reflexive about my own positionality, I remain predisposed to accept the narratives that White mainstream discourse uses to make sense of the racial order and to deflect its own moral culpability for the suffering of Black and other non-White peoples.[147] This "tendential alignment" does not prevent me from engaging in critical acts of listening and reflecting on the limits of my own experiential register, of course. But it would be a fallacy to think that lone and "virtuous" individuals could fully eliminate these racist pre-judgments and habits from their practical way of being-in-the-world while the social institutions, modes of governance, and normative practices that make race a part of the "real" relations of their social lives.[148]

In this materialist reading of ideology, I have tried to approach the ideological as a "terrain" or social field in its own right, one with a relative degree of autonomy from the direct or mechanistic determinations of the economic base. As Hall notes, "though the ideological field is always…articulated to different social and political positions, its shape and structure do *not* precisely

[140] Hall, "The Problem of Ideology," 40. Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 168-170.
[141] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 157.
[142] Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology,* 146.
[143] See Michael Rosen, "On Voluntary Servitude and the Theory of Ideology," *Constellations* 7, no. 3 (2000): 393-407.
[144] Robin Celikates, "Against Manicheanism: The Politics of Forms of Life and the Possibilities of Critique," *Raisons politiques,* vol. 57, 2015, 81-96.
[145] Hall, "Encoding and Decoding," 274.
[146] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 45.
[147] For more discussions of White ignorance and the cultivated epistemic vices that afflict privileged knowers, see Sullivan and Tuana (eds)., *Race & Epistemologies of Ignorance* and Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance.*
[148] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 31-32. Hall, "The Problem of Ideology," 38.

mirror, match, or 'echo' the class structure of society. Nor can they be reduced to their economic content or function."[149] The ideological is not a crude reflection of the economic base in which all ideas and interpretative schemas are merely imprints of existing material practices and therefore possess no social agency of their own. Yet neither should the ideological be conceived as a free-floating realm of pure linguistic utterances, divorced from the practical imperatives laid down by capital and hierarchical power relations in concrete milieus. Such a view falls back into the dematerialized view of signification that I criticized in some social epistemologists' work. In this respect, my conception of ideology attempts to thread a path between these excesses of material determinism and the overestimation of individual hermeneutic agency.[150]

I contend that racisms are fundamentally entangled with — but not wholly determined by — racial capitalism and White political hegemony. Instead, these forms of raciological reason are always ever metastable discourses that are open to contestation and critique, translation and retrenchment. In this respect, the "materialism" of this version of ideology critique relates to the objective conditions that individuals encounter within their actual everyday life — conditions that are obviously delimited by specific economic relations but which cannot be reduced to them.[151] As I will explore in greater detail later on, racial imaginaries can distort the possibilities of White and Black political agency in different ways. Like Lukacs, I argue that the practical know-how that individuals acquire to navigate certain institutional relations can have unintentional impacts on subjective attitudes and understandings.[152] For many White subjects, this hermeneutic horizon interferes with their ability to take responsibility for their involvement in racial domination. For Black subjects, the problem is less that they cannot (or refuse to) see the world they live in for what it is, but that their lived experience of systemic anti-Black racism serves all too often as a site of disempowerment. In this respect, racial ideologies are effective because they remain practically involved with the constitution of a racist reality, not because they have mystified Black and non-White peoples into accepting White dominance.[153]

I am not the first to propose that social critics should approach the problem of racial imaginaries through a concept of ideology critique. Within the more European tradition of political theory, Black intellectuals like Fanon, Mbembe, Edward Said, and Gilroy, to name just a few who have been instructive for this project, have worked with 'race' as an ideological phenomenon. They have largely shied away from framing their analyses as a version of ideology critique. As Hall notes, the concept comes with significant baggage in the Marxist tradition, and therefore he — like many other thinkers — have often preferred to use a practical conception of discourse instead.[154] But regardless of whether they embrace the notion of ideology critique outright, these antiracist critics have consistently sought to reconstruct racialized imaginaries and the specific forms of racism that they mobilize in different sociohistorical contexts, from French Martinique to Black Britain to Palestine. All of these thinkers treat 'race' as a regime of truth that must be mapped and critiqued on its own terms, rather than discounted through more narrowly Kantian professions of moral personhood.

There has been much less work on racism as a target for ideology critique within the Anglo-American tradition, at least until recently. But the analyses that have been carried out under this scholastic

[149] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 46.
[150] I understand the concept of determination in the way that Stuart Hall does — namely, in that determination entails both predisposing individuals towards certain ends and setting up limits on what can be intelligibly thought and said. Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 33.
[151] "What the economic cannot do is (a) to provide the contents of the particular thoughts of particular social classes or groups at any specific time; or (b) to fix or guarantee for all time which ideas will be made use of by which classes. The determinacy of the economic for the ideological can, therefore, be only in terms of the former setting the limits for defining the terrain of operations, establishing the 'raw materials', of thought." Hall, "The Problem of Ideology," 43.
[152] Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness,* 90.
[153] Voegelin, ""The Growth of the Race Idea," 284.
[154] Peter Osborne and Lynne Segal, "Interview with Stuart Hall," *Radical Philosophy 86,* 1997, 31.

heading have tended towards some of the same theoretical flaws that the social epistemology literature displays — namely, in that these theories of racial ideology prove to be too cognitivist.[155] Even when they attempt to embrace a more practical conceptualization of ideological resources, these analyses fail to be quite materialist enough in its understandings of structure and power. The functional and genetic aspects remain undertheorized. In this sense, social epistemologists' take on 'race' as ideology doesn't provide much of a critical edge when it comes to understanding *which* racialized practices are ethically harmful and politically regressive. After all, in a racial order like the United States, Blackness isn't going anywhere, and there is a plethora of mechanisms that continue to recode and reproduce racial distinctions. The task for the political theorist is to go after those forms of racism and ideological praxis that reproduce racial hierarchies, not racial categories. Antiracist critique now must aim not at 'race' in general, but as 'race' as a site of subjection and subjugation.

Missing from more narrowly epistemic accounts of racism-as-ideology, I contend, is a substantive reckoning with the concrete institutions, architectures, and practices that make these "anti-Black" ideas *appear* both rational and legitimate to particular agents. An example from Robert Gooding-Williams is illustrative. In an article, Gooding-Williams argues that the "criminal" functions as what he calls an "anti-Black concept" within U.S. policing.[156] Within the context of the U.S. carceral state, he argues that the concept of a "criminal" has become so constitutively racialized that it infects and distorts how individual officers interpret which bodies are dangerous and in need of surveillance and control. To demonstrate how this ideological cathexis works, he examines the report that the U.S. Department of Justice put together on the Ferguson, Missouri police department and its widespread racist practices. In the department's review, the investigators found that cops — from White and Black backgrounds alike — deployed particularly dehumanizing and animalistic language in their discussions of Black men and women. This, of course, draws on a long genealogy of seeing the Black body as animalistic, as less than human and therefore best suited for the sorts of unthinking labor and subjection that other beasts of burden would receive.[157] Gooding-Williams argues that this latent ideological history has polluted the social imaginary's understanding of who criminals are — and what they look like — in similarly inferiorizing ways. (Paul Gilroy, on a related note, expresses a general concern with this phenomenon when he decries the British media's discursive attempts to "ontologize" Black crime, or to frame Black criminality as an essential and natural feature of Blackness.)[158]

Gooding-Williams' diagnosis improves on Fricker's account of hermeneutical injustice in two key respects. First, he theorizes the interpretative obstacles that racialized imaginaries present not as a problem of semantic lack, but of the racialization of existing concepts. Second, he looks past what concepts might mean at the level of propositional content to how they are put into practice by police officers in the course of their duties. And yet Gooding-Williams' account still lacks a certain materialism that is crucial for antiracist critique. Namely, he manages to link up discourses to social practices, but he forgets to think about the institutional apparatuses within which these discourses and practices are situated. He still treats the racialization of the criminal as if it were merely an epistemic problem with ethical consequences — as if police officers made a series of unfortunate mistakes in their apprehension and treatment of Black men, albeit mistakes that reflect a racist association of Black men with criminality. What he fails to theorize, however, are the kinds of

[155] Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," 9
[156] Robert Gooding-Williams, "Ideology, Social Practices, Anti-Black Concepts," draft paper presented at "International Summer School in Critical Theory," Humboldt University Berlin, 15-20 July 2018.
[157] Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, 38.
[158] Paul Gilroy, "Fanon and Améry," *Theory, Culture & Society* 27, no. 7-8 (2010): 16-32.

institutional mediation that make these racialized practices, and the interpretative judgments that produce them, into a functional norm. Policing doesn't simply happen to target, survey, imprison, and punish Black people at higher rates; this is not an aberration. It is a constitutive part of the biopolitical project of managing populations within a racialized settler state. This sort of investigation, therefore, can't stop short with decrying certain kinds of racial judgments as either mistaken on epistemic grounds or wrong on ethical grounds. It has to understand how these racialized practices are made, to a certain extent, to appear both practical and rational for police officers seeking to discharge their institutional duties.

To better understand how it is that the police continue to target, abuse and kill Black people to a disproportionate degree,[159] social critics need to account for the police as an institution with a very specific genealogy and functional role with regard to social reproduction. This is where my work, I contend, offers an improvement. Within the United States, in particular, the institution was created to meet a very specific need — namely, the hunting down, capturing and killing of escaped slaves in the South. These fugitive slave patrols became an instrument not just of White capital, but of white supremacy more widely. The members of these patrols often consisted of lower-class Whites who did not own slaves themselves.[160] Rather than stand in political solidarity with Black slaves and free men against the white planter class, the White laborers joined forces with White elites. And they did so in large part to secure certain forms of social status and symbolic differentiation from the Black Other, whose degradation was visible proof that White men were in fact men and deserving of equal respect.[161] This explains why the White men on those slave patrols often acted with such brutality and violence towards the Black men and women they recovered; the ability to inflict violence on Black bodies without punishment became a potent way of enacting one's own standing as White and free. In this sense, the symbolic logic of White equality was constituted on the back of racial inequality, a dialectical contradiction that continues to operate in the White social imaginary and produce affective investments in whiteness today. The fugitive slave patrol, therefore, became a much more potent institution than simply its more limited aim — that of returning human capital to its owners. It became a social institution whose function was tethered to the political constitution of the White community at large. Against the security of the White community — and particularly the sanctity of White womanhood — the fugitive slave proved a dangerous threat to be contained and eliminated.[162]

The fugitive slave patrol is not the modern-day police force. And yet the biopolitical logic that underpinned the White slave patrol and the figure of the Black fugitive remains continuous, in certain key ways, within the U.S. mass incarceration complex and the kinds of policing that it relies on[163]. The phenomenon of mass incarceration — and the police's racist and racialized use of surveillance and force that sustains it — continues to speak to how the Black "underclass" is treated as a remainder, a sort of deviant surplus population whose bodies are either exploitable or disposable.[164] Modern policing still deploys necropolitical techniques. It mobilizes an entire carceral regime for managing Black labor and for disposing of the "surplus" Black population, complete with the physical architectures to match.[165] Prisons, courts, walls and fences. Over the past few years, a new Black

[159] For more on the problems of racist policing and brutality in the U.S., see Wesley Lowery, *They Can't Kill Us All: The Story of the Struggle for Black Lives* (New York: Hachette, 2017); Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From Black Lives Matter to Black Liberation* (New York: Haymarket Books, 2016); and Alex S. Vitale, *The End of Policing* (London: Verso, 2017).
[160] Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America,* 12.
[161] See Roediger, *The wages of whiteness*; Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America,* 18-19; Robert S. Chang, "The Great White Hope: Social Control and the Psychological Wages of Whiteness," *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 16, no. 3 (2020): 379-90.
[162] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 78.
[163] Sally Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).
[164] For an extensive study of the emergence of the prison-industrial complex and its links to neoliberal transformations of the labor market and the welfare state, see Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (University of California Press, 2007), esp. 107-112.
[165] Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), 12-15.

counterpublic has emerged around this issue of institutionalized forms of state-inflicted violence and death on Black bodies. Since a White cop shot and killed an unarmed Black body, Michael Brown, in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014, activists associated with the Movement for Black Lives have called attention to and protested the unarmed killings of Black men (and sometimes women) by police.[166] Extracting racism from policing is a far more complicated issue than simply providing anti-bias training. Ideology critique, therefore, ought to engage more directly with how the social production and circulation of knowledge is entangled with particular sites of power and domination. This means bringing together institutions, discourses, and practices to think through the sorts of situations in which racialized subjects and raced bodies encounter one another.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that racisms are best understood first and foremost as the ideological precipitates of political projects of European racial colonialism and its late imperial offshoots. Although the idea of 'race' has no metaphysical basis in either biological or cultural types, political theorists ought not to approach it primarily as an epistemic problem of misguided or otherwise flawed judgment. Many social epistemologists, however, attempt to do just that. Miranda Fricker, for instance, has theorized racial prejudice as a kind of epistemically suspect prejudice that tracks an individual's racial identity and causes knowers to act in unjust and discriminatory ways towards them. Or individuals from socially subjugated identities might find that the mainstream social imaginary fails to reflect their experiences in ways that prevent them from speaking effectively to and with others about the harms they are suffering. Fricker's reading of the epistemic consequences of domination has much to recommend it when it comes to understanding the phenomenology of social silencing. But I argued that her narrowly epistemic account failed to grapple with the practices, institutions, architectures, and affects that make such hermeneutic resources both intelligible and convincing to differently positioned subjects. In this respect, she falls back into a linguistic account of communication that focuses on the availability of semantic resources instead of analyzing the practical efficacy of racialized discourses. Antiblack prejudice is not simply an epistemic mishap or an ethical mistake. It emerges out of a particular kind of political conjuncture and fulfils a certain political purpose — i.e., by further reproducing the racial hierarchies that its meaning-making seeks to render natural and uncontested.

Antiracist critique, then, must do far more than simply reveal the "fictional" character of 'race' and its classifications of the human. An effective critique must also expose the *materiality* of the racial orders that structure individuals' practical contexts of action. At a cognitive level, demonstrating that racial groups have no essential grounds, either in biological material or in cultural background, does little to challenge the ways in which individuals' practical judgment remains racialized. As the recent emergence of new raciological thinking in the field of human genetics demonstrates, social orders continue to find new ways to situate and ground these practical distinctions among human beings. Rejecting old raciological narratives as intellectually spurious often does little to either remove the interpretative traces they have left on the social imaginary, nor does that sort of anti-essentialist analysis guarantee that other explanatory modes won't surface to conceptually frame what remains a regulative set of racialized practices. Debunking the idea of 'race' on an ontological level is obviously

[166] Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter,* 13-15.

a crucial part of the ongoing project of contesting raciological thinking, both on an epistemic and on an ethical level. But social critics cannot be content to let their inquiries stop there. Instead, I contended that political theorists ought to use a Gramscian-inspired ideology critique to analyze what race, as an interpretative frame, does in a given conjuncture.

The version of ideology critique I have defended draws in particular on the work of Lukacs, Gramsci, and Stuart Hall, each of whom sought to move the problem of ideology from the terrain of propositional beliefs to the social realm of interpretative practices. Such a method is vital for antiracist criticism because it can unmask the ways in which knowledge production remains entangled with racial domination. It often involves de-naturalizing certain accepted raciological "truths" or generally hegemonic understandings of the world in order to show them to be the products of the European racial colonialism. These are racialized forms of knowing that not only have an immoral past, but that are embedded in and stabilize oppressive racial hierarchies today. As I have framed it, the critique of racial ideologies involves two interrelated moves. First, theorists seek to disclose or unmask the ways in which the idea of a hierarchical division in the Human becomes meaningful in particular social formations. As Gilroy notes, the first steps in the critique of racialized assemblages "always involve their de-naturing. That basic move remains for me, just as it was for Fanon and Wynter, the premise of *all* efforts at disalienation."[167] And second, antiracist critique must expose the role that these suspect imaginaries play in stabilizing racial hierarchies — either by rationalizing certain kinds of discriminatory praxis or by removing certain kinds of antiracist political transformation from the realm of the possible. At times, this means that an ideology critique of racisms reveals those forms of knowing or representing the world that have "ossified."[168] It opens the door to the notion that the Euromodern world could, in fact, look and function quite differently.

In the next chapter, I look at what this approach to raciological reason means for political theory. Namely, I contend that the moral norm of the rational self-determining human being is institutionalized in Euromodernity in ways that rely on the presence of an irrational, incapable and racialized subhuman. In this respect, political theorists and social critics alike cannot presume that the Kantian ideal of moral personhood can provide a ready index for the interrogation of racial domination. Instead, as I will further explore in chapter three, antiracist theorists ought to look to a more practical and conjunctural method in order to reckon with the practical hierarchies of the Human that Euromodern racisms have introduced.

[167] Gilroy, "Offshore Humanisms," 10.
[168] Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason,* 40.

Chapter II
Racism and the Problem of the Human

Once we acknowledge the constitutive entanglement of Euromodern humanism with racial domination and the abjection of the Black subject,[1] then political theorists are left with a conceptual and an ethical puzzle. Without the human being as its ethical foundation, where should critics look instead for the normative measure against which to evaluate social relations and the actions of individuals and institutions alike? In this chapter, I look at three analytical responses to this racialized division in the Human that, for all their insights, I contend are ultimately unproductive for antiracist critical theory today. First, I address the anti-humanist trend in recent postcolonial literary criticism and posthumanist approaches to the Anthropocene.[2] In this pessimistic account of Euromodernity, the humanist project is irrevocably entangled with domination. To proffer any sort of "philosophical anthropology," no matter how thin or formal, is to mistake the very nature of the Human as a historical being, one whose being is shaped by its material and social existence rather than by any sort of discernible essence. Given the ideological straitjackets that ontological readings of 'race' have placed around nonwhite peoples over the past five centuries, there should be no rush to proffer new models of the human that open themselves to similar hierarchical exclusions. If it is to avoid the oppressive legacy of the Enlightenment, this discursive milieu argues, then political theory must eschew the "identitarian" thinking of humanism altogether and embrace the free play of difference. Yet I argue that this anti-humanist account overstates the degree to which these racial and ethnic divisions constitute unbridgeable divides. As cosmopolitans like Paul Gilroy argue, there is more that unites human beings and different cultures than divides them.[3] But perhaps most importantly, I contend that effective antiracist critique will require the sort of normative toolkit that a humanist ethic can provide (i.e., ideas of freedom, dignity, and equality).

Yet this is not to say that any humanist imaginary will do. Next, I look at certain forms of abstract liberalism that deploy European humanist ideals for moral critique while often failing to reckon with their raciological roots. Under this more optimistic reading of Euromodernity, there is nothing essentially "racist" or racialized about the modern rational subject and the moral ideal of personhood. Instead, Kantian-influenced thinkers argue that the wrong of racism and the harms that it inflicts on nonwhite subjects are best tackled *through* these ethical standards. Yet I will argue that such a top-down approach to normative theorising does little to disclose or contest the practical terrain of racialized judgments that make racisms both intelligible and mundane. At best, attempts to rely on these "thin ethical precepts"[4] fall prey to the common critique of Kant — that they remain mired in the "mere impotence of the ought." At worst, normative political theory can interpret racial discrimination and anti-black violence as little more than aberrational vestiges of an antiquated form of life. Without coming explicitly to terms with what Gilroy calls a "view of racial discourse that is

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[1] For literature about the raciological reason built into the Enlightenment project, see the following: Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997); Thomas McCarthy, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009); Mark Larrimore, "Antinomies of Race: Diversity and Destiny in Kant," *Patterns of Prejudice* 42, no. 4-5 (2008): 341-63; Robert Bernasconi, "Silencing the Hottentots: Kolb's Pre-Racial Encounter with the Hottentots And Its Impact on Buffon, Kant, and Rousseau," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 35, no. 12 (2014): 101-24; and William Uzgalis, "John Locke, Racism, Slavery, and Indian Lands," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Race*, ed. Naomi Zack (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 21-30; and Bernard Boxhill, "Kantian Racism and Kantian Teleology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Race*, ed. Naomi Zack (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 44-53.

[2] For a discussion of anti-humanism in postcolonial theory, see Gates, "Critical Fanonism," 461-462. For a discussion of the recent turn to the Anthropocene, see Gilroy, "Offshore Humanism," 4.

[3] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 84.

[4] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 4.

endowed with its own political life and institutional tempo,"[5] humanist egalitarianism will stumble over or outright ignore the practical contradictions and ideological inconsistencies that racial orders produce.

Third and finally, I will consider critical race theorist Charles Mills' attempt to integrate a racialized social ontology into his radical Black Kantianism.[6] In a move reminiscent of the "ontological turn" in African American political theory, Mills adopts a sociological narrative of modernity centered around the European conquest of the Americas and the transatlantic slave trade.[7] In his work on the racial contract, Mills offers a radical challenge to the abstract liberal conception of the Human that undergirds so much of contemporary Anglo-American political theory. But he also contends that normative political theory — in particular, Rawlsian social contractarianism — can be redeemed for antiracist work if thinkers purposefully begin from a social ontology that is racialized between White persons and Black subpersons.[8] But in doing so, I contend that Mills takes the "Manichean delirium" that Western imperialism created as its ideological excuse and reifies it into a new ontological picture that displaces more historical understandings and complex articulations of difference. In a world that is increasingly fragmented by cross-cutting hierarchies, I question whether such a binaristic picture of the social — as riven by one primary and insurmountable cleavage between the West and rest, White and Black — is ultimately of as much analytical value when it comes to dismantling the practices, imaginaries, and institutional apparatuses that continue to make that racial distinction meaningful. In particular, this dyadic relation of racial domination tends to offer an overly homogenous and unified account of racial subjects, one that reduces the complex overdetermination of different racial, ethnic and engendered positions within and across class divides to a schematic divide between White oppressors and the Black (or nonwhite) oppressed.[9] Not only does such an account fail to substantively theorize discourses and practices of gender, but it fails to link race (or more specifically, the distinctive racializations of various groups) back to class in a convincing way.[10]

Ultimately, I argue that antiracist critique must reckon with the racial limits of Euromodern humanism's abstract universals *without* essentializing "difference" in ways that remove racial hierarchies from the social plane of contingency and action. This will involve a different methodology — one that is reflexive and concrete, attuned to both the structural and the subjective planes of analysis, and skeptical of the racial "regime of truth" that conditions the terms of recognition operable in a given milieu. Rather than accepting the "homogenizing" logic that racist ideologies espouse, political theorists would be better served taking a more historical, concrete and relational approach to racial orders — one that makes space for the plural and often intersecting identities that shape individual subjects, on the one hand, and for the strategic alliances across racialized class segments which (re)produce racist institutions and discourses, on the other. At the end of the chapter, I look to the alternative humanisms that antiracist thinkers like Sylvia Wynter, Edward Said, and Paul Gilroy have proposed in order to avoid Euromodernity's raciological shortcomings without hypostatisizing 'race' into a quasi-mythological explanation for social domination and individual subjection. As Fanon reminds us, "If, at a certain point in his history, [the Black man] has been made to ask the question of whether he is a man, it's because his reality as a man has been challenged."[11]

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[5] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 13.
[6] Charles W. Mills, "Black Radical Kantianism," *Res Philosophica* 95, no. 1 (2018): 1-33.
[7] See Mills, *The Racial Contract;* Mills, "Black Radical Kantianism;" and Carole Pateman and Charles W. Mills, *Contract and Domination* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity, 2007).
[8] Pateman and Mills, *Contract and Domination,* 118-122.
[9] Gramsci makes a similar argument against reductive accounts of class in vulgar Marxism. Gramsci, *The Modern Prince*, 155.
[10] Stuart Hall points out that capital often works through and further hones these forms of racial, ethnic, and national differentiation to both segment its labor force within domestic labor markets and incorporate different modes of production within the same social formation. Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 49-50.
[11] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 78.

This subaltern reading of modernity, then, makes a strong case for a concrete and pragmatic humanism, rather than one predicated on abstract ideas of a Transcendental Subject.

Euromodern humanism and the 'coloniality of being'

Historically, Euromodern ideals of rational personhood have been systematically used to justify the ongoing violence against Black and brown subjects, both inside the Global North's benighted minority communities and in the Global South. "For if equality among men is proclaimed in the name of intelligence and philosophy, it is also true that these concepts have been used to justify the extermination of man," Fanon reminds us.[12] Political theorists, however, are divided over just what the racism of Enlightenment thinkers means today when it comes to carrying out social critique. At the very least, this means that antiracist critics should be cautious when it comes to versions of humanist thought that are built on either an exclusionary anthropology of the rational and self-directed subject or on a Eurocentric developmental narrative about civilizational progress.[13]The line that a thinker takes in answer to these problems, of course, reflects how they read the relationship between Enlightenment and anti-black racisms. If Europe's racist failures are nothing more than incidentally or contingently associated with its moral and political imaginary, then it would seem that its normative concepts might be retrieved for more emancipatory purposes. But for many postcolonial and antiracist thinkers, Euromodern humanism is conceived of as an inherently racist ideological phenomenon, one whose racism cannot be readily excoriated because it is internal to its formal grammar.[14] Under this reading, 'race' functions as an "ongoing and irresolvable abjection"[15] which structures the symbolic order of the Human. This is why many postcolonial and critical Black studies scholars have rejected the humanistic enterprise altogether — both as a descriptive project and as an ethical horizon against which to locate criticism.[16] And yet I contend that antiracist critique ought not to shy away from the prospect of a new humanism. The strictures and failings of the Euromodern project do not necessarily mean that another cosmopolitan vision of the human will fall prey to the same exclusionary and hierarchical shortcomings. The answer to an essentializing and racist humanism is not necessarily an anti-essentialist and relativistic anti-humanism.

Prima facie, then, Europe's crimes in the construction of the modern world — and the dehumanizing logics upon which they both relied and fed — ought to call into question this normative framework of the Human, especially one predicated on a narrow and exclusive account of rational, disembodied personhood.[17] Beginning in the 17th century, Enlightenment liberals began to articulate a kind of moral universalism predicated on a shared sense of the human. For all of the interpretative differences and divergent political interests, a philosophical discourse began to take shape around two fundamental premises. First, Enlightenment humanism foregrounds a particular conception of the individual — one that has since been associated first with the rationalist subject of the modern bourgeoisie and later with the self-interested subject of late capitalism. This is "the humanist image of Man as a self-regulating rational animal endowed with the universal powers of reason and

[12] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 12.
[13] Goldberg, *The Racial State,* 74-79.
[14] Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2014), 11.
[15] Sharpe, *In the Wake,* 14.
[16] Gates, "Critical Fanonism,"
[17] Elizabeth Grosz indicts the ways in which this view of the rational, dispassionate and disembodied self has been indexed to a "hierarchy which positions one kind of subject (male, white, capitalist) in the position of superiority over others." Elizabeth Grosz, "Merleau-Ponty and Irigaray in the Flesh," *Thesis Eleven* 36, no. 1 (1993): 37-59, 54.

language,"[18] and therefore as both designed and deserving of a certain kind of individual autonomy. And second, liberal philosophers like Kant and Hegel situated this rational Human being within a teleological account of sociocultural learning in which the social world became increasingly rational — and thereby moral.[19] European political dominance, then, was presumed to provide empirical evidence of the West's developmental "superiority," and Euromodern institutions and norms were assumed to reflect the telos of rational progress.[20] According to Euromodern humanism, then, political tyranny, enslavement, and unfreedom of all kinds ought to be rejected as immoral and inimical to the human form of being in the world.

This seems to point to an apparent paradox. Enlightenment philosophers and their 18th and 19th century liberal inheritors had articulated egalitarian and universalist projects of human dignity and self-determination while also, at worst, condoning and, at best, failing to condemn the mass enslavement of Black Africans and the subjugation and genocide of indigenous peoples. Fanon disparages "…this Europe where they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them, at the corner of every one of their own streets, in all corners of the globe."[21] As intellectual historians of empire have demonstrated, it was the concept of 'race' that stepped in to mediate between these seemingly incompatible projects.[22] As an ideology of "natural" or inherent difference, raciological reason provided an easy way to square the circle between moral equality and social inequality.[23] 'Race' came to reify and absolutize the distinctions between the Europeans and the peoples they would come to subject, brutalise and exploit during their colonial remaking of the world. For all its pious testaments to the equality of "Men,"[24] the ethical status of personhood became a category predicated on exclusion — of racial "others," women, the indigent, the differently abled.[25] "The moment in which Kant compromised himself by associating the figure of the 'Negro' with stupidity and connecting differences in color to differences in mental capacity provides a useful symbolic marker," Gilroy concludes. "From that point on, race has been a cipher for the debasement of humanism and democracy."[26]

These Enlightenment philosophers devised interpretative strategies to avoid taking their universalist presumptions to their cosmopolitan conclusions. Many thinkers adopted a racialized and exclusionary philosophical anthropology that delineated which kinds of subjects could be regarded as "full" members of the Human. Against the rational, self-directed and autonomous "Man" of Euromodern humanism, there stood new normalizing stereotypes — that of the irrational, savage Other of the indigenous Americas and the subrational, animalistic Other of Black Africa.[27] Under these modern accounts of political legitimacy, all those kinds of "human" beings that were somehow incapable of rationality and autonomous self-determination — women, children and the differently abled at home in Europe; indigenous and Black men and women in the settler colonies — could be dominated in order to better secure their own wellbeing.[28] With the rise of Darwinian social theory, later

[18] Paul Gilroy and Rosi Braidotti, "Introduction," in *Conflicting Humanities,* eds. Rosi Braidotti and Paul Gilroy (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 2.
[19] Robert Bernasconi, "Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism," in *Philosophers on Race: Critical Essays*, eds. Julie K. Ward and Tommy Lee Lott. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 145-166; Allen, *The End of Progress,* 3.
[20] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being," 315.
[21] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 251
[22] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being," 309-311, 316-319.
[23] Stuart Hall, "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance," in *Essential Essays, Vol. 1: Foundations of Cultural Studies,* ed. David Morley (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2019), 217.
[24] The usage of the masculine is intentional here.
[25] Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason,* 19.
[26] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 9.
[27] See, for example, this quote from Kant: "Incidentally, humid warmth is beneficial to the robust growth of animals in general and, in short, this results in the Negro, who is well suited to his climate, namely strong, fleshy, supple, but who, given the abundant provision of his mother land, is lazy, soft and trifling." Immanuel Kant, "On the Different Races of Man," in *Race and Enlightenment Reason: A Reader,* ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 46.
[28] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being," 300-301.

Euromodern thinkers embraced a teleological and totalizing account of historical development that relegated the "lesser races" to lower rungs on the civilizational ladder than their European overlords.[29] To thinkers like Hegel and Kant, the European Man was a kind of developmentally superior being whose genetic profile has "won" the competitive contest of life and is therefore deserving of his social and political advantages.[30] In this later stage of Euromodern humanism, African, American, and Asian peoples were not necessarily seen as incapable of self-governance and rational conduct, but they were not yet at the stage where they could be trusted with collective self-rule. Under this ostensibly humanitarian logic, then, the colonial powers had a responsibility to guide these "inferior races" into their full developmental "maturity."[31] In the place of a philosophical anthropology of racial difference that placed the White European at the top of a great "Chain of Being,"[32] then, this late imperial version of Euromodern humanism substituted a teleological philosophy of history that placed the West at the acme of social and moral progress.[33] The consequences, of course, were the same: Black and nonwhite Others were constitutively foreclosed from being seen as full members of the human species and thereby subjected to European domination.

When embedded in a broader account of raciological reason, then, the failures of European humanism no longer look quite so paradoxical. Historically, "the overall Janus-faced effects of large-scale human emancipation [are] yoked to the no-less large-scale human degradation and immiseration to which these behaviors collectively lead," Wynter writes.[34] This abjection of the irrational, deviant, lazy, *embodied,* Other, in turn, sets up the very terms of the European rational, disembodied, and productive citizen. Just as racism produced the idea of 'race' in ways that further legitimated and enabled techniques of racialized differentiation, humanism too produces the 'human' in various iterations that legitimate and enable different techniques of political subjection and government. As anticolonial thinkers like Aimé Césaire, Leopold Senghor, and Frantz Fanon pointed out, Europe's "high ideals" of moral equality, human dignity, and individual freedom could not look like anything other than bankrupt and flimsy platitudes from the view of the peoples whose land, lives and livelihoods had been forcibly stolen by those self-proclaimed "enlightened" and "civilised" Others. As Césaire put it, "The West has never been further from being able to live a true humanism — a humanism made to the measure of the world."[35] From the subaltern vantage of the Black Atlantic, the oppressive relationship between European Man and his infrahuman and non-white Others is revealed to be internal to the logic that constituted Euromodern humanism.

This is why many postcolonial and critical Black studies scholars have embraced instead an anti-foundationalist, (often) Foucauldian-inspired anti-humanism.[36] For example, Homi Bhabha's main concern with Fanon's work is with the "existentialism humanism that is as banal as it is beatific."[37] More recently, practitioners of "critical Black studies" in the American academy have taken the

[29] For example, British colonial bureaucrat Alfred Milner defended a view of White (specifically Anglo) civilizational superiority that justified Britain's colonial rule in South Africa and the institution of a racialized mode of governance that controlled the movement, labor, and rights of Black communities for White benefit. See, for example, Alfred Milner and Cecil Headlam (ed)., The Milner Papers, Vol. II (London: Cassell & Company, 1931), 467.
[30] Robert Bernasconi, "With What Must the Philosophy of World History Begin? On the Racial Basis of Hegel's Eurocentrism," *Nineteenth-century Contexts* 22, no. 2 (2000), 186-190.
[31] Edward Said, "Culture and Imperialism," in *Power, Politics, and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said,* ed. Gauri Viswanathan (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), 194.
[32] Wynter, "On the Coloniality of Being," 300.
[33] Allen, *The End of Progress,* 3.
[34] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being," 270.
[35] Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism,* trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 73.
[36] Within these discursive milieus, then, to profess a commitment to the humanistic project is to reveal a compromising liberalism at the heart of one's theoretical praxis. It is an embarrassment, an antiquated conceptual attachment that mars the surface of a critic's more negativist insights into power hierarchies, relations of force, and the production of knowledge. Braidotti and Gilroy, *Conflicting Humanities*, 2-4.
[37] Homi K. Bhabha, "Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition," *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (London: Routledge, 1994), 120.

racialized and hierarchical construction of the Human to be its foundational problematic.[38] In these intellectual frameworks, racial and ethnic difference are assimilated to a primary and constitutive relation in which the Black or brown subject assumes the place of the "Other."[39] No matter how well intentioned, the humanist project is a deeply flawed exercise that will always trap theorists into an exclusionary logic of identitarian thinker that requires this racial Other as its delimiting Outside. In this respect, this postcolonial critique draws on a similar kind of Nietzschean anti-essentialism to the poststructuralist tradition.[40] It accuses the Kantians of taking an exclusionary version of the Human subject — one particular to a certain time, place, and racialized schema — and ontologizing it into an exclusionary figure that transcends history and the social. The attachment to the idea of the human as a base index for ethical critique then seems to reflect a sort of political naïveté. In certain respects, this skepticism might seem prima facie justified. After all, the contemporary political conjuncture is still permeated with abstract liberalisms that throw about empty words about human dignity in the face of neo-imperial projects and late capitalist expropriations in the Global South. It is not easy to "produc[e] a worldly vision that is not simply one more imperialistic particularism dressed up in seductive universal garb."[41] Instead of retrieving the Human for antiracist purposes, then, postcolonial literary critics prefer to deconstruct these ideological mystifications or to analyse, in more concrete ways, the forms of life and kinds of subjectivities made possible in different worlds.[42] Drawing in turn on either continental postmodernist thinkers or the Latin American discourse around Creolization, these anti-humanist critics celebrate difference and encourage alternative forms of subjectivation that escape the constraints, material and ideological, imposed by European imperialism.[43]

Yet I find this postcolonial rejection of humanism to be ultimately unconvincing. Part of the postcolonial theory's pessimism here owes to the fact that it assimilates racial differences to an abstract paradigm of symbolic Difference. This linguistic structuralism frames "difference" in quasi-theological terms, rather than on historical terms as the contingent outcome of political struggle.[44] By adopting such an absolute vision of Difference, postcolonial critics deny the points of continuity that undergird those differential relations by reading them through the logic of an unbridgeable opposition. But not all critical genealogies of the dialectic between Enlightenment reason and European racism understand this relation in this decontextualised way. There is a weaker kind of argument that one can make about the racialization of Euromodernity — one that focuses on the historical and practical foreclosures that have become contingently sedimented into the liberal worldview and its figure of the Human. What began as a contingent articulation of the humanist ethic and raciological reason became further cemented into a self-supporting dialectical relation in which White European emancipation became dependent upon the oppression of African, indigenous American, and Asian peoples. The universalist aspirations of the Enlightenment were corroded and compromised by the emergence of the colonial order and its brutal management of non-European peoples, but this corruption owes to practical antagonisms, not theoretical or symbolic ones. This is

[38] Some thinkers like Hortense Spillers and Alexander Wehilye seek to recover a new account of the human outside of the racialized trauma of Euromodernity, but others like Frank B. Wilderson argue that personhood is a construct predicated upon the abjection of the Black subject from the ranks of the human.
[39] See, for example, Homi K. Bhabha, "Difference, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Colonialism," in *The Politics of Theory*, ed. Francis Barker (Colchester, University of Essex, 1983).
[40] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being," 318-321.
[41] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 4.
[42] For an overview of this multiple worlds paradigm, see Arturo Escobar, "Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise: The Latin American Modernity/Coloniality Research Program," *Cultural Studies*, 21(12–13), 2007, 179–210. For an account of what it might mean to work from the presumption of "multiple worlds" as political theorists, see Anna M. Agathangelou and L. H. M. Ling. *Transforming World Politics: From Empire to Multiple Worlds* (London: Routledge, 2009).
[43] For a comparison between the multiple worlds paradigm and more European-influenced postcolonial criticism, see Nalini Persram, "Spatial and Temporal Dislocations of Theory, Subjectivity, and Post-Reason in the Geocolonial Politics of Subaltern Studies," *Cultural Studies*, 11(1), 2011, 9–23.
[44] Edward Said, "Overlapping Territories," in *Power, Politics and Culture,* 57-58.

a more materialist, conjunctural account of the dialectic of the Enlightenment, one that is more attuned to the discrete practices, institutional apparatuses, and spatial orderings that set out certain groups of the human beings as inferior and less valuable.

Under this view, Enlightenment humanism has functioned in racist ways, perhaps irredeemably so. But that doesn't necessarily threaten the prospect of arriving at another humanism — one whose cosmopolitan or "planetary" vision traverses and explodes the ideological blockages of 'race,' nation, and ethnicity.[45] In fact, I argue that political theorists will need the normative concepts linked to such an ethical horizon — ideals like freedom or, in a more negativist sense, non-domination — to identify and criticise ongoing forms of racist dehumanisation. The notion of difference for difference's sake doesn't provide the ethical teeth to separate out instances of normalised racial subjectivation, say, from racist violence. Without both a structural account of racialized domination and a more explicitly normative framework, it becomes difficult for critics to separate out *wrongful* and *harmful* social relations from those which impose certain predispositions and tendencies on the subjects conditioned by them. As Lois McNay writes, postmodern feminism is ultimately "unviable…. because at some basic level, feminist critique necessarily rests on normative judgments about what constitutes legitimate and non-legitimate forms of action in relation to the political goal of overcoming the subordination of women."[46] So too, I argue, the capacity for making normative judgments is vital for antiracist criticism. In turn, what it means to imagine a better future is necessarily tethered to some understanding of what kind of social transformation constitutes progress.[47] When Toni Morrison writes that she, like many, cannot even imagine a world without racial hierarchies, she is already putting forward a conception of what antiracist struggle ought to drive towards — a world in which 'race' is not necessary linked to social hierarchies but instead becomes akin to the culturally specific grouping we currently associate with ethnicity. But to do so, Morrison must rely on both a structural account of "relations of force" as well as an ethic of non-domination.

Politically, too, the move to the posthuman feels suspect, given that Black people and other racially oppressed groups have long organized around humanist ideals to challenge their own subordination. As Gilroy points out, "something like an immanent critique of humanist customs and habits remains not only an essential source of hope, but a practical, political tool in a range of postcolonial conflicts."[48] In many contexts, Black and indigenous subjects have only recently been recognised as full members of the human race. (As have many other racialized postcolonial subjects from Asia, the Pacific, and the Americas.)[49] It seems premature, then, for many in critical Black studies, to throw out the notion of a humanist ethic altogether, given that the moral status it encodes cannot be taken for granted or guaranteed. The nature of racial oppression has been systematically legitimated through discourses that have assimilated the Black subject to the less-than-human or non-human. Opposing those inferiorizations, in turn, often requires a notion of a shared sense of human capacity that raciological reason has worked hard to obstruct and deny.[50] In this sense, humanism doesn't just provide a set of important moral ideals; it also foregrounds an ontological picture of common being-in-the-world that subtends and explodes the racial (and racist) codes that seek to stabilize an unbridgeable caesura between groups. As Martin Jay puts it, "However much it may on occasion mask imperialist intentions, the discourse of human rights cannot be so briskly dismissed as nothing

[45] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 84.
[46] Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender, and the Self* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2007), 117.
[47] Allen, *The End of Progress,* 12.
[48] Paul Gilroy, "Not Yet Humanism, or the Non-Jewish Jew Becomes the Nonhumanist Humanist," *Conflicting Humanities,* eds. Rosi Braidotti and Paul Gilroy (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 97.
[49] These general moral critiques of dehumanization, however, do not mean that all of these racialized groups share the same historical trajectories of domination, oppression, and dispossession, nor that they are incorporated into the existing racial orders on equally precarious or subordinated terms.
[50] Hall, *"New ethnicities,"* 446.

but ideological window dressing."[51] In turn, a celebration of "difference" *qua* difference can all too easily be assimilated into an essentialist logic of racial and ethnic distinctiveness that separates and segregates rather than pluralises. The difficulty with the kinds of difference that racisms proliferate, after all, is not primarily about occupying a different world or embodying a cultural separatism that Euromodern hegemony has displaced. It is driven by the ideological creation of differences that are then read as meaningful in moral and political terms. The rallying cry of difference for difference's sake, then, may not as readily emancipatory as some postmodernist thinkers might presume.

That said, not all attempts to reclaim a humanist index of critique are productive when it comes to interrogating racial orders and the forms of domination, violence, and subjugation that they distribute. As I explore in the next section, many liberal thinkers end up abstracting these Kantian-inspired moral ideals away from their racialized provenance too readily. In doing so, they overlook the ways in which raciological reason continues to practically undercut their universalist promise in contemporary social formations. Given the persistent attractions of "race thinking" and ethno-nationalist politics in the contemporary conjuncture, political theorists ought to be wary of adopting an intellectual paradigm whose limits and values were so fundamentally entangled with the subjection of a majority of the world's peoples.

Abstract liberalism and its shortcomings

Normative political theorists working today tend to separate out Enlightenment thinkers' moral or political ideas from their racist views. Contemporary Kantian thinking, for example, has largely dismissed Kant's lectures on anthropology and his *Critique of Teleological Judgment* in order to focus in on his account of practical reason and his moral theory.[52] In this intellectual framework, just because a thinker like Locke or Hegel thought that people of African descent were essentially inferior does not necessarily mean that their concept of the social contract, say, or historical reason are suspect and cannot be reclaimed. If anything, thinkers like Thomas E. Hill Jr. and Bernard Boxill argue that such universalist norms have been and continue to be productively used to challenge racist acts and racialized hierarchies as oppressive, dehumanizing, and inegalitarian.[53] Without an account of the Human as a "member of the kingdom of ends," it becomes difficult to indict racisms or to recognise instances of racial injustice. This explicitly normative approach to critique then seeks to apply these "universalist ideals" like freedom, human dignity, equality, etc. to various "non-ideal" situations in order to identify when a given social order fails to live up to the desired ethical standard. In this respect, there are two distinctive analytical moments within this theoretical approach: first, the normative question of which ideals and values to affirm; and second, the descriptive problem of how a given sociological context might (fail to) realise those ideals. Allen notes that the former problematic is largely the provenance of what many Anglo-American political philosophers might call "ideal theory" today. The latter is falls under the interrelated category of "applied ethics."[54]

[51] Martin Jay, "Amy Allen. The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory (Review)" *Critical Inquiry* 45.2 (2019): 563-65.
[52] Robert Bernasconi, "Will the real Kant please stand up? The challenge of Enlightenment racism to the study of the history of philosophy," *Radical Philosophy* 117, 2003, 14.
[53] Thomas E. Hill Jr. and Bernard Boxill, "Kant and Race," in *Race and Racism,* ed. Bernard Boxill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 449.
[54] Allen, *The End of Progress, xiv.*

Within this methodological framework, then, the ongoing persistence of racism could either be a problem of "bad" normative principles — i.e., exclusive moral commitments to a European Human with no corresponding obligations to nonwhite Others — or it can be a problem of "bad" practices. For many liberal political theorists and moral philosophers working today, it is the latter. They argue that there is no necessary relationship between anti-black racisms and Euromodern humanism. As Davenport puts it, "surely the error lies not in the very idea of [Kantian reason] but rather in symbolic associations of such 'marginalised subjects with the irrational.[55]" Such an interpretation seems increasingly tenable today, liberal thinkers point out, given that the legal and ideological terms of personhood have expanded beyond its historical limitation to the White European bourgeois male. Racist science has been denounced. Chattel slavery has been abolished. *De jure* systems of racial apartheid in South Africa and the U.S. have been outlawed. Black and brown peoples too are rights-bearers in global humanitarian discourses. No longer is the category of Blackness necessarily linked to the abject and the profane. The persistence of racial hierarchies then speaks, in this optimistic liberal view, not to problems internal to Kantian universalism itself but instead to the fact that its moral vision has only been partially realized in the practical norms and institutional realities of the contemporary world. It is an issue of compliance, not of theoretical design or moral failure. This is why normative political theorists often contend that racism itself is a rather simple moral problem.[56]

To be fair, antiracist critique will need some sort of normative teeth if it is to distinguish the wrong of racial domination from other kinds of social relations. As Stuart Hall notes, there is something inhuman and inhumane about all racisms.[57] And yet, as he also points out, the *moral* question of whether or not racism is legitimate is not a particularly interesting one. Political theorists ought to be looking at a more engaged set of problems — i.e., which forms of raciological thinking remain hegemonic in particular social formations; how this racial nomos works through the state, capitalist markets and social institutions to reproduce racial hierarchies; and what sort of obstacles individual subjects might experience to their own political agency within these racial orders.[58] In a certain respect, simply casting moral aspersions on the persistence of anti-Black and other racisms does little to explain why these forms of dehumanization retain their social currency. In that respect, Kantian-inspired moral critique of racial hierarchies all too often remains mired in the "impotence of the mere ought." It can indict the current status quo as inhumane and oppressive, but it has nothing to say about why and how such a world might be contested and unmade. The straightforward moral injunction against racism does little to challenge either the institutional regimes that operate in racialized ways or the forms of racialized knowledge, ethics, and self-relation that continue to produce individual subjects that make racist decisions.[59]

In particular, I argue that such a thin normative approach to racism has little to say about the specific forms of raciological reason that continue to regulate social life in White settler states, postcolonial societies and European metropoles. Part of the problem lies with the institutional confines of academic philosophy itself. "Race thinking" was not a suitable topic for philosophical investigation until recently within the Anglo-American and European academies, as critical philosophers of 'race' and gender have testified to.[60] Instead, an overwhelmingly White and male discipline has largely been content to either marginalize or evacuate those "embarrassing" racial facets of a thinker that threaten

[55] John J. Davenport, "*The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (Review)" *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews,* 2 Oct 2016, https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/the-end-of-progress-decolonizing-the-normative-foundations-of-critical-theory/
[56] Thanks to Cecile Laborde for emphasizing this point to me.
[57] Hall, *Selected Political Writings*, 144.
[58] Hall, "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance," 175-176.
[59] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 13.
[60] For an argument to this effect, see Mills, "The Whiteness of Political Philosophy."

the contemporary salience of their work.[61] In turn, American and European liberals of various stripes have regularly sought to deny or minimise the racialized practices of domination upon which the Western world order was constructed: settler colonialism, chattel slavery, indigenous genocide, indentured labor, and territorial dispossession. But part of the problem too is methodological. Anglo-American political philosophy, particularly in the post-war period, has adopted a tendency towards analytical abstraction and conceptual coherence that simply excises the racist anthropologies or unfortunate "empirical facts" from what is perceived to be a thinker's general philosophical system.[62] Many normative political philosophers simply pushed racism, racial hierarchies, and the colonial matrices that produced these inhuman practices to the intellectual margins by assimilating them to the category of the "non-ideal."

By looking at the rise of the modern nation-state, capitalism, and liberal democracy through such rose-tinted glasses, political theorists have displayed the sort of interpretative "bad faith" that Baldwin indicts in White Americans: "They do not know and they do not wish to know."[63] In contradistinction to the Nietzschean-inspired critiques of the Human that postcolonial thinkers have lobbied, my concern here is more Hegelian.[64] Namely, I contend that these liberal frameworks often work at such a level of abstraction that they overlook the ways in which these "thin ethical precepts" remain practically entangled with racialized exclusion.[65] These concepts of personhood and autonomy are always embedded within what Hegel calls the "thick ethical life" of social formations. It is these normalised forms of praxis and expectation which render the Human into a meaningful category.[66] Hegel argued that the critic could only understand how certain ideals were experienced as legitimate and action-guiding by resituating them within these localised contexts of use. The task of the antiracist critic, however, aims not at reconstructing *desirable* ethical practices — as Hegel would have it — but instead seeks to disclose and contest the *undesirable* racial ethics, imaginaries and etiquettes that circumscribe and displace Black humanity in the eyes of so many individuals and institutions. When we look at how racial orders today and how they are reproduced, we see that racisms often function as social norms in their own right. "Racial science, racialized reason, and the enforcement of their boundaries around official human status were not straightforward or simple aberrations from more noble or consistent standards,"[67] Gilroy writes. Enlightenment liberalism's "thin ethical precepts," he points out, did little to ward against the "genocidal barbarism and biopolitical atrocities of the twentieth century."[68]

An example from Sojourner Truth helps to illustrate this concern with abstract Kantian approaches to critiquing social domination. In a now famous extemporaneous speech at the 1851 Women's Rights Association meeting in Akron, Ohio, Truth stood up to contest the exclusion of Black women from the organisation's rhetoric and platform:

> That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns,

[61] Bernasconi, "Will the real Kant please stand up?" 16.
[62] Mills, "Ideal Theory as Ideology."
[63] Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*, 10.
[64] As Hegel pointed out, Kant's problem is that his proscriptions fall back into the "impotence of the mere ought" because they remain so formal and decontextualised from concrete social orders. For a detailed discussion of Hegel's critique of Kant's abstract formalism, see Kenneth R. Westphal, "Normative Constructivism. Hegel's Radical Social Philosophy," *SATS* 8, no. 2 (2007): 7-41.
[65] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 4.
[66] Westphal, "Normative Constructivism," 34.
[67] Gilroy, *Against Race,* 285.
[68] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 4.

> and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?[69]

A narrower interpretation of Truth's critique might read her speech primarily as a challenge to the racist exclusion from Black women from the category of "womanhood" in 1850s America. And it certainly does contain that sort of claim. But I would argue that Truth is not suggesting that Black women, enslaved and free, *ought* to assimilate to the normative conception of White femininity. She is not arguing that Black women too should be helped in and out of carriages. Instead, Truth's speech poses an effective challenge to the normative construction of White womanhood itself. She does so in two key respects. First, she challenges the patriarchal ideologies that read women as inferior, incapable, weak, and fragile with her own lived experience as a formerly enslaved Black woman. Second, she points out that White women can be treated in this patronising and controlling way by White men because of the functional role that Black women play at the bottom of the social and sexual hierarchies. It is Black women's labor, their bodies, and their families which are sacrificed in order to enable the myth of the chaste White housewife that these White women find so oppressive. What Truth reveals here is that there is a *dialectical* relationship between engendering Whiteness and disengendering Blackness. (Similarly, we might look at all the ways in which Black men and women are read as either hypersexual or asexual in relation to White anxieties over heteronormativity.)[70] As Wehilye notes, "the sociogenic anchoring of racial difference in physiology and the banning of black subjects from the domain of the human occur in and through gender and sexuality."[71] Truth's critique, then, targets both White supremacist and patriarchal practices. And it does so by uncovering the practical interconnections between the oppression of Black women, on the one hand, and the subjection of White women, on the other.

This dialectical reading of Euromodernity, then, holds that raciological unreason is not an addendum to the sociocultural development of the Human, but is instead at the heart of that world-making project. It is not simply that White America's humanist ideals do not extend to or include Black communities, but that the very possibility of White political equality and White moral autonomy has been built off the exploitation of Black labor and the symbolic degradation of Blackness as inferior and subhuman. At this point, 'race' has now become so sedimented into institutions and spatialized orders, social imaginaries and individual techniques of subjectivation, that it is now part of the "historical *a priori*" in post-imperial and postcolonial contexts. In the U.S. today, then, liberal humanism still functions ideologically. Racialized ideologies continue to shape who is perceived as human, what citizenship looks like and entails, and how states ought to govern and legitimate that governance. Academics and policy researchers too have produced reams of pages documenting all the ways in which skin color is likely to track your social position: your access to educational opportunities, labor market success, state resources; the security of your neighborhoods and your general insulation from violence; your symbolic capital in cultural representation and your desirability in intimate relations; the power of your vote and the strength of your voice in the political apparatus; the probability that you won't receive adequate reproductive healthcare and that the doctors won't take your pain seriously; the chance your neighborhood has clean running water and sanitary waste services; the likelihood that the state will prosecute you and the likelihood that your peers will convict;

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[69] The historical transcription of Truth's speech is contested by experts. This is the version that Frances Gage published in *The New York Independent* on 23 April 1863. Accessed at https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/sojtruth-woman.asp.

[70] Fanon stresses this point in *Black Skin, White Masks* when he analyses the White sexual preoccupation with the Black man's presumed sexual prowess, a discourse that both reveals White men's homoerotic anxieties and the White community's erotic fascination with Black men while also eviscerating Black men's subjectivity.

[71] Wehilye, *Habeas Viscus,* 42.

the chances that a police officer shoots you in broad daylight for no good reason at all.[72] The persistence of anti-Black racism and racialized oppression, of course, is not a radical disclosure. Black and brown communities have never stopped testifying to the pervasive and systemic nature of racial oppression. "I have never lived, nor has any of us, in a world in which race did not matter," African American writer Toni Morrison concluded. "Such a world, one free of racial hierarchy, is usually imagined or described as a dreamscape — Edenesque, utopian, so remote are the possibilities of its achievement."[73]

Political theorists can't truly understand the reproduction of racial orders unless they pay closer attention to the ways in which these seeming contradictions between the Human and the inhumane were produced and sustained. As Bernasconi notes, "the annunciation of fine principles — the philosopher's stock in trade — is no guarantee that one is not at the same time undermining or negating those principles."[74] In contrast to the thin moral injunctions that liberal political theorists lodge against racist practices, I contend that antiracist critique will need a methodology that can challenge the racial order in a radical sense, by tackling the pathologies built into their very roots. This will, of course, involve more diagnostic work than that involved in normative theory. Yet if anything, such an intellectual project takes on new urgency in the contemporary U.S. conjuncture. The resurgence of White supremacist ideologies and widening racial inequalities should direct social critics back to the links between American imperialism, deregulated forms of racial capitalism, and the biopolitical dream of a White America protected from deviant racial Others. David Theo Goldberg describes the new biopolitical logic of racial neoliberalism thusly: "the state looks after your interests by encouraging you to choose to lock yourself in (to gated communities) while it locks up the undesirable (in prisons) or locks out the externally threatening (by way of immigration restrictions)."[75] Some political theorists have argued that the best way to take 'race' seriously is by adopting an explicitly racialized social ontology. By working from a sociological picture that foregrounds 'race' rather than abstracts away from it, thinkers like Charles Mills attempt to bring into view the systemic and structural features of racial hierarchies that might otherwise go overlooked. And yet, as I explore in the next section, these attempts to add "race" back into the social too can run into conceptual and political difficulties, especially when they hypostatise Manichean binaries into an explanatory trump card.

Charles Mills and racial ontology

Charles Mills' work has proven hugely influential in North American critical race theory, and his challenges to the silences around 'race' have been crucial interventions for normative political philosophers and Critical Theorists alike. His first book, *The Racial Contract,* challenged the ideological nature of the social contract in Anglo-American political philosophy. In it, Mills contends that liberal political philosophers, both in the Enlightenment and in contemporary social contractarianism, rely on a white-washed notion of the state which mystifies its origins in conquest and domination.[76] He contends that the modern state would be better captured by a different conceptualization of the

[72] For instances, see Perry, *More Beautiful and More Terrible*; and Winant, "Racism Today."
[73] Toni Morrison, "Home," in *The House that Race Built: Original Essays by Toni Morrison, Angela Y. Davis, Cornel West, and Others on Black Americans and Politics in America Today*, eds. Wahneema H. Lubiano and Toni Morrison (New York: Vintage, 1999), 3.
[74] Robert Bernasconi, "Hegel's racism: A reply to McCarney," *Radical Philosophy* 119, 2003, 37.
[75] Goldberg, *The Threat of Race,* 335
[76] Mills, *The Racial Contract,* 7.

contract — a racial one that centers the history of European imperialism and the resulting "global color line."[77] In doing so, Mills offers a radical challenge to the abstract liberal imaginaries that undergird today's Rawlsian-inspired normative political theory. And yet I argue that he ends up reifying the Manichean delirium that European colonialism created as its ideological justification and paranoid obsession, thereby foregrounding a crude account of racialized difference. In this, Mills' work echoes a broader "ontological turn" in African American thought that has generated a diverse array of projects from across disciplines like literary studies, political theory, and Black studies.[78] But in the case of normative political critique, I worry that this binaristic framework displaces more historical understandings and complex articulations of difference in problematic ways. This can pose significant diagnostic limitations when it comes to analysing how racial orders are reproduced. A reductive Black/White paradigm limits the sorts of questions antiracist critique can ask, what kinds of evaluations it can provide, and what sorts of antiracist politics it can envision.

In his book, Mills performs an effective ideology critique of the concept of the "social contract" in political philosophy. In effect, he reveals that the idea relies on an epistemically flawed account of the political community, one that abstracts away from the darker past of racial subordination in order to legitimate existing forms of state authority. He takes aim at two interrelated philosophical discourses. First, he contends that Enlightenment thinkers like Hobbes, Rousseau, and Locke worked out "genealogical" narratives of the modern polity that mystified their entanglement with indigenous dispossession, chattel slavery, racial violence, gendered and sexual domination, imperial subjection, and capitalist expropriation of coerced and ostensibly "free" labor.[79] Not only did the mythological narratives of the "state of nature" draw heavily on racist interpretations of the American indigenous peoples as "primitive" and "uncivilized," but this brand of social contractualism only applied to those humans deemed capable of granting rational consent, Mills points out. The moral legitimacy that the supposed "social contract" was meant to bestow on the Euromodern state, then, was always only ever an undemocratic sham. Second, he turns to a more recent iteration of social contract theory, that of John Rawls' social contractarianism. In his "ideal theory," Rawls turned the concept of the social contract into a hypothetical procedure by which individuals can be said to reach moral consensus over how a just society ought to be organised.[80] But as Mills points out, Rawls' theory of justice relies, to a large extent, on an idealised, if not ideological, understanding of the social. He conceives of the market as primarily a sphere of collaboration, of political institutions as sites of consensus, and of intimate relations as regulated by practices of mutual care, thereby abstracting away from these social forms' oppressive pasts and unequal presents.[81] This prevents Rawls' theory from reckoning with racial inequality, given that it fails to account for the racialized construction of today's social institutions.

Contra these liberal interpretations of Euromodernity, Mills argues that political theorists ought to operate from a more historically and sociologically accurate picture of early state formation. Drawing inspiration from Rousseau's critical genealogy in his *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality*, he offers an alternative view of the social contract — one modelled after the relations of racial domination that obtained in White settler societies like the U.S. [82]

Mills summarises the Racial Contract thusly:

[77] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1.
[78] See, for example, the Afro Pessimist work of thinkers like Frank B. Wilderson, Saidiya Hartman, and Fred Moten.
[79] Mills, *The Racial Contract,* 65-71.
[80] Mills, *Contract and Domination*, 15-16.
[81] See Mills, "Ideal Theory as Ideology."
[82] Mills, *The Racial Contract,* 5.

> The Racial Contract is that set of formal or informal agreements or meta-agreements …between the members of one subset of humans, henceforth designated…. as 'white," …to categorise the remaining subset of humans as "nonwhite" and of a different and inferior moral status, subpersons, so that they have a subordinate civil standing in the white or white-ruled polities…the general purpose of the Contract is always the differential privileging of the whites as a group with respect to the nonwhites as a group, the exploitation of their bodies, land, and resources, and the denial of equal socioeconomic opportunities to them.[83]

In Mills' reading, modern political sovereignty is predicated on a hierarchical agreement that grants equality and membership to Whites,[84] on the one hand, and assimilates Black and indigenous peoples to a subordinate status, on the other. "In the ideal Kantian world of the raceless social contract, persons can exist in the abstract; in the non-ideal world of the naturalized Racial Contract, persons are necessarily related to subpersons," Mills writes.[85] This is an imperial rather than democratic imaginary, one that largely seeks to defend projects of conquest, resource extraction, and the management of subject populations. And as Mills points out, such a racist framework of citizenship can be found materialised in all sorts of treaties, constitutions, and political agreements made during these centuries of European colonisation and imperial expansion.[86] This set of agreements, in turn, inculcates in White subjects what Mills describes as a 'Herrenvolk morality' in which only their White peers have "rights that others are obligated to respect."[87] In turn, the Black and other nonwhite "subpersons" within this political formation have no say over the terms of their participation. Instead, their labor, land, resources, and even their bodies can be exploited at will by the White community. This is why, Mills argues, the racial contract is, at its fundament, an "exploitation contract."[88] The constitutive underside of White freedom and political equality in the Euromodern world has been Black bondage, indigenous genocide, and the coerced labor of nonwhite peoples.[89]

Mills' figure of the racial contract certainly provides a more historically accurate model of the political relations and power hierarchies that birthed the Euromodern nation-state than, say, the Lockean "state of nature" in which people reasonably and freely share material resources. In this respect, then, Mills' theory represents a step forward over Enlightenment political philosophy's mystifications. By foregrounding this racialized origin story, his idea of the racial contract can also helpfully challenge analytical blind spots in contemporary Rawlsianism. In particular, the racial contract brings into view a number of political and ethical problems that Rawls (and many liberals working from a deracialized ontology) would overlook: for example, the internal relationship between "free" White political status and unfree Black and indigenous infra-humanity in settler societies; the distorted moral psychology that White subjects develop in order to legitimate and naturalise their privileges; and the ways in which the racial contract conscripts its "nonwhite" subcontractors through a combination of both coercion and ideological manipulation.[90]

To liberal thinkers, colonial and racist practices of dispossession, extraction, exploitation, domination, and violence might appear to be aberrations from humanist ideals, but Mills shows that they are in effect the actualization of a different set of moral and political norms. In this respect, Mills' theory

[83] Mills, *The Racial Contract,* 11.
[84] Mills, *The Racial Contract,* 11.
[85] Mills, *The Racial Contract,* 56.
[86] Mills, *The Racial Contract,* 20-21.
[87] Dred Scott v Sandford, 60 U.S. 393 (1857).
[88] Mills, *The Racial Contract,* 30-32.
[89] Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason,* 16.
[90] Mills, *Contract and Domination,* 92.

of the racial contract has made a substantive contribution to normative political theory, especially Anglo-American analytic philosophy in its Rawlsian variants. Yet in his later work, he takes a step further and argues that his conceptual device too can provide the foundation for better normative theorizing about social justice.[91] In particular, Mills argues that Rawlsian social contractarianism can be redeemed for antiracist work if philosophers explicitly begin with "a (color-conscious rather than colorblind) social ontology of white persons and black sub-persons."[92] In contrast to the Rawlsian description of the original position, the individual contractors are instead provided with a sociological and historical understanding of the current order grounded in the "historical a priori" that the racial contract models. When given such a revised sociological picture, Mills reasons that individuals will arrive at a set of reparative or corrective measures that will undo existing racial inequalities, seeing as they could very well find themselves to be in a position of racial inferiority once the veil of ignorance is lifted. In this respect, the "racial contract" he outlined in his earlier work can also serve as a "contract of the breach that proscribes how best to correct for racial injustice in societies like the U.S.[93] But even beyond that, Mills contends, this racial caesura between White Persons and Nonwhite Subpersons continues to demarcate who belongs politically and who is equal morally on a global scale.

This hierarchical divide in the Human, then, is the new social ontology from which Mills argues normative critique ought to work.[94] Yet I am deeply skeptical of the ontological turn that Mills takes in his radical Black Rawlsian Kantianism. While his negative critique effectively demonstrates how raciological "unreason" corrodes some of political theory's key concepts and ontological presuppositions, I argue that Mills' normative critique ends up reifying the very racial divides that he hopes to dismantle. As Ato Sekyi-Otu points out in response to Mills' project, if moral and political philosophy…is guilty of 'the evasion of race,' as Mills charges, let us be careful that the new improved version does not surrender our critical judgment to the imperialism of race-centeredness."[95] Mills reduces 'race' into *the* explanatory framework through which to analyze power, hierarchies, and subjectivation in the modern world. For all that it may reflect racialized power asymmetries at a macrostructural level, I contend that this picture of a primary and insurmountable cleavage between the West and the rest, White and Black, poses serious diagnostic challenges for antiracist critique. First, such a Manichean starting point fails to provide an accurate analysis of how 'race' has become a significant stratification order in the contemporary world. Namely, Mills overinflates and totalizes his criticism of whiteness in ways that overlook other kinds of structuring mechanisms, like extractive capitalism, heteropatriarchal gender norms, neo-imperial wars, and the emergent migration flows produced by an impending climate disaster. And second, Mills' Manichean divide in the Human tends towards an essentialist reading of racial identity. He theorises the racial categories of "White" and "Nonwhite" as if they were transhistorical and stable phenomena, rather than as racial positionalities which are overdetermined by crosscutting and often contradictory forces within the social field like gender, class, sexuality, and nationality.

Part of the problem lies in the fact that the concept of the "racial contract" functions primarily as a metaphor for a global society structured in racial dominance, rather than as a description of *actual* contractual relationships between White people and nonwhite people. This "exploitation contract,"

[91] Mills, *Contract and Domination*, 84.
[92] The racial contract concept therefore functions in two distinctive ways in Mills' oeuvre: first, as a negativist intervention that discloses and challenges the ideological "Whiteness" of social contract theory; and second, as a proscriptive critique that uses this new racial ontology as the starting point for a "non-ideal" Rawls-inspired theory of justice. Charles W. Mills, "Black Radical Kantianism," *Res Philosophica* 95, no. 1 (2018), 1.
[93] Mills, *Contract and Domination*, 118, 131.
[94] Mills, "Black Radical Kantianism," 26.
[95] Sekyi-Otu, "Postcolonial Imagination," 9.

in this sense, is an abstraction meant to link European projects of racial colonialism, on the one hand, to the emergence of modern capitalism, on the other. But I worry that such a general mode of accounting for the complex overdeterminations of imperial dominion, class exploitation, and 'race' is of little analytical or explanatory value, especially when it comes to thinking the plurality of racial formations that have worked out these relations between racist ideology, racialized political visions, and racially segmented labor forces in divergent ways.[96] In deploying the racial contract in this world-historic form, Mills overextends the African American experience of capture, enslavement, and segregation in the White supremacist U.S. As thinkers like Mbembe and Annie Lolaloku-Teriba stress, the African American experience does not exhaust the "historical ontology of race," nor monopolize the ideological spectrum of anti-black racisms.[97] Speaking about how racialization is conceptualized in the Francophone world, Mbembe notes, "In truth, the kind of absolutization of blackness one finds in some variants of Afro-pessimism is foreign to that archive."[98] Outside of the context of the United States, racialization has operated in different ways to consolidate and subjugate various populations. For instance, the indigenous peoples of the Americas were subjugated largely through genocidal wars, systematic land dispossession, and a state program of cultural annihilation through assimilation.[99] In British South Africa, the settlers built a regime of coerced nonwhite labor in its mines and on wide-scale farms by effectively keeping Black and Chinese men in work camps away from their families, who lived either on native reservations in rural areas or overseas.[100] And in Martinique, Creole and Afro Caribbean peoples were granted the political status of French citizens and often deployed to French colonial holdings in Africa as civil bureaucrats and military personnel to manage the local African populations.[101] In West African postcolonies like Senegal, the key racial divides in domestic politics after independence were not between the White European and the Black African, but instead between the North African Arab and Berber, on the one hand, and the Black Christian African, on the other. [102] In these contexts, the Manichean split between White citizen and Black subject, White human and Black infra human, never seemed as inert, natural or incontrovertible as it did in the former slave-holding Anglophone world.[103] This undercuts the analytical purchase that Mills' work might have on Black diasporas outside of the American model of "race relations." As Fanon notes, the Black African realises at some point that the objective problems he faces are different from those of the African American in the U.S., even as they might share similar subjective experiences to anti-black racism.[104]

Yet I contend that, even within the U.S. context, the racial contract oversimplifies the practices, institutions, and structures that produced its White supremacist state and that continue to shore up White hegemony. Fundamentally, Mills' racial ontology relies on reductive sociological theory. Theorizing social domination through the interpersonal mechanism of a contract tends to displace from view the institutional mediation that structures these power relations in the first place.[105] By adopting such a Manichean picture of global power structures, he narrows the complex overdetermination of racialized hierarchies to a hypostatised White/Non-White dyad. In doing so,

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[96] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 48.
[97] David Theo Goldberg, "'The Reason of Unreason': Achille Mbembe and David Theo Goldberg in Conversation about Critique of Black Reason," *Theory, Culture & Society* 35, no. 7-8 (2018): 205-27. Annie Olaloku-Teriba, "Afro-Pessimism and the (Un)Logic of Anti-Blackness," *Historical Materialism* 26, no. 2 (2018): 96-122.
[98] Mbembe in Goldberg, "'The Reason of Unreason," 210.
[99] See Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).
[100] Mae M. Ngai, "Trouble on the Rand: The Chinese Question in South Africa and the Apogee of White Settlerism," *International Labour and Working Class History*, 91 (2017), 59-60; Harold Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour in South Africa," *Economy and Society* 1, no. 4, 1972.
[101] Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution: Political Writings,* trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 19.
[102] Leopold Senghor, "Some Thoughts on Africa: A Contintent in Development," *International Affairs* 38, No. 2, 1962, 192.
[103] Mbembe in Goldberg, "'The Reason of Unreason," 209-210.
[104] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 172.
[105] Amy Allen, "Rethinking Power," *Hypatia* 13, no. 1 (1998): 29.

he assimilates a great many relations of domination, exploitation, displacement, and conquest between diverse groupings of peoples into a global White/Black divide structured around the assimilative binary of consent/coercion. What is missing from Mills' project, then, is a more complex sociological understanding of the ways in which racial stratification orders continue to be reproduced within the contemporary conjuncture. As numerous sociologists and social theorists have pointed out, these practices of racial inequality are often embedded within complex institutional assemblages from the healthcare system to the carceral state to the segmented labor market. They are caught up in the controlled partitioning of space and the exhaustion of raced bodies.[106] As Nancy Fraser might say, these are problems that escape the "conceptual grid [of the master/subject dyad], since they involve more abstract forms of social mediation and impersonal mechanisms of action coordination."[107]

Particularly problematic, in my view, is that Mills leaves undertheorized the intersections of capitalist economic imperatives and racialized political status. Even though Mills describes the "racial contract" as an exploitation contract, his account remains too voluntaristic. In his narrative, it is White European people that exploit nonwhite communities for their own personal gain. But racial capitalism involves a more complicated set of functional imperatives that work through racial difference in order to accumulate value.[108] The "racial contract' leaves little room to analyse the differential positions of the White and Black working classes today to White capital, for example, or to investigate the intermediate positions and political investments of various nonwhite middle class segments. As Stuart Hall points out, the antiracist critic "needs to know how different racial and ethnic groups were inserted [into power hierarchies] historically, and the relations which have tended….to preserve these distinctions through time — not simply as residues and traces of previous modes, but as active structuring principles of the present organization of society. Racial categories alone will not provide or explain these." [109] Mills, however, replaces these crosscutting biopolitical regimes of population management and the systemic demands of capital with the explanatory "tell-all" of the racial contract in which White subjects agree together to withhold their material and symbolic advantages from nonwhite Others. As Gramsci might say, such a reductive framework "assumes a mean and usurious self-interest" on the part of the dominant group as its primary causal mechanisms, rather than taking the time to theorize the cross-cutting economic, political, and ideological relations that position certain racial groups in antagonistic opposition.[110] Such a model for thinking racial domination puts forward an overly cognitivist account of racism, one that overlooks the complex overdetermination of social formations structured in racial dominance. It takes what should be an open political question and substitutes ready-made, homogenous answers. Such one-directional analyses, Gramsci notes, don't "produce anything except moralistic sermons and interminable personal problems."[111]

Mills' Black Rawlsianism treats 'race' as if it were a primary social cause rather than as the complex overdetermination of material and ideological forces that render certain racial classifications into functional norms. In this respect, he ends up offering an essentializing picture of racial identity. For all that he doesn't tether Blackness or Whiteness to a substantive idea of divergent physiology or culture — which would be obviously racist — Mills does assimilate each category to a hypostatised Oppressor/Oppressed relation.[112] He contends that all White people are either invested in White

[106] Goldberg, *The Threat of Race,* 27, 70-74.
[107] Nancy Fraser, "Beyond the Master/Subject Model: Reflections on Carole Pateman's Sexual Contract." Social Text, no. 37 (1993): 178.
[108] For an extended discussion of this entanglement, see Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition.* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).
[109] Hall, "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Racial Dominance," 213.
[110] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince*, 155.
[111] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince*, 159.
[112] As he explains, "My categorization (white/nonwhite, person/subperson) has the virtues of elegeance and simplicity and seems to me…to carve the social reality at its ontological joints." Mills, *The Racial Contract,* 78.

supremacy — and the symbolic and material capital it brings — or they are "race traitors."[113] There are no intermediary positions. By contrast, the nonwhite "subcontractors" become visible primarily as passive victims who were coerced or entrapped into a political order that they have no control over.[114] Nor is the "big tent" conception of "nonwhite" all that helpful for the social criticism of the discrete racializations of various groups in divergent racial orders. As Angela Davis notes, "there have been other racialized histories and other forms of racial domination, not the least of which is the genocidal assault on indigenous populations….[I]t is extremely important to acknowledge the mutability of race and the alterability of the structures of racism."[115] This is particularly the case, of course, in the North American case in which the necropolitics of indigenous dispossession both preceded and made possible the necropolitics of the slave ship. Certainly, Mills does specify at numerous junctures in his texts that racial subjects can respond to their social positionality in variegated ways and that not all "nonwhites" stand in the same relationship to Whiteness. There is internal variation within White Contractors and Nonwhite Subcontractors, he stresses.[116] And yet his theoretical model makes it difficult for those internal variations to mean much of anything for either his social diagnosis of "non-ideal" racial injustice or for his normative proscriptions for antiracist correctives. For example, in *Contract and Domination,* he groups all peoples racialized as White under the heading of R1s and all peoples racialized as nonwhite under R2s.[117] His theoretical apparatus therefore flattens localized moments of racial segmentation and crosscutting forms of stratifying power relations into an absolute and unbridgeable conception of Difference.[118] This is a racial ontology framed on rigid, oppositional, and binaristic terms: White becomes the normative, and Nonwhite is its abject negation. In this respect, Mills ends up playing the same game as the racists who sought to fix "Blackness" and "Whiteness" as natural categories in the first place.[119]

Mills' ontologization of "race" runs into serious diagnostic trouble when it comes to thinking the crosscutting stratification orders of class, gender, and ethnicity.[120] This becomes particularly clear when Mills attempts to revise his concept of the "racial contract" to account for gender domination in his co-written volume with Carole Pateman. In *Contract and Domination,* Mills contends that patriarchal domination can be thematized as a kind of cross-cutting axis to the racial hierarchy of White supremacy. To that effect, he devises a four-fold distinction between White men (R1G1); White women (R1G2); Black men (R2G1); and Black women (R2G2) in which White women are positioned below White men but above Black men in terms of their positional advantages. Black women, in turn, are positioned at the bottom.[121] In this respect, Mills treats these forms of identity-driven domination as if they could simply be "added" together in order to get the total sum of inequality that a particular subject might face. But as Black feminists have stressed, such a quantitative framework displaces the qualitatively different and interlocking forms of oppression that Black women and other minority groups face.[122] This "matrix" system of mapping racial and gendered identities has little to say about the concrete ways in which 'race' is engendered and vice versa. The ways that Black women are "disengendered" and "racialized" as asexual carers for White families, for example, is quite distinct from the ways that Black men are "racialized" and "disengendered" as sexual

[113] Mills, *The Racial Contract,* 107-108.
[114] Allen, "Rethinking Power," 25.
[115] Davis, *Abolition Democracy,* 39.
[116] Mills, *The Racial Contract,* 79-80.
[117] Mills, "Black Radical Kantianism," 12.
[118] As Hall puts it, "There is the 'difference' which makes a radical and unbridgable separation: and there is a 'difference' which is positional, conditional and conjunctural, closer to Derrida's notion of differance…" Mills ends up with the former; for Hall, the latter is more analytically accurate and politically promising. Hall, "New Ethnicities," 488.
[119] Hall, *New Ethnicities,* 446.
[120] Hall, *New Ethnicities,* 445.
[121] Mills, *Contract and Domination,* 173.
[122] See, of course, Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6, 1991, 1241-1299, and Elizabeth V. Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988).

animals incapable of controlling their urges.[123] Even with the "intersecting gender contract," then, Mills assimilates Black women's experiences and differential struggles with White supremacy, racial capitalism, and heteronormative patriarchy to an over-arching account of Black subordination that is structured around the notion of a denied Black masculinity. Rather than see engendering 'race' and racing gender as two coeval and cross-cutting regimes of social structuration and subjective interpellation, he gives primacy to 'race' — and in particular to the White/Black dichotomy — as a prior and more deterministic fact about the subject.

Such an essentialist view of the Black subject, in turn, can lead to unproductive political interventions. As Stuart Hall worries, "once [the signifier of 'race'] is fixed, we are tempted to use 'black' as sufficient in itself to guarantee the progressive character of the politics we fight under the banner—as if we don't have any other politics to argue about except whether something's black or not."[124] In his non-ideal theory of racial justice, Mills is guilty of just that sort of conservative reductionism. He argues that the main task confronting Black communities in the U.S. today is to ensure that they are included in *existing* U.S. social institutions on formally equivalent terms to Whites.[125] But in so doing, he gives a blanket endorsement to deeply unjust social, economic, and political institutions within the U.S. — from the military-industrial complex to the carceral state to predatory forms of finance capital. Mills might be attempting to offer a pragmatic intervention here, one that seeks to win political support for antiracist policies by accepting much of the status quo. And yet I am skeptical that U.S. racial hierarchies can be overcome without targeting, in any real sense, the articulation of late capitalism, militarized imperialist projects at home and abroad, and the curtailment of the political franchise on the basis of White ethno-nationalist worries around demographic change.[126] Mills' political optimism leaves him in an ambivalent stance where his prescriptions for corrective justice stand at cross purposes to his own forceful indictments of racial pathology. His normative prescriptions for an antiracist society, then, start to look like what Angela Davis calls an "equal opportunity to perpetuate male dominance and racism" against nonwhite peoples outside of U.S. borders.[127] As she puts it, what antiracist and feminist struggles should aim for is a dismantling of these oppressive systems, not for the promotion of a Black woman into a position of authority in the military-industrial complex.[128]

A fierce critic of "idealized" and de-raced liberalism, Mills ends up becoming a fierce proponent of a race-conscious but no less idealistic project of liberal "oughts." This owes to both his renewed commitment to a Kantian normative critique, on the one hand, and to his embrace of an ontological reading of Blackness, on the other. When mobilized for prescriptive moral interventions, the concept of the "racial contract" cannot capture the interlocking practices of stratification and subjection that define the contemporary conjuncture. This is particularly true now that the rigidly White/Black world of Du Bois' "century of the color line" is receding from view. Concrete social changes are restructuring the state of racial and racist play in the contemporary U.S. and in what Gilroy calls "fortress Europe" — including the emergence of new technologies of surveillance and financialization, the increasing commodification of the African American aesthetic and the hyper-exploitation of the spectacular Black body in athletics and popular music, the changing profile of

[123] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 69-70; Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 135; Wehilye, *Habeas Viscus,* 41-42.
[124] Stuart Hall, "What is this 'black' in black popular culture?" in *Critical dialogues in cultural studies,* eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996), 475-476.
[125] In this respect, his normative vision is even less radical than that of Rawls. Whereas Rawls recommended that societies tolerate only those social and economic inequalities that are to the benefit of the least well-off, Mills argues that all the "reparative racial contract" requires is that Black and other nonwhite people can enjoy formal equality of opportunity. What goes unremarked in Mills' work, too, is that there is no guarantee that the American political order will be either desirable or just after the elision of raced-based inequalities.
[126] Brandon Terry, "MLK Now," *The Boston Review,* 10 Sept. 2018, http://bostonreview.net/forum/brandon-m-terry-mlk-now..
[127] Davis, *Abolition Democracy,* 46.
[128] Davis, *Abolition Democracy,* 68.

ecological disaster and the architectures of material and legal insulation that surround wealthy and largely but not exclusively White communities, the return of bioscientific theories of 'race' through genomic medicine, and the militarization of policing at both internal borders (i.e., around racialized and poor enclaves) and external borders (against perceived threats from migratory racial Outsiders). Today's racial order is not DuBois's. This is why I contend that antiracist critique will be better served by pursuing a more contextualist and historical interrogation of racialization than is demonstrated in Mills' Kantian commitments to repairing a global "racial contract." In the next section, I look at what an alternative antiracist humanism might entail.

Towards an anti-racist humanism?

Antiracist critique, then, seems stuck in an analytical quagmire. The normative indices tethered to Euromodern accounts of the Human have been discredited for their raciological foreclosures, on the one hand. Yet critical theories that begin explicitly from Manichean ontologies of 'race' remain inherently uncritical — tethered, as they are in Mills' case, to reified accounts of identity and quasi-theological narratives of racial domination. The problem then seems to be how to channel the self-reflexive and critical attitude of Enlightenment philosophy, both towards the self and towards the world, without remaining locked into its flawed understandings of the Human and moral progress. This was the task as Said saw it — to "imagine paradoxically a nonhumanistic humanist, someone given neither to piety or to tiresome and inconsequential word-spinning."[129] Such a gesture, of course, begs the question: without the Euromodern Human as its ethical lodestone, where should critics look for the normative measure against which to evaluate social relations and the actions of individuals and institutions alike? Like Gilroy, Said, and others, I argue that critical accounts of racial oppression are most productive when linked to a humanist ethos that transcends the narrow "facticity" of 'race.' Doing so, however, is not a straightforward task.

In order to avoid falling back into an exclusionary conception of the Human, I contend that antiracist humanism should make two interrelated moves.[130] First, in its "explanatory-diagnostic" mode, it must adopt a meta-ethical posture that can submit its normative inheritance to a more rigorous degree of reflexivity. Part of the problem with Euromodern humanism is that it treats its form of life and valuation as if it were universal — thereby positioning non-European cultures and social relations as necessarily inferior.[131] In this respect, political theorists need to work from a stance of epistemic and normative humility, both when it comes to assessing their cultural praxis and that of others. And second, in its "anticipatory-utopian" mode, antiracist critique should look to the lived experiences of Black and nonwhite subjects in order to imagine a more *human* humanism, one that is inclusive and accommodating of difference while refusing to jettison the ethical notion of a shared humanity. This project is necessarily more speculative, but it opens the door to a more concrete humanism in which the norms of reciprocity and equality are more than empty rhetoric. Not only is such an ethical humanist imaginary necessary for effective social critique of domination, oppression, and alienation, but I contend that this provisional and pragmatic approach to thinking human commonality is not as dangerous as some postcolonial and post-humanist critics might suppose.

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[129] Edward W. Said, "Presidential Address 1999: Humanism and Heroism," *PMLA* 115, no. 3 (2000): 290.
[130] I get this conceptual division of labor in critique from Seyla Benhabib. Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 142.
[131] Allen, *The End of Progress,* 206.

Adopting a methodological posture of epistemic openness and ethical flexibility is meant to redress Euromodernity's exclusive claim to universalism. As thinkers like Sylvia Wynter and Amy Allen argue, the problem with Euromodern humanism is not necessarily that its ideals of self-determination or moral equality are misguided, but that they are treated as the *only* legitimate values. Wynter contends that, historically, there have been a number of formal "regimes of being" that have delimited which sorts of beings are intelligible as human — and which are assimilated to the category of the Other.[132] What distinguishes Euromodernity from these previous other cultural schemas, she argues, is that it universalises and absolutises itself. The European imaginary thus naturalises its own form of life and codifies all forms of difference as deviancy and inferiority. But there are multiple ways of being human, and to set one up as the so-called "natural" or "developed" form of life is to fall back into an ideological mistake that has profound consequences for all those human beings deemed outside of its purview. Similarly, Allen points out that modern liberal thinkers have long relied on "the historical story that positions European modernity as the outcome of a developmental learning process, inasmuch as this story necessarily positions non- or premodern Others as cognitively and normatively inferior to 'us.'"[133] Such a view espouses a problematic Eurocentrism, one that is predicated on "white-washed" accounts of modernity that marginalise Europe's genocidal projects and deny the contributions of non-white Others.

In this respect, both Allen and Wynter criticise Euromodern humanism for its moral imperialism. Their work highlights two interrelated problems. First, that this falsely universalist posture rejects the possibility that other societies and cultures might have produced desirable ethical ideals that Europeans and other members of the Global North might learn from. And second, that Euromodern thinkers often failed to subject their own ethical commitments to sufficient scrutiny by presuming their form of life to be both rational and developmentally superior. Under this diagnostic account, the racist and gendered exclusions of European humanism will only be overcome once its socio-cultural schema no longer privileges its own particularist vision of the ratiocentric Human being. Such an analytical task is possible, Allen contends, if theorists work from a different interpretative posture at the metanormative level. She notes, "…the willingness to put 'our' Enlightenment inheritance radically into question by interrogating its entanglement with the coloniality of power is a way of taking up this inheritance by decolonizing it, and thus of acting in solidarity with the suffering of the colonized."[134] In particular, I contend that antiracist critics ought to cultivate a certain set of epistemic virtues — namely, openness to the possibility of other ways of valuing; humility about the authority of their own judgment; and a continual commitment to self-reflexivity.[135]

One way to do so, as Edward Said and Paul Gilroy have pointed out, is by adopting a posture of self-estrangement from one's own cultural milieu.[136] For Said, this epistemic vantage point is best theorised through the figure of the exile.[137] Exiles are existentially conditioned by their state of "homelessness," Said argued. The worlds they move through are not their own, which gives them a degree of critical distance. And yet there is no home to return to, no interpretative and ethical vantage point that can be taken for granted. In this respect, the exile cannot be drawn in by the romantic vision of ethical closure, of settling these difficult questions of value once and for all. Similarly, Gilroy recommends that the critic attempt to look at their own social milieu as if they were a stranger

[132] David Scott and Sylvia Wynter, "The Re-enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," *Small Axe* 8, 2000, 199.
[133] Allen, *The End of Progress*, 79
[134] Allen, *The End of Progress,* 209.
[135] Medina, *The epistemology of resistance,* 42-43.
[136] Said, "Humanism and Heroism," 290.
[137] Said's exilic humanism, of course, reflects his preoccupations with his own condition of "homelessness" as a Palestinian.

entering a foreign land. "This alienation [need not be] a disadvantage," Gilroy notes. It can be a productive "anthropological and indeed ethical method."[138] Methodologically speaking, an active exposure to alternative forms of life and other humanities could provide the necessary epistemic friction to spark this sort of self-estrangement.[139] But theorists can also "make strange" the values immanent to their forms of life by re-embedding them within their historical contexts of emergence. As Nietzsche demonstrated, such a critical historicism reveals that what appears to be a transcendental and universal way of interpreting the world is in fact a contingent development of certain relations of force.[140] As Allen writes, "[this problematising approach to genealogy] is a way of inheriting the normative perspective of the Enlightenment in the dual sense of taking it up while simultaneously problematising and decentering it, opening up a space for moving beyond it into an unknown and unknowable future."[141] To be a humanist critic, then, is to de-naturalize received wisdom and hegemonic narratives. In adopting this method of self-estrangement from one's form of life, theorists both open up their normative commitments to the possibility of rejection, affirmation, or transformation.

This is humanism as a critical practice, not as a laundry list of anthropological facts. It has productive consequences for antiracist criticism. First, the commitment to epistemic humility opens up the possibility for a genuine intercultural dialogue between the Anglo-European world and other cultures. It expresses a willingness to engage in good faith with the views of nonwhite Others. Rather than speaking down to other non-European peoples, Euromodern theorists could position themselves as an equal and receptive participant. Such a pluralist approach to humanisms aligns with the contributions of many indigenous and decolonial thinkers, who have called for a recognition of the multiple ontologies that native peoples occupy around the world. It is absurd and ethnocentric to assume that Europeans are the only people to have come up with an idea of freedom or an account of what just social relations would entail.[142] Second, taking on such a self-reflexive posture towards one's own normative inheritance can disclose the ways in which it remains practically entangled with forms of social domination. This is a particularly important capacity for antiracist theory, given that it seeks to tackle the racialized and gendered exclusions embedded within Euromodern ideologies of the human.[143] After all, racisms can and do coexist with a tolerance of cultural and ethnic differences. Remaining open to the value inherent to other forms of life does not necessarily challenge patriarchal and heteronormative norms, either in Euromodern societies or in the Global South. Just as antiracist theorists must be critical about the Euromodern inheritance, they too must be careful about not falling back into an unreflective valorisation of the "non-European," which can trend towards a problematic exoticization of other cultures. When theorised in a crude way, then, this call for a dialogue with the Other can give rise to a naive and relativist multiculturalism, one in which difference is celebrated for difference's sake. Instead, antiracist critics need to look past the often-times obfuscatory binary between the European and Non-European, West and Rest, White and Black, in order to assess how racialization is operating in diverse ways in Euromodern societies and their former colonial possessions. No matter how attractive the initial impulse might be, Said stresses, critics must look beyond the "safe" territorial assemblages of 'race' and nation if they are to truly provide an emancipatory humanism.[144]

[138] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 78.
[139] Medina, *The epistemology of resistance,* 23.
[140] Koopman, *Genealogy and Critique,* 81.
[141] Allen, *The End of Progress,* 206.
[142] Sekyi-Otu, "Postcolonial Critical Imagination," 12.
[143] Racial divides are not, first and foremost, underscored by a lack of cultural intelligibility, but instead by the inscription of power relations that segment the social into hierarchical types. Wehilye, *Habeas Viscus,* 3.
[144] Gilroy, "Not Yet Humanism," 97.

Wynter's revised "grammar" of the human, Allen's problematising genealogy, and Said's democratic criticism, then, all attempt to carve out a new method for carrying out a negative and self-reflexive critique of existing humanist projects. And yet they do not offer that much when it comes to theorizing an alternative to the ratiocentric and exclusionary model of European Man. As Said argues, the telos of such a humanist praxis, for a critic, is two-fold: first, to attain a degree of critical self-knowledge, and second, to express a concern for other human beings.[145] This second, more positivist project — what Benhabib might describe as the anticipatory-utopian moment of an antiracist humanism — is certainly the more difficult one. Not only must such efforts avoid the "thick" philosophical anthropologies that generate so much skepticism in today's post-metaphysical discourse, but they also must be cautious about replacing one imperialist account of the human with another parochial and exclusionary understanding. And yet that doesn't mean that such work is not important or necessary. As Gilroy points out, there will always be a need for the ongoing de-mystification of raciological reason.[146] But antiracist theory too must push beyond such a negative mode to imagine what an antiracist cosmopolitanism might look like, what sort of human and humane world we could bring into being.

This project, then, involves articulating an alternative imaginary of the human, one that can bridge the political and ideological divides entrenched by centuries of racial imperialism and exclusionary nationalisms. In particular, I argue that thinkers like Hortense Spillers and Gilroy have productively worked to define a humanism which is not hamstrung by Europe's genocidal failures.[147] Rather than foreground the mythic norm of the White cisgendered, heterosexual man of property, both Spillers and Gilroy begin from the racially oppressed's lived experience of suffering and subjection.[148] Humanist ideals like freedom and dignity matter in a much richer sense to those individuals who have been exposed to multiple forms of dehumanisation, domination and violence than they do to the liberal self whose concerns with political tyranny remain abstract. Black and nonwhite subjects know what it means to be treated humanely, in a negative sense. Their understanding of the human is formulated in direct relief to the inhumane practices of their oppressors. Neither Spillers nor Gilroy, then, seek to simply fold the oppressed subject into the appropriative and disembodied category of the Euromodern self, as a juridical or legal conception of personhood might. In this respect, they are each proposing a more inclusive humanism by theorising from below. These are attempts to construct a new ethical imaginary by reckoning with the wreckage of the old. Yet in order to be successful, I contend that such an imaginative project needs to adequately complete two tasks. First, it must articulate a new descriptive statement of the human — one that begins from the existential phenomenology of the subaltern subject rather than from the idealisation of Western Man. Second, it must link that new figuration of the human to a broader sphere of moral concern than that which has circumscribed these hierarchical divisions of national, racial and gendered belonging. In my reading, Spillers' offers a more robust theorisation when it comes to a new existential phenomenology of the human, but Gilroy better links his account of shared vulnerability to a collective ethic of mutual concern.

For Black feminists like Spillers, the interlocking oppressions that Black women experience make their subject position a productive place from which to identify strategies for becoming otherwise.[149] Drawing in part on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, Spillers re-appropriates his concept of the

[145] Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism.*
[146] Gilroy, *"Offshore Humanism,"* 10.
[147] There are a number of Black intellectuals, many from the Black Atlantic, who have called for a renewed antiracist humanism in their work, including Black feminists like Wynter and Spillers; anticolonial thinkers like Senghor and Fanon; Francophone critics like Eduoard Glissant and Mbembe, and Black British theorists like Gilroy.
[148] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 166-167.
[149] Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 65-81.

"flesh" to describe the liminal site that Black women occupy under the racializing and dis-engendering apparatuses of chattel slavery in the U.S.[150] To be able to claim and possess one's body, under this juridical regime, is a racial and gender privilege, not a natural capacity of all human beings. And in particular, she notes, enslavement dehumanizes by removing the individual from the regular gendered relations of kinship.[151] Yet this abjection from the bounds of legal personhood, Spillers notes, does not negate the subjectivity and life of the individuals whose very humanity is marked as inferior and then misrecognized. Instead, the "flesh" precedes and exceeds the sociopolitical construction of the raced body. It is both constituted by these traumatic acts of political violence ("the calculated work of iron, whips, chains, knives, the canine patrol, the bullet")[152] and describes the corporeal "surplus" that refuses to be fully de-socialized or domesticated in the face of racial domination.[153] This phenomenological perspective, then, foregrounds both the wounds that Black women carry without limiting them to a passive conception of woundedness. It speaks to the creative possibilities that even the experience of suffering cannot extinguish. In this respect, Spillers argues that Black women, as subjects, have been pre-figuring ways of escaping the normalising straitjacket that Euromodernity seeks to institutionalise. As she puts it, "This problematizing of gender places [the enslaved Black woman], in my view, out of the traditional symbolics of female gender, and it is our task to make a place for this different social subject. In doing so, we are less interested in joining the ranks of gendered femaleness than gaining the insurgent ground as female social subject."[154] The strategies for self-making that they have developed from these sites of abjection speak to a capacity for human agency that is both constitutively and ethically prior to the (masculine) conception of autonomous self-ownership that Euromodernity has fetishised. What becomes less clear, unfortunately, from such an analysis is how these "lines of flight" from the degradations of past inhuman humanisms might coalesce into a more humane world. Left underdeveloped in Spillers' conception is how thinking human agency through the "flesh" motivates an intersubjective concern for the Other. Nor does she specify which social and institutional relations might be needed in order to actualise that Other-regarding mutuality. Instead, her account of self-determination remains wedded to a quasi-Nietzschean ethic of individual self-overcoming, rather than tackling the social preconditions for collective agency.

Gilroy too argues for replacing the overt rationalism of Enlightenment philosophy with a humanist politics rooted in the shared capacity for suffering.[155] But by contrast, he foregrounds the inhumanity inflicted by racialized fascisms, both in the colonial margins and in Europe itself. To do so, Gilroy draws on Jewish thinker Jean Amery, who attempted to respond to the horrors of the Holocaust, and anti-colonial theorists like Fanon and Senghor.[156] In particular, Amery and Fanon foreground the constitutive role that violence, especially torture, can play in shaping the social and subjective conditions of individual agency.[157] For all that torture is thematized primarily as a purely corporeal phenomenon, it can shape an individual's subjective experience of self in traumatising ways.[158] When suffering from intense pain, individuals often experience themselves as locked in their bodies, unable to communicate or voice their pain in a way that others could grasp or understand.[159] That's why both Fanon and Amery argue that the systematically dehumanized could reassert their humanity by striking violently back against their oppressors. As Amery put it, "In the punch I was myself — for myself

[150] Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 67.
[151] Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 78.
[152] Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 67.
[153] Wehilye, *Habeas Viscus*, 52.
[154] Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 80.
[155] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 167.
[156] Gilroy, "Not Yet Humanism," 102.
[157] Paul Gilroy, "Fanon and Améry," *Theory, Culture & Society* 27, no. 7-8 (2010), 23-24.
[158] See Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).
[159] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 225-233.

and my opponent.... I became a person not by subjectively appealing to my abstract humanity but by discovering myself within the given social reality as a rebelling Jew and by realizing myself as one."[160] Or as Fanon might put it, it is through individual and collective acts of violence that the oppressed once again become *actional* beings, rather than limiting themselves to reactionary or passive responses that further confirm the oppressor's authority.[161] For his part, Gilroy does not seem to be endorsing such a view of political agency *via* violent resistance.[162] He leaves underspecified just what facets of this phenomenology of suffering ought to be built out into a new descriptive account of the human.[163] Yet what Gilroy is clear about in his work is that a recognition of this shared human vulnerability to Others can mobilise a more cosmopolitan conception of moral concern, one that is not limited by 'race,' class, gender or nationality. It is both trite and telling to say that every human being bleeds. Our existential condition of vulnerability, then, is linked to our existential capacity to hurt others — a relationship that, in turn, creates both the socio-political potential to inflict violence on others and the incumbent moral responsibility to prevent such harms. Gilroy foregrounds the duties of care that we owe each other in our mutual vulnerability, and he does so with an eye to the traumatic history of humanity's worst excesses. Against the backdrop of the chattel slavery, colonial massacres, the Holocaust, racial apartheid, and other inhuman brutalities, this ethical imaginary ought to exert itself on individuals with moral urgency, Gilroy contends.[164]

Theorizing humanism from below, as Spillers and Gilroy do, has a number of analytical benefits for antiracist critique. First, it incorporates the perspectives of those subjects whose existences have been characterised by regular and mundane acts of dehumanisation. To be clear, these theoretical interventions do not seek to speak for or represent the dehumanised subject. Instead, Spillers and Gilroy each stress that they are looking to the ethical resources and analysis that the oppressed have devised to negotiate their subjugation. Second, this new descriptive analysis of the human foregrounds an existential phenomenology that returns the subject to the body. Not only is this a more "accurate" philosophical anthropology in the sense that it incorporates a more holistic account of the subject, but such a conceptual shift dislodges the cognitivist ego of Enlightenment philosophy from its presumed place of normative superiority. This is particularly important for marginalised populations like women, people of colour, queer and trans people, the differently abled, and children whose assumed "irrationality" has been used to legitimate their control, domination, and, at times, extermination. As Elizabeth Grosz notes, the insistence on a rational and disembodied self "is complicit with the hierarchy which positions one kind of subject (male, White, capitalist) in the position of superiority over others."[165]

These alternative accounts of the human, however, will need to avoid two theoretical pitfalls if they are to provide effective normative tools for an antiracist politics. First, they cannot mistake what is a common condition of exposure to the Other with the presumption that individuals have a shared existential susceptibility to domination, exploitation, or violence.[166] These threats of coercive interference are not distributed equally, but instead generally track the stratification orders of class, race, gender, and sexuality that have shaped imperial modernities. A new humanist ethic, then, might

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[160] Jean Améry, *At the Mind's Limits*, trans. Sidney Rosenfeld and Stella Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 91.
[161] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 73.
[162] Not that this means Gilroy doesn't endorse Amery and Fanon's reading of the brutal contexts in which they were writing. Nor would Scarry support an action-theoretical account of individual empowerment that valorized violence.
[163] Gilroy does not say too much about how he conceptualises this phenomenology of suffering or what kind of agential capacities this alternative humanism might find in these experiences of violence. But the fact that he finds intellectual and ethical inspiration in both Amery and Fanon gives some indication of how he reads this precarity. His existential-phenomenological account of that vulnerability, however, remains underdeveloped, compared to Spillers.
[164] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 84.
[165] Elizabeth Grosz, "Merleau-Ponty and Irigay in the Flesh," *Thesis Eleven* 36, no. 1, 1993, 54.
[166] Judith Butler cautions against this in her distinction between a general ontological state of precariousness and a socio-political phenomenon of differently distributed precarity. Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004).

be articulated on the basis of this existential phenomenology of what suffering does to the embodied self, but the critique that it orients must tackle this more political problematic of differential vulnerability and the relations of force that produce those discrete kinds of precarity. This is, after all, what makes this humanist critique a form of social *criticism* rather than yet another version of moral philosophy or applied ethics. And second, theorizing the human from the perspective of the oppressed must be careful not to fall back into a celebration of victimhood. As Wendy Brown points out, articulating a morality from a position of social subjection can paradoxically wed an individual or group of subjects to the very woundedness that catalysed their moral claims in the first place.[167] In particular, oppressed groups may find that they are trapped in an unproductive cycle of testifying to their own suffering in order to win concessions from the state or the majority racial group. At worst, such a politics can fall back into a kind of "oppression Olympics" in which dominated groups must compete amongst themselves for legal recognition and moral redress by showing why they are the "most" affected.[168] "Too often, this tendency leaves intact hegemonic ideas of humanity as indistinguishable from western Man but demands comparing different forms of subjugation in order to adjudicate who warrants recognition and belonging," Wehilye writes.[169]

Both of these problems, in turn, stem from theorizing suffering in identitarian terms — as if it were a possession that belonged solely and exclusively to the individual or group experiencing it. I contend that antiracist critique can avoid this flattened ontology of precarity, on the one hand, and this counterproductive "politics of resentment,[170]" on the other, if theorists adopt a *materialist* account of suffering. Doing so means situating these discrete harms in relational terms by linking them back to the social field of institutions, practices, and discourses. Sufferings are not the unique possession of certain groups, but instead are profoundly social phenomena that implicate all those involved in their constitution. As Asma Abbas puts it, political theorists should read "…our sufferings and our labours as co-constitutive of the world we inhabit, however homelessly."[171] Relying on a social (as opposed to ontological) account of suffering, then, brings into view the other side of the humanist project — namely, the individuals and institutions responsible for these acts of violence in the first place. And it moves critique away from a comparative exercise by which each group or affected subject attempts to claim special moral authority by diminishing the sufferings of others.[172] This makes it possible to build out an antiracist politics built on interracial and interethnic solidarity, rather than one that further reifies the divisions of 'race,' ethnicity, and nation. As Gilroy has repeatedly stressed, contemporary antiracist struggles will require a more robust ethical and political program than that provided by the notion of a shared racial injury.[173] Cultivating ethical practices of living humanely alongside and with Others is an increasingly urgent project in a postcolonial world that is shaped by increasingly global flows of people, capital, discourses, and goods. In these multi-ethic and multi-racial societies, the "old" political settlements of nation and 'race' will not provide stable ground for emancipatory critique or anti-racist solidarity.

The task of imagining an alternative antiracist humanism, then, might be utopian in the sense that it imagines a world that is yet to come. But it might not be quite as dangerous as the anti-humanist theorists suppose. As Gilroy notes, there is more that we human beings share in common than divides

[167] For an in-depth argument on this front, see Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 65.
[168] Wehilye, *Habeas Viscus,* 13-14.
[169] Wehilye, *Habeas Viscus,* 75.
[170] Brown, *States of Injury,* 67-74.
[171] Asma Abbas, *Liberalism and Human Suffering: Materialist Reflections on Politics, Ethics, and Aesthetics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 229.
[172] Wehilye, *Habeas Viscus,* 81.
[173] Gilroy, *Against Race,* 2-3, 51-52.

us — "this crushingly obvious, almost banal human sameness."[174] Or as Said might say, different cultures and ethnic groups are borrowing from and exchanging with one another more than they fight.[175] This methodological shift that I am advocating, then, involves taking a more provisional and pragmatic approach to humanism. First, it strives for epistemic humility and self-reflexivity about its own ethical commitments. And second, it seeks to theorize what dignity and freedom might mean in practice by looking to the myriad violences that we inflict upon one another. The benefit to thinking the human being as "praxis," as Sylvia Wynter puts it, is that such ontological statements are always only provisional and historically specific.[176] This means too that it is not the critic's job to decide whether a humanist ethic is convincing and productive. Such a question will be decided by individuals in a given social formation.[177] In fact, people around the world are already working out how to live humanely alongside and with Others, from the multicultural milieus of the global metropolis[178] to the maritime environs of de-nationalised labourers.[179] In a certain respect, different communities are already prefiguring — in often ad-hoc and interstitial ways — alternative forms of relating across the pathological closures that racial hierarchies seek to effect.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that antiracist theory will need to disclose the ongoing racializations at work at the heart of liberal moral and political norms if it is to successfully move past the traumatic and exclusionary histories that the idea of 'race' has legitimated. Yet rather than attribute the failures of Euromodernity to its philosophical anthropology directly, I contend that actual projects of conquest, enslavement, and mass expropriation fundamentally eroded the Enlightenment's universalist moral promise.[180] Reckoning with these tacitly racialized worldviews, however, is not a straightforward task, methodologically speaking. Antiracist critique, then, appears to be caught between Scylla and Charybdis. On the one hand, political theorists need to avoid normative frameworks that function ideologically to obscure or mystify ongoing racial oppression. And yet on the other hand, they cannot build an entire social and moral philosophy on the basis of racial ontology that reifies the White/Black divide in reductive and dangerous ways. While I advocate for the politicizing of ontology in the sense of challenging the idealized presumptions that undergird certain sociological and political theories, that does not mean that theorists should erect a new polemical ontology as the lodestone for critique. Antiracist theory would be better served by more nuanced and complex accounts of racial formation, racism, and the techniques of racial subjectivation that constitute the contemporary world on unequal terms. Critique, therefore, needs an analytical lens that is flexible enough to parse the concrete overdeterminations of racialized subjection without retreating to an abstract liberalism that elides the ongoing difference that racial difference makes.

There is, however, a way out of this double bind. As I argued in the final section, several antiracist thinkers have attempted to *work through* — rather than resolve — this dialectical relationship between

[174] Gilroy, *Against Race,* 29.
[175] Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism,* xvi.
[176] Scott, and Wynter "The Reenchantment of Humanism," 207.)
[177] James Bohman, "Participants, Observers, and Critics: Practical Knowledge, Social Perspectives, and Critical Pluralism," in *Pluralism and the Pragmatic Turn: The Transformation of Critical Theory, Essays in Honor of Thomas McCarthy,* eds. Thomas McCarthy, William Rehg and James Bohman (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 101-102.
[178] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 130-132.
[179] See Peter Linebaugh and Marcus. Rediker, *The Many-headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).
[180] In this, my view echoes Said. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Citizenship,* 13.

universalist humanist principles and exclusionary racial practices. In particular, Wynter, Allen and Said argued that humanist critics must take on a second-order metanormative openness if they are to both de-naturalize their own racial "truths" and treat racial and ethnic Others as intercultural equals. In turn, Gilroy and Spillers pointed out that such a humanist project will not be complete without an alternative conceptualization of the human — one that foregrounds our shared vulnerability to suffering and dehumanization, rather than the fetishized figure of the disembodied rational agent. Ultimately, there is more hope in an investigation that explicitly problematizes this second "quasi-ontology" in racial orders as a site of political struggle, as a hegemonic settlement that delimits how individuals understand themselves and their world. This is why I argue that a more critical and pragmatic approach to social criticism provides a better way forward for antiracist theorists. In the next chapter, I look at the potential of immanent critique — a methodological approach that situates itself with concrete conjunctures and relies on forms of rationality and ethical standards already embedded within those social milieus.

Chapter III
Critical Theory and Racial Hierarchies

Antiracist critique is best served by a method that is materialist, that begins from concrete sites of racial injustice, and that is in the business of diagnosing how racisms function in pathological ways.[1] It involves not just indicting racial inequities but disclosing the mechanisms, both material and ideological, which sustain the racial order in the hopes of pointing towards antiracist transformation. This type of approach is commonly exhibited in immanent critique. As a form of embedded criticism, immanent critique reflexively reconstructs the ethical indices that regulate existing social practices and seeks to diagnose the ways in which the social order fails to live up to its own normative promise.[2] Yet not all forms of immanent critique are equally productive and well-suited for the complexities of theorising racialization as one of the structuring power hierarchies of the Euromodern (and now globalising) world. Critical theory is a large and internally divided tent, both in terms of its approaches and its intellectual progenitors. In this chapter, I look at two modes of immanent criticism — that of the genealogical tradition of French Critical Theory espoused by Foucault and the Left Hegelian tradition of the German Frankfurt School as modelled through Axel Honneth. Following Foucault, the French wing of Critical theory adopts a Nietzschean agonism that views all norms as the metastable outcomes of contingent social struggle. The radical acknowledgement of contingency calls for the "revaluation of all values" and rejects the idea of legislating morals for others.[3] By contrast, the Left Hegelians hold that critics can make normative claims in a prescriptive sense. They offer a more robust normative toolkit when it comes to critiquing injustice and domination, but in doing so, they open up thorny questions about how to assess whether a critic's ethical judgments are the right ones. Honneth defends his meta-ethical claims by looking to a "socio-cultural learning process" in which societies have dialectically arrived at better practices.[4] Critics, therefore, can universalise these ethical ideals because they reflect the progressive unfolding of moral improvement.[5]

In this chapter, I ask whether Michel Foucault's genealogical critique and Axel Honneth's Left Hegelian critique might be productively redeployed to reckon with racialization and White hegemony. To be clear, the purpose of this analytical comparison is not to revisit this debate between French and German Critical Theory. Such ground has been well covered. Instead, I seek to isolate what each method has to offer for an antiracist critical theory — and what sorts of limitations it might impose. In key respects, I contend that Foucauldian genealogy provides a productive way of reconstructing a "critical ontology of the [racialized] present."[6] Rather than simply contest racial distinctions as grounded on flawed biological thinking, a genealogical analysis would seek to understand how these hierarchical divisions in the human were contingently produced and how they continue to meaningfully orient individual subjects. Foucault's critical theory provides a useful set of analytical tools for denaturalising racial orders, on the one hand, while also demonstrating how it is that they have created their own racialized forms of knowledge and practices of self-formation, on the other.

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[1] Axel Honneth, *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory,* trans. Joseph Ganahl (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 34-35.
[2] In contrast to more hermeneutic approaches to social criticism, immanent critique aims to reflexively assess not just existing institutions, but also the very ideals that are already operating in a given conjuncture. Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms of Life,* 190.
[3] For this interpretation of Foucauldian genealogy, see Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique;* Allen, *The End of Progress;* and David Owen, *Maturity and Modernity: Nietzsche, Weber, Foucault, and the Ambivalence of Reason* (London: Routledge, 1994).
[4] Allen, *The End of Progress,* 3.
[5] Axel Honneth, "Reconstructive Social Criticism with a Genealogical Proviso: On the Idea of "Critique" in the Frankfurt School," in *Pathologies of Reason: On the Legacy of Critical Theory,* ed. Amy Allen, trans. James Ingram (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 50-51.
[6] Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress" in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth, Vol. 1* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 262.

Yet his Nietzschean commitments also limit the impact that Foucault's work might have on productive antiracist theorizing. First, his tendency towards sociological functionalism and his unwillingness to embrace clear normative ideals like nondomination or self-determination leave him vulnerable to being co-opted by political theorists who see domination at every turn. And second, his radically individualist account of the subject prevents him from linking his criticism to the collective practices of antiracist struggle. Under Foucault's theoretical apparatus, it becomes difficult to differentiate between practices of racist domination and antiracist struggle, given that all forms of racialized belonging are treated as sites of dangerous normalisation.

In contrast to Foucault's normative ambivalence, Axel Honneth follows in the footsteps of Jürgen Habermas and articulates a new humanist ethic — one tethered not to a monological philosophy of the subject but instead based around a Hegelian conception of intersubjective recognition. Honneth argues that the individual's need for recognition from others can provide an ethical index by which to evaluate which kinds of social relations allow human flourishing. When individuals are denied these ethically necessary forms of recognition, he contends, they experience that interaction as a moral insult. This misrecognition affects them at a pre-theoretical level, and it can, with the right conditions, mobilise them to contest the existing normative order and push for social transformation. Honneth argues that the role of the critical theorist, then, is to "normatively reconstruct" the types of mutual affirmation that individuals need in particular social contexts in order to become autonomous.[7] By focusing on these moral experiences of disrespect, Honneth's theory attempts to speak to societal struggles against racism, patriarchy, and other kinds of identity-driven domination. And yet I contend that he remains too optimistic about how these lived experiences of misrecognition will be understood and acted upon. His theory of the subject moves too quickly from social suffering to political resistance. This means that he is left unable to fully see, let alone theorise, important facets of Black subject formation under White racism, including inferiority complexes, the habituation to survival strategies in White environments, and sites of disempowerment. Adding to his analytical difficulties is the fact that he adopts a Eurocentric (and white-washed) account of late modern social institutions. Left untheorized are the internal relations between European capitalism and chattel slavery and indigenous genocide, say, or between liberal democracy and racial colonialism. Ultimately, I contend that Honneth underestimates the degree to which persistent practices of racial misrecognition continue to stabilise unjust social hierarchies by winning the consent of White and privileged subjects, on the one hand, and by disempowering Black and nonwhite subjects on the other.

Foucauldian genealogy and antiracist critique

At first glance, looking to Foucault for critical resources to theorize racial oppression might seem misguided. After all, he had little to say about 'race,' racism or European settler colonialism, even though he wrote extensively about modern regimes of power and governance.[8] His silence on racialization is all the more notable for the fact that 'race' plays a constitutive role in the development

[7] Axel Honneth, *Freedom's Right*: *The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*, trans. Joseph Patrick Ganahl (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), 1-11.
[8] Foucault does reference racism briefly in his lectures on bio-politics and exclusion, but fails to expand much on the point. See Ladelle McWhorter, "Poststructuralism and Race: Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault," in *The Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Race,* eds. Paul C. Taylor, Linda Martin Alcoff, and Luvell Anderson (New York: Routledge, 2017), 113-123.

of these techniques of population management.[9] Yet for all that Foucault did not address racialization or imperialism outright, postcolonial and antiracist critics have regularly drawn on his work. Part of this intellectual filiation owes to Foucault's robust critique of Enlightenment humanism. He rejected its ethical imaginary as, at best, an ideological obfuscation and, at worst, a tool of ever-tightening social control.[10] In this respect, Foucault's work refutes the naive assertion of Euromodern civilizational superiority and its claim to universal moral authority in ways that are crucial for antiracist and postcolonial theory. But part of this uptake of Foucault in antiracist theory can be attributed to his negative view of the liberal state apparatus and contemporary forms of population control. Unlike in liberal theories — which are largely concerned with the question of when state violence is legitimate — Foucault's analyses of the prison, the hospital, the clinic, and the administrative state all focus on the *functional* exercise of coercive force. Substantively, then, Foucault's preoccupations with discipline, normalization, and the constitution of biopolitical remainders all align quite well with the problematics that many antiracist and postcolonial thinkers are probing. After all, it is hard to overestimate the extent to which the carceral state, its surveillance techniques and its architectures of confinement and isolation have oppressed Black communities in the United States and other postimperial societies.[11]

What I am interested in, however, is what Foucault's specific *method* of critique might offer for antiracist theorizing.[12] In particular, Foucault argues that his genealogical method aims at constructing a "critical ontology of ourselves" in the present.[13] This is a problematic, he points out, that he (dis)inherits from Kant.[14] But where Kant sought the limits of the human subject in his transcendental capacity for reason, Foucault looks to the historical *a priori* that constitute the (Euro)modern subject as the product of contingent social struggle. He takes the Kantian concern and refracts it through Nietzsche.[15] Yet rather than carry out a Nietzschean genealogy centered on the psychological drives,[16] Foucault looks at how the modern individual precipitates out of specific historical practices.[17] This is not, however, a conventional exercise in historiography. As Foucault writes, genealogical critique does not involve "the erecting of foundations: on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself."[18] His work may be descriptive in a first-order sense, but it has an ethical impetus that points beyond the limitations of the status quo. In particular, Foucault uses his historical reconstructions to defamiliarise the present and achieve a "pathos of distance" from existing forms of life. By tracing the emergence of what we now view as the inert order of things, the genealogical method discloses both the contingent nature of these configurations and provides a sense of their political and ethical dangers. This is why Koopman describes Foucault's work as a "problematising" critique.[19] Rather than either vindicate or subvert our current practices and forms of reason, Foucault uses his analyses to open up the room for critical reflection on their ethical adequacy.[20] In doing so, he reframes the perceived limits of the status quo into concrete sites for

[9] Gilroy, *After Empire.*
[10] See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge, 2002) and Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences,* (London: Routledge, 2002).
[11] Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), 14-15.
[12] There is, however, some debate among academics about what Foucauldian genealogy entails. Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique,* 5.
[13] Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," 262.
[14] Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" trans. Catherine Porter in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth, Vol. I,* ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 2007), 307-309.
[15] Owen, *Maturity and Modernity,* 201-204.
[16] Jesse Prinz, "Genealogies of Morals: Nietzsche's Method Compared," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 47, no. 2 (2016): 180-201.
[17] Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 777-778.
[18] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *The Foucault Reader,* ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 82.
[19] Koopman, *Geneaology as Critique,* 45-46.
[20] Koopman, *Geneaology as Critique,* 89.

individual practices of transgression and overcoming. As Foucault puts it, "…the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are."[21]

Foucauldian critique seeks to "liquify" a given social order by showing that its world — and the people within it — could become otherwise. Such a genealogical approach has two crucial advantages when it comes to de-naturing racial orders. First, Foucault returns practices of subjectivation back to the social — to the concrete analysis of institutions and architectures, discourses and practices, grammars and pleasures.[22] For example, in *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault argued that a new form of political power emerged in 19th century Europe — one that was tethered less to juridical regimes and their spectacular acts of cruelty, but instead to the training and regulation of individual bodies. This paradigmatic shift, he argued, can be seen in the changing face of the modern prison. The prison's material architecture and daily regimens deploy a variety of techniques — including mass surveillance, normalizing judgment, and corporeal regimentation[23] — to transform its inmates into "docile bodies" that manage themselves.[24] But in 19th century Euromodern societies, this disciplinary model is taken up across a variety of social institutions, from the school to the hospital to the factory to the military.[25] In turn, the shift to a disciplinary regime both requires and produces new forms of knowledge about the human being as an object to manipulated (i.e., the human and social sciences). In this respect, Foucault contends that his genealogical critique of the modern subject sought to bring together three interrelated planes of analysis.[26] First, he interrogated the "regimes of truth" or the forms of "power-knowledge" that make certain kinds of human being into definable objects of study. Second, he mapped the practices of relating to and governing Others' conduct that he finds in modern social orders. And third, he explored the techniques of self-relation by which individuals come to understand themselves as certain kinds of people.[27] By doing so, Foucault argues that he identified some of the specific rationalities that have shaped the modern individual into an apposite fit for late capitalism (and for the 20th century welfare/workfare state).[28]

Foucault's genealogical critique, then, brings into view the power-striated structures of recognition that make certain kinds of subjectivity possible. A method derived from his work, therefore, would refuse the essentialist fallacy of 'race' and instead problematize the social production of racialized subjects. Such a denaturalising move is a crucial first step for all forms of antiracist criticism because it challenges the ideological narratives which legitimate power hierarchies and racist abuse. Yet unlike in other social constructivist accounts of identity, Foucauldian genealogy avoids the abstract and overly linguistic accounts of the (racial) Other that proliferate in many postcolonial and psychoanalytical discourses. In his work, there is no totalizing concept of Difference as the Abject or the Symbolic Other. Instead, difference is always a social relation that must be explored through its entanglement with the non-discursive realm of bodies, institutions, and capital.[29] Similarly, effective antiracist critique will involve linking raciological reason back up to the specific practices, discourses, and affective investments that make "race" meaningful in a specific milieu.[30] As Mbembe writes, scholars must "pay attention to the historical processes by which 'blackness' was invented as a presumably 'ontological' category, in any case as a legal category, as a social status, and more

[21] Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 785.
[22] Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 778.
[23] See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 162-167, 177-192.
[24] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 136.
[25] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 296-297.
[26] For a helpful exegesis of these aspects of Foucault's work, see Owen, *Maturity and Modernity.*
[27] Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 777-778.
[28] For an expanded theorization of Foucault's neoliberal subject under biopolitical regimes, see Nikolas Rose, "The Politics of Life Itself," *Theory, Culture & Society* 18, no. 6 (2001): 1-30.
[29] In this sense, Foucault's later genealogical work avoids the abstract forms of linguistic constructivism that bedevilled his earlier writings. Owen, *Maturity and Modernity,* 149.
[30] Hall, "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance," 213-214.

importantly as the hole into which the distinction between the human and the non-human vanishes."[31] For example, genealogists could investigate the scientific discourses that "objectified" and explained the differentiation of human beings into hierarchical racial groups, from medicine to anthropology to psychology.[32] Or they could look at the concrete institutional sites of racialized expropriation and domination that emerged on the colonial topos, including the plantation, the mine, and the reservation.[33] Or they could examine the juridical discourses around personhood, property, and citizenship that set up classes of political subjects in White settler states.[34]

Genealogical criticism, then, discloses the field of power relations that lie behind, so to speak, the ideological mystifications that 'race' seeks to enact. In this respect, Foucault provides a more nuanced conception of social formations structured in racial dominance than the Manichean imaginaries that predominate in certain strands of Black political thought. This is the second advantage that I see in Foucault's work — namely, that he rejects a reductive macrostructural reading of the social. He remained highly skeptical of the "grand narratives" of Marxist theory[35] and instead dedicated himself to mapping what he called the "microphysics of power."[36] As I argued in the last chapter, projects that explain all racial divisions through a White Oppressor/Black Oppressed dyad, such as Mill's racial contract, often fall back into a reifying and depoliticising stance towards racial hierarchies. But a genealogical reading refuses to mistake those neat racial binaries for the overdetermined and messy articulations of societies structured in racial domination. And it acknowledges the significant amount of work that went in to creating these metastable divisions in the human and that is still required to maintain them as regulative norms.[37] For all that 'race' isn't a main concern of his work, Foucault provides a model for antiracist theorists looking to avoid the analytical pitfalls of racial essentialism, on the one hand, and racial eliminativism, on the other.

When reconstructed on these terms, then, I contend that Foucault's approach could be productively applied to racial orders. Gilroy's work on racial imperialism also offers an instructive example of how such an immanent critique might work. In his book, *After Empire,* he outlines how a particular kind of political rationality emerged out of the European colonial nomos — that of the biopolitical management of racialized populations.[38] In particular, he examines the European settler colony as a "laboratory…for experiment and innovation that transformed the exercise of governmental powers at home and configured the institutionalization of imperial knowledge to which the idea of 'race' was central."[39] He points out that colonial governance brought martial law (and its zone of extrajudicial exception) out of the logic of wartime and into everyday bureaucratic administration.[40] European settlers and imperial bureaucrats too developed specific political technologies to manage and disempower racialized populations, from the concentration camp to the slave patrol, the pass system to the segregation of urban space, the routine use of torture to spectacular acts of state violence.[41] It was in the colonial hospital that medical professionals developed new ways of measuring the health of populations and of responding to pollutants in the "social body." Like the proto-industrial forms of labor exploitation developed on the Caribbean sugar plantations, these forms of biopolitical

[31] Goldberg and Mbembe, "'The Reason of Unreason,'" 208.
[32] See, for example, Tracy Teslow, *Constructing Race: The Science of Bodies and Cultures in American Anthropology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
[33] Hall, "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance," 193-194; Roediger, *Class, Race, and Marxism,* 118-133.
[34] See Theodore Allen, *The Invention of the White Race* (London: Verso, 2012).
[35] Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures" in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977,* ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 96-101.
[36] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 26.
[37] Hall, 'Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance," 214.
[38] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 12.
[39] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 46.
[40] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 23.
[41] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 51-55.

governance did not remain in the Global South. Instead, the racialized forms of governance and biopolitical rationality that predominate today in the Global North were transplanted from these colonial zones to structure the metropolitan capitalist order in racial and engendered dominance. In this respect, Gilroy stresses, the colonial archive provides a central ground for a genealogical critique of Euromodernity. He returns to the colonial nomos in order to *problematize* existing state practices as well as the political imaginaries tied to racist accounts of national purity.[42] As he puts it, "contemporary discussions of immigration, asylum, nationalism, and other areas of government where race is strongly resonant have been enriched…by consideration of the conceptions of political power that resulted from detours through the bloody history of colonial societies and the planetary ambitions of race-driven imperialism."[43] By situating our contemporary liberal nation-states within an explicitly racialized and postcolonial framework, he draws attention to the routine ways in which they continue to survey, target, dominate, and neglect non-white populations both at home and abroad.

When read as a kind of immanent critique, then, I argue that Foucauldian genealogy is well suited to the first task facing antiracist theorists — that of denaturalizing the political ontology of the racial present. His method could well be deployed to map what Saidiya Hartman describes as "the history that hurts — the still-unfolding narrative of captivity, dispossession, and domination that engenders the Black subject in the Americas."[44] At its most effective, it opens up the space for ethical reflection on forms of knowing, of relating to Others, and of relating to oneself. Where genealogical critique has less to say, however, is the moment of anticipatory-utopian criticism[45] in which political theorists seek to imagine antiracist alternatives to the current neo-imperial order. This is not a surprising claim, given Foucault's own hesitance to espouse strong normative commitments in his work and his skepticism of utopian thinking. As I argue in the next section, antiracist theory will need more than just a "problematising" investigation of our existing racial practices. It also requires a more robust normative toolkit to condemn anti-human and inhumane practices as well as some ethical horizon for what an antiracist cosmopolitanism or ethical multiculturalism might look like.

Foucault and subaltern resistance

For all its promise, Foucault's genealogical method is not without its limitations[46] for antiracist theorizing. As numerous critics have pointed out, his analyses can slip too readily into a form of sociological functionalism. All too often, Foucault appears to reduce the individual subject to nothing more than the passive precipitate of techniques of power. In part, this is because he neglects the broader "relations of force" that by turns empower and disempower different actors within a social formation. By adopting a Nietzschean view of the social as contingent, he can fall back into treating these institutional apparatuses, rationalities, and practices of governance as if they were simply arbitrary. He overlooks the *political* nature of contemporary racial hierarchies as well as the existence

[42] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 25-26.
[43] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 19.
[44] Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection,* 51.
[45] Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia,* 142.
[46] Numerous critics have lambasted him for offering a functionalist view of power, one in which the individual subject is little more than the passive after-image of the institutions, discourses, practices, and affects that work to constitute them. I am not unsympathetic to some of these concerns, although I think the crudest iterations of them are often based on either partial or willful misreadings of Foucault's work. For example, see Michael Walzer, "The Politics of Michel Foucault" and Jurgen Habermas, "Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present" in *Foucault: A Critical Reader,* ed. David Coutzens Hoy (Oxford, U.K.: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 51-68, 103-108.

of subaltern and oppositional forces that work to contest them. But Foucault's social reductionism too relates to his overly deterministic account of subject formation and thin conception of individual agency. Even after his so-called "ethical turn," he remains wedded to an idea of the social primarily as a site of normalising constraint rather than an ambivalent site of intersubjective negotiation.[47] This, in turn, overinflates the possibilities of subjective freedom for certain oppressed individuals, on the one hand, and deflates (if not outright denies) the possibilities of collective resistance to that oppression, on the other. And finally, the genealogical method that Foucault practices is notoriously ambivalent about its normative commitments. This inhibits his work from differentiating between the domination, exploitation, and subjection critiques that are so vital to antiracist theory. As a method of immanent critique, then, genealogy doesn't provide much — either by way of ethical indices or utopian imaginaries — for diagnosing existing practices of racist domination or for imagining a more humane future.

Across his oeuvre, Foucault fails to offer a robust account of either individual or collective agency. This is the most striking in his early work. Both his archaeological and genealogical excavations can appear to treat the individual subject as little more than a passive body, produced either by discourse or by power relations.[48] Some of the language Foucault deploys too seems to confirm his structuralist reductionism. He describes the individual at one point as "one of power's first effects,"[49] and he notes that the functional aim of disciplinary regimes is to create "docile bodies."[50] It is not surprising, then, that many critics argue that his genealogical critique negates the possibility of individual agency. But this is an uncharitable and mistaken reading of Foucault, one that overlooks both statements he's made and the ethical turn in his later work. In interviews, Foucault is clear not to conflate the presence of domination with subjectivation. As Foucault notes, "[Individuals] are never inert or consenting targets of power; they are always also its relays. In other words, power passes through individuals. It is not applied to them." [51] This is because he views power not necessarily as a juridical relation of domination and submission, although it can take that form. But for Foucault, all power relations are first productive. They are aimed at the modification or conduct of another individual's actions.[52] Under his reading, a power relation is only metaphysically possible when the "other," the one whose conduct is being influenced, possesses the capacity to do otherwise.[53] If such a capacity were not present, Foucault points out, then we ought not to describe it as a power relation at all, but instead as brute force. In this respect, he argues that the capacity for resistance is internal to the power relation itself. "At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom," Foucault wrote.[54]

Yet it is true that Foucault's idea of resistance remains rather abstract and formal. He seems to treat individual agency as a quasi-ontological phenomenon — as if the individual subject, by virtue of their subjecthood, possessed a general potential to reject or resist the imposition of power. This may very well be the case, but such a thin account of human reflexivity has little to say about the social and material phenomenon of individual agency in concrete situations.[55] As Bourdieu might put it, Foucault's theoretical apparatus does not give social critics the tools to assess given individuals' "spaces of possibilities."[56] After all, individuals' degrees of self-determination will be conditioned by

[47]Amy Allen, ""Discourse, Power, and Subjectivation: The Foucault/Habermas debate reconsidered," *Philosophical Forum* 40, no. 1 (2009): 22.
[48] Allen, "Discourse, Power, and Subjectivation," 14-23.
[49] Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-76*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 30.
[50] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 136.
[51] Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended,* 29.
[52] Foucault "The Subject and Power" 789.
[53] Foucault, "The Subject and Power" 790.
[54] Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 790.
[55] McNay, *Foucault and Feminism,* 173-174.
[56] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art, Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Cornwall: Stanford University Press, 1996), 236.

the structuring social hierarchies that dictate their access to capital, security, status, care, and ideological resources. Not all people are equally empowered, in a material and an ideological sense, to "act in their best interest," to use the trite and loaded phrase. Nor are all situations of possible resistance to the Other equally meaningful. As McNay points out, Foucault's presumption that an individual can resist in any power relation seems tethered, at worst, to a set of "resistant" but undesirable options — suicide, for instance, or murder. While it is true that there are key historical incidents in which Black folks committed suicide in mass rather than subject themselves to chattel slavery in the Americas, such acts of resistance are a reasonable and tragic response to absolute desperation.[57] This formal capacity to say no to one's dehumanization is certainly not a politics. "Such statements [about the possibility of autonomous action] are hollow unless accompanied by an awareness of the overarching structures of inequality and discrimination against which all relations between free individuals are played out," McNay writes.[58] Foucault's conception of resistance as internal to power relations, then, is more of a logical possibility than it is a practical competency that is enabled and disabled in certain conjunctures for particular kinds of subjects.

In this respect, then, Foucauldian genealogy doesn't deny the possibility of individual agency altogether, but it certainly leaves the phenomenon under-theorized. This is a serious problem for any social critic that wants to disclose and contest practices of domination. Without a graduated and robust conception of agency — one that takes into account both the objective limitations and subjective obstacles that a given individual might experience in acting autonomously — political theorists cannot diagnose why it is that individuals fail to make decisions that might appear to be "in their best interest," so to speak. In racial hierarchies in particular, oppressed subjects often have to deal not just with overt instances of racist discrimination and violence, but they also can struggle with inferiority complexes, exhaustion, and pessimistic withdrawal that can prevent them from taking advantage of the formal opportunities for self-advancement that are available.[59] Nor are those individual instances of antiracist resistance that are actualised guaranteed to be politically productive. There is quite a significant gap between the ontological capacity to say no to the Other and the social and subjective conditions necessary for individual self-determination. And so for all that Foucault doesn't mean to position the subject as little more than a passive recipient of power relations, his genealogical phase fails to offer the conceptual tools to engage with the these ethical-existential dimensions of individual and collective empowerment. Part of this stems from the fact that he is not all that interested in the problem of subaltern resistance. He had little to say about the situation of individuals engendered as women or that of racialized postcolonial subjects seeking to contest the norms of recognition that assimilated them to inferior statuses within a masculine, White (often Anglo) European bourgeois frame.

But some of this analytical shortcoming comes from the faulty model of subjectivation that Foucault relies upon. In his earlier work, Allen points out, Foucault's account of the self is notably one-sided in the sense that he overemphasises the "power-ladenness" of socialisation, at the expense of individual reflexivity.[60] In his analyses, individuation is first and foremost an exercise in subjugation to forms of authority whose "legitimacy" owes more to the contingent struggle of forces than it does to anything natural or morally exemplary. Again, Foucault acknowledges in interviews that subjection is inherently an ambivalent process, one that entails both the subjugation to a repressive authority and the capacity to act as a competent subject in one's own right.[61] But most of his

[57] Marquetta L. Goodwine (ed.), *The legacy of Ibo landing: Gullah roots of African American culture* (Atlanta, G.A.: Clarity Press, 1998).
[58] McNay, *Foucault and Feminism,* 174.
[59] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* xv.
[60] Allen, "Discourse, Power, and Subjectivation," 14.
[61] Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 781.

genealogies are dedicated primarily to mapping the first term of this phenomena and neglect the ways in which individual subjects reflexively negotiate their own "thrownness." This means that his account of the prison apparatus, say, or of modern sexuality over-estimate the "smoothness" by which practices, institutions, and discourses constitute the individuals interpellated by them. This theoretical shortcoming owes, to a certain extent, to Foucault's distrust of both existential phenomenology and psychoanalysis.[62] His reluctance to engage more fully with these "experiential" discourses of continental philosophy meant that he made little room in his work for thinking the social practices that produce critical reflexivity or resistant subjectivity at a subjective level.

Missing from his "critical ontology of the present" are the cracks, chinks, and points of friction that spark interpretative resistance, alternative forms of life, and oppositional politics. Such a totalising view of power relations, then, obscures how Black individuals can and do shape lives of meaning and resistance within the hierarchies that structure their lives. Antiracist criticism ought not to conflate "domination and violence with the complete absence of subjectivity, life, enjoyment, humour, and so on."[63] As Mbembe notes, the history of Black reason is a doubled phenomenon — it must map both the sites of "exclusion, brutalisation, and degradation" and the sites of resistance and living-otherwise.[64] Black subjects have long been engaged in creatively carving out spaces of autonomy from racial domination, no matter how precarious and marginal those sites might be. Black women, in particular, have worked hard to thrive in situations that are structured counter to their own flourishing, both by developing communities of solidarity with other Black women and by pursuing their own self-fashioning.[65] As Audre Lorde put it, "I learned that if I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive."[66] These forms of subaltern agency and resistance don't just spring up from the ground, contrary to what some social theorists believe[67] — and what even the ethical Foucault appears to presume. Without a hermeneutic lens on the phenomenon of Black disempowerment, critics are left either conflating subjection with subjugation or presuming, in an almost a priori sense, that the oppressed possess the same agential capacities as their privileged counterparts. As Michelle Wallace cautions, the myth of the "Black super-woman" — i.e., the idea that Black women are innately resilient and capable of rising above the suffering they endure — is often weaponised to legitimate their mistreatment, neglect, and exploitation.[68] Theorizing strategies of escape, dissent and revolt, then, are of vital importance for envisioning Black freedom and shaping effective antiracist politics.

In his later ethical writings, Foucault does correct for some of these shortcomings. In particular, he foregrounds a stronger conception of individual reflexivity and agential possibility by theorizing techniques of self-making that challenge the normalising force of modern subjectivation.[69] By cultivating a "care of the self," he argued, individuals could creatively construct themselves in ways that transgressed existing social limitations and transformed their own self-relations.[70] Following Nietzsche, Foucault contends that individuals are only free insofar as they are engaged in a process

[62] Foucault is dismissive of phenomenology as a method, given that it treats the individual self-understanding as if it could provide transparent and readymade access to the social world. He critiqued psychoanalysis, in turn, for falling back into an essentialist model of thinking the human, one that read the processes of ontogenesis through a heteronormative account of sexual roles. Foucault, "Preface to the English Edition," in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences,* (London: Routledge, 2002), xv. Amy Allen, "Foucault, Psychoanalysis, and Critique: Two Aspects of Problematization," *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities* 23, no. 2 (2018): 170-86.
[63] Wehilye, *Habeas Viscus,* 52.
[64] Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason,* 6.
[65] For a thoughtful example of this scholarly reclamation of Black women's agency, see Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments.*
[66] Audre Lorde, "Learning from the 60s," Address at Harvard University, February 1982, https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1982-audre-lorde-learning-60s/.
[67] Lois McNay, *The Misguided Search for the Political: Social Weightlessness in Radical Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), 132.
[68] Michele Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (London: Verso, 2015).
[69] McNay, *Foucault and Feminism,* 3-4.
[70] Foucault instead took as his model the virtue-centered ethics practiced by the ancient Greeks. See Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality, Vol. II,* trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

of transgressing these contingent constructions of identity: "We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries."[71] The ethically virtuous individual would thus be engaged in creative experiments of self-fashioning that decoupled the self from its obsession with fixity, homogeneity, and normalising patterns of social recognition. For many critics, then, Foucault's turn to modes of ethical self-fashioning go some way to addressing earlier concerns over his functionalism.[72] Individual subjects, as theorised in these texts and lectures, are certainly not "docile bodies" who passively receives whatever is done to them. They are active agents who are participating in various attempts, some successful, some less so, to construct their lives as a "work of art."[73]

That said, Foucault's "care of the self" remains tethered to a solipsistic account of the individual subject in ways that undermine his ethical project for antiracist criticism. As both Allen and McNay have noted, even his later work relies on an isolated and abstract self, one that remains fundamentally disconnected from the social — and thus too from the politics of struggle. "For Foucault, the political energies of the individual are directed exclusively inward towards the goal of an isolated aesthetic autonomy, rather than towards a more collective goal," McNay notes.[74] As in Nietzsche, there is little room for the intersubjective norms of reciprocity, mutuality, and solidarity in Foucault's work. He retains this "tooth and claw" view of the social as governed almost exclusively by strategic power relations.[75] By relying on such an agonistic social ontology, he ends up characterising all forms of social interdependence as constraints on individual freedom, rather than (at times) the constitutive supports for freedom's exercise. Instead of finding liberation in and with others, the Foucauldian subject finds it in the aesthetic pursuit of individual self-fashioning. The resistant subjectivity turns inwards to reshape its own practices, rather than outwards to contesting the normative (and oppressive) hierarchies that stigmatise and often foreclose alternative forms of being.[76] As McNay warns, "…it is unclear how such an ethics translates into a politics of difference that could initiate deep-seated social change."[77] These individual projects of creative self-fashioning can be, of course, deeply political.[78] Aesthetic acts of transgression, especially of rigidly policed norms, are innately contestatory acts, even when they happen in isolated and spontaneous fashions. They seek to destabilise — and potentially dismantle — that which was accepted as the order of things. But there is a substantive difference between actions that have a political valence and politics. The work of politics involves building the intersubjective consensus necessary to participate in political struggle, to engage with others and articulate a common viewpoint, to formulate strategies and tactics, to act in concert. All of these vital aspects of political agency are eclipsed in Foucault's aesthetic individualism. Because of its "intense subjectivism"[79] and suspicion of the social, his theoretical apparatus cannot demonstrate how the transgressive performance leads to a transformative politics.

Foucault's ethics of the self, then, might be an improvement on his earlier determinism, but his account still has two profound shortcomings when it comes to grappling racisms. First, he fails to link the ethical practices of self-making up to the structuring hierarchies that make certain selves possible and foreclose others. Individual subjects' capacities to act otherwise against the attempted regulation of their conduct obviously depends largely on the kinds of situations they find themselves in. For example, Black feminists like Audre Lorde too have stressed the importance of "self-care" as

[71] Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 785.
[72] See Allen, "Discourse, Power, and Subjectivation;" McNay, *Foucault and Feminism;* and Own, *Maturity and Modernity.*
[73] Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," 261.
[74] McNay, *Foucault and Feminism,* 180.
[75] Allen, "Discourse, Power, and Subjectivation" 16. Said, *Power, Politics, and Culture,* 15.
[76] McNay, *Foucault and Feminism,* 180.
[77] McNay, *Foucault and Feminism,* 177.
[78] Owen, *Maturity and Modernity,* 206.
[79] McNay, *Foucault and Feminism,* 161.

a radical strategy. But in their hands, such a project is a specific strategic response to the intersectional oppressions that Black women face at the hands of White people, on the one hand, and Black men, on the other. It is not, in this sense, a general approach to the ethical life, meant to be adopted equally by privileged White bankers as by poor Black mothers. Foucault, however, overlooks the fact that the hierarchical arrangement of the social necessarily means that self-care for certain kinds of advantaged subjects all too often comes at the expense of subordinated groups, particularly women of color. For example, as more White middle class women have pursued their own self-realization in the late capitalist workforce, they have shifted the burden of their households' domestic and child-rearing labor to a precarious class of Black, Latinx, and Asian women, taking advantage of a largely unregulated labor market to exploit carers and cleaners without accountability.[80] In the face of these compounding caring obligations for others — both paying White families and one's own — Lorde's suggestions that Black women find ways to centre themselves and their needs is a more transgressive gesture than Foucault's own ethical turn.

Second, these individual acts of creative self-determination are not enough to unmake technologies of racist misrecognition or to give Black communities the resources, protections and political rights that justice demands. As generations of Black intellectuals and writers have noted, changing one's relation to oneself may be an important task for combatting the inferiority complex that racisms attempt to inculcate in Black subjects. But it doesn't itself do much to dismantle those structures of racist reification and devaluation in the first place. Challenging racist discourses and dismantling racial hierarchies will involve much more political coordination, labor, and inter-racial solidarity than individualist "lines of flight" can provide.[81] This is particularly true when in today's political conjuncture where the weaponization of identity has both facilitated the capture of political energies by corporate multiculturalism and deflected from the kinds of substantive collective mobilization needed to contest neoliberal disinvestment and state violence. As Gilroy notes, it's a minute to midnight,[82] and fights over identitarian racial etiquette often do more to distract from the political organizing needed to challenge the precaritization of the labor force, the mass incarceration of surplus populations, the heightened privatization of capital, and the resurgence of racist populisms in western "liberal" democracies. Without a concrete account of where individual subjects are situated within stratified orders, Foucault offers an elitist project of self-experimentation that, at best, proves ineffectual at producing social change and, at worst, is complicit with the identity-pedalling market logic of late capitalism.

Foucault might have been able to avoid such a political dead-end if he had either adopted a more Gramscian view of power relations, on the one hand, or a stronger set of normative ideals, on the other. Both theoretical interventions would help his genealogical criticism to better differentiate between the kinds of normalisation and resistance that privileged individuals engage in from the situational obstacles specific to subaltern or oppressed groups. Under Foucault's diagnostic lens, all individual subjects stand in a similar position to the institutional apparatuses that he seeks to investigate. What often goes unexplored, then, in this view of the social is the differing "relations of force" that distribute capital and status, mechanisms of consensus and of coercion, across racial, gendered- and class-stratified milieus. Stuart Hall writes, Foucault "saves for himself 'the political' with his insistence on power, but he denies himself a politics because he has no idea of 'relations of force.'"[83] Ironically, Foucault's attempt to get away from the functionalism of vulgar Marxism ends

[80] Joan Tronto, *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).
[81] Hans Herbert Kögler, "The Self-empowered Subject: Habermas, Foucault and Hermeneutic Reflexivity," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 22, no. 4 (1996): 36.
[82] Gilroy, "Black in the Union Jack?" public panel.
[83] Stuart Hall, "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall by Larry Grossberg and Others," in *Essential Writings, Vol. 1: The Foundations of Cultural Studies,* ed. David Morley (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2019) 228.

up trapping him in an altogether different reduction of the social — one in which "power" is responsible for everything and actual political actors are displaced from view.[84] As David Garland notes, "…even if we accept his structural or relational approach to power, we still need to know who are the people in positions of power and how they came to be there."[85] For all Foucault's methodological commitment to the concrete workings of power, he doesn't situate his analyses of modern disciplinary and normalising institutions within a broader sociological picture of which groups are systematically positioned to have "power-over" others. He also tends to overestimate the degree to which even disciplinary apparatuses like the prison serve as sites of contestation and struggle, of alternative decodings and oppositional practices. For example, Foucault attributes the "success" of the modern prison system to the role it has played in dividing and domesticating working-class dissent. But as David Garland points out, Foucault's account ignores the complex interplay of values and aims that actual prisons actualised — not least of which was a cross-class attachment to retribution.[86] His view of "power" remains surprisingly depoliticised.

Without an account of where different subjects stand in relation to these disciplinary apparatuses, his genealogies too run the risk of treating all cows like they are grey, and therefore rendering discrete instances of domination, violence, normalisation, and subjection together. This sort of ethical ambiguity is obviously of concern for diagnostic critiques of the racial present. Racialized and engendered subjects face different degrees and kinds of harms, depending on their positionality within interlocking structures of domination. For example, the alienation that a White middle-class woman faces in corporate work environments designed for and by White middle-class men are not the same as the alienation and diminution that a Black middle-class woman faces when she interfaces with a health system whose practices and "regimes of truth" deny Black women's voices and their suffering. Generally speaking, the Black subject is vulnerable to violence, neglect, exploitation, expropriation, silencing, and inferiorization that is dialectically related to the advantages of — and often perpetuated by — White subjects. That should be a social difference that makes an ethical difference to political theorists. And yet Foucault's genealogical method lacks the normative edge to make those distinctions. He explicitly rejects the notion that the critic ought to legislate ethical values for others, declaring that "the role of the intellectual is not to tell others what they have to do."[87]

Foucault's ethical ambivalence owes, to a large extent, to his skepticism of universal moral claims. Across his oeuvre, there is no talk of liberal ideas like justice or equality, or of Left Hegelian diagnostic concepts like domination or alienation. Foucault remains, in this sense, profoundly Nietzschean. Ethical values precipitate out of particular contingent assemblages of discourses, and their versions of the "good life" tend to naturalise particular ideas of the human being in ways that normalise and homogenise the diversity of individual subjectivity. In that sense, they remain always-already the product of power relations and cannot lay claim to any transcendental or universal meta-ethical grounds. The role of the genealogist, then, is to historicise and thereby problematise the existing norms.[88] "…[T]he critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them," Foucault argued.[89] The practice of critique is meant to free individuals to pursue their own creative self-determination, not to dictate a set of ethical best practices or moral norms that are "most aligned"

[84] David Garland, "Foucault's 'Discipline and Punish'--An Exposition and Critique," *American Bar Foundation Research Journal* 11, no. 4 (1986): 853. See also Kögler, "The Self-empowered Subject," 28.
[85] Garland, "Foucault's 'Discipline and Punish,'" 878.
[86] Garland, "Foucault's 'Discipline and Punish,'" 879. See too Gilmore, *Golden Gulag.*
[87] Michel Foucault and Lawrence D. Kritzman, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984*. (New York: Routledge, 1988), 265.
[88] Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 781.
[89] Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?," in *Michel Foucault: Ethics, Vol. I.,* 319.

with one person's understanding of human flourishing.[90] In many respects, the closest that Foucault comes to acknowledging that there are localised moral norms that could be deployed to assess social relations is when he makes small allowances in interviews: "The farthest I would go is to say that perhaps one must not be for consensuality, but one must be against non-consensuality."[91] It is difficult to see how Foucault's radical individualist ethic can provide the theoretical toolkit for that sort of criticism. Writing about the normative difficulties facing postmodernist feminisms, McNay notes that "on the whole, if feminism is to retain a moral force to its declaration that the subordination of women is unjust, then some form of legislative rationality which enables distinctions between progressive and oppressive actions must be retained."[92] On similar grounds, I worry that Foucault's anti-essentialism proves a stumbling block for effective antiracist diagnosis. Neither a celebration of difference for difference's sake nor an ethic of aesthetic self-overcoming can separate out instances of normalised racial subjectivation, say, from racist domination in any straight-forward sense.

I question too the usefulness of Foucauldian genealogy when it comes thinking the *futural* politics of antiracist transformation. He remains unwilling to provide even a thin ethical vision of what a better social order might look like. This is because Foucault remained inherently skeptical of what he saw to be "utopian" thinking, both in Marxist and liberal circles.[93] He argued that these anticipatory moments proved more often than not to be yet another form of mystification. Yet as Garland and others have pointed out, not all forms of social transformation reflect the intensification of power relations.[94] In certain instances, an institutional apparatus does become less oppressive, or a social formation less unequal. The critical theorist need not be wedded to an idealist and misguided teleology of Civilizational Progress in order to acknowledge that certain kinds of political arrangements are superior to others against certain normative metrics.[95] Not all attempts to imagine the future otherwise are normalising traps. It depends on how these ethical discourses relate to concrete practices, either of subaltern resistance or of hegemonic conformity. For example, prison abolitionists and decarceral activists in the United States have worked to prefigure alternative social arrangements, from community-mediated dispute resolution to targeted mental health services.[96] As Dylan Rodriguez writes, "abolition is not merely a practice of negation…but [is] also a radically imaginative, generative, and socially productive communal (and community-building) practice. Abolition seeks (as it performs) a radical reconfiguration of justice, subjectivity, and social formation that does not depend on the existence of either the carceral state…or carceral power as such."[97] For prison abolitionists like Rodriguez and Angela Davis, these oppositional forms of life are collective and social endeavours. They are only made possible through the provisioning of new institutions that actualise relations based on mutuality, respect for difference, and human dignity. If Foucault had engaged more fully with the "…rigorous and imaginative thinking of the political imaginary that rests in the tradition of the oppressed,"[98] then he might have realised that there were more pragmatic, conditional and dialectical ways of thinking the relationship between *collective* praxis and forward-looking social theory.

Foucauldian genealogy, then, might be productive when it comes to denaturalising and problematising the racial present, but that doesn't necessarily mean that his methodology provides either the

[90] Owen, *Maturity and Modernity,* 202.
[91] Michel Foucault and Kritzman, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, 379.
[92] McNay, *Foucault and Feminism,* 129.
[93] In his view, such visions of emancipatory futures relied on the misleading presumption that there could ever be a world without power. Paul Rabinow, "Introduction," in *The Foucault Reader,* ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 27.
[94] Garland, ""Foucault's 'Discipline and Punish,'" 876.
[95] Allen, *The End of Progress,* 215-216.
[96] Allegra M. McLeod, "Envisioning Abolition Democracy," *Harvard Law Review* 133, no. 1 (2019): 1637-1647.
[97] Dylan Rodriguez, "Abolition as Praxis of Human Being: A Foreword," *Harvard Law Review* 133, no. 1 (2019): 1576.
[98] Wehilye, *Habeas Viscus,* 82.

normative toolkit or the ethical horizon to orient struggles for an antiracist and democratic future. His undifferentiated account of power relations, his refusal of robust normative claims, and his understanding of political agency through an aesthetic individualism all contribute to an understanding of the social that cannot account for the distinctiveness of racialization as a political project. It is this radical withdrawal from politics and into the aesthetic in particular that German Critical Theorists, after Habermas, discount as a theoretical dead-end. Instead of surrendering to a deep-seated pessimism about the possibilities of Enlightenment reason, the later generations of the Frankfurt School sought to revitalise the possibilities of immanent critique on new, more stable ethical foundations. In the next section, I look in particular at how Axel Honneth takes up that charge in his project of immanent critique as normative reconstruction.

Axel Honneth and (racist) misrecognition

For decades, the debate between the French and German approaches to Critical Theory centered around the work of Foucault and Jurgen Habermas, respectively. The divergences between these two thinkers are now well-trodden terrain. It is not my intention to revisit those debates here. Instead, I want to explore the methodological contrast between Foucauldian genealogy, on the one hand, and Axel Honneth's approach to immanent critique, on the other. Rather than work to denaturalise the limits that the social has contingently placed upon the modern self, a la Foucault, Honneth's Critical Theory is engaged in a more proscriptive and forward-looking project — one that seeks to reconstruct the ethical indices for critique from the field of everyday praxis and then appropriate the normative surplus of those ideals to indict inadequate social relations.[99] Not all social relations are ethically suspect, in Honneth's view. Some provide the institutional and subjective preconditions for individual freedom. This method of normative reconstruction, in turn, ought to be distinguished from the context-specific form of hermeneutic criticism advocated by thinkers like Michael Walzer. What differentiates Frankfurt School Critical Theory as a method, Honneth contends, is that it seeks to ground its criticisms on context-transcending ideals that "can justifiably be shown to be the expression of progress in the process of social rationalization."[100] The mere existence of certain ideals or values in a community's praxis is not itself enough to legitimate relying on those ethical indices. Reconstructive critique, therefore, can provide a more stable ethical vantage point than either normative political theory or communitarian-inspired forms of hermeneutic criticism from which to diagnose social suffering and to evaluate the possibilities of emancipatory political change.[101] In this respect, I argue that Honneth's Left-Hegelian critical theory offers a more robust normative toolkit and a more gradated view of sociality than does Foucauldian genealogy. This ought to serve Honneth well when it comes to distinguishing between forms of racialized socialisation, on the one hand, and practices of racist domination and oppression, on the other. But perhaps most importantly for antiracist criticism, Honneth embraces a phenomenological view of misrecognition that foregrounds how racisms make themselves felt at the level of lived experience.[102] Reckoning with the hermeneutic vantage point is, I contend, a critical part of understanding how racialized subjects are empowered

[99] Honneth, "Reconstructive Social Criticism with a Genealogical Proviso," 48.
[100] Honneth, "Reconstructive Social Criticism with a Genealogical Proviso," 51.
[101] Axel Honneth, "A Social Pathology of Reason: On the Intellectual Legacy of the Frankfurt School," in *Pathologies of Reason: On the Legacy of Critical Theory,* trans. James Ingram (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 29.
[102] Axel Honneth, "Recognition and Moral Obligation," *Social Research* 64, no. 1 (1997): 22-23.

or disempowered by their social situations. In particular, it allows for a diagnosis of the subjective obstacles to healthy self-determination that individual subjects might face in racial orders.[103]

In Honneth's view, an effective form of immanent critique will begin from the emancipatory interests generated by social praxis itself.[104] Contradictions and crises in a given social milieu produce pre-theoretical or emergent experiences of injustice, social pathology or moral failure. The oppressed or dominated individual, then, often expresses these forms of suffering as grievances, either against specific Others or against social institutions or groups. It is the role of the critical theorist, Honneth, contends, to first identify these intramundane moments of dissent and second to articulate how they relate to broader social and material problems.[105] If you look to the claims that individuals today are making about their own sense of injury, he claims, they often centre on the notion that the wronged have been misrecognized or disrespected.[106] Their dignity has been undercut in some vital way. From these phenomenological experiences, then, the critical theorist can reconstruct the normative expectations that these individuals had that were left unsatisfied. When we do so, Honneth contends, we find that individuals in modern social orders expect certain kinds of intersubjective recognition from others. This is why he argues that a Hegelian concept of recognition can both describe how individual subjects relate to others *and* provide a normative account of ethical self-realization. Certain kinds of social acknowledgement are necessary for individuals to relate to themselves as autonomous and empowered subjects, Honneth contends.[107] The content of that recognition might shift from social context to context, but the formal need to be recognised is a universalizable condition of individual agency — and therefore can be used as an ethical index for critique.[108] In lieu of a Habermasian Critical Theory centered on the discursive possibilities for rational agreement, then, Honneth embraced an ethic of freedom actualized through social recognition.[109]

Honneth's idea of recognition comes from Hegel who famously argued that certain forms of intersubjective acknowledgement were necessary for individuals to come become conscious of themselves as objects for the other.[110] But unlike existentialist thinkers like Kojève or Sartre who turn to Hegel's master-slave dialectic, Honneth instead looks at a less remarked-upon aspect of Hegel's writings — his phenomenological account of the love relationship.[111] When an individual is in love, Hegel contended, they discover their freedom *through* their acts of self-abnegation in the face of the Other's needs and wants.[112] Rather than presenting itself as a constraint or an imposition, these loving acts of self-limitation makes them who they are. For Honneth, this dyadic paradigm of mutual care can model more than just the nature of interpersonal love. It also provides a framework through which to understand any social relation in which two people can become free and self-determining through their commitments to others. This is what distinguishes "social freedom" from other thinner conceptions of autonomous action.[113] Honneth argues that intersubjective recognition relations, then, provide a key mechanism for both social integration, on the one hand, and individual autonomy,

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[103] Lois McNay makes a structurally similar argument about the importance of the phenomenological for feminist criticism. See Lois McNay, "Agency and Experience: Gender as a Lived Relation," *Sociological Review* 52 (2004): 173-90.
[104] Honneth, *Disrespect,* 63.
[105] Honneth, "A Social Pathology of Reason," 37.
[106] Honneth, "Recognition and Moral Obligation," 23.
[107] Honneth, "Recognition and Moral Obligation," 27-29.
[108] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition,* 147.
[109] Honneth too follows Habermas' intersubjective turn as a way to reground reason and the normative in social life. But whereas Habermas focused on the intersubjective practice of communication, Honneth looks at what the practices of social recognition. McNay, *Against Recognition,* 132.
[110] G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J.B. Baillie (London: Allen and Unwin, 1949), 230-231.
[111] Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition,* 45-47.
[112] G.W.F. Hegel and Leo Rauch, *Hegel and the Human Spirit: A Translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805-6) with commentary* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983), 107-110.
[113] For an in-depth account of Hegel's concept of social freedom, see Axel Honneth, *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom: Hegel's Social Theory*, trans. Ladislaus Löb (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010).

on the other. But the specific kinds of recognition required to achieve individual autonomy will vary depending on the sociohistorical context.[114] In (Euro)modern societies, Honneth contends, there are three kinds of recognition relations that individuals need in order to become fully functioning, autonomous beings. All subjects need to be loved as a unique being by a specific Other; to be respected as an equal human by the state and general Others; and to be esteemed as a particular subject with talents and skills by concrete others in a cooperative community.[115] Taken together, individuals who experience recognition in all three of these spheres of social life will develop the self-confidence, the self-respect, and the self-esteem necessary to act autonomously.[116]

Honneth contends that his critical account of recognition provides not only a formal account of the ethical life, but it can also anchor a theory of social justice. This is because the types of mutual acknowledgement necessary for successful self-determination are embedded and secured through key social institutions.[117] In Euromodern societies, he contends that these autonomy-enabling forms of recognition are realised in and through the family partnership (love); the state and legal regime of juridical rights (equality); and the capitalist markets (social esteem).[118] "What makes this new, discursive view of freedom 'social' is the fact that it regards a certain institution of social reality no longer as a mere addition to freedom, but as its medium and condition…Only if such institutions are given in social reality can individuals relate to their own wills within that framework in a way that ensures reflexive freedom," he writes.[119] This means that he doesn't see all forms of socialization as problematic, nor that he is incapable of diagnosing the differential ways in which individual subjects are assimilated into the franchise, say, or the capitalist labor market. When a given institution is failing to provide the appropriate forms of acknowledgement to an individual or class of people, then, a social critic can describe it as unjust. It is failing to secure the social bases of individual freedom for all, or it is doing so on asymmetrical or biased terms. In this respect, Honneth contends that all struggles against injustice can best be understood as struggles for recognition. The struggle to secure voting rights for Black people in the U.S., for example, was motivated by the Black community's desire to be recognised as moral equals and citizens deserving of a say in how they are governed. In turn, the push for fairer wages and working regulations represents workers' interest in having their productive contributions appropriately recognized, both by their employer and by the state.[120] Honneth's critical theory, then, adopts a negative approach to theorizing justice. The critic begins from feelings of moral discontent and then seeks to connect those affects back up to an analysis of the social pathologies that prevent individual flourishing.

Honneth's method of immanent critique appears to address some of the shortcomings I identified in Foucault's work. First, Honneth foregrounds a more optimistic view of the social. Sociality is no longer only a site of coercion and alienation. Consent is not always a con. Instead, individuals can struggle to reappropriate the forms of life suitable to their own flourishing. The crucial project for critique, then, is not to condemn all forms of social influence or conditioning, but to distinguish between those which are problematic and those which are freedom-enhancing. This is an analytical task for which Foucault's normative ambivalence does not suit. But Honneth, after other Left Hegelians like Habermas, does not shy away from making ethical and normative judgements about which kinds of social orders are conducive to the good life. His universalist commitments give Honneth's critique both a stable normative measure by which to separate the human from the

[114] Axel Honneth, "Recognition and Justice: Outline of a Plural Theory of Justice," *Acta Sociologica* 47, no. 4 (2004): 355.
[115] Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition,* 146.
[116] Honneth, "Recognition and Moral Obligation," 26.
[117] Honneth, "Recognition and Justice," 358-359.
[118] Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?: A Political-philosophical Exchange* (London: Verso, 2003).
[119] Honneth, *Freedom's Right,* 42.
[120] Fraser and Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?*

inhumane and a political imaginary towards which to direct antiracist struggle. Equally importantly, Honneth adopts a less solipsistic account of individual subject formation than that offered by Foucault. His sense of the self is fundamentally social, and successful self-determination is reached through reciprocal relations with Others rather than in aesthetic acts of individualistic self-fashioning. In this sense, Honneth foregrounds the other side of the dialectics of subjectivation — that of "communicative rationality."[121] The Honnethian subject is first and foremost a resistant agent, one who is empowered to contest the status quo rather than one whose subjectivity is coercively shaped by it.

But perhaps most importantly for theorizing racisms, Honneth's critical theory provides a window onto the action-theoretical plane of individual resistance. Unlike Foucault — who was skeptical of phenomenology — Honneth gives critical weight to lived experience. He foregrounds a phenomenology of social suffering that seeks to explain, from the first-person perspective, why some social actors resist the status quo rather than acquiescing to their domination.[122] When the Other fails to provide the recognition that an individual believes they deserve, they experience that failure as a moral slight. This is not just an epistemic moment of disclosure. It sparks an affective response of anger over this perceived instance of disrespect. These instances of misrecognition, then, make themselves felt at the level of individuals' pre-theoretical experience. For his part, Honneth explains this possibility of subjective self-reflection by drawing on the work of pragmatist George Herbert Mead. Mead argued that the self could be productively understood as a composite of an "I" — a deciding subject who made choices — and a "Me" — an object of reflection that the "I" could then identify with or seek to change through its futural praxis.[123] In the moment of recognitive failure, then, the "I" comes to see how their objective self is misrepresented by the Other's gaze. It is then up to the misrecognized subject to decide how to respond. When the moral harm is substantial enough, Honneth argues, they are often motivated to contest the social terms by which they are seen and evaluated.[124] This means that Honneth's version of immanent critique is more directly linked to the possibility of emancipatory politics than is Foucauldian genealogy. There is a collective vision of social struggle here. In particular, recent social movements against sexism, racism, xenophobia, heteronormativity, and other forms of identity-driven or symbolic diminution seem to echo Honneth's critical interpretation that people mobilise against the status quo when they feel they have been misrecognized and disrespected.

Honneth's account of the misrecognized subject opens up the analytical space for thinking the ethics of racial subject formation. From the first-person vantage, 'race' is both given and reflexively negotiated. On the one hand, 'race' can serve as a hard limit on an individual's social visibility. For Black people, "no amount of visibility will alter the ways in which one is perceived," Claudia Rankine writes.[125] On the other, the mask that the White world forces the Black subject to wear does not exhaust the Black subjectivity.[126] Individuals can exert some control over how they respond to and reclaim a sense of their own racial positionality and what sorts of identifications it may or may not provide. In this respect, racial identity cannot be seen purely as a site of disciplinary control, even as it may have gotten its start as a symbolic category of human types through a disciplinary apparatus of labor expropriation and violence. Instead, racial subjectivation becomes a problem space in its own right — one that both individuals have to negotiate in their everyday lives and that racial groups

[121] Allen, "Discourse, Power, and Subjectivation," 5.
[122] Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition,* 139-140.
[123] Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition,* 71-75.
[124] Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition,* 140.
[125] Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Graywolf Press, 2014), 24.
[126] Hall, "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance," 216. See also David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 2007).

must often deal with collectively when it comes to pursuing their own self-determination. Honneth's phenomenology of misrecognition too echoes many testimonial accounts of "…the anger built up through experience and the quotidian struggles against dehumanization every brown or black person lives simply because of skin color."[127] In these instances — when no one will sit next to a Black man on a train or when a Black academic's credentials are questioned and undercut — Black subjects become all too aware of how these Others are perceiving them. In this respect, Honneth's work can account for the fact that even seemingly "small" instances of racism can have traumatic consequences for the oppressed. For these moments of racist dehumanisation strikes at the heart of Black subjects' sense of their own humanity. And they, predictability, can provoke exasperation, rage, fatigue in the misrecognized.

Antiracist criticism requires an attention to the lived experience of domination if it is a) to diagnostically understand the motivational, affective, and epistemic harms that are suffered by the oppressed, and b) to identify emergent forms of suffering that might not yet be articulated in political or moral terms. Fanon stresses this point in *Black Skin, White Masks* when he argues that critics must take the existential situation that racially oppressed subjects face if they are to understand what it feels like to be a Black subject.[128] But Honneth's attention to the pre-theoretical substratum of moral disrespect is important too for accessing the social suffering of racially oppressed groups. After all, political discourse all too often privileges elite speakers and mainstream White imaginaries over Black and other nonwhite voices or their concerns.[129] These epistemic hierarchies, in turn, also structure the academy and the discipline of political theory.[130] As Tressie McMillan Cottom points out, many Black women are still only treated as "experts" when it comes to testifying to their own experiences.[131] As such, when they want to contest the dominant constructions of justice, freedom, and equality they tend to frame their arguments in personal terms in order to garner epistemic authority. But as Black feminists remind us, their lived experience of interlocking oppressions is also an important source of knowledge about the ways in which the social order actually functions.[132] For example, Cottom points out that Black women may be best positioned to identify the pathology of the beauty complex, its affective entrapment of White women, and the capitalist exploitation and expropriation of their labor and resources — and this is because they cannot be fully interpellated by it.[133] It is easier to see that the game is rigged when you never even have the chance to compete for the prize. Phenomenologically oriented critique like Honneth's, then, ought to be more capable of identifying what we might call, after Raymond Williams, "emergent" forms of pathological racial subordination and the harms that attend them.[134]

The problems inflicted by racist misrecognition — and the politics of White supremacy that these practices support — have long been central to antiracist activism and theorizing. And yet these are not critical conversations that Honneth engages with in his work. His theories of social domination and misrecognition don't tackle 'race' explicitly, nor does he spend any time thinking through the relation of European colonialism to modernity. This begs the question of just how effective Honneth's critical theory will prove when it comes to negotiating the discrete problems presented by racist dehumanization, racial hierarchies, and the politics of racial closure. As I explore in the next

[127] Rankine, *Citizen*, 24.
[128] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 90.
[129] Honneth notes that participating in public debates about justice requires learned competencies that are not as readily available to dominated or otherwise marginalised subjects. I am less amenable to the idea that the problem lies with oppressed speakers, but instead argue that the exclusionary thrust of elitist discourse owes more to the privileged interlocutors who fail to listen with epistemic humility and interpretative generosity to discourses that do not sound like the ones they are familiar with. Honneth, *Disrespect,* 85-87.
[130] Mills, "The Whiteness of Political Philosophy."
[131] Tressie McMillan Cottom, *Thick: and other essays* (New York: The New Press, 2019), 23.
[132] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought,* 257-260.
[133] Cottom, *Thick,* 43.
[134] Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: Verso, 2015).

section, there is more than just a substantive mismatch here. In particular, Honneth's theory of subjectivation and his optimistic Hegelian reading of Euromodernity obstruct his criticism from truly grappling with racial oppression and antiracist resistance.

Honneth's white-washed critical theory

In many respects, Honneth's turn to the struggle for recognition would seem to be an easy analytical fit for theorizing identity-driven social movements, including the 20th century push for African American civil rights in the U.S. Yet I contend that his broader socio-theoretical project is not well positioned to deal with the ethical-existential pathologies that White supremacy can cause. The conceptual problems begin with Honneth's universalist aspirations — and the strategies he adopts to justify his theory on a metanormative level. He must find a way to ground his claim that the ideal of individual self-determination is the primary and universal good without making reference to a problematic metaphysics of the Human. Honneth proposes that there are two distinctive ways in which Critical Theory can approach this thorny metanormative issue.[135] Either theorists can return to some thinner notion of a philosophical anthropology, or they can look to a non-teleological philosophy of history that still makes room for descriptive accounts of past progress. Throughout his career, Honneth's work has vacillated between the two justificatory narratives as he moved from a primarily psycho-social account of recognition to one that had more institutionalist and sociological roots. Neither approach, however, serves him well when it comes to thinking the ethical-existential problematic of racial subjectivation. Honneth's philosophical anthropology relies on contested psychological literature and abstracts away from the power relations that shape practices of individual subjectivation. This leads him to adopt an overly simplistic account of individual agency — one that assumes away the epistemic, affective, and agential obstacles to political resistance. In turn, Honneth's progressive account of sociocultural development foregrounds a problematic Eurocentric account of the "good life," one that negates alternative forms of living and sanitises the historical emergence of contemporary Europe. This background sociological frame ensures that his work is limited to correcting for "misfires" in existing institutional apparatuses like the racially segmented capitalist market.[136] Nor can his critical theory diagnose the internal relations between Euromodern social institutions' ethical promises and their actual practices of racialized exclusion, expropriation, and domination.

In his earlier work on recognition, Honneth relies primarily on philosophical anthropology to justify his ethical account of individual self-realisation. He argues that this need for social recognition is a necessary prerequisite for human ego formation. To demonstrate this, he adopts an explicitly psychological account of subject formation that draws heavily on D.W. Winnicott's psychoanalytic theory of child development. Winnicott posited that the infant remains anxiously dependent on the mother in the early stages of life, to such an extent that he can only become confident enough to be on his own if he can trust in her care.[137] Winnicott's work here is notably controversial in developmental psychology. [138] Yet in his account of subjectivation, Honneth generalises the dyadic

[135] Honneth, *Disrespect,* 21-22, 38.
[136] Jörg Schaub, "Misdevelopments, Pathologies, and Normative Revolutions: Normative Reconstruction as Method of Critical Theory." *Critical Horizons: Journal of Social & Critical Theory* 16, no. 2 (2015): 107-30.
[137] Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition,* 90-93.
[138] Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 48.

structure of that constitutive mother-child relationship into a model of healthy social relations centred around reciprocity. Just as the child requires the loving affirmation of the mother to become confident enough to be on its own, the citizen requires the respect of the state and his fellow citizens in order to become sure of his equal standing within the polity.[139] Under this psychological reading, racial subjection places the stigmatised individual in a wrong or otherwise formally dysfunctional relation to his affective investment in himself. He doubts his agential capacities, self-worth, or self-understanding. This prevents him from acting autonomously in social institutions dominated by White others, many of which have near monopolies on capital, rights, and symbolic status. In a descriptive sense, Honneth is not wholly wrong about the psychological consequences of systematic racism, as social psychologists have documented. The persistent exposure to White supremacist logics and racist abuse can impact an individual's sense of self in ways that inhibit self-confidence and self-esteem.[140]

But the ligature that he sketches between the lived experience of social disrespect and the struggle for recognition, either individual or collective, is far too linear and straightforward. As McNay notes, Honneth's existential phenomenology moves too quickly and too cleanly from the level of social suffering to the prospect of resistant agency. "Honneth's social theory lacks an explanation of how this underlying affective impulse [of moral disrespect] is mediated through symbolic and material power relations and he finishes with a naive, spontaneist account of action," she writes.[141] He assumes that individuals who feel themselves to be unjustly disrespected will a) experience that disrespect as a social wrong, b) interpret that wrong correctly, and c) be motivated to contest the institutional apparatus and social norms that encode them in these unjust ways. None of these assumptions are justified.[142] Political agency, especially for subaltern subjects, depends on a more complex assemblage of power asymmetries, proximity to capital, political know-how, vulnerabilities to violence and coercion, access to the interpretative resources to understand one's suffering on political terms, and the availability of collective solidarity.[143] Part of the problem, Oliver notes, is the fact that Honneth isn't all that interested in subjectivation as a psychoanalytic phenomenon.[144] In his hands, the processes of becoming a self are largely frictionless and tethered to unproblematic relations with a sympathetic and caring Other. By generalising this image of the love relation to other forms of intersubjective sociality, power is only ever present *ex post facto*. It is a barrier or a source of constraint that inflicts itself upon always-already formed subjects, who are capable of recognising and rejecting it as such.[145] But part of the issue too lies with the fact that Honneth conflates the existential conditions of privileged subjects living in Euromodernity into the formal preconditions for all autonomy-valuing individuals. Mills warns against this trend in idealizing social theories: "The human agents as visualized in the theory will also often have completely unrealistic capacities attributed to them—unrealistic even for the privileged minority, let alone those subordinated in different ways, who would not have had an equal opportunity for their natural capacities to develop, and who will in fact typically be disabled in crucial respects."[146] This is not to deny agency to the Black subject (or to Black subjects), but instead to recognise that the agential is a political topography in its own right.

[139] Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition,* 93-96, 98.
[140] A strong sense of ethnic identity, in turn, has been shown to help insulate African Americans from the damaging effects of anti-blackness. Monnica Terwilliger Williams, Lloyd Kevin Chapman, Judy Wong, and Eric Turkheimer, "The Role of Ethnic Identity in Symptoms of Anxiety and Depression in African Americans" *Psychiatry Research* 199, no. 1 (2012) 31-36.
[141] Lois McNay, *Against Recognition* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 127.
[142] McNay, *Against Recognition,* 139-140.
[143] Finlayson, "On Mountains and Molehills."
[144] Oliver, *Witnessing,* 48.
[145] McNay, *Against Recognition,* 135.
[146] Mills, "Ideal Theory as Ideology," 76.

Under White supremacy, Black people and other nonwhite racial groups can interiorise anti-black ideologies or adopt strategic habits of self-silencing and self-censorship. They can suffer depression and anxiety after persistent devaluation and neglect. Or oppressed subjects can become affectively invested in narratives of self-improvement or imaginative roles that are ultimately doomed to fail. As Fanon points out, racial colonialism doesn't just place Black and indigenous peoples in subordinate positions. It can also dislocate, alienate, and disempower them.[147] In these contexts, demands for recognition can function primarily to naturalize an unjust status quo,[148] rather than serving as an emancipatory practice. Yet Honneth's idealistic account of the self overlooks the ways in which power hierarchies can shape individual subjectivities from the outset, trapping them in, say, a "psychic attachment to…subordinating modes of femininity"[149] and other constraining forms of self-relation. He ends up validating the perceptions and affective reactions of individuals without indexing that first-person vantage to a structural account of power.[150] This raises clear diagnostic concerns, especially within racial orders. In particular, his critical theory is not well-positioned to reckon with inferiority complexes, ideological obfuscation, affective disempowerment, and reactionary forms of political solidarity.[151] For instance, White-led institutions can offer tokenistic forms of acknowledgement that win the support of certain Black subjects without shifting the "relations of force" that perpetuate White hegemony and Black oppression. This is why both Fanon and Lorde reject the struggle for White recognition and instead argue that Black people should work to define themselves, for themselves.[152]

Nor can Honneth separate out these forms of "false" and unethical recognition when they entrap privileged subjects. For example, James Baldwin and the more recent work on critical whiteness studies has examined the ways that White subjects come to recognise themselves as "White" and therefore think they deserve superior treatment, privileges, and status.[153] This affective attachment to Whiteness can ultimately be self-defeating though. It displaces many White subjects from a more objective understanding of their own class exploitation and patriarchal domination, on the one hand, and locks them into ineffective political coalitions driven by White elites.[154] But Honneth argues that these forms of ideological recognition can only be critically evaluated *ex post facto,* once a social order has "learned" from its mistakes.[155] (To demonstrate his point, Honneth gives the example of the 1950s housewife who derived her sense of self-esteem from her ability to perform the duties of a caring mother and wife.)[156] Today's critics can now recognise those forms of social recognition for what they were — ideological traps that gave middle-class White women a certain sense of self-worth at the expense of their intimate domination and domestic exploitation within the patriarchal household. But Honneth contends that such a criticism can only be "grounded" once the recognition order has progressed past that point, so to speak. His defense here against the ideology charge, however, is wholly inadequate. Honneth's confidence that the passage of time will unveil or disclose "ideological" or "disempowering" forms of social recognition relies heavily on his mistaken and overly optimistic teleology of historical progress. If we adopt a more materialist view of history, then there is no guarantee that a chronologically later social order will "uncover" the ideological mistakes of its predecessors. Nor that it won't produce its own new forms of oppression and social normalisation.

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147 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 78.
148 Allen, "Recognizing Domination," 31.
149 Amy Allen, "Recognizing Domination: Recognition and Power in Honneth's Critical Theory," *Journal of Power* 3, no. 1 (2010): 26.
150 This is one of Nancy Fraser's compelling criticisms of Honneth's critical theory in *Redistribution or Recognition?.*
151 McNay, *Against Recongition,* 147.
152 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 197. bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 22.
153 Baldwin, *The cross of redemption*, 12-18.
154 See, for example, Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction* and Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason,* 16.
155 Axel Honneth, "Recognition as Ideology," in *Recognition and Power: Axel Honneth and the Tradition of Critical Social Theory,* eds. Bert Van Den Brink and David Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 326-327.
156 Honneth, "Recognition as Ideology," 338-339.

But fundamentally, the notion that we might not be able to tell if a certain demand for racial recognition is ideological or unethical in the contemporary conjuncture is incorrect. This is the fundamental task of social critique — to make distinctions between the ethical and unethical, to disclose new forms of domination and to point the way towards more emancipatory futures. Honneth can only fall back into such an argumentative stance if he refuses to expand his socio-diagnostic criterion beyond the level of the individual subject and his intersubjective assimilation to the status quo. The phenomenological experience of racialized subjects is important for disclosing racial domination, but it is not in and of itself sufficient to ground legitimate claims of social suffering nor to explain how and why such suffering is produced. As critical race scholar Imani Perry puts it, "the useful individual interpretation or racial anecdote must coincide with the existence of patterns."[157] Without linking the lived experience back to a structuring context of power relations, a theorist remains rooted in ethnography. This is why Fraser argues Honneth's work fell back into an "uncritical phenomenology of social suffering" that could not link the psychosocial back up to the sociological.[158] With its overly dyadic focus on the interpersonal encounter, his early work on recognition leaves the fact of structural mediation — whether through institutional apparatuses or ideological discourses — by the wayside.

Perhaps in response to these criticisms, Honneth moves away from the psychological narrative of social suffering in his later work. Instead, he adopts an institutionalist account that links the need for recognition to the possibilities of successful agency.[159] In *Freedom's Right*, he reconstructs how certain institutions have become key sites for the realisation of social freedom in the Euromodern world.[160] Even though this ideal of self-determination might arise from a particular socio-historical constellation (i.e. late modern Europe), Honneth contends that it can still be relied upon as a universalizable ethical framework because such an idea of human flourishing has developed out of a "developmental process."[161] This is a teleology without a telos, a set of historical a priori that have become so naturalised into existing social life that they might well be considered as if they were an ahistorical a priori.[162] Rather than view misrecognition primarily as a problem of psychological incapacity (lack of self-confidence, lack of self-respect, etc), he instead analyses the objective ways in which individuals are precluded from participating in key aspects of social life. Without being recognised as equal citizens to whom certain political rights and duties are owed, individuals cannot fully participate in collective self-governance. They too may be subjected to illegitimate forms of abuse, from the state or from other citizens. Honneth's substantive account of the ethical life remains the same — he still contends that the formal preconditions for individual autonomy lie with the family, the state and legal regime of rights, and the capitalist markets. But he replaces his previous "thick" descriptions of the subject with a more historically situated and structurally attuned analyses of how certain institutions work in exclusionary and exploitative ways. In this respect, Honneth embraces an alternative version of Hegel — the more sociologically minded Hegel of the "Sittlichkeit" in place of the existentialist Hegel of the dialogic construction of the self.[163]

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[157] Perry, *More Beautiful and More Terrible,* 4.
[158] This is McNay's characterization of Fraser's critique. McNay, *Against Recognition,* 149.
[159] Fabian Freyenhagen, "Honneth on Social Pathologies: A Critique," *Critical Horizons: Journal of Social & Critical Theory* 16, no. 2 (2015): 140.
[160] See Honneth, *Freedom's Right*, 131-335.
[161] Allen, *The End of Progress,* 82.
[162] Honneth argues that it is possible to reconstruct a viable philosophy of history without the problematic Hegelian metaphysics. Even without presupposing some sort of natural unfolding of reason or a definitive and utopian telos, Honneth writes that certain contingent developments have now become so sedimented into social life they can now be treated as if they were stable metaphysical foundations. For an extended defense of this view, see Honneth, *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom*.
[163] Honneth, *Freedom's Right,* 7.

At a methodological level, this shift towards a more objectivist approach appears to be analytically promising.[164] For instance, such an interpretation moves the harm of racism away from the subjective slights that prejudice inflicts and towards the objective obstacles that it erects to social and political equality. And yet I argue that Honneth's more sociological approach continues to fail antiracist critique. To begin with, he continues to over-inflate and mischaracterise the possibilities of subaltern agency in his later work. This is because his diagnostic index still hinges on a problematic dichotomy between consent and dissent. In order to justify that the Euromodern form of life is an ethical one, Honneth argues that the ongoing reproduction of social institutions like the family, the liberal state, and the capitalist market illustrates that they are meeting people's needs for individual self-realization.[165] As Honneth notes, "in the vital preservation of institutions, we see the conviction that members of society belong to a social reality that, compared to the past, deserves the active support of its members."[166] In turn, individuals who are misrecognized are those who withdraw their consent from these institutional apparatuses and demand for different terms of social integration. But the politics of consensual inclusion versus coercive incorporation is more complicated than Honneth allows. Not all forms of social reproduction depend on the consent of all, and not all consent should be read as a normative endorsement of how the existing social institutions function. As Gramsci reminds us, civil society is often a place where normative and political consent is actively produced, not as a product of universal buy-in and sociocultural progress but as the political-discursive triumph of hegemonic class coalitions.[167] This dynamic is particularly important in racial orders where subordinated racial minorities are structurally disempowered from expressing dissent in meaningful ways without risking violent retribution, financial ruin, social censure, or state incapacitation. To contend that the reproduction of social institutions is solely or even primarily a matter of individual ethical judgments effects a profound erasure of these very relations of force.

Even more problematic is the idealised social ontology of late Euromodernity that Honneth adopts in *Freedom's Right* and his later writings. As Amy Allen points out, his ethical imaginary reads European social institutions as the apex of civilizational development.[168] In doing so, however, he mistakes a sociological statement (that there has been certain advancements in social and political life) for a much stronger moral claim (that Euromodern value of individual freedom is a superior moral framework). Such a valorisation of Euromodern life poses two key diagnostic problems for antiracist criticism. First, his Eurocentric value monism prevents him from being able to truly relate, in an equitable and dialogic sense, to the alternative ethical practices that emerged in other cultures. Honneth presumes the normative supremacy and centrality of his own value system. He once again places Europe back at the end of the civilizational development process by unduly privileging its life-world and unfairly disregarding other societies' epistemologies and ethical systems.[169] Sociocultural Others, in turn, are only ever positioned as lesser participants in a discourse over values and forms of the good life, if they are admitted in at all. Not all communities place such primacy on the ideal of individual autonomy, as Zurn points out.[170] Nor do they see its institutionalisation in the late capitalist market, the liberal democratic state, and the heteronormative family as crucial preconditions for healthy self-relation. Allen rightly points out that this Eurocentric vision of the ethical life acts as a severe limitation to his theoretical ambitions.[171] In particular, his insistence on the universality of

[164] As McNay notes, Honneth's sociological analyses correct for the abstract nature of much of contemporary political theory. Lois McNay, "Social Freedom and Progress in the Family: Reflections on Care, Gender and Inequality," *Critical Horizons: Journal of Social & Critical Theory* 16, no. 2 (2015): 185.
[165] Freyenhagen, "Honneth on Social Pathologies," 141.
[166] Honneth, *Freedom's Right,* 59.
[167] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 38.
[168] Allen, *The End of Progress,* 83.
[169] Allen, *The End of Progress,* 114-115.
[170] Zurn, "Anthropology and Normativity," 121.
[171] Allen, *The End of Progress,* 120-121.

his theory prevents him from engaging with other ethical contexts in good faith. Understandably, then, postcolonial critics and antiracist thinkers who have dedicated their careers to revealing the "dark" side of that Euromodern project would not find a suitable resource in Honneth's version of immanent critique. His work remains too tethered to an implicit narrative of social progress that always figures the postcolonial "margins" as simply that — marginal to the European developmental narrative and to the practice of radical critique itself.

My critique of Honneth's Eurocentrism, however, follows a somewhat different vein from Allen's. She argues that Honneth's critical theory needs to be decolonised at its meta-ethical level. What has to change, she says, is his second-order commitment to a European ideal of the good life that he takes to be universalizable and incontestable. But I contend this concern for alternative ways of valuing — while important — is addressed predominantly to the problem of cultural imperialism, rather than to that of racisms. Racial orders are, of course, profoundly Euromodern. In this respect, racial divisions are not, in any necessary sense, about absolute alterity or Otherness. Instead, they are about intimate and hierarchical orderings of the human between those whose humanity is uncontested and those whose inferiority is encoded in biological signifiers, normally those marked on the body itself. Here the problem does not lie at the metaethical level, but instead at the practical level. What racial minorities are contesting are not the values of freedom, equality and justice that Euromodernity ascribes to, but the hypocritical performance of those values in practices that only serve to oppress and exploit them. As Fanon puts it, this Euromodern call for human "dignity has nothing to do with the dignity of the human individual…All that the native has seen in his country is that they can freely arrest him, beat him, starve him: and no professor of ethics, no priest has ever come to be beaten in his place, nor to share their bread with him."[172] Charles Mills rightly points out that the move to decolonize Critical Theory by pluralising its value commitments does not necessarily entail at the same time that Critical Theory will de-racialize.[173] A posture of metaethical humility towards other cultures does not necessarily mean that a critic will be capable of interrogating the racializing exclusions internal to their own ethical imaginaries and social practices.

The second diagnostic limitation in Honneth's work, then, stems from a different facet of his universalist approach — namely, his whitewashed vision of Euromodernity. I contend that Honneth displaces from view the region's historical entanglements with chattel slavery, racial colonialism, imperialism, violence, mass expropriation and exploitation, and war. In particular, he reads the late capitalist market, the liberal representative state, and the heteronormative bourgeois family as sites of collective emancipation rather than as sites of domination. Such a deracialized reading relies on a mystificatory vindication of these institutional apparatuses. And it overlooks the ways in which they each continue to work through regulative norms of racial difference. This prevents him from diagnosing the internal relationships between, say, late capitalist markets and their racialized logics of exploitation, dispossession and predation. Where we once saw an overly idealised account of the interpersonal recognition relationship in his early work, now we also see that sort of optimistic appropriation of Hegel playing out now at the level of social ontology. In his shift from Winnicott and Mead to normative reconstruction, Honneth might get away from the charge that his theory is little more than a dressed-up psychologism. But in doing so, he traps himself instead in a uncritical sociology of Euromodern progress — one that obscures ongoing practices of racial oppression at the expense of a "Whiggish history" of moral learning.[174]

[172] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 34.
[173] Mills, "Critiquing Critical Theory."
[174] Robin Celikates argues that such a philosophy of history easily falls back into an ideological and depoliticizing stance. Robin Celikates, "Slow Learners? On Moral Progress, Social Struggle, and Whig History," presentation at Oxford Critical Theory Seminar, March 2020,

For example, Honneth's view of the family is built around a White bourgeois norm of heterosexual, two-parent households.[175] His normative reconstruction of intimate partnerships abstracts these interpersonal dyads of loving care from their structuring power hierarchies. As Black feminists have pointed out, this White middle-class ideal is often used to berate and stigmatise single Black parents whose structural conditions and voluntary choices do not accord with the White middle-class norm.[176] It invites forms of state surveillance into poor Black women's parenting that White and wealthy parents are never exposed to, a disciplinary consequence of a welfare regime that justifies its financial support by making normalising and normative judgments about how Black parents work, live, keep house, raise children, interact with their schools, look for childcare support, shop for groceries, etc. As Loïc Wacquant puts it, the neoliberal U.S. "state regulates the troublesome behaviors of these women (and their children) through workfare and those of the men in their lives (that is, their partners as well as sons, brothers, cousins, and fathers) through criminal justice supervision."[177] Ultimately, this "liberal" state regulation of Black family life opens the door to greater numbers of parent-child separation[178] — a traumatic practice that deliberately undercuts, in much the same way that mass incarceration and cash bail systems do, the very preconditions for creating a sphere of intimate and private relations in the first place.

Nor is Honneth's account of the liberal nation-state any more promising. He argues that liberal democracies, with their formal schema of individual rights and representative decision-making structures, represents the apex of a sociocultural learning process by which European societies increasingly come closer to realising political equality.[179] But this "normative reconstruction" displaces from view the dark underbelly of liberalism's historical consolidation and contemporary functioning through zones of exclusion and exception. As Gilroy has convincingly shown, the liberal state has long engaged in racist practices of population management that distinguish full members of the polity — those whose interests ought to be safeguarded — from those "undesirables" which pose a threat to citizens' rights and autonomy.[180] These racial remainders are at the heart of the dialectical logic of liberal orders, as Foucault points out.[181] In the U.S. and other postcolonial settler states, "political emancipation [remains] fatally coupled to both ordinary and excessively cruel racialized state violence."[182] The U.S. state is meant to protect individuals' property and bodily integrity, but its racialized policing and criminal justice regimes still routinely subject Black and Latinx minorities to undue searches and seizures, on the one hand, and state-inflicted violence and even death, on the other.[183] In turn, its biopolitical regime has created internal enclaves of authorised neglect where Black communities and undocumented migrants are prevented from accessing material resources, public services, economic opportunities, and social space[184] — largely through coercive strategies like over-policing, mass incarceration, felon disenfranchisement, immigration raids, punitive cash-bail systems, stringent welfare regimes, starved public housing programs, etc. This is why Wacquant argues that "the remnants of the imploding dark ghetto and the exploding carceral

[175] McNay, *Against Recognition,* 135-136; McNay, "Social Freedom and Progress in the Family," 175-179.
[176] Carby, "White Woman Listen!" 112-114; Collins, *Black Feminist Thought,* 46-48.
[177] Loïc Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 99.
[178] Kathleen Simon, "Catalyzing the Separation of Black Families: A Critique of Foster Care Placements Without Prior Judicial Review," *Columbia Journal of Law and Social Problems* 51, no. 3 (2018): 347-89.
[179] Honneth, *Freedom's Right,* 290-293.
[180] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 47-49.
[181] McWhorter, "Poststructuralism and Race," 119-120.
[182] Jodi Melamed, "Racial Capitalism," *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015): 77-78. See also Chandan Reddy, *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the U.S. State* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
[183] For the racialization of the carceral state, see Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2010 and Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor,* 195-208.
[184] Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Tommie Shelby, *Dark Ghettos: Injustice, Dissent, and Reform* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016).

apparatus" work in tandem as racializing apparatuses of enclosure in the contemporary U.S. conjuncture.[185]

But perhaps most troubling is his Honneth's idealised account of modern capitalism. In *Freedom's Right,* Honneth returns to the work of Adam Smith to argue for a *normative* conception of the market.[186] While the market can operate in exploitative and unjust ways, he writes that the institution should ultimately be thought of as a recognition order that evaluates individuals' contributions to the collective good through a society's patterns of valuing labor, talent, initiative, etc. In contemporary Euromodern societies, he contends, the market has become a key institutional site for individual self-determination as it enables us to freely pursue our own needs and provides affirmation of our special talents. This is a sanitised picture of capitalism, one that ignores the persistent and profound ways in which its mechanisms of accumulation have been racialized from its inception.[187] The emergence of industrial economic regimes in Northern Europe relied on the widespread theft of resources, land and labor from indigenous peoples and forced African migrants in the Americas and the Caribbean. The sugar plantation, in turn, became the experimental testing ground for new strategies of mass production and capital accumulation, even as the primary labor relation was that of enslaved and unfree serf labor.[188] When social theorists shift to an imperial genealogy of modern capitalism, it changes how we think the internal relations between European colonialism and its project of indigenous dispossession and coerced migrant labor, on the one hand, and between metropolitan industrialization and its project of feudal land clearances and exploited "free" White labor, on the other.[189] Capitalism has often incorporated these divergent modes of production by maintaining and further entrenching racial and ethnic differences, not by eliminating them under the guise of "homogenizing" labor value.[190]

As proponents of racial capitalism are quick to stress today, the racialized logics that segment the White worker from the Black slave or the indigenous serf have not fallen by the wayside with the abolition of slavery and the formal inclusion of Black and indigenous populations within the bounds of "those with rights." Both within domestic economies and across global borders, late capitalism still relies on and operates through the social divisions of labor that gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality delimit and consolidate.[191] For the Black and White working classes in many postcolonial settings, Stuart Hall stresses, "race…is the modality in which class is 'lived,' the medium through which class relations are experienced, the form in which it is appropriated and 'fought through.'"[192] Racial minorities often fulfil the role of a surplus labor force; they are incorporated into the labor market when it's tight and employers need more workers, but they are often vulnerable to hyper exploitation and disincorporation when the economy hits a downturn.[193] In the U.S. today, Black and Latinx Americans continue to face widespread discrimination in hiring and promotion practices, and their communities have proven ripe for predatory forms of speculative capitalism that expropriate their wealth through "bad" loans, subprime mortgage lending, and risky debt.[194] In turn, the White

[185] Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor,* 196.
[186] Honneth, *Freedom's Right,* 191-196.
[187] Robinson, *Black Marxism,* 2-3. See also Barbara L. Solow and Stanley L. Engerman (eds.), *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery: The Legacy of Eric Williams* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
[188] Roediger, *Class, Race and Marxism.*
[189] Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks,* 11-15.
[190] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 49.
[191] For a feminist account of how the emergence of capitalism produced and then reified the gendered division of labor, see Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2014). Hall makes a more general analytical point about the ethnic and racial structuration of the labor force, as well as its gendered composition, in his interpretation of Gramsci. Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 49-50.
[192] Hall, "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance," 216.
[193] Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor,* 86-87.
[194] See Manuel B. Aalbers, *Place, Exclusion and Mortgage Markets* (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); Jackelyn Hwang, Michael Hankinson, and Kreg Steven Brown, "Racial and Spatial Targeting: Segregation and Subprime Lending within and across Metropolitan

working classes — while still exploited — enjoy certain symbolic and material advantages when it comes to both the access to better paid, more secure jobs, on the one hand, and to the mechanisms of personal wealth accumulation, like housing, consumer debt, and employer-provided healthcare, on the other.[195] As Hall points out, the White working class and the Black working class do not occupy the same structural position in the capitalist machine. These class segments structured in racial dominance provide ideological forms of consent for the White workers while subjecting Black, Latinx and indigenous workers to additional forms of precarity, economic disempowerment, and state neglect. For many racially oppressed subjects in the U.S. today, neoliberal market capitalism still looks more like a site of expropriation, predation, and theft than it does a pre-condition for social freedom.

Euromodernity, it turns out, is racialized all the way down. When viewed through this alternative genealogical lens — one that inverts the Hegelian picture of Euromodernity as a privileged site of moral progress and individual freedom — then the practices of social recognition that Honneth recommends begin to look from the subaltern perspective like conscription to an unjust, unequal and often profoundly inhumane status quo. In Honneth's work, then, the role of the critic is limited to revealing the ways in which existing Euromodern institutions fail to fully live up to their motivating ethical ideals. But in a society that continues to operate in and through racial hierarchies, engendered practices of domination, and systematic asymmetries of capital and power, such a limited scope for critique starts to feel like a bit of wishful thinking, at best. At worst, it starts to signal a form of complicity with White hegemony and the global capitalist regime. As Malcolm X put it, "you don't have a revolution in which you are begging the system of exploitation to integrate you into it."[196]

Conclusion

Foucauldian genealogy and Honneth's normative reconstruction each offer worthwhile insights when it comes to grappling with racialized orders. And yet both fall short in certain key respects. The former provides a more politicized and radical critique of how 'race' comes to serve as a regulative norm within Euromodernity. Foucault's account of the hierarchical production of difference as deviance, in particular, helps to think how racialization and racism segment off the "infra-human" from the normative account of Western Man. Genealogical critique, then, exposes the ligature between practices of racial domination, exploitation and violence and the racial identities that racialized social formations produce. Yet Foucault's "cryptonormativity" and his rejection of a humanist ethic in favor of an aesthetics of self-creation both flatten his sociological analysis of racist domination and limit his insights into antiracist struggle. For all that Foucault clearly expressed an interest in radical politics in his interviews, he didn't provide the conceptual tools to theorise resistance as a social and political problem of collective empowerment. Ultimately, I contend that Foucault's rejection of a humanist ethic is overblown, and his skepticism about normativity leads him

Areas," *Social Forces* 93, no. 3 (2015): 1081-1108; Elizabeth Korver-Glenn, "Compounding Inequalities: How Racial Stereotypes and Discrimination Accumulate across the Stages of Housing Exchange," *American Sociological Review* 83, no. 4 (2018): 627-656; Jackie Wang, *Carceral Capitalism* (Pasadena, Calif.: Semiotext(e), 2018).

[195] See Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005); Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality*, (New York: Routledge, 2006).

[196] Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet" speech. King Soloman Baptist Church. Detroit, Michigan. April 12, 1964.

to an aesthetic and radically individualist politics that does little to challenge the structural and institutional mechanisms of today's racial oppression.

In turn, the version of Left Hegelian humanism that Honneth puts forward offers real possibilities for individual agency. His critical theory provides for the possibility that sociality and constraint are not always sites of domination and alienation. Comparatively speaking, Honneth offers more conceptual ground for both thinking Black resistance on both ethical and political terms than Foucault does. His ethical conception of (mis)recognition too aligns with a phenomenology of racist disrespect that many Black writers have detailed and contested. And yet Honneth's Hegelianism weds him too tightly to an idealised and overly optimistic account of human sociality, on the one hand, and of Euromodern "development," on the other. His progressive account of history empties his sociological diagnoses by reducing political struggle to a "necessary stage" in an eventual progressive overcoming. The turn to a formalist account of the ethical life threatens to be either, on the one hand, too analytically thin to ground robust critique or, on the other, too embedded in a sociological account of Euromodernity that over-idealises its own historical becoming. His overly optimistic account of Euromodernity hobbles Honneth's capacity to produce the kind of rigorous indictments of racial pathologies that truly critical theories of society ought to provide.

But of course, not all methods of social criticism have to do all things. "There is no reason to think that Foucault got everything right," Koopman writes. "We can take from genealogy the richness of its best resources, take from other philosophical traditions their best resources, and leave behind those parts of past philosophies we find wanting."[197] In the next chapter, I will demonstrate that antiracist critique will require a method that can work with the best of both traditions — an approach which utilizes the genealogical and sociological complexity characteristic of French Critical Theory to destabilize 'race' as an ideological apparatus but which also can evaluate those racial practices against a humanist ethic that refuses to concede the possibilities of emancipatory collective action. This method is exemplified in the work of Frantz Fanon and his sociogenic approach to theorizing racism in colonial orders. Much of contemporary Critical Theory would need to be "stretched," both conceptually and methodologically, if it is to de-racialize and decolonize its own theoretical foundations. This is one of the conceptual gaps that I seek to redress in part through the latter half of this thesis, in which I turn to the work of Frantz Fanon on colonial orders and anti-Black racism. As I will seek to show in Chapters 4 & 5, it is Fanon's robust engagement with, on the one hand, the colonial situation and, on the other, existential phenomenology and psychology that gives him a more productive lens onto how racial hierarchies condition and, at times, pathologize individual subjectivation.

[197] Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique,* 12.

Chapter IV
Frantz Fanon and the Sociogenic Method

In this chapter, I argue that political theorists can find a methodological exemplar in Frantz Fanon's writings on racial colonialism. This is because Fanon refuses to conceptualize the human prior to and divorced from power relations. In this respect, one could say that he adopts what Gramsci calls Marxism's key insight for political thinking: "that there does not exist an abstract, fixed and immutable 'human nature'... but that human nature is the totality of historically determined social relations, that is, a historical fact."[1] Yet Fanon applies this materialist lens to the problem of racial colonialism. To do so, his "sociogenic" approach to critique works to insert racialized subjects back into the colonial hierarchies that produced them. He links the subjective harms that racisms inflict upon individual subjects back up to the objective structures of domination, exploitation, and violence that such racisms attempt to naturalize. Rather than turn to an abstract ideal of European moral personhood, he advances a negative critique of racialized inhumanity by working directly from the Black subject and indigenous subject's experience of dehumanization. In this respect, Fanon deploys an immanent critique of the human as a moral norm, thereby dialectically moving between the facticity of existent racial groupings and the ethical aspiration of a shared humanity. For all that Fanon's humanism may not be fully articulated in his work, I contend that he remains as a potent critic of the European imperial project and of the raciological reasons that it produced. In particular, his humanist ethic of "disalienation" can point the way towards a more emancipatory politics — one that dismantle the structures, institutions, and discourses that continue to displace the Black subject from social relations predicated on reciprocity, equality, and respect.

In this chapter, I reconstruct Fanon's sociogenic method by looking to the various books, essays, and speeches he wrote over the course of his career. In *Black Skin, White Masks,* Fanon defines his "sociogenic" method in contradistinction to either a phylogenetic or an ontogenic approach to understanding the human subject. In lieu of focusing either on a philosophical anthropology of the species or a psychoanalytic reconstruction of the individual, he argued that 'race' could only be understood by returning it to the social. Although he said little directly on what this sociogenic method entailed, I argue that one can reconstruct a coherent sense of Fanon's approach by looking to his criticisms of other scholars and the analyses he offered of the racial orders in Martinique, France, and Algeria. In particular, I argue that Fanon makes two critical moves. First, he seeks to denaturalise racial categories and practices by situating them back within the material hierarchies and the hegemonic social imaginaries, discourses, and fantasies that make these classifications meaningful sites of subjectivation. Second, he looks to the existential phenomenology of racialized selves in order to critique the ways in which these raciological worlds can alienate and metamorphose individuals subjected to them. In this respect, what Fanon's sociogenic approach offers is an "embodied politics of location" within racial orders.[2] The former shares its analytical profile in part with Foucauldian genealogies of late Euromodern subjectivation. The latter foregrounds a Hegelian-influenced diagnosis of misrecognition that echoes Honneth's critical theory. But as I will show in this chapter, Fanon's work corrects for the analytical shortcomings that I diagnosed in both Foucault and Honneth's approaches.

Crucially, I contend that antiracist criticism should read Fanon primarily as a materialist thinker, even if his own accounts of the economic bases of racial colonialism remained underdeveloped. In

[1] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 139.
[2] I borrow this phrase from Adrienne Rich, "Notes towards a Politics of Location," in Rich, *Blood, Bread, and Poetry* (Norton, 1994).

particular, I position his work in conversation with two early 20th century Marxist thinkers who offered novel insights into the political and the ideological dimensions of capitalist relations — namely, Antonio Gramsci and Georg Lukacs. This is not to say that one should *assimilate* Fanon's work to either of their projects. Unlike Gramsci or Lukacs, Fanon certainly was not operating within such explicitly Marxist paradigm.[3] Instead, what I am claiming is that Fanon's work shares certain theoretical commitments and political preoccupations with both thinkers.[4] Like Gramsci, he pays close attention to the political — to its "relations of force"[5] and to the strategies, tactics, ideologies, and practices that go into stabilizing a social formation in dominance. Rather than reduce the political to the "rule" of a unified White supremacist class, say, Fanon wants to think the complex overdetermination of racial relations that European colonialism and its neo-imperial afterlives produce. In turn, Fanon shares with Lukacs' an ethical concern for the ways in which inhuman social relations can prevent individuals from relating to themselves, to one another, and to their own agency on proper terms. As I explore in greater detail in Chapter 5, the French Martinican too relies on the reification critique for thinking how racist imaginaries and interactions can negatively distort intersubjective relations between racialized subjects. What Fanon shares with Gramsci and Lukacs, then, is a historical materialist framework that focuses its attention primarily on the institutional apparatuses, discourses, architectures, and sources of identification and desire rather than on a more economistic account of capital flows and class segmentation.

Reading Fanon in this way — through the lens of Gramsci and Lukacs — distinguishes my work from that of other popular interpretations in critical race theory. As I explore towards the end of the chapter, this puts me at odds with both Black Marxist thinkers like Cedric Robinson and Afro Pessimist writers like Frank B. Wilderson. Robinson, for example, rejects Fanon's phenomenological analyses as an "epiphenomenal" hangover from his own bourgeois postcolonial subject position.[6] I contend that Robinson overstates his case against the early Fanon and, in doing so, jettisons the very phenomenological work that gives Fanon a more robust model for thinking the subjective obstacles that racisms can pose to individual freedom. In turn, I argue that Afro Pessimists like Wilderson overstate the importance of Fanon's existentialism when they absolutize his account of racist reification into a quasi-ontological state that afflicts any and all Black subjects.[7] Wilderson's theorization of the Black subject through the concept of the "Slave" reifies and overextends a particular Manichean narrative of African American enslavement, natal alienation, and ongoing domination. In doing so, he neglects Fanon's attention to the more complex array of racializing apparatuses and racial subjectivities. For all that Fanon acknowledged the shared subjective experiences of racism, he was aware of how different objective conditions (from class to nationality to gender) impacted the ways in which racisms functioned and the kinds of subject positions that were made available. Fanon made clear that these different forms of racialization, from the Arab in French Algeria to the mulatto woman in French Martinique, needed to be analyzed in their specific relations — not assimilated to an overarching and abstract narrative of anti-Black abjection.[8] In this

[3] It is clear that Fanon read Marx and was influenced by his theory in a number of ways, from his philosophy of history to his account of class struggle. And yet Fanon's own work doesn't center the shifting conditions of economic production in its account of social change nor does it presume that the driving antagonism in historical development is between capital and labor, read on general terms.
[4] There is no evidence that Fanon would have engaged with Gramsci's work, given that it was written in Italian and scattered throughout his various journalistic, political and prison writings. But Edward Said claims that Fanon did in fact read a French translation of Lukacs' *History and Class Consciousness*. Said, *Power, Politics, and Culture,* 267.
[5] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 166.
[6] Jock McCulloch, *Black Soul, White Artifact* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983): 200-204. Cedric Robinson, "The Appropriation of Frantz Fanon," in *Cedric J. Robinon: On Racial Capitalism, Black Internationalism, and Cultures of Resistance,* ed. H.L.T. Quan (London: Pluto Press, 2019), 300.
[7] Frank Wilderson, "The Prison Slave as Hegemony's (Silent) Scandal," *Social Justice* 30, no. 2 (2003): 24-27.
[8] In "The North African Syndrome," for example, Fanon analyzes how Black and mulatto Martinicans serving as colonial bureaucrats in French Algeria had internalized anti-Black narratives about the "African Negro" to such an extent that they felt more solidarity with White French men than with the African subjects they managed. But even when these Martinicans began to realize that they too were "Negros" in the eyes of White France, there were real objective differences between their situation and between that of the Black

respect, Wilderson's Afro-Pessimism displaces one of the most vital aspects of Fanon's work — that he never relinquished the prospect of a future in which the "Manichean delirium" of 'race' would lose their ideological hold on us and their material force in our world.

Fanon's commitment to the social

I insist on reading Fanon as a materialist thinker. What I am describing as Fanon's materialism, of course, looks quite different than the historical materialism espoused by conventional Marxists.[9] Fanon remained skeptical of the idea that a strict interpretation of Marx's texts could incapsulate the articulations of White supremacy, capital, and engendering practices in the colonial world. As he put it, "Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem."[10] In this respect, he steers clear of the sort of crudely economistic interpretations of racial inequality and White supremacy that reduced 'race' to little more than a tool the bourgeoisie wielded to split the working classes.[11] Instead, I argue that Fanon was more interested in the complex intersections between the economic "base" and the political realm of struggle and the ideological space of discourse, affect, and imagination. His sociodiagnostic approach is more closely aligned with Gramsci's analyses of political hegemony than it is with more vulgar accounts of conventional Marxism. Gramsci was profoundly skeptical of what he called "economism," or a kind of theoretical reductionism that models social causality in a one-directional and mechanistic way and therefore treats politics as a "necessary emanation" and the "sole effective expression of the economy."[12] As he noted, political theorists should concern themselves with the study of concrete situations, "the problem of relations between [economic] structures and [the political and ideological] superstructures."[13]

Like Gramsci, Fanon treated both the political and the ideological as spheres with a relative degree of autonomy from the structuring imperative of capital, but he never sought to extricate them from the material relations of production, exploitation, and disappropriation that powered the Euromodern economy.[14] For all that he notes that racisms emerge out of the "shameless exploitation of one group of men by another," his analyses take seriously how racial ideologies can acquire a life of their own when it comes to shaping the affective, intellectual, and psychological investments of the individuals interpellated by them. In this respect, Fanon doesn't reduce racialization to little more than an epiphenomenon of capitalist exploitation. Such a reading would overlook the psychosocial, affective, and political afterlives of racial colonialism. But neither does he abstract the problem of racial domination from the economic and thereby explain the persistence of racisms through some sort of anthropocentric narrative of human beings' dislike of "Difference."[15] As he puts it, "racism is not a constant of the human spirit. It is, as we have seen, a disposition fitting into a well-defined system" of exploitation and political dominion.[16] Or as Hall might say, Fanon's sociogenic analyses

African. Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 21-26.
[9] Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks,* 33-34.
[10] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 30.
[11] As sociologist John Rex pointed out, Fanon's work can be read as a complement to Weber's corrective to an economistic Marxist reductionism. Quoted in Hall, "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance," 184.
[12] Gramcsi, *The Modern Prince,* 153.
[13] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 165.
[14] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 25-34.
[15] Hall, "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance," 212.
[16] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 41.

thread their way through the excesses of "economism," on the one hand, and "ideologism," on the other, to treat discrete racisms as historical facts that must be problematized, not presumed.[17]

In this respect, Fanon works at a rather concrete level of analysis, akin to Gramsci.[18] He is interested in what we might call racial conjunctures, rather than offering a theory of "race" or racial exploitation in general. Throughout his oeuvre, Fanon consistently foregrounded the role that concrete social practices, imaginaries, institutions, and affects play in the production of discrete racial groups and the racial subjects that identify with those categorisations. He explicitly characterised such a method as a commitment to "sociogeny" in his first book, *Black Skin, White Masks.*[19] But this interpretative posture both pre-dated that text and continued to shape his thinking and his praxis as a psychologist up until his death. Contrary to Fanonian critics who seek to differentiate his earlier existentialist and psychological studies from his later political writings, I contend that his work remained, at the very least, embedded within a social constructivist approach to thinking 'race,' racialization, and racial subject formation in discrete milieus. Such a commitment to the social — as that which prefigures the individual — proves transformative for critical theories of 'race' because it can treat racial categories as material phenomena without naturalising them into inert biological or cultural facts.[20] Fanon's sociogenic method, then, returns the contingent and the social back into the problem of ontology in productive ways.[21] His project, in this sense, echoes both Gramsci's Marxist reading of the human *and* Foucault's Nietzschean critique of Kant. Sociogeny takes a presumed transcendental understanding of the individual subject and denaturalizes it by way of historicization. In doing so, it challenges the ways that the Euromodern Human is constructed against the figure of its nonwhite and inferior Other.

Fanon makes the most explicit case for a sociogenic approach in the introduction to *Black Skin, White Masks.* In his introductory remarks, he rejects theorizing 'race' according to either 'phylogenetic' or 'ontogenetic' logics.[22] By phylogenetic, Fanon refers to forms of reasoning that study the human through its shared capacities and traits as a species. In its most racist incarnations, phylogenetic explanations seek to understand the "races" of human beings as distinctive biological categories, replete with their own traits, capacities, predispositions, etc.[23] The human and social sciences have played a pivotal role in the consolidation of this sort of raciological knowledge, Fanon points out. Mbembe describes this sort of racialized knowledge production as follows:

> Its function was first and foremost to codify the conditions for the appearance and the manifestation of a racial subject that would be called the Black Man and, later, within colonialism, the Native. ("Who is he?" "How does one recognise him?" What differentiates him from us?" "Can he become like us?" "How should we govern him and to what end?")[24]

[17] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 28-30.
[18] Stuart Hall, in particular, stresses that Gramsci's concepts are designed to work at a different level of abstraction than the "epochal" terms used in, say, more classical accounts of Marxism. Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 23-24.
[19] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* xv.
[20] Hall, "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance," 217-218.
[21] Wynter too advocates for adopting an approach predicated on sociogeny. Yet I find Wynter's explanatory mechanisms — that of the direct connection between a raciological discourse of the Human Self and its infrahuman Others and the individual psyche and its neural programming — to be overly simplistic. Sylvia Wynter, "Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, Identity, the Problem of Conscious Experience, and What It's Like to Be 'Black'" in *National Identities and Sociopolitical Changes in Latin America*, eds. Mercedes F. Duran-Cogan and Antonio Gomez-Moriana (New York: Routledge, 2001), 31.
[22] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* xv.
[23] Gilroy, *Against Race,* 45-47.
[24] Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason,* 28.

This sort of racist reasoning was still sanctioned in certain academic circles at the time in which Fanon was writing, including in psychiatry where "ethno-psychiatrists" sought to isolate the ways in which African brains were developmentally inferior to their White counterparts.[25] But he stresses that this "vulgar, primitive, over-simple racism" that grounded its hierarchies in biology was increasingly being replaced by "cultural racism" that takes as its object "as certain form of existing."[26] Fanon takes aim at imperial forms of sociology that sought to "interpret" Algerian culture through stereotypes of matriarchal family life and therefore lent epistemic authority to colonial bureaucrats' attempts to draw the Algerian woman out of the home.[27] Today, such explicitly racial explanations might seem easy to debunk. Yet sociological investigations continue to blame "cultural deficits" and "women-led households" for Black subordination, poverty, and neglect.[28] The emergent field of genetic medicine too is working to re-inscribe racial difference within biological, albeit this time at a nanoscopic rather than anatomical level.[29] Regardless of their disciplinary home, however, such phylogenetic explanatory frameworks reify what is only ever a metastable social product — that of 'race' — into a self-supporting division in the human. "The black man is not. No more than the white man," Fanon claims.[30] As he points out, these ideologies of racial difference are not only epistemically insupportable, but they are often tied up in biopolitical strategies of population control and the economic exploitation of nonwhite labor.

By contrast, Fanon associates the "ontogenetic" investigations of the human with a method that emerged out of Freudian psychoanalysis.[31] Instead of focusing on the objective study of the human as a species being, Freud approached the individual subject through a psycho-structural account of ego development. What psychoanalysis made available, then, was a way to access and diagnose the individual from the first-person vantage point of lived experience, desire, and affect. But these ontogenetic explanations conceptualize the individual subject as prior to and divorced from politics. They reify a particular set of psychoanalytical processes into a formal and transhistorical model for individual ego development, thereby displacing the social conditions under which that socialization process took shape.[32] Such an abstracted account of subject formation, for Fanon, fails to capture the existential obstacles that the Black individual faces under White supremacy or the indigenous subject faces under European imperialism. "Ontology does not allow us to understand the being of the black man, since it ignores the lived experience," he writes.[33] The particularities of the social must be taken into account, even at the subjective level. Otherwise, the ontogenetic lens removes from view the pathological impact that power hierarchies can have on subaltern or dominated subjects.

Fanon's commitment to sociogenesis, however, predates his work in *Black Skin, White Masks*. He advanced a similar argument for the primacy of social relations in diagnosing subjective pathologies in his doctoral thesis in psychology. In his analysis of a mental disorder, Fanon soundly rejects both the organicist explanations of neurologists and the psychogenetic determinism of psychoanalysts like Lacan.[34] The former falls back into an overly biological account of the individual subject, he contends. Organicist explanations hold that all forms of psychopathology can be reduced or traced causally back to their "lesion" on the brain. But Fanon pointed out that there were neuroses whose onset could most often be traced to social and political causes, rather than requiring or following from any

[25] Richard C. Keller, "Madness and Colonization: psychiatry in the British and French Empires, 1800-1962,' *Journal of Social History,* vol. 35 (2001): 295-326.
[26] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 32.
[27] Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism,* 37-39.
[28] Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor,* 80-87.
[29] Gilroy, *Against Race,* 34, 47-49.
[30] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 206.
[31] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* xv.
[32] Allen, "Foucault, Psychoanalysis, and Critique," 174-177.
[33] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 90.
[34] Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom*, 224, 253.

noticeable defect in the neural wiring. Even those psychopathologies directly correlated with a neurological "lesion" presented divergent symptom profiles and psychosocial expression, depending on individual subjects' social situations.[35] In contradistinction, Fanon thought that the psychoanalysts like Freud and Lacan veered too far to the other analytical pole. By negating the corporeal dimension of psychopathology, they read all instances of alienation as stemming from processes internal to an individual's psyche. But psychoanalysts like Lacan wrongly presume that all forms of personality development require and work through an essential alienation of the self.[36] By contrast, Fanon contended that there is such a thing as "normal" and "disalienated" individual psychogenesis.[37] Neither the organicist nor the psychoanalytic paradigms truly grasped the social nature of psychosocial neuroses, Fanon argued. The neurological story disregarded the social as almost entirely irrelevant to the primary causal actor, that of the "sick" body. In turn, the social is only ever present in the psychoanalysts' ontogenesis story as a formal abstraction that performs the essential alienation of all subjects. For Fanon, such an ahistorical and flattened account of the social could not account for the particularities of how individuals experienced themselves as not-at-home or displaced because of domination, oppression, racism, or violence. In particular, an abstract ontogenesis ignores the "special character of the colonial situation."[38]

I raise these aspects of Fanon's little-read doctoral work because they speak to the account of individual subjectivation that he takes forward into his more political writings. From this early stage in his career, he was committed to the notion that the self could not be explained solely through either the corporeal or the psychological. Both of those planes of analysis had to be interpreted in and through an individual's specific situation.[39] As he puts it, "in some circumstances, we must recall, the *socius* is more important than the individual."[40] In turn, Fanon consistently argued that individuals could respond to their physiological and social determinants in multiple ways. His psychological and social theorizing was always predicated on the fact of a disjunctive space between biological and social determinism in which individual freedom could be located.[41] He rejected the mechanistic notion of causality[42] that read all individual subjectivity and agency off of either an economic base or a single determining relation.[43] In doing so, Fanon makes space for both the possibilities of individual agency and for a plural account of the self — one that opens subjectivity to the cross-cutting and intersecting discourses that shape modern practices of identification.[44] In this respect, then, Fanon's theory of subjectivation avoids the one-sidedness that characterises both Foucault's and Honneth's work. Whereas Foucault focused too much attention on the ways that the social disciplines the subject and Honneth on the ways that the individual resists the social, Fanon is able to bring both facets of the dialectical process into view. His image of the self is not wholly determined from a repressive outside, nor is it overly optimistic about the prospects of individual self-determination in the face of oppressive conditions. This is, to a large extent, because of Fanon's training in psychology, a discipline that poses this ontogenic questions of individual self-relation in more detail than many liberal political theories are inclined to do.[45] But it also relates to the manner by which Fanon integrates his psychogenetic insights into healthy forms of self-formation into a broader critique of pathological social relations. His psychosocial analyses are always returned to the

[35] Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* 215-218.
[36] Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* 263, 271.
[37] Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* 252, 363.
[38] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 33.
[39] Pierre Macherey, "Figures of Interpellation in Althusser and Fanon," *Radical Philosophy* 173 (2012): 18.
[40] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 85.
[41] Jean Khalfa, "Fanon, Revolutionary Psychiatrist," in *Alienation and Freedom,* eds. Jean Khalfa and Robert J.C. Young, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018): 175.
[42] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 166.
[43] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 40.
[44] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 50.
[45] Oliver, *Witnessing,* 23-26.

situational complex of both impersonal forces (structures, discourses, modes of governance) and interpersonal relations.

Such a sociogenetic account of subject formation, in turn, undergirds the blistering critiques that he advances against raciological reason in the human sciences.[46] Throughout his political writings, Fanon regularly denounced what he saw to be racist attempts to "ontologize" the behaviour of the Algerian native or the African "Negro." For example, Octave Mannoni argued that the Malagasy people were psycho-socially preformed for European dominance, which was why they displayed such inferiority complexes in the face of Europeans.[47] For Fanon, not only is such an explanation little more than an apology for European imperialism, but it ignores the fact that the Malagasy subject's psychosocial profile has been deformed by the politics of colonialism. What Mannoni diagnoses as an innate psychological tendency in a racial minority is in fact a product of the violence of European occupation.[48] As Fanon writes, "The arrival of the white man in Madagascar inflicted an unmistakable wound…It's colonisation that needs to be put on trial!"[49] He makes a similar kind of critique later on in *The Wretched of the Earth*. The French colonialists attribute the Algerian's inefficiency "on the job," so to speak, to a mental peculiarity or abnormality in his constitution. But Fanon contends that the Algerians' "behavior" is better understood as a concerted political strategy of refusal. He writes, "The native's laziness is the conscious sabotage of the colonial machine; on the biological plane it is a remarkable system of auto-protection; and in any case, it is a sure brake upon the seizure of the whole country by the occupying country."[50] His analyses are peppered with examples like these. Rather than settle for racist ideologies of ethnic difference, Fanon consistently returns to the social — and in particular to the politics of colonial domination. As he notes in the case of another patient, "if he is overcome to such a degree by a desire to be White, it's because he lives in a society that makes his inferiority complex possible, in a society that draws its strength by maintaining this complex, in a society that proclaims the superiority of one race over another."[51]

The task for psychologists and social critics alike, then, is to identify those social and cultural circumstances that prevent an individual from developing a right relationship to self.[52] Following a neo-Hegelian vein, Fanon contends that individual psychosocial development requires the proper social supports — roles that are often played through specific Others like mothers and fathers, but which require too a sociocultural imaginary and broader milieu that helps to locate the individual. Across his oeuvre, Fanon argues that colonial oppression and racialization can distort the kinds of relations that these subjects can have to themselves and to others, especially those individuals whose humanity is not presumed as an *a priori*. As he writes about the colonized native, "if at a certain point in his history, he has been made to ask the question whether he is a man, it's because his reality as a man has been challenged."[53] This is where the problem of alienation comes in.[54] Rather than define alienation as a fundamental loss of one's labor power to the commodifying force of the capitalist market, however, Fanon argues that racisms can corrode intersubjective recognition relations in ways that trap Black individuals and other racially dominated subjects within a grid of inferiorized intelligibility. In these cases, "the oppressor...manages to impose on the native new ways of seeing

[46] See, for example, Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 32-33.
[47] Octave Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization,* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1990) 40.
[48] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 66.
[49] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 77.
[50] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 238.
[51] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 80.
[52] In this sense, then, Fanon's work on psychopathology presaged the rise of relational psychoanalysis over the past few decades as thinkers like Stephen Mitchell have sought to introduce the social into the paradigmatic frameworks that Freud and his (dis)inheritors devised. Emirbayer and Desmond, *The Racial Order,* 258-259.
[53] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 78.
[54] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 38.

and in particular a pejorative judgment with respect to his original forms of existing," he notes.[55] Fanon's alienation critique, therefore, has more in common with the ethical-existential concerns that motivated Lukacs' account of reification, on the one hand, and Sartre's phenomenology of the gaze. In this respect, Fanon treats Blackness not as an ontological category or a transhistorical existential deviation from the Human, but as a set of discrete racializations that have their roots in specific colonial formations. He critiques the traumas inflicted by concrete racisms, rather than identifying "flaws" ostensibly inherent to particular biological or cultural groups. What Fanon seeks to reconstruct is how something as contingent and phantasmagoric as racial classification came to be a social fact — and how, in turn, racialized subjects continue to experience and negotiate these practices of domination, neglect, violence, and alienation. As he asks, "the men who are prey to racism, the enslaved, exploited, weakened social group — how do they behave? What are their defense mechanisms?"[56]

In his version of "sociodiagnostics,"[57] I contend that Fanon combines what could be described as a genealogical method with an ethical-existentialist inquiry. From the objective, third-person vantage, he unpacks how different racial formations take shape and appear to the people within them as incontestable, as the inert order of things.[58] From the subjective, first-person vantage, he interrogates how subjects interpellated within those racialized regimes experience their embodied racial selves. [59]"For once, reality requires total comprehension," Fanon writes in the introduction to *Black Skin, White Masks*, "an answer must be found on the objective as well as the subjective level."[60] I contend that Fanon moves dialectically between two perspectives in his work. This means that, contrary to some Fanonian critics, I read his earlier existentialist work in *Black Skin, White Masks* in conjunction with his later more materialist analyses of anticolonial politics in *The Wretched of the Earth, A Dying Colonialism*, and *Toward the African Revolution.* As I see it, his analyses in *The Wretched of the Earth* don't reflect a new or divergent project, but instead can be read as the performative enactment of what Fanon had been arguing antiracist critique ought to be doing all along. Namely, one can read his theorization of the distinctive spatiality of colonial power, the biopolitical technologies of racialized population management, and the complex arrangements of resource capture and financial dependency that structured the colonial economy as in keeping with his earlier injunction that "it's colonization that needs to be put on trial."[61] In the next section, I turn to Fanon's genealogical excavations of racial orders to demonstrate why I find him to be a materialist thinker.

Fanon and the making of racialized worlds

Like many other critics of racial colonialism, Fanon argued that European imperialism had produced a fundamental caesura in the human between the normative European Man and the non-European subhuman. This is what he diagnosed as the "Manichean delirium" that delimited the colonial imaginary and which directed the colonial state's political strategies.[62] "The affirmation of the

[55] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 38.
[56] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 38.
[57] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* xv.
[58] This is where his work echoes many Gramscian themes.
[59] This is where Fanon's Sartrean (and potentially Lukacsian) influences become clear.
[60] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* xv.
[61] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 77.
[62] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 31.

principle: 'it's them or us' does not constitute a paradox, since colonialism, as we have seen, is in fact the organization of a Manichean world, a world divided up into compartments," Fanon writes.[63] In this sense, what precedes the consolidation of distinctive racial groups is first the economic, political and social structures that produce a hierarchical, exclusionary and segregated society.[64] Unlike other antiracist critics, however, Fanon is not content to simply reduce the complex overdetermination of racialization in diverse colonial orders to a world-historic narrative of European conquest. Instead, like Foucault, he betrays a skepticism of such abstracted accounts of race-craft. For all that he acknowledges the shared inhumanity that European colonialism has produced around the Global South, the "objective problems" that discrete nonwhite populations face often differ and rely on the specificities of the political and economic order in that geopolitical situation. The Black African does not face the same structural obstacles to individual and collective self-determination as, say, the African American or the Black Martinican.[65] As he notes, racisms change based on the underlying structural and social conditions at work in a given conjuncture.[66] In his analyses of the racial worlds built in French Martinique, in French Algeria, and back home at the French metropole, Fanon mapped the *mechanisms* that made 'race' into a meaningful partition of the social in each context — racializing practices and discourses, institutions and architectures, imaginaries and affects. Like Gramsci, then, Fanon reminds us that a given racial formation is the product of contingent relations of force, and that these hierarchical orders could be dismantled or transformed, depending on the political coalitions brought into play.[67]

For Fanon, the first step of critiquing European colonialism, then, will necessarily involve denaturalizing the inert order of racial hierarchy. This is why I contend that Fanon's "sociogenic" analyses of racial worlds bear strong affinities to Foucault's genealogical method.[68] Like Foucault, Fanon wants to understand how what is contingent and inessential becomes naturalized.[69] And like Foucault, he reconstructs these historical phenomena in order to problematize and open up the space for critical reflection on their ethical and political adequacy. As David Hoy remarks, "Genealogy … does not change the world, but it does prepare the world for change."[70] Fanon's analyses too could well be described as incorporating the three planes of Foucault's analysis — namely, that of the regimes of "power-knowledge;" the technologies of regulating other individuals; and the techniques of regulating oneself. Yet Fanon foregrounds a different object of analysis — namely, he examined how racialized orders produced raced subjects — whose desires and investments, habits and horizons for action were delimited by these closed circuits of racialized thought and affect. This shift to a colonial problemspace improves on Foucault's narrower sociological focus when it comes to antiracist criticism. First, it puts the colony back into an economic and political relation with the European metropole and its rabid capitalist expansion. Unlike Foucault, who was content to work on the mechanisms that "rendered docile" European working- and middle-class subjects in more strictly delineated national contexts, Fanon broadens his analytical gaze to a more international and relational account of Euromodernity. This dialectical vision, as anticolonial thinkers and (more recently) economic historians have demonstrated, is crucial for effectively understanding the emergence of

[63] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 66.
[64] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 37-38.
[65] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 172-173.
[66] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 33, 37.
[67] Both Gramsci and Fanon were dismissive of theory for theory's sake, but instead engaged in theoretical analysis and social critique in order to better orient their revolutionary practices — whether against mid-20th century Italian capitalism or against French settler colonialism in Algeria. Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 173.
[68] Of course, describing Fanon's analyses in such a way is anachronistic at best. By drawing this methodological comparison, I hope to stress the ways in which Fanon can be read as a political thinker who was fundamentally interested in and engaged by the material practices that produced the racial nomos in the first place.
[69] Cynthia Nielsen, "Resistance through Re-Narration: Fanon on De-constructing Racialized Subjectivities," *African Identities,* vol. 9, no. 4 (2011): 363-385, 378.
[70] David Couzens Hoy, "Genealogy, Phenomenology, Critical Theory," *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 2, no. 3 (2008): 283.

modern capitalism on the back of coerced labor regimes, dispossessed land, and extraction regimes in the Global South. As Fanon notes, "The well-being and the progress of Europe have been built up with the sweat and the dead bodies of Negroes, Arabs, Indians and the yellow races. We have decided not to overlook this anymore."[71] For all that Fanon wrote so eloquently about White mystification and Black alienation specifically, he was clearly aware of and responsive to the different forms of (often mutually reinforcing) racialization that European colonialism and racial capitalism had produced and institutionalized across historical contexts.

Second, Fanon's shift to the colonizer/colonized relation brings into focus a different kind of subaltern subject than the "deviant" individual that Foucault theorised. Under colonial regimes, the problem of normalisation is not the primary or sole method of social control that the state exercises over its subjects. Instead, as Fanon notes, the colonial context is one whose principal law is that of violence. "In the colonies, it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official, instituted go-betweens, the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression," Fanon notes. In the European metropoles, by contrast, social control relies on "a multitude of moral teachers, counsellors and 'bewilderers' who separate the exploited from those in power," "which lightens the task of policing considerably."[72] In this respect, Fanon follows Gramsci in drawing an analytical distinction between social formations disciplined through overt coercion and military force and those stabilized through the manufacturing of consent, often through civil society's organizational infrastructure.[73] He associates the latter with European societies with robust civil and civic institutions. But in the colonies, Fanon points out, the European settler state is always engaged in what Gramsci would identify as "military" or "politico-military" relations to strategically discipline and disempower the native population (or the racially oppressed).[74] The colonialists' attempts to "normalise" or "domesticate" the native or Black subject, in these situations, can never be divorced from the overt logics of violence, domination, and subordination. The relations of force are different, so to speak, and Fanon's engagement with both a) the lived experience of his own inferiorization and b) the politics of anticolonial resistance in Algeria opens up a key space through which to theorise subaltern resistance. This attention to the subaltern, in turn, allows Fanon to better reckon with the situated possibilities for individual and collective agency. Political empowerment becomes a problematic in its own right, rather than a formal and abstract condition internal to all power relations, as it is in Foucault. Such a reading, then, opens up a whole new set of questions about how best to strategically pursue a collective politics of antiracist emancipation.[75]

In this reconstruction of racialized worlds, Fanon trains his analytical gaze on both the discursive practices and the non-discursive relations of force that structure these colonial formations in racial dominance. Even in his earlier more existentialist texts, Fanon traces specific racisms back to the discourses, imaginaries, and forms of knowledge production that shape these racial "truths" and affects. He too treats racisms as an *ideological* problem, in the pragmatic sense that I outlined in Chapter 1. What is to be challenged, Fanon reminds us, is not the illusive reality of race — for racial divisions are very real and material to the people pinioned by them[76] — but the processes of racialized Othering that reproduce oppressive and exploitative practices. This necessarily involves looking to the contexts of enunciation in which these racisms become hegemonic. As he points out, racism "has

[71] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 76.
[72] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 29.
[73] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 38-40.
[74] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 171.
[75] Notably, of course, Fanon attempts to provide some strategic insights on this front in *The Wretched of the Earth* and in some of his political writings on the Algerian Revolution. Gramsci, of course, was equally concerned with this sort of strategic political thinking, but in the Italian context after World War I and in the lead-up to World War II.
[76] Gramsci reminds us that popular conceptualizations are material forces at work in social formations. Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 157.

had to renew itself, to adopt itself, to change its appearance…This [biological] racism…becomes transformed into cultural racism."[77] Across his oeuvre, Fanon takes aim at various raciological discourses, especially the "objective" knowledges produced by the social and human sciences. For instance, Fanon lambasts ethno-psychiatrists who have published articles explaining the African's "inferiority" by pointing to their supposedly deformed brain structure.[78] In doing so, he reveals how mid-century European psychology replaced early 20th century phrenology as the legitimating ground of biological difference.[79] In turn, he points out that the medical staff in French Algeria continuously relied on raciological explanations when confronted with what appeared to them to be recalcitrant Algerians with "imaginary ailments."[80] But Fanon doesn't just analyse the so-called "elite" ideological apparatuses. He also takes aim at what Gramsci might call the collective common sense that permeates a social formation and delimits what individuals within it are predisposed to believe or doubt, to accept or reject. As Gramsci reminds us, these sorts of "popular" conceptualizations are material forces at work in social formations;[81] they set the hermeneutic terrain "on which the practical consciousness of the masses is actually formed."[82] It is at this level, rather than at the level of "technical" knowledge production that Fanon locates a substantial degree of his critique. There is an entire "historical-racial schema," Fanon notes, that White knowers have constructed of the Black Other, a grid of intelligibility that does not correspond to the Black subjects present before them.[83] The culture industry, in its myriad mass-market commodities and media forms, proves instrumental for consolidating this racist image of the Black Other — from stereotypical fears over cannibalism to television programs that frame the Black subject as pure corporeality to racist advertising that uses the grinning Sambo to sell a chocolate banana drink.[84] As writer Paul Beatty quips, "Racist Negro Archetypes…don't die. They multiply."[85]

Fanon refers to this shared, often tacit hermeneutic imaginary as the "social unconscious."[86] And he stresses how this social imaginary provided legitimation for the colonial administration and its attempts to discipline the colonised peoples. The colonial bureaucrats themselves deployed sociologists and public health professionals, anthropologists and geographers, to study the "natives" and pull together data at the level of the population: "These hordes of vital statistics, those hysterical masses, those faces bereft of all humanity, those distended bodies which are like nothing on earth, that mob without beginning or end, those children who seem to belong to nobody, that laziness stretched out in the sun, that vegetative rhythm of life — all this forms part of the colonial vocabulary."[87] Knowledge of the African Negro or the Algerian Muslim, his habits and his capacities, his cultural by-ways and his beliefs, was all too often produced in order to facilitate the settler project. These forms of knowing helped the Europeans effectively control the peoples they had subordinated and dispossessed. As he remarks, "Disciplining, training, mastering and today pacifying are the words most frequently used by the colonialists in occupied territories.[88]" For example, he argues that the French settlers' attempt to "unveil" the Algerian woman — while cloaked in the rhetoric of civilizational progress and moral improvement — functioned as a form of erotic fascination for White

[77] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 32.
[78] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 245.
[79] McCulloch, *Black Soul, White Artifact,* 14-17.
[80] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 9.
[81] Gramsci, The Modern Prince, 157.
[82] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 43.
[83] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 170.
[84] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 92.
[85] Paul Beatty, *The Sellout* (Farrar, Strauss, & Giroux, 2015).
[86] Whereas Jung argued that individuals all drew upon a shared background framework of beliefs, images, and fantasies in a transcendental way, Fanon contends that such a phenomenon is a profoundly social and historical product. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 124.
[87] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 33.
[88] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 245.

men and worked to legitimate invasive interventions into Algerian social life.[89] In this respect, Fanon's analyses of racial ideology don't adopt a Foucauldian conceptual vocabulary, but they certainly can be read as an attempt to reckon with racism as the product of specific relations of "power-knowledge-difference."[90] He refused to divorce specific racial ideologies from the practical contexts of domination and conquest out of which they emerged. Nor did he separate these "popular beliefs" from the specific political functions that they continued to serve in directing, legitimating and naturalizing racial governance.

On one level, then, these raciological discourses work to naturalize and explain racial colonialism and its violence. But as Fanon continually stresses, these Manichean imaginaries aren't free-floating ideas of human difference. They take shape, to a large extent, because the European coloniser has built a Manichean world — one that works through the racial segmentation of labor, of citizenship, and of physical space. Racisms are often articulated with biopolitical technologies of managing, disciplining, exploiting, and eradicating nonwhite peoples in order to shore up both White settler colonies and the metropolitan extraction economy. For Fanon, the problem of racial difference was not first and foremost a matter of racist discourse, but of the structuring political and economic regimes that produced racisms *qua* ideological explanations in the first place. As he notes, "military and economic oppression generally precedes, makes possible, and legitimates racism."[91] Fanon consistently links these raciological imaginaries back up to the nondiscursive practices that make their interpretative schemas both normal and normative. In this respect, my materialist reading of Fanon diverges somewhat from the account offered in most postcolonial literary criticism.[92] Taking its inspiration from French postmodernist and psychoanalytic thinkers, postcolonial theory sought to explain — in very general terms — how European colonialism produced new kinds of difference that were first and foremost embedded at the level of the symbolic. But a Lacanian or Derridian account of Difference can only tell political theorists so much about racisms *qua* ideological discourses, let alone about the actual practices and structural embedding of racial stratification.[93] Reading Fanon on such terms, I argue, separates the plane of discourse from power relations and reduces racial and ethnic difference to an abstract linguistic logic. Many kinds of socio-political difference become lumped together under a similar explanatory framework. This is why Gates decries the "Fanonism" prevalent amid postmodernist literary critics for turning him into a "global theorist of alterity."[94]

I argue that Fanon's analyses of these non-discursive forces that structure racial worlds trace a dialectic between unmaking and making.[95] The European project of conquest seeks to replace the old indigenous order with a new one, populated with new kinds of beings. But in order to do so, it must first dismantle the existing institutional and cultural apparatuses, on the one hand, and undermine the indigenous people's subjectivities, on the other.[96] This is a "politico-military strategy" that Gramsci points out is vital for colonial states to maintain their control of an oppressed population.[97] At its most extreme, such a politics can take on genocidal strategies to clear the land of indigenous peoples altogether. This is what Achille Mbembe refers to as the "necropolitical" logic of the racial colony. These "forms of subjugation of life to the power of death" involve the sequestering and disciplining of those who are disposable.[98] They regulate the state's "murderous functions,"

[89] Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 42-45.
[90] Hall, *The Fateful Triangle,* 48.
[91] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 37-38.
[92] For an overview of the postcolonial Fanon, see Gates, "Critical Fanonism" and Robinson, "The Appropriation of Fanon."
[93] Hall, "On Postmodernism and Articulation," 241-242.
[94] Gates, "Critical Fanonism," 459.
[95] Gramsci also stressed the importance of this deconstruction-reconstruction dialectic when it came to thinking political relations of force. Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 161.
[96] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 169.
[97] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 171.
[98] Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 39.

rather than seeking to micro-manage the health of various populations.[99] There is a different mode of political rationality operative in French Algeria, say, and in other White settler states than in the imperial metropole. Unlike in Europe, where "softer" and subtler forms of social control are now used to assimilate the White working classes to the capitalist order, the colonial order relies predominantly on the threat of violence to discipline and contain Black and indigenous communities. "In the colonies, it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official, instituted go-betweens, the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression,"[100] Fanon remarks. Questions of political legitimacy or normative consent rarely, if ever, came into it. As one French government official put it, "we must counter these natural creatures who obey the laws of their nature blindly, with a strict, relentless ruling class. We must tame nature, not convince it."[101]

To this effect, Fanon's work highlights two important strategies of power characteristic of these colonial "death-worlds."[102] First, he foregrounds the routine ways in which violence is used to terrorise dominated groups into submission.[103] And second, Fanon highlights the spatiality of colonial power by focusing on the political technologies and built architectures that maintain strict racial segregation. As Fanon puts it, "colonialism…is violence in its natural state."[104] This is brutality not as an epiphenomenal outburst of disturbed or misguided individuals, but as a concerted political strategy. The coloniser inflicts myriad cruelties on the subject peoples, both as a way of coercing them into submission and as a way of spectacularizing their own power.[105] The settler state is prone to massacres,[106] both by state military actors and by the settler population. In French Algeria, whole villages were burned, the men dragged out and shot, the women raped. Torture too was a routine practice in the Euromodern colonies.[107] As Fanon points out, "Colonialism cannot be understood without the possibility of torturing, violating, or of massacring."[108] These routine acts of violence not only dominate and disempower Black and indigenous communities with the hope of quashing out dissent, but they also can destabilise the native or Black subject's sense of self. Fanon's patients who have survived police torture can't sleep. They have panic attacks. They feel pins and needles. They are depressed. They won't eat. Whereas Foucault saw an emergent carceral logic at work in various Euromodern social institutions, from the school to the hospital to the workplace, Fanon argues that the colonial matrix of power was always-already wedded to brutal strategies of enclosure, bodily torture, and forced assimilation. What appeared to be a bit of a hysterical pronouncement in Foucault[109] — that the White European lives in a society modelled after a giant prison — looks much more like a critical diagnosis in Fanon's reconstruction of settler colonialism. As he puts it, "Every colony tends to turn into a huge farmyard, where the only law is that of the knife."[110]

The settler regime too seeks to destroy the collective structures that support the indigenous community and ensure its self-continuity. On the one hand, that means the coloniser razes villages, takes down bridges, repurposes religious sites, re-routes roads, commandeers water systems, etc. At its most extreme, such a politics follows the logic of the siege. The indigenous people are "sealed off and cut off from the world. Daily life is militarised."[111] Bulldozing the colonised society and its

[99] Mbembe. "Necropolitics," 17.
[100] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 29.
[101] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 245.
[102] Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 40.
[103] Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 24.
[104] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 48.
[105] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 42.
[106] Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* 618-620.
[107] Gilroy, "Fanon and Améry."
[108] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 66.
[109] Garland, "Foucault's "Discipline and Punish,"" 877.
[110] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 249.
[111] Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 30.

material architectures works to disable the subject peoples and to render them newly dependent on the European settler, his extractive infrastructure, and his overpriced commodity exchange. On the other, the settler regime attempts to force the indigenous population and other nonwhite groups to assimilate to Western values, from converting to Christianity to embracing Euromodern social hygiene to adopting an individualist ethic of self-advancement. The colonial state too begins to embark on a project of "civilizing" certain native elites, assimilating them to its power structures and cultural forms.[112] (Fanon, in turn, notes that the settler state engages in more of this assimilative work — "it presses, it arouses, it urges, and it punishes"[113] the native bourgeois — as its mode of exploitation shifts and the settler project requires increasingly skilled forms of native labor.)[114] By devaluing indigenous cultural lifeways and denying the oppressed people's existence in historical time, Fanon writes, the European colonisers work "to drive into the natives' heads the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation and bestiality."[115] Settler colonialism, then, is regulated by the ideal of "terra nullius" in two ways.[116] It is a political project which, first, denies the existence of the indigenous inhabitants in order to legitimate its dominion and then, second, seeks to effect that very emptiness by dismantling the natives' world, both physically and ideologically. It is a scorched earth politics — move the indigenous people off their land, destroy their cultural life-worlds, devalue and deny their knowledges, level the built environment, and then reap the benefits of this totalizing fragmentation.

But Fanon's analyses of French Algeria too point to a second political technology central to racial colonialism — namely, the construction of segregated spaces. In place of the native world, he explains, the European settler then builds a new institutional order which is predicated on the principle of a "reciprocal exclusivity" between the White and the Black, the settler and the native.[117] As Mbembe notes, "colonial occupation itself was a matter…of writing on the ground a new set of social and spatial relations."[118] On one side of town, the settler regime erected walls, barriers, no-go zones, camps, prisons to control the native peoples. On the other, the colonisers constructed estates, markets, state office buildings, public spaces for settlers to mingle and commercial spaces for them to pursue leisure, roads that skirted the indigenous settlements. The built environment makes the racialized caesura obvious, inescapable, a naturalised part of the landscape. In Algeria, there emerged two kinds of towns: the settler town — "the strongly-built town…the brightly-lit town…the well-fed town, an easy-going town; its belly always full of good things." The other is "the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, [which] is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of ill repute."[119] There are now two worlds were separate and profoundly unequal, organised around a militarised border of checkpoints, police stations, and military barracks. This apartheid regime regulated both the distribution of bodies in space and their movements. As Gilroy points out, many settler colonies adopted political technologies like South Africa's pass system, in which nonwhite peoples could only move along certain roads and into certain spaces with official permission.[120] Whiteness and Blackness weren't just marked on the body, but they also encompassed an entire habitat to which that raced body could be said to "rightly" belong. The settler society is one of racial injunctions regulating which individuals can enter which spaces, can work in which industries, can marry which people, can attend which schools. "The first thing which the native learns is to stay in

[112] Gramsci argued that the coercive facet of State power was subordinate to this positive project of creating a "new type and level of civilization." Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 187.
[113] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 188.
[114] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 37.
[115] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 169.
[116] Pateman, *Contract and Domination,* 38.
[117] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 30.
[118] Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 25-26.
[119] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 30.
[120] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 53.

his place, and not go beyond certain limits."[121] Racial colonialism unmakes the old native world and reconstructs a new one riven by a deep caesura. The idea of one world populated by different peoples and cultures — a social conception predicated on the existence of many differences amid a shared or common humanity — has been replaced. In its stead is the "Manichean delirium" in which racism provided the key shibboleth between those populations whose life the modern state sought to manage and those which it saw as polluting and ripe for elimination.[122]

And yet, unlike some critical theorists of 'race,' Fanon refuses to reify this divide into a new social ontology. Whereas thinkers like Mills set up an entire political theory based on the White/Black antagonism, he remains skeptical that such an ideological horizon can always accurately describe the objective reality of racial formations. Such an ontological account of Blackness may be understandable, given the very real wrongs and violences that anti-Black racial domination has inflicted on Black people for centuries, Fanon notes, but it makes the crucial mistake of "forgetting racism as consequence" and instead "concentrates on racism as cause."[123] As he notes, the oppositional Manichean logics that dominate in both the settler imaginary and the colonised imaginary emerge out of a particular kind of political moment — that of anticolonial struggle.[124] But once national self-determination has been achieved, Fanon points out, neither these categorical accounts of 'racial belonging' nor the totalizing diagnoses of racist domination are always reliable.[125] As he puts it, "the people who at the beginning of the struggle had adopted the primitive Manicheanism of the settler — Blacks and whites, Arabs and Christians — realise as they go along that it sometimes happens that you get Blacks who are whiter than whites and that the [nationalist struggle] does not always tempt certain strata of the population to give up their interests or privileges" and join the anticolonial cause.[126] Anticolonial and antiracist efforts, therefore, will require a more granular political analysis — one that looks at the disparate relations of force that structure access to capital, political privileges, and social status. "Racialism," as he puts it, is not enough to anchor or direct an anticolonial struggle for liberation alone, even as it may provide some initial motivation for the colonised to rebel against their oppressors.[127]

There is a vital anti-essentialism, then, to Fanon's work on 'race.' He never loses sight of the fact that racisms and racist institutions are the crystallization of political work. Racial hierarchies don't simply spring out of the "fall" of the European slave trade, fully formed and unchangeable. Instead, their historical inertia depends on ongoing practices of racial inequality, which shift depending on the economic imperatives, ideological mechanisms of legitimation, and political coalitions ascendent in concrete contexts. And this means too that these racial orders can be contested, revised, and potentially dismantled. For Fanon, however, such an emancipatory future could only be realised through antiracist and anticolonial struggle.[128] It was at the level of collective politics that other worlds could become possible. These political movements "are the essence of the fight which explodes the old colonial truths and reveals unexpected facets, which brings out new meanings and pinpoints the contradictions camouflaged by these facts," Fanon concludes.[129] By taking up an active posture towards their oppression, the colonised reclaim both their own agency in the face of colonial immobilisation and bring into being new forms of material relations. These new relations, in turn,

[121] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 40.
[122] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 40.
[123] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 40.
[124] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 73.
[125] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 116.
[126] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 115.
[127] "Racialism and hatred and resentment — a legitimate desire for revenge — cannot sustain a war of liberation." Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 111.
[128] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 102-103.
[129] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 118.

can open the door to new futures or a "completely new line of action."[130] In this respect, Fanon remained skeptical of the idea of a unified racial subject — one whose political interests and understanding could be readily assumed to be homogenous, coherent, and emancipatory. Instead, like Gramsci, he focused on the stages of political work that had to go into turning a racially oppressed group from people who shared similar concrete interests into an effective and politicized class bent on dismantling the systems and structures that dominate them.[131] The "reverse Manicheanism" of the colonized, then, is for Fanon both a predictable ideological reaction to the injustices of the colonial system *and* a strategy for consolidating political solidarity across class lines in the struggle for national liberation. But that strategy never displaces the real complexity of racialized, classed, gendered, and regionalized relations that shape the colonial conjuncture,[132] and it fast outlives its usefulness in the postcolonial moment.[133]

The benefit of reading Fanon as if he were a genealogist becomes clear here: The antiracist critic can both acknowledge the depth of racial stratification in late modernity without reverting to a kind of political quietism about the possibility of overcoming White supremacy. In his work, Fanon remained committed to the transcendence of racism and its inhuman logics — even as he remained clear-eyed about the difficulties of arriving at that sort of "human" world. "It is a question of the Third World starting a new history of Man," he writes, "a history which will have regard to the sometimes-prodigious theses which Europe has put forward, but which will also not forget Europe's crimes."[134] Like Foucault (and like Gramsci), his analyses of racial orders are localized and attuned to the specific technologies, institutions, discourses, and practices that produce and naturalise a particular world as *the* world. But Fanon also moves beyond the sort of critical investigations that Foucault carried out. Namely, he also seeks to engage with the ethical-existential pathologies that racial orders can inculcate in White European subjects, on the one hand, and Black and colonised subjects, on the other. To do so, he mobilises a much more robust normative toolkit than does Foucault. Whereas both theorists look at practices of self-making in Euromodernity, Fanon adopts the alienation critique as a diagnostic framework through which to separate out healthy forms of self-relation from neurotic or otherwise dysfunctional orientations. In the next section, I'll look at the second facet of Fanon's sociogenic critique — his existential phenomenology of racial subjectivation. Such a methodological step sets the stage for challenging how it is that race, as a phantasmagoric idea that has made itself into a social reality, impacts and conditions the bodies that must wear its significations.

Fanon and the making of racial selves

From Fanon's racialized "ontology of the present," then, emerge two distinctive kinds of subjects — a White European subject granted the formal status of personhood and all its incumbent rights, and a Black or native subject whose Otherness precludes them from standing as equals within the intersubjective community. Such an existential marginalisation, in turn, renders these Black and indigenous individuals more vulnerable to practices of domination, exploitation, and violence.[135] "I am speaking here on the one hand of alienated (mystified) Blacks, and on the other of no less

[130] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 46.
[131] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 170.
[132] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance, 37.
[133] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 127.
[134] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 254.
[135] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 200.

alienated (mystifying and mystified) Whites," he writes.[136] Yet Fanon is not claiming that these racialized types exist in any purely ontological sense. There is no essentially White Subject or essentially Black Other. Instead, Fanon is analysing White subject formation and Black subject formation as internally related but discrete existential phenomena.[137] In racial orders, he points out, "race" serves as a constitutive frame through which individuals make sense of themselves and their world in these colonial orders. This is in part because racisms often dominate, disadvantage, and violate Black and brown subjects. But crucially, these racial identities are both ascribed *and* identified with.[138] A racial identity can provide a strong source of affective investment as well as a sense of social solidarity that shapes who individuals understand themselves to be.[139] In antiracist critique, then, the political theorist must grapple with the ways in which 'whiteness' or 'blackness' becomes a significant site of social and self-relation under concrete conditions. This involves taking on the first-person perspective of what certain kinds of racialized judgment, desire, and action *mean* to those individuals who experience them. As Emirbayer and Desmond put it, "no discussion of the racial order is possible without racialized selves."[140]

In order to grapple with the ethics of racialized subject formation, Fanon turns to French post-war existentialism for theoretical resources. In particular, he looks to the work of thinkers like Jean-Paul Sartre, Alexandre Kojève, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. (He also potentially relies on Georg Lukacs, but claims to that effect remain speculative.) But Fanon revises their general existential insights for the specific sociological conditions that colonised subjects must negotiate. In particular, he argues that racist oppression removes the Black or native individual from the struggle for reciprocal recognition in the first place. By virtue of their skin colour, Black subjects are foreclosed from even participating in a mutual struggle for intersubjectivity with their White counterparts.[141] In the face of the White gaze, the Black subject is displaced from himself, is perceived as if he were nothing more than "an object among other objects."[142] In Sartrean parlance, the Black self cannot effectively return the gaze that reifies them and therefore reify, in turn, the White Other. In Kojèvean terms, the White subject fails to even identify the Black Other as a reciprocal and potentially reciprocating human Other. As Lukacs might put it, the Black subject can no longer relate to herself on humane terms, but instead is forced to treat herself like a racialized object.[143] Under these material conditions, the practices of subject formation cannot be understood in any general or abstracted sense, he points out. No individual is race-less. Instead, he seeks to detail these "distinctive metaphysics" of the Black subject and the White subject under racial colonialism.[144] Famously in *Black Skin, White Masks,* Fanon argues that the dehumanized Black or indigenous subject can develop an all-consuming desire for recognition from the coloniser — an affective investment that is both doomed to fail on structural grounds and which can produce alienated self-relations. In turn, he points out that the White colonizer too adopts a set of unhealthy attachments to Whiteness and paranoid obsessions with Blackness that trap them in a mystified world of anti-Black fears and anxieties.[145] As I explore in greater detail in Chapter 5, Fanon brings together the existentialist Marxists' work and his psychological training to offer his own version of the alienation critique.[146] Ultimately, he indicts what

[136] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 12.
[137] Gordon, "Fanon and the Crisis of European Man.
[138] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 90.
[139] For those individuals who are pinned in place by the social imaginary's set of racial meanings and narratives, they can appear in one encounter as a limit or a constraint, and yet in another, these racial positionalities act as sites of affective investment and constitutive self-understanding. Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity.*
[140] Emirbayer and Desmond, *The Racial Order,* 234.
[141] Oliver, *Witnessing,* 24-25.
[142] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 89.
[143] Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness,* 84.
[144] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* xii.
[145] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 12.
[146] Unlike Foucault, who embraced an anti-essentialist ethic of individual self-fashioning, Fanon offers a more robust normative framework for separating out "healthy" from "unhealthy" forms of self-relation, one that he gets from the weak anthropology that

he sees to be cases of racial "neuroses" among White and Black subjects which prevent them from standing in a right relation to themselves or their actions.[147]

Fanon's existential phenomenology is therefore both descriptive and diagnostic. He argues that these asymmetrical and nonreciprocal relations of interracial misrecognition — which obtain at a social level — can inflict pathologies at the subjective level that obstruct individual self-determination. "If there is a flaw, it lies not in the 'soul' of the individual, but in his environment,"[148] Fanon notes. The parallels to Lukacs' critique of reification under commodity capitalism are clear.[149] But I also contend that Fanon's existentialist work contains key similarities with Honneth's critical project. Both thinkers share a commitment to pre-theoretical lived experience, to working from the embodied perspectives of those individuals suffering from domination, marginalisation, or violence. In turn, Honneth and Fanon each contend that distorted or otherwise pathological forms of recognition can obstruct individual self-realization and impede the construction of more just social orders. They link the structures of recognition, in fundamental ways, to the necessary preconditions for individual and collective freedom. And yet Fanon offers a much more realistic and nuanced account of intersubjective recognition and its ethical potential than does Honneth. The latter avoids the complexities of psychosocial subject formation and instead assumes that the lived experience of misrecognition will translate into an ethically viable and politically actionable struggle for emancipation. This means that Honneth's theory of social recognition appears, at best, naive, and, at worst, to be ideologically invested in Euromodern institutions like the bourgeois family, the liberal representative state, and the capitalist market. By contrast, Fanon's entire oeuvre demonstrates that such an assumption is both mistaken and dangerous. Rather than presume that all Black subjects will automatically resist European colonialism and its racist ideologies, he charts all the ways in which the racially oppressed and the colonised can interiorise the violences and inferiorization visited upon them, from "despair" over his diminishment to "hallucinatory lactification" (i.e., a desire to magically become White).[150] In Fanon's analyses, the desire for recognition is first and foremost to be critically interrogated, not celebrated.[151]

Part of this critical divergence owes to Fanon's own lived experience in the colonial "margins." But part of it too can be attributed to the fact that Fanon works with a different account of intersubjective (mis)recognition to that of Honneth. Whereas the latter models the intersubjective on the supposedly power-free relationship of care that obtains between a mother and her child, Fanon looks to a much more sociologically embedded kind of interpersonal encounter — that which he has with a White mother and her child on a French train. He recounts this incident in his chapter on the "Lived Experience of the Black Subject" in *Black Skin, White Masks*. A White child pointed to him and called out, "Look, a Nègre!"[152] As he tells it, the child's gaze freezes him in place. In this moment, he experiences himself not in personal terms, but instead sees himself as the White child does — as the feared Black Other. "I cast an objective gaze over myself, discovered my blackness, my ethnic features: deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, fetishism, racial stigmas, slave traders, and above all, use, above all the grinning Y a bon Banania."[153] Fanon is (rightly) angered by this reification and its dehumanization. It is not just that the White child misapprehends Fanon because he misapplies certain social stereotypes' propositional content. His gaze renders Fanon into that which is essentially

psychoanalysis provides.
[147] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 42.
[148] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 188
[149] Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness,* 84-90.
[150] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 42, 80.
[151] Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks,* 32-34; Oliver, *Witnessing,* 26-27.
[152] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 93
[153] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 92.

Other and inferior. Fanon writes, "I sense, I see in this White gaze that it's the arrival not of a new man, but of a new type of man, a new species. A Negro, in fact!"[154] His capacity for individual self-determination has been constitutively elided in the face of the Negro, whose phantasmagoric character replaces and displaces every Black subject. As in Lukacs' account of commodity fetishism, the open-ended responsiveness of individual subjectivity is elided under this instrumentalizing relation that the White knower has to the Black self as "object." This is a presence as erasure, the hypervisibility of the Black body as the invisibility of Black subjectivity. In turn, the White child is both the mouthpiece of that reification and its dupe. Neither he nor his White mother can see Fanon as a subject like them, regardless of the response Fanon offers. And this reification too distorts the kind of relation that Fanon can have to himself. "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," he writes.[155]

Fanon generalises this anecdote of the racist encounter he has on the French train into a model for thinking through the pathological nature of recognition relations in racist societies. As Pierre Macherey puts it, this incident becomes the existential "figure" through which he thinks Black subjectivation.[156] "Ontology does not allow us to understand the being of the black man, since it ignores lived experience," Fanon points out. "For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man."[157] To be clear, Fanon is not claiming that Black or indigenous subjects are not subjects before they face the reifying force of the White gaze. But what he does want to highlight is the fact that the racially oppressed subject often becomes cognisant of their infrahuman status through these sorts of encounters — and that these reifications follow the Black self through diverse milieus. As Rankine writes of a Black man getting stopped by police, "And you are not the guy and still you fit the description because there is only one guy who is always the guy fitting the description."[158] In this moment, the forms of racist inferiorization latent with the social imaginary become the mirror against which one sees one's own face. These interpersonal encounters with White Others effectively force the Black subject to take up the position of the inferior Other, even if only for a moment: "The white world…demanded of me that I behave like a black man — or at least like a Negro."[159] The "Black problem" — as the White imaginary likes to frame it — is no longer an abstract issue to be solved, debated, rationalized and argued over; it is intimately and viscerally present as a set of norms that positions you in particular as a "Negro" or a "native" or a "Black woman." This sort of subjectivating experience, in turn, can come either from a specific Other or from the general Other created in the hegemonic social imaginary. As James Baldwin writes, Black children realize at some point that the White cowboys they are rooting for in the cowboy and Indian TV programs are out to kill them, that they are the Indians.[160]

Nor are these experiences of anti-black racism isolated or epiphenomenal affairs. To inhabit a Black body in racial orders is to subject oneself, daily, without respite, to the threat of White racism and the forms of stigma, prejudice and stereotyping that give racism its hermeneutic content. As Paul Beatty remarks in *The Sellout,* "Yes, being black is a full-time job: sometimes you are invisible, other times you are hyper-visible…Sometimes you are welcome, other times you are not. The thermostat is always moving and you have to keep adapting to find some comfort level."[161] This learned "balancing act,"

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[154] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 95
[155] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 92.
[156] Macherey, "Figures of Interpellation," 18.
[157] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 90.
[158] Rankine, *Citizen,* 108.
[159] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 94.
[160] James Baldwin, "The American Dream and the American Negro," *New York Times,* March 7, 1965, https://www.nytimes.com/images/blogs/papercuts/baldwin-and-buckley.pdf.
[161] Beatty, *The Sellout.*

of course, takes work, both mental and emotional. It involves "knowing your Whites"[162] and calibrating your words, behaviour, actions, and gestures to pass without incident through White spaces that could quickly become hostile. As Ta-Nehisi Coates reminds us, racism all too often is physically violent, that "it dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscle, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth."[163] To inhabit a Black body in a racist society is to be existentially vulnerable to violation and harm, both from the state and from White people. Racism makes even the straightforward tasks of living, from shopping at the store to applying for a bank loan to speaking with a colleague to driving down the street, into difficult and potentially dangerous outings. Constantly navigating projections of Black inferiority, then, displaces Black subjects from their own corporeal existence. "The worst injury is feeling that you do not belong so much / to you —" Rankine writes.[164]

Fanon argues that such an "existential deviation," in turn, can produce problematic or unhealthy coping strategies in the Black or indigenous subjects whose selves are regularly dehumanised. "What are their defensive mechanisms?" he asks.[165] For example, some Black subjects attempt to "whiten" or lactify themselves by adopting "White" forms of life.[166] They work hard to speak French a certain way.[167] They go to Paris and enjoy quintessential Parisian pursuits.[168] They pursue the affection and erotic interest of White partners, thereby bringing themselves closer to the upper tiers of the racial hierarchy.[169] "It is commonplace in Martinique to dream of whitening oneself magically as a way of salvation,"[170] Fanon writes. In order to win the White world's esteem — and therefore confirm in their worth in their own eyes — these Black subjects must reject their own Blackness. They attempt to become as White as possible. But this obsession with being recognized as White — or as close to White as possible — is a symptom of its pathological racial order. "If he is overcome to such a degree by a desire to be white, it's because he lives in a society that makes his inferiority complex possible," Fanon notes.[171] It is not a struggle for the Other's acknowledgement that can be successfully resolved, at least when the terms of that relation remain trapped in racial phantasmagoria. Such a self-relation is both inherently unstable and a sign that the Black subject has accepted the inferiorised picture of Blackness that the White world has produced. In this respect, Fanon contends that these self-negating behaviours are signs of Black alienation in the face of systematic racism. By alienated, Fanon means that Black individuals cannot enjoy healthy, self-determining relationships to their own embodiment.[172] The distorting and pathologizing force of anti-Black racism changes how they relate to themselves, their desires and their habits. And it does so in ways that can prevent Black subjects from pursuing their own self-determination in creative and healthy ways. As Gilroy puts it, "Fanon used the idea to index the estrangement from authentic human being-in-the-body and being-in-the-world that colonial social relations had wrought."[173]

In turn, the White subject too stands in a pathological relationship to their own agency, but that distortion takes a very different existential form. Under racial colonialism, Fanon argues, the White subject is both the mystifier and the mystified.[174] This reflects the divergent structural and ideological positioning that White subjects occupy in racial hierarchies. In social formations organized around

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[162] Cottom, *Thick,* 80.
[163] Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Letter to My Son," *The Atlantic,* July 4, 2015, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/07/tanehisi-coates-between-the-world-and-me/397619/.
[164] Rankine, *Citizen,* 146.
[165] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 38.
[166] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 80.
[167] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 4-5.
[168] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 7-8.
[169] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 29.
[170] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 27.
[171] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 80.
[172] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 92.
[173] Gilroy, *Against Race,* 46.
[174] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 200.

White hegemony, even the White working classes possess insulating advantages that are not as readily available to Black and brown communities. They remain within the normative body of the polis — its rightful citizens, to whom the state owes duties of protection and fairness; its rightful laborers, to whom the markets should reward effort with a livable wage and the consumption patterns to match. As Gramsci might point out, the White ruling elite have offered White labor and the White poor certain rights and advantages to secure their consent to the racialized status quo.[175] From their empowered positions within the culture industry and mainstream political discourse, White subjects have created the infrahuman figure of the "Negro" or the "native." As Fanon notes, borrowing from Sartre's reading of anti-Semitism, "What is called the black soul is a construction by white folk."[176] Likewise, it is the White settler who creates the colonised, both in the ideological sense of constructing the Algerians as "born slackers, born liars, born robbers, and born criminals"[177] and in the material sense of dispossessing them of their land, collective self-determination, and forms of life.[178] In a certain respect, then, it is not the White child who reifies Fanon on the French train when he calls him a Negro.[179] It is the White French "collective unconscious" that has trapped the Black subject behind the veil of the "grinning y a Bonania" advertising.

For all that White subjects are the source of these racist mystifications, they are also blinded by them. They fail to see the work — both ideological and material — that they have put into making these racial worlds and racist phantasms in the first place. This historical-racial schema, to use Fanon's term, says more about White knowers, their fears and anxieties, their ignorance and their empathetic failures, than it does about Black people. What appears to them to be a moment of recognition is always-already the site of a misrecognition. The Black subject sits behind a mask that the White social imaginary has erected, and the White subject mistakes the mask for the being.[180] In turn, the White world they inhabit appears simply to be the world. Their interpretative judgments, their forms of life, their desires and aspirations, are naturalised. The White subject is both normal and normative. For many Whites, their racial identity is a taken-for-granted, implicit and tacit part of the hegemonic social imaginary.[181] As such, they often don't think of themselves as "White" in conscious and active ways. For others, their Whiteness is an existentially important part of their sense of self, one that provides symbolic status and a key source of social belonging.[182] Yet regardless of whether their whiteness is a reflective aspect of their self-understanding, White subjects continue to practically enact all sorts of racist and racialized actions.[183] The structural element of White racism cannot be avoided here. As Fanon notes, "it is therefore not as a result of the evolution of people's minds that racism loses its virulence."[184] In this sense, then, Fanon's work echoes Lukacs' reification critique in its focus on the social and structural possibilities of intersubjective recognition, rather than on individual psychologies. What characterizes the White subject's existential condition in racial orders, then, is the actively cultivated contradiction between their practices and their consciousness.

Yet just because the problem of White reification is structural in nature and linked to the broader "social constellation" of exploitative and dominating practices does not mean that White knowers bear no epistemic or ethical responsibilities.[185] For all that it may be fragmentary and not fully volitional for individual knowers, this "active ignorance" about Black people, Black life, and anti-

[175] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 154-155, 161.
[176] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* xviii
[177] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 239.
[178] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 28.
[179] Macherey, "Figures of Interpellation," 17.
[180] Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason,* 51.
[181] Emirbayer and Desmond, *The Racial Order,* 251-252.
[182] Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness,* 13-15.
[183] Perry, *More Beautiful and More Terrible.*
[184] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 35.
[185] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 36.

Black racism is not mere happenstance.[186] As Baldwin stresses, many White people *do not want to know* about the extent of Black suffering[187] — both because that would place them in a morally compromising position and because anti-black racism has conditioned them to simply not care as much about what happens to Black people. "Unable to confront all these demands, the white man shirks his responsibility. I have a phrase for this: the racial allocation of guilt," Fanon writes.[188] Fanon describes this existential-affective incapacity to value Black life in *Black Skin, White Masks* as "affective ankylosis,"[189] referring to a medical condition that fuses the spine in place and prevents the body from flexible and regular movement. The White subject has ossified. They have lost their analytical flexibility, their ability to bend towards and react to others. As Oliver argues, "subjectivity and humanity are the result of response-ability. That which precludes a response destroys subjectivity and thereby humanity."[190]

In racial hierarchies, then, many White subjects too becomes alienated from their actions, but in this situation, it is because they cannot grasp these racist ideologies and images, institutions and practices, as rightly their own product.[191] Unlike Black subjects — who suffer an incapacity of agential self-determination in the face of White racism — White subjects experience a surfeit of self-determination, albeit one that comes with a profound epistemic and ethical price. This is where the critical element of Fanon's diagnosis becomes unavoidable. Against the backdrop of rampant police killings, the regular torture, the massacres of native towns, the systematic dispossession and robbery of Black and native communities, there can be no room for White ignorance or apathy. White subjects dehumanize Black people while at the same time denying that they have done so. In the process of disavowing their own involvement in Black suffering, then, White subjects lose their capacity to stand in a right relation to their own ethical character.[192] As Fanon asks the French doctors he works with, "If you do not want the man who is before you, how can I believe the man that is perhaps in you?"[193] Or as Baldwin puts it, "if I am not a man here, you are not a man here. You cannot lynch me and keep me in ghettoes without becoming something monstrous yourselves."[194] The White subject's racism, and his complicity with a racist colonial system, serve to undercut the *a priori* claims that White subjects make for their own humanity — and for their form of life as an ethical one.

Fanon's indictment of the "double narcissism" that afflicts White and Black subjects also reveals that a politics of racial "recognition" is more fraught than Honneth presumes. Under Manichean political ontologies, as in Lukacs' account of capitalism's commodity fetishism, the interracial encounter is always-already overdetermined from the outside. The forms of recognition that the White subject provides for a Black interlocutor are only ever metastable and easily superseded by the racialized expectations of Black inferiority.[195] Even when two people have an interpersonal history of shared experiences to draw upon, as Claudia Rankine reminds us, those biographical grounds can be superseded in an instant if the historical-racial schemas intrude: "Instantaneously your attachment seems fragile, tenuous, subject to any transgression of your historical self. And though your joined personal histories are supposed to save you from misunderstandings, they usually cause you to

[186] See, for example, Medina, *Epistemologies of Resistance;* Mills, *The Racial Contract;* and Sullivan and Tuana, *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance.*
[187] Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time,* 10.
[188] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 83.
[189] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 101.
[190] Oliver, *Witnessing,* 90.
[191] I do not have the space in this dissertation to explore the various forms that White ossification can take nor the various intellectual and affective attitudes that White subjects develop in response to their own epistemic and social privilege. But this would be a productive avenue for future research and development.
[192] There is a different account of ethical responsibility at work here in Fanon — one that foregrounds the subjective dimensions of individual accountability and which draws from a more Aristotelian notion of virtue. He gets it, in part, from reading Karl Jaspers' *The Question of German Guilt.* Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 79-80.
[193] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 16.
[194] Baldwin, *The Cross of Redemption,* 17.
[195] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 96-97.

understand all too well what was meant."[196] This instability owes to the fact that such moments of intersubjective acknowledgement can only ever come through the largesse of the White subject — if the asymmetrical power relations that structure the interracial encounter remain intact. By virtue of their material advantages and ideological security, the White subject is empowered to dictate the terms of that recognitive gesture.[197] This means that the Black subject, in attempting to win the White Other's acknowledgement of his humanity, remains trapped in a reactive posture by which his self-worth is wholly dependent on that Other's arbitrary will.[198]

Nor is the collective struggle for state recognition more productive. As Coulthard points out, such a demand can often backfire on subaltern communities because it forces them to accept a status quo that works against their interests.[199] This assimilative trap is all the more prevalent, Fanon reminds us, in racial orders that require the consent of certain privileged members of the racially oppressed or colonized group.[200] He spends pages of *The Wretched of the Earth* indicting the ways that the native "bourgeoisie" in French Algeria strives for the recognition of their European colonizers — and for the economic and social privileges that such an incorporation brings. This newly empowered native middle class becomes "the transmission line between the nation and a capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the masque of neocolonialism," Fanon notes. "The national bourgeoise will be quite content with the role of the Western bourgeoisie's business agent."[201] In Gramscian terms, then, we might say that Black subjects need to be particularly wary of the tokenistic forms of recognition and personal success that a still mostly White political coalition offers in exchange for stabilizing a social formation structured in racial domination. Once a political situation has shifted from a "war of maneuver" with its clearly delineated "front" between two mutually opposed antagonists to a "war of position" distributed across various sites within civil society and the state,[202] it becomes more difficult to discern what is a step towards antiracist progress and what is in effect another form of racialized control. The "native intellectual" should be doubly wary, Fanon notes, once the White settler stops denigrating his culture and instead begins "grow enthusiastic" over specific aspects of its cultural practices.[203] To demand that the oppressor recognizes the oppressed all too often works to normalise the hierarchical relationship that enables ongoing practices of oppression. As Fanon pointed out, without a radical restructuration of the social, the struggle for antiracist recognition is strewn with more pitfalls, psychologically and politically, than it avoids.[204]

Fanon's critical project, then, is directed not towards the desire for White recognition, but instead toward an ethical imaginary of disalienation.[205] In his view, achieving either Black disalienation or White accountability will require more than simply individualist ethical solutions. No matter how good an individual's intentions or how committed someone is to viewing Blackness on affirmative terms rather than negating ones, these racial imaginaries remain socially hegemonic. Pursuing ethical self-realization in a racial order cannot be a task for one ethical, anti-racist individual — or even a small group of them — alone. He therefore links the subjective struggle for autonomy-enabling recognition to the collective praxis of dismantling oppressive racial regimes.[206] As he puts it, "It

[196] Rankine, *Citizen,* 14.
[197] Oliver, *Witnessing,* 28-29.
[198] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 197.
[199] For example, by pursuing state recognition for their distinctive nationalities in Canada, indigenous groups have effectively normalised the centuries-long processes of Canadian colonisation and dispossession of their land, resources, labor, sovereignty, and cultural forms of life. Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks,* 40-41.
[200] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 37.
[201] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 122.
[202] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, eds. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), 238-239.
[203] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 39.
[204] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 63.
[205] Fanon *Black Skin, White Masks,* 201.
[206] Gilroy, "Fanon and Améry," 25-27.

remains, nevertheless, evident that for us the true disalienation of the black man implies a brutal awareness of the social and economic realities."[207] Such a task, as I argued at the outset of the chapter, must take place on two levels simultaneously, the material and the ideological. It is not enough to change individuals' attitudes towards oppression without removing the boot from their neck.

The politics of disalienation, in Fanon's work, remains rather underdeveloped. But what becomes clear from his brief remarks in *Black Skin, White Masks* and his later political analyses is that this is not a spontaneist theory of revolution, even as Fanon may seem to romanticize violence in certain facets of his work. In *The Wretched of the Earth,* he carries out a careful analysis of anti-colonial struggle, its strategies and its conditions for success in French Algeria. Similar to Gramsci, Fanon looks at the role of the nationalist party, the importance of popular culture, the strategic alliances that must be formed across regional divides, the substitution of cheap racial or factional solidarity in lieu of concrete political goals, and the dangers of a movement that loses touch with the grassroots in the face of elite co-option.[208] Whatever its strategic choices and tactical maneuvers in specific situations of struggle, though, this politics of disalienation remains oriented towards a certain antiracist horizon. Fanonian antiracist praxis seems to involve, on the negativist side, a rejection of dehumanizing practices and ideologies and, on the positivist side, the creation of new institutions predicated on mutuality and reciprocity rather than domination. As Fanon says, "I am fighting for the birth of a human world, in other words, a world of reciprocal recognitions."[209] Emancipatory struggle — whether against the settler colonial regime in French Algeria or the carceral state in the U.S. today — involves constructing social institutions that are regulated by an antiracist egalitarianism in practice, not just in name.[210] Only then will there be the possibility of an intersubjective recognition that enables mutual respect and individual flourishing rather than trapping the oppressor and the oppressed in pathological self-relations.

By adopting an existentialist phenomenology, Fanon is better placed than liberal critics to diagnose the subjective and social constraints that individuals experience as obstacles to their own autonomous action. In particular, he argues that the psychological traumas that racisms inflict must be understood as limitations on individual and collective flourishing. "The problem of colonization, therefore, comprises not only the intersection of historical and objective conditions but also man's attitude toward these conditions," Fanon remarks.[211] Neurotic obsessions with proving "oneself" to White people, self-hating behaviours and anti-black desires, forms of listlessness that are actually political protests, a paranoid distrust of White people and their medical institutions — these are all practices of self that purely objectivist accounts of racial domination might mischaracterize or miss entirely. As Coulthard remarks, "the problem is that any psychological problems that ensue, although socially constituted, can take on a life of their own, and thus need to be dealt with independently and in accordance with their own specific logics."[212] And yet I argue that it is important to situate Fanon's existential phenomenology within his broader genealogical project of denaturalizing specific racial regimes. When read in isolation from his more materialist work, Fanon's concerns with White reification and Black alienation can be turned into an unproductive ontology of all hierarchical forms of difference, one that privileges the ideological at expense of the nondiscursive relations of force that make such racial categories meaningful in the first place. In the next section, I attempt to defend

[207] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, xiv.
[208] For this discussion in Gramsci, see Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 30, 145-148, 157, 173-175. For a similar discussion in Fanon, see Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 128-133, 136-137, 145-148.
[209] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 193.
[210] Fanon's work echoes that of W.E.B. DuBois on the positive sense of abolition. As Angela Davis points out, DuBois differentiated between the negativist labor of formally outlawing chattel slavery in the U.S. and the active work needed to ensure that the freed slaves were integrated as political, economic and social equals into American society. Davis, *Abolition Democracy,* 64-65.
[211] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 65.
[212] Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks,* 37.

my reading of Fanon against other critical accounts that disaggregate his phenomenological work from his broader oeuvre.

Against Manicheanism

It is Fanon's existentialist phenomenology, however, that lends itself to many partial or one-sided readings of his work. Drawing in particular on his analyses in *Black Skin, White Masks,* many thinkers reconstruct a Manichean Fanon, one who reads all power relations through the structuring dyad of White/Black.[213] For critics like Cedric Robinson and Henry Louis Gates, this crude account of racial difference is what lets Fanon's critical theory down.[214] In turn, Afro Pessimists like Frank B. Wilderson take up this "race-centric" reading as a methodological exemplar for their own ontological account of Blackness.[215] Yet regardless of whether they endorse or reject this Manicheanism, I contend that these thinkers are engaging with the wrong Fanon. In particular, they abstract his existentialist and psychological analyses away from his more social and materialist insights. Doing so turns 'race' into a primary cause, rather than a complex overdetermination of forces, capital, spatiality, and discourse. It takes what Fanon saw as sociohistoric phenomena — namely, the kinds of inferiority complexes and neuroses that Black subjects can develop in the face of European colonization and racism — and inflates it into a quasi-transcendental framework for understanding all forms of racialized subjectivity. When one reads Fanon as a materialist, however, then it becomes easier to see how his critical theory might not prove as susceptible to the criticisms lodged against him or against the more Manichean interpreters of his work. I'll now briefly respond to these alternative readings of Fanon.

Postcolonialism and the Manichean Fanon

In his analysis of the postcolonial Fanon, Henry Louis Gates worries that Fanon's analytic falls back into a crude and deterministic understanding of 'race,' one that puts too much stock on 'race' as an ordering regime of power. In particular, he points out how these poststructuralist-informed readings can problematically assimilate all forms of ethnic difference to the colonizer/colonized dyad that Fanon writes about on the French train. Fanon as a "global theorist of alterity is emptied of his own specificity," Gates writes.[216] But contrary to what Gates alleges and how some postcolonial critics might read him, I contend that Fanon does not fall back into such a reductive Manichean logic. Rather than theorize Racism in general under this abstract White/Black dyad, Fanon mapped the "relations of force" that structured discrete racial formations in dominance — and that provided specific practical possibilities for antiracist and anticolonial struggle. In doing so, he follows Gramsci in acknowledging that not all modes of exploitation have the same face but that instead they must be analyzed in their concrete interrelations.[217] Even in his most existentialist text, *Black Skin, White Masks,* he does not absolutize the racial imaginary into a catch-all political explanation, nor does he mistake those existential archetypes for quasi-ontological ones. For example, he is not taken in by the quest for an essential Black subject, whose "authentic" being can be traced back to a mythic African

[213] Gates, "Critical Fanonism," 470.
[214] Robinson is particularly scathing of the linguistic abstractions at work in postcolonial criticism's reading of Fanon. See Robinson, "The Appropriation of Fanon," 303-304.
[215] Wilderson, "The Prison Slave," 19-20.
[216] Gates, "Critical Fanonism," 459.
[217] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 36.

past or to a logic of biological or cultural difference. Fanon remains largely dismissive of such attempts to "resignify" or "rescue" Blackness from stigma by looking to such mythological source material. As he puts it, "The discovery that a black civilization existed in the 15th century does not earn me a certificate of humanity."[218] Nor is he convinced by the "culturalist" attempts to valorise Blackness as the site of "rhythm" and "intuition."[219] Time and time again, Fanon insists on the materiality of 'race' — as it structures the world and its hierarchies, as it is lived and contested by those pinioned by it — but he never loses sight of the fact that these racial identities are both "made" and absurd. "The black man is not. No more than the white man."[220]

Nor are Fanon's diagnoses of Black alienation and White neurosis meant to characterise all individuals racialized as "Black" or "White" across diverse social formations.[221] Obviously, not all Black people desire to "become White" or have interiorised these racist evaluations of Black worth. As Fanon notes, the Black subject whose only desire is to sleep with a White woman is not the same subject as the one who feels himself "fixed, like a dye" by the White child on the French train.[222] Nor are Fanon's indictments of the White settler subjectivity meant to encapsulate every White person. As he points out, the kinds of racism and racialized affects that White individuals adopt often relates to their political and economic positioning. The virulent racism of the White settler in Algeria is not the same as the intellectual and disdainful racism of the White French metropolitan.[223] Fanon's phenomenological analyses are instead meant to serve as existential archetypes, rather than as categorical delimitations of what it means to be Black or White under a particular racial regime. As T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting writes, "*Black Skin, White Masks,* in essence, critiques stereotypification; it does not reinscribe it."[224] His psychoanalytical profiles are dispositional and generalized to a shared field of knowledge, desire and action. In his work, there are many intermediary positions within the overarching categories of Native and Settler, just as there are many different ways of responding to and negotiating the traumas that racial hierarchies inflict. There will be some White settlers who act against colonial institutions, he reminds us, just as there will be some Black subjects who buy into the hierarchies of value that White hegemony entrenches.[225] Fanon's "Manichean delirium," then, isn't a metaphysical claim about the actual range of subject positions available or their political interests. Instead, he highlights how this ideological framework of "a struggle between two, apparently, simple and homogenous class blocs"[226] acts as a "regime of truth" in colonial orders like French Algeria. This White/Black dichotomy often serves as the ideological terrain upon which individuals become conscious of their social positioning and their conflicts, but it elides the fact that the actual social formation is structured in more complex, fragmented and overdetermined ways.

Black Marxism and the Bourgeois Fanon

Cedric Robinson argues that Fanon's attention to the "psychological features" of the Black experience under White supremacy reifies a bourgeois notion of racism and emancipation.[227] Like

[218] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 200.
[219] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 102-107.
[220] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 206
[221] Yet simply because these subjective pathologies do not afflict any and all subjects from a particular social group does not mean that they do not exist, as phenomena, nor that they aren't problematic for those individuals who are afflicted by them. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* xvi.
[222] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* xvii.
[223] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 131-132.
[224] T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Frantz Fanon: Conflicts and Feminisms* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 12.
[225] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 115.
[226] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance, 37.
[227] Robinson, "The Appropriation of Fanon," 299.

Jock McCulloch, he holds that Fanon neglected the ways that racialization had served as an internal feature of capitalist development, one that needed to be theorised and contested on those grounds. In this respect, Fanon's political diagnosis seem to distract from the objective struggle between a largely White capitalist class and its disparately racialized working classes. Part of Robinson's skepticism of the early Fanonian texts may well be justified. The economic bases for racial slavery, colonisation, and new forms of White domination remain, at best, severely undertheorized in *Black Skin, White Masks*. For all that he stresses the importance of paying attention first to the "economic" level of social structuration, he barely discusses the relations of capitalist production or the class hierarchies that they produce. This is why McCulloch concludes that "Fanon does not define class with any precision and the categories of nationality and race are given precedence."[228] Yet contrary to this Marxist-inspired dismissal of the existentialist Fanon, I contend that those phenomenological and ethical critiques of Black subjectivation in the Antilles ought to be read alongside the more overtly materialist discussions that Fanon introduces in his later career. Fanon was fairly committed to the notion that the economic relations of production shaped the conditions of racial domination, alienation, and exploitation even in *Black Skin, White Masks*. After all, he regularly stressed the differences that class made in the racialization of discrete groups and their capacity to accumulate various kinds of capital, both economic and social.[229] If anything, his analytical gaze was simply trained on a different problematic at the time than the one that Robinson (and many other Black Marxists) think is worthwhile, namely the subjective interiorization of one's social positionality in ways that hinder efforts to struggle for self-determination, either individual or collective. But even in his later work, Fanon remained much more interested in the ways that colonial domination and racial exploitation cathected the political and ideological terrain in which individuals moved, rather than in the colonial mode of production and its incumbent social forms.

Rather than rejecting Fanon's alienation critique out of hand, then, I argue that social critics ought to link it up to the concrete discussions of Euromodern capitalism and its colonial dependants. When we do so, we can see the ways in which capitalism remains a key problem for Fanon. From the outset, his analyses of racial colonialism acknowledge the importance of capitalist development to the European conquest of the Americas, its institutionalisation of racial slavery, and its late imperial "scramble" for Africa. "For centuries the capitalists have behaved in the under-developed world like nothing more than war criminals," he writes. "Deportations, massacres, forced labor and slavery have been the main methods used by capitalism to increase its wealth, its gold or diamond reserves, and to establish its power."[230] He points out that racism is in itself an ideological precipitate of these earlier forms of economic and military domination.[231] In his later texts, he too makes a number of insightful observations about the complex articulations of class and 'race' in the African colony, both before political independence and afterwards. For example, Fanon points out that the colonial class hierarchies are structured differently than those in the European metropole, such that the indigenous worker becomes one of the most successfully assimilated to the capitalist workforce.[232] He identifies the potential for the nationalist bourgeoisie in newly independent African states to turn its back on the anticolonial struggle and set itself up the new overlords of the old European extraction economy. "The national bourgeoise will be quite content with the role of the Western bourgeoise's business agent," he quips.[233] And Fanon too foresees the precarious position that the newly "emancipated" African post colony would face in a geopolitical and capitalist regime still run by and for the old

[228] There is little discussion of capital accumulation, the exploitation of the working classes, the emergence of the proletariat, the ideological construction of bourgeoisie hegemony, etc. McCulloch, *Black Soul, White Artifact,* 211.
[229] For example, see his analysis of the "nationalist" middle class in *The Wretched of the Earth,* 121-127.
[230] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 80.
[231] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 37-38.
[232] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 86.
[233] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 122.

European imperial powers and the neo-imperial United States.[234] Faced with anticolonial movements, the European metropole withdraws its capital and sets the terms of reinvestment on deeply asymmetrical terms.[235] "In plain words, the colonial power says: 'Since you want independence, take it and starve,'" he writes.[236] In this respect, Robinson's dismissal of Fanon as an overly idealist and alienated intellectual remains a bit too easy.

Black Feminism and the Patriarchal Fanon

Some feminist thinkers like Gwen Bergner and bell hooks have criticized Fanon for what they see to be his reductive views on gender stratification.[237] At best, then, they contend, Fanon elides or otherwise ignores the difference that engendering makes to the racialization of discrete subjects.[238] At worst, he offers critiques of Afro Caribbean women (in particular) that fall back into sexist tropes.[239] Black feminists and queer thinkers are certainly right to point out that the search for a "pure" or essential Black subject most often serves patriarchal and heteronormative forms of cultural nationalism. Yet I argue that is not the project that Fanon undertakes. It is true that his writings are regulated by a tacit heteronormativity when it comes to sexuality and intimate relationships. And he is quite dismissive of what he sees to be an "alienated" desire for White men among certain Afro-Caribbean women. His indictment of the Martinican writer Mayotte Capecia's memoirs are particularly harsh on this front. Yet Fanon is clear that his indictment of Capecia is not meant to speak to *all* Black women, but instead to a particular neurotic obsession with Whiteness that he sees in some Afro Caribbean women.[240] Rather than ascribe to Fanon an outright misogyny that renders his early work unusable for antiracist feminisms, I'd contend that his diagnostic critiques in *Black Skin, White Masks* are calibrated for a particular subject position, that of the middle-class Black Caribbean heterosexual man. This obviously means that certain subjective obstacles and forms of suffering particular to Afro Caribbean women remain undisclosed and un-theorized. And yet that does not necessarily signify that Fanon is unaware of the differences that engendering, in its various practical articulations, makes to racialized subjectivities. Instead, I contend that Fanon's work in *Black Skin, White Masks* speaks to a broader problemspace that he attributes, in diverse ways, to both Black men and Black women — namely, the interiorization of a symbolic hierarchy that fetishizes Whiteness and degrades Black femininity. As Sharpley-Whiting concludes, "Fanon's honesty in *Black Skin, White Masks* may be brutal, but it is not brutalizing."[241]

In his later analyses of Algeria, too, Fanon remains sensitive to the interlocking problems of racial domination and patriarchal practices. For example, he writes an essay on the "veil" in Algerian society as a political technology wielded by indigenous women.[242] Whereas the White settlers saw the face covering as an emblem of "traditional" Algerian culture and a sign of its regressive gender relations, it became an enabling condition for and tool of women's political resistance. As the anticolonial war intensifies, many Algerian women deploy their veils as a kind of camouflage. Sheltered from the

[234] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 77.
[235] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 82.
[236] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 76-77.
[237] See, for example, Gwen Bergner, "Who Is That Masked Woman? Or, the Role of Gender in Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks." *PMLA* 110, no. 1 (1995): 75-88.
[238] T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, "Anti-black Femininity and Mixed-race Identity: Engaging Fanon to Reread Capecia," in *The Fanon Reader,* ed. Lewis Gordon et. al. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 155-162.
[239] Bergner, "Who Is That Masked Woman?".
[240] For a similar reading, see Myriam J. A. Chancy, "Subjectivity in Motion: Caribbean Women's (Dis)Articulations of Being from Fanon/Capécia to the Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands," *Hypatia* 30, no. 2 (2015): 434-49.
[241] Sharpley-Whiting, "Anti-black Femininity and Mixed-race Identity," 161.
[242] Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism,* 51-55, 61.

French soldier's gaze, they ferry weapons, explosives, and other arms across enemy-controlled areas. In doing so, these native women's actions upend the traditionalist Algerian gender hierarchies in which the woman's rightful domain was the home.[243] Rather than reduce the native woman to little more than a passive creature governed by her patriarchs, then, Fanon gives us a nuanced analysis of the ways she reclaimed her own political agency. Nor does he index the Algerian woman against the normative ideal of the European White woman and her conception of empowerment. If anything, he reveals how European colonialists have exploited the narrative of "backwards" gender relations to justify their projects of conquest and domination in the Global South. Fanon's analysis, then, could well be read as an early complement to the kinds of anti-imperial critiques that have surfaced in postcolonial theory, Black feminisms and queer studies. Namely, that these ideologies of Euromodern liberal superiority are often deployed to legitimate dehumanizing forms of political dominion under the guise of protecting either indigenous women or queer people from "their internal oppressors."[244] I contest, then, the notion that Fanon remains categorically incapable of dealing with gendered domination because of its masculinist focus on the White/Black divide. His work on this front is underdeveloped, yes, but it is not methodologically or substantively opposed to such a project.[245]

Afro Pessimism and the Fanon of Anti-Blackness

Finally, I want to contest the recent readings of Fanon that argue he advances a new racial ontology predicated on Black abjection. Many of these interventions depart from a singular line in Fanon's Black Skin White Masks: namely, that White racism confines the Black subject in the "zone of non-being, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an incline stripped bare of every essential from which a genuine new departure can emerge."[246] For example, Afro Pessimist thinker Frank Wilderson takes Fanon's phenomenology of racist reification and absolutizes it into the defining ontological condition of Blackness. The Black subject is no longer a human like the others, but a discrete category of individual subjects whose being-in-the-world is deformed by White supremacy.[247] Unlike White workers or other oppressed and exploited racial groups, the case of the Black subject is categorically distinctive because it marks the set of individuals for whom the very possibilities of human agency were withheld, Wilderson argues.[248] He describes this reading as the "Fanon of the slave." The "social death" or "zone of nonbeing" inflicted by New World slavery, then, becomes the paradigmatic framework for understanding Blackness across the African diaspora.[249] As Annie Olaloku-Teriba summarises, "to be racialised as black and to be a slave are treated as one and the same" in this strand of Afro Pessimist thought.[250] Instead of discussing sociohistorically specific racisms, then, Wilderson prefers to theorize anti-blackness as a world-historic project born out of the dehumanizing violence of African capture and enslavement in the New World.[251]

I contend that such an ontological move opens up some serious theoretical and political problems. It has a tendency to treat the Black subject as little more than an object or passive recipient of White supremacy. Yet Black people, even those who were enslaved, were and remain engaged in complex

[243] Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism,* 59-60.
[244] This is of course not to undercut the very real obstacles to self-determination that many women and queer people face, in the Global South and elsewhere. But it is to question the moral authority and political legitimacy of an American-led Neo-imperial war machine that uses such suffering as a smokescreen for what really are adventures in resource speculation and geopolitical advantage.
[245] For a great example of such a theoretical engagement, see Ranjana Khanna, *Algeria cuts: women & representation, 1830 to the present* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008).
[246] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* xii.
[247] Frank Wilderson, "Grammar & Ghosts: The Performative Limits of African Freedom," *Theatre Survey* 50, no. 1 (2009): 123.
[248] Frank Wilderson, "Gramsci's Black Marx: Whither the Slave in Civil Society?" *Social Identities* 9, no. 2 (2003): 237.
[249] Wilderson, "Grammar & Ghosts," 122.
[250] Olaloku-Teriba, "Afro-Pessimism and the (Un)Logic of Anti-Blackness," 100.
[251] Wilderson, "Grammar & Ghosts," 119.

strategies of survival and creative meaning-making.[252] Even more problematic is the fact that Wilderson's Afro Pessimism replaces the concrete analysis of Blackness as a contextually dependent and unstable political product with the quasi-ontological figure of the Slave (or the prison slave).[253] Such an "ontological turn" centers the African American experience of racialization and domination under racial slavery in the U.S., at the expense of the range of racial formations that subject and dehumanise Black and African-descendent peoples around the world.[254] In doing so, Wilderson too denies the commonalities of shared human existence, which exist beneath the social and political articulations of racial type.[255] No longer are there "passages, bridges" between Black subjects and all other racialized individuals, whether White or non-Black people of colour. [256] Wilderson's account, then, exceptionalizes the African American experience in ways that both prevent a transnational diagnosis of its harms and foreclose the possibility of building relations of political solidarity around an anti-imperialist, anti-racist agenda.[257] As Stuart Hall warns, "the moment the signifier 'black' is torn from its historical, cultural, and political embedding and lodged in a biologically constituted racial category, we valorize, by inversion, the very ground of the racism we are trying to deconstruct. In addition…we fix that signifier outside of history, outside of change, outside of political intervention."[258] There is no easy way out of this anti-black "zone of non-being" that Wilderson theorizes. The only politics that his raciological view makes possible is an apocalyptic one. "Afro-pessimism is also premised on the idea of a categorical antagonism that cannot be transcended," Mbembe says. "Or that can only be transcended through a war that is and is not a mere civil war; a war that would be waged against the very concept of humanity since this concept is indeed the Trojan horse which trapped us in a permanent state of death."[259] For all that Wilderson — and other Afro Pessimists — claim Fanon as a progenitor of their thought, I argue that their work heads in an explicitly divergent direction from his own anticolonial politics of struggle.[260]

Political critics, then, ought to be wary of attempts to disaggregate Fanon's existential phenomenology from the more social and historical aspects of his critical theory. To do so, as Wilderson does, has serious consequences for both the diagnosis of racism and for the praxis of antiracist struggle. Like Mbembe, I am skeptical of a radicalism that can only theorize social transformation on such dystopian and romantic terms. The process of dismantling racial orders will certainly be a struggle of world-historic proportions, of course, but it is one where institutions, discourses, practices, and accumulated capital matter — both when it comes to thinking about what needs to change and what could be possible. To this effect, I have offered a divergent interpretation of Fanon in this dissertation — one predicated instead on a more Gramscian reading of the political and ideological as "new areas of antagonism and struggle."[261] When read this way, I contend that Fanon too helps us to "interrupt decisively this homogenization" of historically specific racisms under the common and general banner of Racism.[262] In turn, he opens the door for a more plural and contested account of racial subject formation, one that acknowledges the moments of intersection

[252] Fred Moten develops this critique in his counterpoint to Wilderson's work. As Moten stresses, there is and has been, even in chattel slavery's darkest hours, a vital and rich black social life. See Fred Moten, "The Case of Blackness," *Criticism* 50, no. 2 (2008): 187-188.
[253] Wilderson, "The Prison Slave," 26.
[254] Such a formulation mystifies the diversity of specific political formations in Western Africa that both pre-dated and continued past the transAtlantic slave trade. Olaloku-Teriba, "Afro-Pessimism and the (Un)Logic of Anti-Blackness," 110-111.
[255] Sekyi-Otu, "Postcolonial Critical Imagination," 8.
[256] Goldberg and Mbembe, "'The Reason of Unreason,'" 222.
[257] Olaloku-Teriba, "Afro-Pessimism and the (Un)Logic of Anti-Blackness," 117-118.
[258] Hall, "What is this 'black' in black popular culture?" 475-476.
[259] Goldberg and Mbembe, "'The Reason of Unreason,'" 221. See, for example, Wilderson, "The Prison Slave," 26.
[260] For all that Fanon too calls for anticolonial violence, his political analyses circle a number of more mundane obstacles to emancipatory politics, from the white settler state's attempts to "buy off" the native bourgeoisie and intellectual classes to a reactionary native politics that attempts to build liberatory coalitions off racial solidarity alone.
[261] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 41.
[262] Hall made this very claim about Gramsci's importance for critical social thinking about racism. I argue that it too can be extended to the materialist Fanon. Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 48.

with other interpellating discourses and the ideological work that goes into developing a sufficient anti-racist consciousness. Like Sekyi-Otu, then, I contend that Fanon "courageously confronts and rejects the reactive temptation to fashion out of the oppressive racialization of experience a foundational race-centered social and moral ontology."[263] In his reckoning, 'race' is not an essential feature of the Black or colonised self, nor always a reliable basis for political resistance. Instead, I argue that Fanon's anticolonial vision points us towards a more productive kind of antiracist politics — one that isn't predicated on visible sameness or identity assimilation, but instead on building coalitions across situated differences with a shared set of emancipatory aims. As Gramsci reminds us, no political successes can be guaranteed, nor can an oppressed group win its liberation without making strategic alliances with other subaltern groups.[264]

Conclusion

Fanon's sociogenic *method* provides a suitable exemplar for antiracist critique in today's racial orders. Over the course of this chapter, I have sought to demonstrate how Fanon's sociogenic analyses combine the strengths of both the Foucauldian genealogical and the Honnethian normative reconstruction approach. Like the genealogists, his methodology insists on returning racial identities and the hierarchies that produce them to the material and ideological conditions of their emergence. His interventions are parochial, problem-centered, and geared towards problematizing the ethical ideals and ontological presuppositions that undergird pathological racial orders. And yet like Honneth and the Left Hegelians, Fanon also refuses to give up the possibility of an ethical humanism — one that transcends the distorting practices of misrecognition that oppress so many people. By arguing for an antiracist politics centered around practices of disalienation, Fanon offers a version of antiracist theory that seeks to transform the social and the human alike in the direction of a more emancipatory and humane world. His work is radical in the sense that it is concerned with the roots of racialized oppression and humanist in the sense that it remains committed to the idea that human individuals ought to serve as the ethical lodestone of critique. To be clear, this is not the Euromodern humanist project that I problematised in Chapter II. Fanon remains harshly critical of the European discourse around "Man," given its practical entanglements with world-historic projects of conquest, subjugation, violence, and genocide.[265] His ethical vision is directed past such a thin account of the "abstract Subject" and his rational self-determination. Instead, Fanon looks to the possibility of dismantling racial hierarchies and creating the conditions for the emergence of a new kind of self-determining human — one that "endlessly creating" itself without the fear of racial domination.[266]

This chapter demonstrated how Fanon's method of critique corrects for the theoretical flaws that bedevil both Foucault and Honneth when it comes to negotiating racial hierarchies and the subjectivities they produce. On the one hand, his sociogenic critique of racial orders embraces a more robust normative toolkit for diagnosing and critiquing racial subjectivation than Foucault. In particular, he diagnoses the ethical-existential pathologies that these Manichean contexts can produce in White and Black subjects in turn.[267] This reworked version of the alienation critique gives Fanon

[263] Sekyi-Otu, "Postcolonial Critical Imagination," 7-8.
[264] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 168-170.
[265] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 252.
[266] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 204.
[267] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 78.

both a political horizon and an ethical index through which to evaluate anticolonial and antiracist struggles. On the other hand, he offers a more realistic and ambivalent account of intersubjective recognition than does Honneth. Not all desires for the Other's acknowledgement are emancipatory, nor are all subjects guaranteed to cognitize their oppression on such transparent and resistant terms. Unlike Honneth, then, Fanon's critical theory is capable of diagnosing those instances when recognition provides individuals with a subjective benefit while also locking them into positions of racial subordination. To a large extent, this too reflects the fact that Fanon rejects the notion that Euromodernity has served as a site of either rational or moral enlightenment. As he puts it, "when I search for Man in the technique and the style of Europe, I see only a succession of negations of man, and an avalanche of murders."[268] Instead of idealising the late capitalist market or the liberal state project, his analyses disclose the practical relations that link European social orders to racialized projects of conquest, extraction, and dominion.

By reading Fanon's existentialist analyses in conjunction with his more genealogical excavations of specific racial formations, I have attempted to show that his work does not fall back into the crude Manichean binaries that he is so often accused of. This separates my interpretation from both critics like Gates, Robinson, and hooks, on the one hand, and from disinheritors like Wilderson, on the other. Instead — following the work of Gilroy, Said, Mbembe, and others — I argue that Fanon is a theorist both of racisms and of their potential transcendence. His method uncovers the ways in which specific racisms too are socio-historical phenomenon, that they can be changed. And it sets the stage for challenging how it is that race, as a phantasmagoric idea that has made itself into a social reality, impacts and conditions the bodies that must wear its significations. This is a Fanon who decries the 'Manichean delirium' in which he lives, works, and struggles, and yet recognizes that ideological picture for what it is — a "rational irrationality" that structures our imaginative understanding of self and world. His refusal to embed these reifying Manichean logics at the heart of his social ontology, in turn, frees him up for the sort of the concrete political analysis that postcolonial and neo-imperial racial orders require. "Disalienation will be for those Whites and Blacks who have refused to let themselves be locked in the substantialized 'tower of the past,'" Fanon wrote at the end of *Black Skin, White Masks*. "For many other black men, disalienation will come from refusing to consider their reality as definitive."[269]

Part of what makes Fanon's sociogenic critique so effective, however, is that his theoretical approach remains firmly grounded in the social and the particular. His analyses are problem-focused and limited to the conjunctures out of which they emerge. As he himself noted, "I am resolutely a man of my time."[270] This opens up a valid concern for this dissertation about the scope of Fanon's criticism. If his analysis does emerge out of particular conjunctures like mid-century Martinique, then how far can I take his insights when it comes to theorizing other sociohistorical contexts, say like the contemporary United States? After all, reading Fanon as a global theorist of racial marginality displaces him from the political conjuncture in which he lived and theorized. Much might be lost in that translation.[271] I certainly do not want to pretend that Fanon's scholarship can speak to any and all experiences of being subjectivated as the Other. And yet I do contend that some of Fanon's insights and diagnostic frameworks could be productive when it comes to advancing antiracist critiques of the United States racial formation. In the next chapter, I gesture towards ways that his psychoanalytically informed alienation critique might help to interrogate how systematic practices of

[268] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 252.
[269] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 201.
[270] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* xvii
[271] David Macey, "Fanon, phenomenology, race," *Radical Philosophy* 95 (1999): 8-9.

racist misrecognition continue to harm Black subjects and to hinder the possibilities for effective antiracist coalition-building.

Chapter V
Fanon's alienation critique and the U.S. racial order

In this chapter, I argue that Fanon's sociogenic approach to racist misrecognition can still prove instructive for antiracist critique in the U.S. conjuncture. Critical theorists, of course, are working in a different conjuncture today than the ones Fanon analysed. The racial order in the U.S. today cannot be directly assimilated to the Manichean world that Fanon diagnosed in French Algeria. White supremacy's institutional regimes, its biopolitical practices and its supporting social imaginaries have not remained unchanged.[1] On the one hand, the ending of de jure segregation and voter disenfranchisement, the increasingly global commodification of Black culture, and the emergence of a thin "diversity" ethic in corporate America today provide greater degrees of opportunity for select groups of Black and nonwhite people.[2] On the other, the loss of stable blue-collar employment and the rise of precarious service work, the erosion of the welfare state and social safety nets for the poor, and the construction of a mass incarceration complex has inflicted huge degrees of suffering on the Black, Latinx and indigenous poor and working classes.[3] As Howard Winant points out, the racial order in the U.S. in the late 20th century and early 21st century has more in common with a Gramscian "war of position"[4] — a struggle for antiracist egalitarianism that is dispersed across various fronts of struggle in civil society, from the schools and the family to civic associations and sports.[5]

There is a lot that a Fanonian sociogenic method might contribute to analyzing these shifting relations of force within the U.S. racial conjuncture, given that Fanon remained committed to viewing racisms as discrete historical facts. For example, his insights into the colonial state's carceral strategies might be productively translated to thinking about the emergence of the carceral state in the late 20th century as a biopolitical regime for managing "surplus" racial populations. I do not have the space in this dissertation, however, to carry out any of those analyses. Such a comprehensive Fanonian critique of U.S. racisms will have to wait for future work. Instead, in this chapter, I seek only to gesture towards what Fanon might offer when it comes to theorizing Black agency and political empowerment in the face of systemic racial trauma. This chapter offers some preliminary thoughts about how Fanon's alienation critique might speak to two specific problems or obstacles to Black self-determination in the contemporary U.S. First, I contend that Fanon's account of reification helps to explain — on social, rather than privatized and psychological terms — the kinds of disempowerment and stress that persistent anti-black racism can inflict on Black Americans. In this, Fanon adapts the reification critique promulgated in a certain strand of existentialist Marxism for thinking the subjective problems that arise from racialized and colonial social relations.[6] Rather than focus on the ethical dislocations that capitalism forced on predominantly White waged labourers, Fanon's analytical paradigm instead centers the dehumanising and mystifying effects of racisms in the colonial and postcolonial nomoi.[7] In particular, Fanon contends that racist imaginaries can deny Black and colonized subjects the

[1] Hall, "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Domination," 212.
[2] For sociological analyses of the neoliberal (and hypercarceral) racial order in the U.S., see Gold, "From Jim Crow to Racial Hegemony,"; Omi and Winant, *Racial Formations in the United States;* Perry, *More Beautiful and More Terrible;* Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor;* and Winant, "Racial Dualism at Century's End."
[3] See generally Hannah Enobong Branch, *Opportunity Denied*: *Limiting Black Women to Devalued Work* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2011). Foreman, 'The Black Poor, Black Elites, and America's Prisons,"; Gilmore, *Golden Gulag;* N. Theodore, "Political economies of day labour: Regulation and restructuring of Chicago's contingent labour markets," *Urban Studies* 40, no. 9 (2003): 1811–28; and Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor.*
[4] Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks,* 238-239.
[5] Winant, "Racial Dualism at Century's End," 91.
[6] In this respect, Fanon's critique bears more of a resemblance to Lukacs' account of reification than it does conventional Marxist accounts of alienated labor power. Like Lukacs, Fanon shifts the critique away from the more subjectivist focus on an individual's creative practice and towards the intersubjective problem of relating to others on humane and reciprocal terms. **Cite Lukacs here.**
[7] Gilroy, *Against Race,* 46.

capacity to represent themselves in a social world in which their presence is overcoded by their perceived inferiority. In these moments of reification, Black subjects are present only as the stereotyped figure that the White racial imaginary purports them to be.[8] Their subjectivity is effectively denied. As Mbembe notes, "the idea that a human being is not a thing, [that] personhood is the antithesis of thinghood is…. central to our understanding of what alienation is all about."[9] Fanon's phenomenological reading of these objectifications helps to explain why exposure to the White gaze can be so injurious to Black and nonwhite subjects, even in what might appear to be minor or epiphenomenal encounters with racism. In doing so, he provides a critical avenue to analyzing how these legacies of racial dehumanization can be "taken into the body" — how they raise blood pressure, increase mental health concerns, shorten life expectancies, etc.[10]

Such a diagnostic framework for thinking racial subject formation, then, improves upon the false dichotomy between structure and agency that structures much of U.S. political discourse around race and racism today. In contrast to the racist conservative approach that attributes ongoing forms of racial inequality to "cultural" problems inherent to minority groups and their "form of existing,"[11] Fanon's work foregrounds the structures, practices, institutions, and discourses that inflict racial domination in the first place. But his method of critique also avoids the exclusive emphasis that liberals place on racist structures — and the overly optimistic views of subaltern agency that tend to result.[12] As Michele Wallace reminds us, assuming that Black subjects have made it through these historical and ongoing violences without being wounded by them is to propagate a dangerous narrative of Black "superhumanity" that can rise about injustices without reparative support.[13] In this respect, then, Fanon's sociogenic account offers a "nonsovereign" account of freedom[14] — one that makes space for these interiorized histories of racial abuse without limiting Black subjects to those narratives or blaming them for what remains a social formation designed for and by a White political coalition for its own benefit. Fanon doesn't assume away the problem of Black interiority under racial hierarchies, but instead treats it as an ethical-existential problematic in its own right, as many Black critics and activists have urged.

Second, I argue that Fanon's sociogenic critique of Black alienation can help to illuminate the psychological and political trade-offs inherent to the politics of assimilation to White supremacist institutions and cultures. As he points out, what looks to the White power structure (and its official discourses) like a project of assimilation is, for the Black subjects entrapped by it, often little more than a form of alienation, even if it offers certain individual advantages in the gruelling late capitalist labor market.[15] Today, many Black middle-class and upper-class individuals are willing to "sacrifice their Blackness"[16] to get ahead in professional and political environments that continue to reward Whiteness. They often do so to secure their own economic well-being and social status, rather than out of a deeply interiorized anti-Blackness. And yet such decisions come with real costs, Fanon points

[8] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 89-92.
[9] Goldberg and Mbembe, "'The Reason of Unreason,'" 210.
[10] See, for example, Kathryn Freeman Anderson, "Diagnosing Discrimination: Stress from Perceived Racism and the Mental and Physical Health Effects," *Sociological Inquiry* 83, no. 1 (2013): 55-81.
[11] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 32.
[12] Wary of falling back into the kinds of cultural racism that conservative thinkers espouse, many liberals fail to analyze the subjective conditions of Black self-determination and instead seem to presume that all that is required for effective agency is the removal of external obstacles.
[13] Michele Wallace critiques this myth of the Black superwoman in Black nationalist politics of the 1960s in which sexist accounts of Black womanhood and her ability to "endure" displaced from view the harms and burdens that Black women faced. See Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (London: Verso, 2015).
[14] Here I am borrowing from Sharon Krause's Arendtian reading of Frederick Douglass. As she writes, "the nonsovereign view shows structure to be an integral dimension of individual agency, but it also includes individual effort and initiative." Krause, "Frederick Douglass: Nonsovereign Freedom and the Plurality of Political Resistance," 122.
[15] Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution,* 38.
[16] Saidah Belo-Osagie, quoted in Caitlin Flanagan, "Private Schools Have Become Truly Obscene," *The Atlantic,* March 11, 2021. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2021/04/private-schools-are-indefensible/618078/.

out. Assimilation forces Black individuals to negate certain facets of themselves in order to win the support of White colleagues, employers, peers, and authorities.[17] In response to these systemic dehumanizations, Black individuals and other colonized peoples can adopt unhealthy coping mechanisms and assume defensive attitudes that prove ultimately to be counterproductive. For example, they can develop either a pathological investment in Whiteness or an obsessive desire to "prove their worth" to the White Other. Both attitudes, in Fanon's view, point to an alienated obsession with the "unreason" of race.[18] Rather than becoming an actional being who charts their own way through the world, the alienated Black self is stuck always responding to — if not desiring the approval of — the White world.

Nor does the mere fact of individual success for a few elite members of a racial group mean that the broader structural forces that position Black communities in racial domination and neglect have been challenged in any effective way.[19] In fact, Fanon points out that the assimilation of certain token Black subjects to White power structures can give those individuals a vested interest in the status quo, one that runs counter to the political and economic interests of the Black poor, say.[20] With the fragmentation of the Black community along class lines, the partial assimilation of certain Black individuals into the financial and political elite, and the incorporation of many Black middle classes into an intermediate role between White-led institutions and the Black poor, we can no longer speak (if we ever could) of a unified Black consciousness in the U.S.[21] Under the current racial order, James Forman points out, the presumed "linked fate" between Black people across class backgrounds, regions, and gender divides must now be treated on "qualified" terms; it may hold up in the context of affirmative action policy, say, but the "in the criminal context, however, different portions of the black community have interests that are often in direct tension."[22] Today, then, political theorists will need to acknowledge the "strategic alliances" that the mostly White ruling coalition has formed with certain subaltern or subordinate groups to "win their consent" to a deeply unjust status quo by granting limited privileges and concessions.[23] This is why Fanon's politics of disalienation, therefore, aims not for limited forms of Black acceptance and success within the White-defined power structure, but instead at the dismantling of the "colonial relation" of domination that removes the possibility of egalitarian and reciprocal exchange across sites of racial and ethnic differentiation.[24] In a racial order that no longer relies strictly on legal coercion and violence to oppress Black communities, then, I contend that a Fanonian critique provides the conceptual tools to interrogate the forms of social recognition that assimilate certain Black subjects to a system that remains structured in racial dominance.

[17] bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 113-114.
[18] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 42.
[19] hooks, *Talking Back,* 63.
[20] Of course, radical Black politics has long been subject to this internal criticism that it remains indexed to the interests of privileged groups within the Black community, such as the Black middle class or Black men. Nor does this middle-class bias in Black politics need to be strategic or consciously pursued. As James Forman notes, many Black intellectuals and activists focus on the problem of racist policing over that of mass incarceration because the former problem still afflicts the Black middle and upper classes, whereas prison remains the provenance of the Black poor. See Forman, Jr. "The Black Poor, Black Elites, and America's Prisons," 802.
[21] For a discussion of the ongoing relevance of political nationalism to Black politics in the United States in the face of these crosscutting and fragmentary trends, see Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).
[22] Foreman, "The Black Poor, Black Elites, and America's Prison," 796.
[23] In this Gramscian view, then, the Asian American struggle to avoid anti-Asian racism in elite university admissions looks more like an "economico-corporate" compromise with the White capitalist and middle-classes who want to roll back affirmative action programs in higher education to protect their own children's chances. Alvin Chang, "Asians are being used to make the case against affirmative action. Again." *Vox,* Aug. 30, 2018. https://www.vox.com/ 2018/3/28/17031460/affirmative-action-asian-discrimination-admissions.
[24] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 44.

Reworking the alienation critique

In critical social theory, the concept of alienation opens up analytical space between outright coercion and meaningful self-realisation. It refers not to the volitional giving-away of that which belongs to you, but to the insidious distortion of a pre-existing relation — a social dislocation that makes what should be familiar and proprietary return to the subject as something detached, alien, hostile and unaccountable to them. As Jaeggi puts it, "the concept of alienation attempts to identify the conditions under which one can understand oneself as a subject, as the master of one's own actions."[25] The version of the alienation critique found in the early Marx has proven particularly productive for continental social thought.[26] In *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844,* he theorized the dehumanizing impact that commodity capitalism had on individuals' relations to their work, themselves, other subjects and to their own "species being," or essence.[27] Marx argued that what was previously a relation of belonging — that between producer and product, laborer and laboring, individual subject and made object — becomes one of dispossession and antagonism. The commodification of labor both dislocates the individual subject from his creative force and transforms the intersubjective relations of mutuality into an arid and reified set of transactional relationships between faceless workers and consumers.[28] In this respect, Marx disclosed how the ostensibly "free" contract offered to the (White) waged laborer had become the site of his exploitation by (White-owned) capital, thereby entrapping him in an unfree and unethical form of life. But of course, as many critical theorists of 'race' and racism have pointed out, Black and indigenous labourers could not even be considered "free" in this juridical sense.[29] Instead, they were subjected to various systems of coerced labor, from chattel slavery to the hacienda system to debt-peonage to indentured labor. Nonwhite "workers" were forced to alienate much, if not all, of the surplus value they created as well as their own bodies. Neither consent nor its illusion had anything to do with it. This version of Marxist humanism, therefore, seems to have little productive to say about the specific kind of harms experienced by Black subjects exposed to racial oppression and coercive expropriation.

By contrast, Fanon's version of the alienation critique draws more from French existentialism and from psychoanalysis than it does directly on Marx.[30] For all that he was influenced by Lukacs' work on reification, his analytical framework focused on the problems that persistent exposure to racism and European supremacy could inculcate in racialized subjects, the subordinated and privileged alike. I contend that Fanon looks to Sartre and Merleau-Ponty for the conceptual resources to theorize the lived experience of racist dehumanization. In turn, his view of Black alienation and pathological (or neurotic) subject formation draws on his psychological training, including on his critical readings of psychoanalysts like Freud and Lacan. Both intellectual constellations eschew the Marxist focus on the human *qua* productive labor and instead turn to the more subjective problematic of individual self-relation under structuring conditions not of a subject's own making, albeit in divergent ways. Alienation for the existentialists and for psychoanalysts was not a temporary social condition that could be escaped through widespread political change or through individual consciousness-raising, but a necessary ontological stricture of the human condition.[31] By contrast, Fanon rejected the idea

[25] Jaeggi, *Alienation,* 23.
[26] István Mészáros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, 5th Ed. (London: Merlin Press, 2005).
[27] Karl Marx, "The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844" in *Marx and Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 3* (Lawrence & Wishart, 2010): 270-282.
[28] Marx, "The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," 279.
[29] Wilderson, "Gramsci's Black Marx."
[30] See Khalfa, "Fanon, Revolutionary Psychiatrist."
[31] Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* 252.

that alienation is best theorised as a necessary or formal condition of all individuals within the social.[32] Contra Sartre, who sees the objectifying force of the Other's gaze as always-already the site of reification, he argued that forms of intersubjective recognition can also be sites of successful individual self-realisation.[33] In turn, the kinds of social relations that ought to concern critics are those which relate to racist and dehumanising practices of misrecognition — whether from specific Others in dyadic relations or from general Others in institutionally mediated social imaginaries. It is within these concrete milieus — when racist social imaginaries systematically denigrate and deny the full humanity of certain subjects — that an individual can develop the sort of psychological neuroses that Fanon diagnoses in *Black Skin, White Masks.* But unlike in the psychoanalytic story, Fanon links these subjective problems back to social causes. Their source lies in the concrete social interplay of institutions, practices, norms, and affects — not to either organic or neurological incapacities (as the neurologists might have it) or to purely psychogenetic sources (as the psychoanalysts like Freud or Lacan would say). As he puts it, "Two equally powerful, equally determinant aspects might be able to help with the diagnostic — the ego aspect and the social aspect."[34]

In this respect, the existentialist concern with meaningful choice (or the lack thereof) and the psychoanalytical concern with subject formation both need to be "stretched"[35] in order to effectively theorise racial subject formation. Rather than understand alienation as a critical component of all subject formation, both normal and dysfunctional, I argue that Fanon's critique best describes those instances in which social formations foreclose or otherwise inhibit individuals' capacity to successfully appropriate themselves, their actions, and their subjectivity in situations overdetermined by racial oppression. In this respect, Fanon's critique bears more of a resemblance to Lukacs' account of reification than it does conventional Marxist accounts of alienated labor power. Like Lukacs, Fanon shifts the critique away from the more subjectivist focus on an individual's creative practice and towards the intersubjective problem of relating to others on humane and reciprocal terms.[36] In his innovating reading of Marx, Lukacs argued that the objectifying logic inherent to the commodity relation had colonized other forms of social relations as well, instrumentalizing how individuals necessarily encountered one another and themselves.[37] As he puts it, "the objectification of their labour-power into something opposed to their total personality is now made into the permanent ineluctable reality of their daily life. Here, too, the personality can do no more than look on helplessly while its own existence is reduced to an isolated particle and fed into an alien system."[38] On similar terms, Fanon argued that the colonial situation (and the racisms it required to legitimate its dominations) had calcified the relations between the White subject and the Black subject to such an extent that they could not relate to one another as subjects but instead only through the fetishized logic of racist objectification.

Fanon's alienation critique is not concerned with the loss between an individual and his labour power, but with the displacement or dislocation of an individual's capacity for social expression in a hostile environment that is always already to expect the worst from him (or someone dark like him). Rankine writes, "The worst injury is feeling you don't belong so much/to you —."[39] By shifting his analytical lens from that of Euromodern capitalism to that of the postcolonial racial orders, Fanon brings into

[32] Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* 271.
[33] Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* 363.
[34] Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* 224.
[35] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 30.
[36] For all that reification is experienced at the subjective level, both Lukacs and Fanon were careful to stress that the problem of reification lies on the objective level of social relations. For an elaboration of this point in Lukacs, see Jütten, "What Is Reification?" 249-250.
[37] Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness,* 83, 86, 88.
[38] Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness,* 90.
[39] Rankine, *Citizen,* 146.

view new or emergent harms that might have otherwise gone unremarked. First, he reveals the intersubjective injury that racisms inflict on oppressed subjects — the phenomenology of being misrecognized for an inferior or otherwise stereotypically devalued Other. Under this paradigm, it is anti-black racism which reifies the Black subject into little more than an always-already known inferior type, whose possibilities of subjectivity are denied and silenced. As Oliver notes, "Without an addressee, without [an adequately responsive] witness, I cannot exist."[40] And second, Fanon's analyses point to some of the problems and obstacles that persistent dehumanisation can pose for Black self-determination and political agency. In particular, he highlights how the routine stress of racism can exhaust and disempower Black individuals, draining their energy and dissuading them from overt political resistance. In turn, he notes, racist institutions and ideologies can also inculcate in Black subjects a pathological desire to be recognised by Whites, entrapping certain Black elites into consenting to an unjust status quo in exchange for limited forms of cultural capital, political advantage, or economic advancement. Fanon argues that, when persistent and dehumanizing, conditions of racialized (mis)recognition can distort individuals' subject formation in ways that hinder their ethical self-realisation.

I contend that a retooled alienation critique — when modelled off of Fanon's insights — can identify and challenge practices of misrecognition that both deny the individuality of the racial Other and can, with persistance and without interpretative challenge, dislocate not only that person's social presence, but his relation to his own being-in-the-world.[41] Yet before I unpack Fanon's analysis of racial misrecognition further, I want to address three objections that have been made to using the alienation critique to theorize the existential situation facing Black subjects under White hegemony. First, many critical theorists have worried that the alienation critique remains too wedded to an essentialist metaphysics of the human to be of much use for contemporary theorising. It presumes that individuals have either lost some sort of primordial, pre-social self,[42] or it indexes itself against a perfectionist ideal of the "good life" that is based on a problematic philosophical anthropology.[43] Essentialism has become increasingly difficult terrain to defend, and for good reason. Time and time again, critical theorists have uncovered how White male European philosophers mistook the existential for the essential when it came to encapsulating the core of what makes us human — and did so in ways that shored up their own epistemic and normative authority to the exclusion of all other human bodies deemed abnormal, incapable, deficient or tainted.[44] And yet the alienation critique that Fanon offers — and which I advocate for deploying — does not fall back into the same theoretical dead-ends. His view of a "right relation to self" draws on procedural models of psychological pathology, rather than relying on a perfectionist Marxist anthropology of human species-being. Fanon's diagnostic lens looks at the ways in which social orders can precipitate functional misdevelopments in practices of subject formation. This is a critical lens trained on the dialectical process of subjective development within the social world, not on the recovery of a primordial Black self. It is about "restoring man to his rightful place" by reconstituting the social formation on egalitarian and humane terms.[45]

Second, some political theorists and commentators have worried that the focus on the subjective problem of misrecognition deflects from the more substantive issues of exploitation and economic inequality. The weaker version of this argument contends that social recognition is important, but that its ethical weight and political significance are dwarfed by the more material problems of

[40] Oliver, *Witnessing, 88*.
[41] Gilroy, *Against Race,* 46.
[42] Sekyi-Otu, "Postcolonial Critical Imagination," 3.
[43] Jaeggi, *Alienation,* 28-33.
[44] "It is not possible to enslave men without logically making them inferior through and through." Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 40.
[45] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 69.

economic maldistribution.[46] In the stronger version of this argument, any attempt to focus on how individual subjects are constructed as particular kinds of people sacrifices anti-capitalist struggle on the petty altar of "identity politics."[47] But the turn away from "identity politics" and towards a "purely" economistic reading of domination and resistance is both analytically mistaken and strategically misguided. Questions of identity — when understood as a "politics of subject position" — are at the heart of workings of contemporary power. As Stuart Hall notes, capitalism has long worked *through* the segmentation and policing of racial difference.[48] Or as Mbembe puts it, "race is one of the raw materials from which difference and surplus — a kind of life that can be wasted and spent without limit — are produced."[49] The racialized divides between "surplus labor populations" at home and those which can be "hyper exploited" abroad continue to fuel the accumulation of resources in the hands of the Global North and its predominantly Anglo-American elites. Under this reading, then, the call for a return to "straightforward" anticapitalist politics begins to look like a call for a White working-class struggle against White bourgeois power, at the expense of other working classes of colour. Such a racialized form of anticapitalism is doomed to failure, not least because it fails to fully understand the internal relations between White waged labor's predicament and that of the Black poor, the hyper-exploited Latinx migrant, and the indigenous community robbed of its land and resources.[50] In this respect, focusing on the subjective problem of individual self-relation is not necessarily a depoliticising and uncritical move, contrary to what some critics might think. It depends on how critical theory reads the subjective level into broader conversations about the structures of domination.[51] Fanon, for his part, adopts a dialectical vision that reckons with racial hierarchies while also critiquing the ethics of racial subjectivation.[52] As Coulthard stresses, Fanon's brilliance lies in the fact that he could read racial colonialism's structural inequities together with the subjective problems that it inflicted on the colonised.

And finally, there are some critical race scholars in particular who have argued the alienation critique does not translate well to the problematic of White supremacy. Describing Black subjects as alienated by anti-black racism would be to crudely characterize them all as passive subjects, incapable of understanding or accessing their own oppression, Howard McGary notes.[53] But Black people are often better positioned to see racism and racial ideologies for what they are — epistemically suspect, politically manipulative and ethically compromised worldviews.[54] The problem is not that Black communities are blind to their own oppression and thus consent to it. It is that they are often so dominated that they are all too often powerless to contest White hegemony in meaningful ways without risking retaliatory violence. I am sympathetic to such a criticism, particularly when lodged against simplistic accounts of ideology that reduce the oppressed to "political dupes" who buy into their own subordination. And yet the kind of alienation critique I reconstruct out of Fanon's oeuvre does not make those same theoretical and ethical mistakes. This conceptual lens examines not how oppressed subjects are "conned" by White supremacy into supporting their own dehumanisation, but how they are harmed by the persistent experience of racial domination and anti-black racism. Knowledge of White supremacy's historical causes and spurious views on 'race' does little to mitigate the mundane experiences of racism, inferiorization, and discrimination that are its practical legacies. Under this more processual account of individual self-development, I seek to draw attention to how

[46] Nancy Fraser has launched forceful critiques of 1990s identity-driven recognition movements along these lines. Nancy Fraser, "From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age," *New Left Review*, no. 212 (1995): 68.
[47] See, for example, Mark Lilla, "The End of Identity Liberalism," *New York Times,* Nov. 18, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/opinion/sunday/the-end-of-identity-liberalism.html.
[48] Hall, "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance," 212.
[49] Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason,* 34.
[50] Taylor, *From Black Lives Matter to Black Liberation,* 209-214.
[51] McNay, "Gender as a Lived Relation."
[52] Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks,* 32-33.
[53] Howard McGary, "Racism, Social Justice, and Interracial Coalitions," *The Journal of Ethics* 1, no. 3 (1997): 249-64.
[54] Baldwin, *The Cross of Redemption,* 17.

the persistent exposure to anti-blackness and the threats of racial violence make themselves felt on Black subjectivities. As Claudia Rankine writes, "you're not sick, not crazy,//not angry, not sad — //It's just this, you're injured."[55] For all that alienation has not proven a popular concept in contemporary Black studies, this reconceptualization of the critique resonates with the claims that African American intellectuals, writers and activists have long been making about the difficulties of enjoying social freedom while subjected to a White world that oppresses and dehumanises them.

I contend Fanon's work can help antiracist critics to frame two specific problems that still pose a threat to Black self-determination in the contemporary U.S. conjuncture — namely, that of Black disempowerment and that of Black co-option. To illustrate why this might be the case, I reconstruct Fanon's analyses of anti-Black reification and Black alienation in greater detail.

Fanon and racist reification

Fanon theorises the experience of racist recognition through the critical concept of reification. In a similar way to Lukacs' critique of how capitalist commodity exchange corrodes the possibilities of intersubjective mutuality, he contends that racisms can bring about a similar rupture in social relations between White subjects and Black or native "Others."[56] When activated, these racist technologies of perception replace the Black subject, in their particularity, with the stereotyped caricature of the "Negro" that the White social imaginary has constructed and learned to fear. In these dehumanizing encounters, Fanon points out, the Black subject is only present to the White Other as a mystification. He is forced to wear a mask not of his own design.[57] In turn, the White subject is both the mystifier and mystified.[58] In this section, I contend that Fanon's reworked concept of reification speaks to the lived experience of anti-black racism in ways that go beyond the indirect consequences that racist discrimination has on material distribution and political participation. In particular, it intervenes in an oft-overlooked problematic in political theory — namely, that of how the persistent exposure to racism is taken into the body, what sorts of existential and affective responses it triggers and the kinds of obstacles to individual agency and subaltern resistance that it provides. Contrary to ontological readings of Fanon, I do not seek to abstract this phenomenology of racism into a new social ontology predicated on Black subjects occupying a "zone of nonbeing."[59] Instead, I argue that reckoning with the lived experience of racist encounters helps to understand how oppressed subjects are often exhausted and disempowered by these dehumanizations, both mundane and spectacular. Such a reading, in turn, resonates with contemporary literature, both testimonial and social-scientific, on the toll that racial oppression in the United States takes on Black people's health and their willingness to engage with hostile institutions. In particular, it provides a critical diagnostic for analyzing how these social sufferings are taken into the body and can shaped Black subjects' capacities for embodied agency.[60]

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[55] Rankine, *Citizen,* 145

[56] Edward Said claims that Fanon read a French translation of Lukacs' *History and Class Consciousness*. Said, *Power, Politics, and Culture,* 267.

[57] Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason,* 32.

[58] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 200.

[59] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* xii.

[60] As McNay points out, reckoning with these forms of symbolic violence is crucial for grasping subaltern or oppressed agency in all its complexity. Lois McNay, "Gender, Habitus and the Field: Pierre Bourdieu and the Limits of Reflexivity," *Theory, Culture & Society* 16, no. 1 (1999): 95-117, 99.

To unpack how he theorises reification, I return to the well-known example that Fanon offers of an encounter he had on a French train. When Fanon is travelling in France as a young doctor, a White child points him out and tells his mother, "Look, a Nègre!"[61] The White child's act of racist ascription pins Fanon in place. He writes, "the Other fixes me with his gaze, his gestures, his attitude, the same way you would fix a preparation with a dye."[62] In a moment of disclosive clarity, Fanon comes to see himself as the child recognizes him: "I cast an objective gaze over myself, discovered my blackness, my ethnic features: deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, fetishism, racial stigmas, slave traders, and above all, yes, above all, the grinning *Y a born Banania.*"[63] The White racial schema, as channelled through the child's naïve identification, becomes an active projection that changes the conditions of Fanon's visibility, "as if skin and bone were public places."[64] Fanon's awareness of himself is transformed. He writes:

> My body was returned to me spread-eagled, disjointed, redone, draped in mourning on this white winter's day. The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is wicked, the Negro is ugly; look, a Negro; the Negro is trembling, the Negro is trembling because he's cold, the small boy is trembling because he's afraid of the Negro, the Negro is trembling with cold, the cold that chills the bones, the lovely little boy is trembling because he thinks the Negro is trembling with rage, the little white boy runs to his mother's arms: '*Maman,* the Negro's going to eat me.'[65]

In his narration, Fanon highlights the epistemic and affective consequences of being subjected to racist abuse. He experiences a rush of affect — shame at the stigmatized identification that he cannot meaningfully reject, anger at the White child for his expressive power and at the White mother for her patronizing attempt to render his reification more palatable. Note how affected Fanon is by this encounter. The rapid-fire staccato style of his narration brims with emotion. The thoughts tumble one right after the other. The Black body *qua* the imag(in)ed is cathected with fear, disgust, contempt, and anxiety. It is this symbolic register that Fanon is translating into propositional content in his retelling: *The Negro is bad, the Negro is wicked, the Negro is ugly*. There is no escape from this White gaze. "The white man is all around me; up above the sky is tearing at its navel; the earth crunches under my feet and sings white, white. All this whiteness burns me to a cinder."[66]

The moment of racist dehumanization, then, displaces Fanon from his embodied subjectivity in two distinctive ways. First, he loses control over his rightful relationship to his own body. Rather than experience his corporeal self as the culmination of his own learned praxis, habituation, and volitional will, Fanon now is forced to reckon with his body as a stigmatised object whose intelligibility and agency is no longer his own.[67] Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, Fanon writes, "the body schema, attacked in several places, collapsed, giving way to an epidermal-racial schema…I gave myself up as object."[68] This experience displaces Fanon from an easy, unreflective inhabitation of himself in space. His body is returned to him, "disjointed" — stretched out and dissected as an object of White knowledge and anxiety. Fanon writes, "I sense, I see in this white gaze that it's the arrival

[61] Important to note here is the term, Nègre, is a more expansive concept in French than it is in English; contained within its denotative range is both what we might signify by using the term a "Black" and the sort of virulent affect entailed by the term "n****r." Macey, "Fanon, phenomenology, race," 8.
[62] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 89.
[63] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 92.
[64] Rankine, *Citizen,* 144.
[65] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 93.
[66] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 94.
[67] Here, Fanon draws on Merleau-Ponty's theorization of the dialectic relation between the embodied self and world. Corporeality was an important plane of phenomenological analysis for Fanon. Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* 225.
[68] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 92.

not of a new man, but of a new type of man, a new species. A Negro, in fact!"[69] The White child's reification depersonalises, replacing an individual subjectivity with an always-already known "essence" whose violence or deviant sexuality is expected. Second, this racial imaginary overcodes the White child's and White mother's vision to such an extent that Fanon cannot make himself known in any other way than as the "Negro" that they take him to be. In this respect, racist dehumanization passes beyond a mere instrumental objectification.[70] It is a "suffocating reification"[71] that strikes at the heart of his ontological status as a human subject, reducing him instead to a type of being about which everything is already known.[72] Even as he knows himself to be a human,[73] to be something more than just this "Nègre" that the child recognizes, Fanon realizes he is powerless to voice or express that individuality in a way that will become convincing or even intelligible to his White spectators. Against the White child's identification, Fanon — at least in this moment — can offer no ontological resistance. "The world begins its furious erasure. / Who do you think you are / Saying I to me?"[74]

Fanon's reading of racialized misrecognition — that which produces White subjects as mystifiers and mystified, Black subjects as mystified and voiceless — discloses the distinctive type of wrong that racisms produce. It takes what White subjects might otherwise read as just an epistemic mistake, a casual and trivial problem easily fixed, and shows it to be more existentially substantial and morally problematic. As Fanon theorises it, acts of racism cut off a vital facet of individual subjectivity, namely the capacity to respond to others and to have that response taken up. "I'm not given a chance," Fanon says. "I am overdetermined from the outside."[75] This visual overdetermination of Black existence is what he calls "epidermalization." His Blackness walks first into any room or any encounter. It is the interpretative touchstone against which all judgments and perceptions of him must be made meaningful. The interracial encounter appears to be a one-way transaction. In these situations, the Black subject's assent is neither required nor listened to. Instead, his Black body provides all the epistemic confirmation of his place in the social order that the White knower requires. In this moment of racist reification, "Imprisoned in a silhouette, [Black individuals] are separated from their essence," Mbembe writes.[76] The hypervisibility of the Black body as the alien object denies the presence of Black subjectivity. As Fanon laments, "I hailed the world, and the world amputated my enthusiasm."[77] To be clear, what Fanon is describing in the moment of reification is not the same as being "turned" metaphysically, into an object. Black subjectivity is still there, behind the mask, even if the White Other refuses to recognise it. It is the "Manichean worlds" that White subjects occupy that prevent them from responding appropriately to the Black subject's presence. Anti-black racisms deny the Black subject the ability to respond to White Others, and they corrode the White subject's responsibility to engage with other human beings as equal subjects in turn. Fanon therefore reconstructs "reification" as a social and political problem that has ethical and existential consequences for individual subjects on both sides of this mystified and damaged relation.

The epistemological grounds for the "truth" of racial classifications have shifted since Fanon's time, of course. So too have the narratives, controlling images, affective investments and anxieties that shape the hegemonic social imaginaries around Blackness and racial difference. The "Nègre" that the

[69] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 95.
[70] Not all forms of objectification are harmful or wrong. See Martha C. Nussbaum, "Objectification," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 24, no. 4 (1995): 249-91.
[71] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 89.
[72] The influence of Sartre's existentialism is clear here.
[73] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 96.
[74] Rankine, *Citizen,* 142.
[75] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 95.
[76] Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason,* 32.
[77] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 94.

White child on the train sees in Fanon in mid-century France is certainly not the same kind of being as the "dangerous Black man" that no one will sit next to on the train in today's America.[78] For some critical race theorists working today, then, Fanon's analysis of epidermalization is no longer a useful tool for theorising anti-black racisms in the contemporary conjuncture. Whereas racial ideologies used to rely visual and anatomical "regimes of truth" in order to ground themselves in social praxis, they now look to scientific discourses that pass below the threshold of everyday human sight — to the genetic sciences, for example, and the mass-market "take-at-home" DNA tests. No matter what you look like in the contemporary racial conjuncture, the proof of one's racial belonging lies at the level of the genetic sequence.[79] Thus, social critics need to grapple with this new analytic, one that no longer treats dark skin as the sole or even primary signifier of racial difference. Yet I argue that much of the everyday praxis of "race-making" still relies predominantly on the visible topography of racialized phenotypical differences. Although the DNA tests may be disclosive for certain White individuals who come to realise that their genealogical ancestry is "racially mixed" or for Black individuals who are now able to trace their family lineages back to particular communities in Africa, these genetic readings do little to change the lived experience of "race" and racial identity in the contemporary U.S.

For the majority of Black people in the U.S., anti-black stigma and racial discrimination remain a structuring feature of social life. These anti-black stereotypes, of course, are also engendered. Black men and Black women are positioned differently by the symbolic logics of contemporary racisms, and they often stand in differential relations to the contemporary labor market and to mechanisms of state control.[80] The White imaginary all too readily assimilates Black men into the category of dangerous, irrational, suprahuman deviant. Their very nature ostensibly disposes them towards aggressive and illegal behaviour.[81] In part a response to this racial imaginary, Black and Latinx young men are disproportionately stopped, searched, harassed, brutalised, arrested, sentenced to longer jail times in more serious prisons, and moved to solitary confinement for minor infractions.[82] In turn, they often find it difficult to find gainful employment in a labor market that has shifted away from conventional blue-collar industrial jobs and towards precarious forms of domestic and retail service work.[83] By contrast, Black women in the U.S. today are subjected to a different range of "controlling images" that delimit how they are perceived and treated by others. As Patricia Hill Collins explains, they are often treated as either asexual objects whose domestic labor and maternal care can be readily exploited by White families; as "bad Black mothers" who are responsible for poverty; as hyper-fertile bodies that are overly dependent on the state; or as deviant (and thus exotic) sexual partners.[84] "Taken together, these prevailing stereotypes of Black womanhood represent elite White male interests in defining Black women's sexuality and fertility," Collins writes.[85] But they also legitimate the greater rates of violence that Black women suffer — both from the state and from men. In turn, these narratives of Black women's incapacity open them to new forms of biopolitical domination and control from state welfare regimes in which civil servants survey, evaluate, and punish Black women for failing to "live up" to middle-class bourgeois norms of parenting, domestic upkeep, and romantic

[78] Rankine, *Citizen,* 131-132.
[79] Gilroy, *Against Race,* 47-49.
[80] See, for example, Branch, *Opportunity Denied*; Dorothy K. Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000); and Shatema Threadcraft, *Intimate Justice: The Black Female Body and the Body Politic.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).
[81] See Elijah Anderson, *Against the Wall: Poor, Young, Black, and Male* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).
[82] Forman, "The Black Poor, Black Elites, and America's Prisons," 795-796 and Bruce Western, *Punishment and Inequality in America* (New York: Russell Sage, 2006), 11-33.
[83] Robert D. Cherry and William M. Rodgers, *Prosperity for All?: The Economic Boom and African Americans* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000), 50-87.
[84] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought,* 72-84
[85] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought,* 84.

partnerships.[86] In turn, the low-paid, precarious and demanding service jobs many Black working women are forced into often take their own physiological and emotional toll.[87]

In the U.S. conjuncture, then, Black individuals must routinely navigate a White world that attempts to fix them first and foremost as simply a cypher, as skins that signify rather than as subjects that relate to the world on their own terms. "And still the world begins its furious erasure," Rankine writes. "Who do you think you are, saying I to me?"[88] This is why I argue that Fanon's critical account of reification provides important insights into the existential situation that confronts many Black, Latinx, Asian, and indigenous peoples in today's United States. In particular, it uncovers how even small acts of racialized objectification like microaggressions make themselves felt in injurious ways. All sorts of gestures and gazes, silences and statements, actions and passivity, can make Black people aware of their essential Difference. Claudia Rankine's book, *Citizen,* is a vivid and difficult account of the ways in which this "daily diminishment is a low flame, a constant drip."[89] It is the man who cuts you in line at the check-out counter because he didn't even see you. It is the friend who calls you by the name of her Black housekeeper. It is the neighbors who call the cops on their neighbor's Black friend when he is on the phone outside their house. It is the White man who runs into a Black child on the subway platform and doesn't stop to help him up.[90] Even when a Black person has built up a substantial interpersonal history with a specific White person, the threat of these racialized judgments and the reifications they perform continues to hang over those interactions. These prejudiced conceptions of Black Otherness remain latent throughout interracial encounters. They are always primed and ready to be mobilized, if given the chance to be relevant and substantiated.[91] Racist encounters with the White Other can make you question your own perception, your understanding. This is why Fanon says he feels like a kind of sensor, always on the lookout for his own Blackness and the expressive traces it leaves on other people.[92] These acts of racist Othering are systemic and systematic, a kind of hyper-visibility from which there seems to be little insulation.

Persistent encounters with anti-black racism takes a physiological and psychic toll. "The sighing is a worrying exhale of an ache," Rankine writes of her physical responses to racism. "You wouldn't call it an illness; still it is not the iteration of a free being."[93] Racisms make themselves felt. They slow down time. They can make an individual hyperaware of their body in space, the space that they take up, the ways they are visible and attracting contemptuous gazes. In this respect, even the most minor of "microaggressions" isn't just a symbolic harm. Racisms open Black bodies up to forms of differential treatment, discrimination, domination, silencing, and violence. This is why Ruth Wilson Gilmore defines racism as "the state-sanctioned and/or extra-legal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death…"[94] This is why many Black parents seek to protect their children from the stigma and invasive devaluations of the White world as long as possible by raising them in majority-Black neighbourhoods and schools. These repeat injustices and violences and little acts of disregard add up. They are taken into the body. They often re-emerge as rage, as righteous anger that then too must often be tamed and tamped down. As Cornel West points out, "The accumulated effect of the black wounds and scars suffered in a White-dominated society is a deep-seated anger, a boiling sense of rage, and a passionate pessimism regarding America's will

[86] Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor,* 88.
[87] Andrew S. London, Ellen K. Scott, Kathryn Edin, and Vicki Hunter, "Welfare Reform, Work-Family Tradeoffs, and Child Well-Being," *Family Relations* 53, no. 2 (2004): 148-58.
[88] Rankine, *Citizen,* 142.
[89] Rankine, *Citizen,* 32.
[90] Rankine, *Citizen,* 17.
[91] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 97.
[92] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 99.
[93] Rankine, *Citizen,* 60.
[94] Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Race and Globalization," in *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World*, ed. R. J. Johnston et al. (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 261.

to justice."[95] In this respect, living under racial oppression is both existentially precarious and exhausting in mundane ways. "I too grew up in a place that could sometimes feel as limiting and final as being locked in an airtight closet," Black writer Jesmyn Ward notes.[96]

Racist reification is a predictable and persistent source of stress for Black people living in the United States, no matter their class background or their educational credentials.[97] For example, medical researchers have documented the significant impact that the interlocking traumas of racism, poverty, and state neglect have had Black women's maternal health.[98] Black women, regardless of class background, are more likely to give birth to premature and underweight babies than their White counterparts.[99] And they are more likely to die in childbirth or shortly afterwards.[100] As Dána-Ain Davis puts it, "the power of race and racism cuts across the American class divide, producing racial disparities in infant mortality and prematurity rates."[101] Some of this can be attributed to the racism that inheres in the medical profession itself. Doctors often underestimate Black patients' pain and are less likely to be responsive to questions and concerns about care.[102] These racial discrepancies in maternal and infant health also reflect the differential access to health insurance,[103] varying degrees of proximity to well-resourced health care[104] and the differential degrees of pressure that Black working women experience as they navigate taxing, low-paid and precarious employment.[105] Yet recent research too attributes Black mothers' health struggles to the stress of racism.[106] This is true even for middle-class Black women.[107] The insulations of material privilege, in this instance, are not enough to offset anti-black stigma. Similarly, Black communities across the U.S. continue to experience worse health outcomes than their White counterparts, especially when it comes to chronic conditions.[108] These differential rates of "being-towards-death," in turn, are particularly high for Black men living in urban "high-poverty areas." Counter to common narratives about "Black-on-Black" crime, the Black community's biggest causes of death remain chronic illnesses, like circulatory diseases and cancer — which they remain more likely to die of than their White counterparts.[109] Again, some of these higher mortality rates reflects the disproportionately inferior access that Black communities in the US have to the social and material conditions that support good health. Yet the fact that Black people, regardless of their current class background, continue to suffer worse health outcomes than their White counterparts too speaks to the ways that racisms inflict undue amounts of stress on Black bodies, from upping the risk for cardiovascular disease[110] to increasing blood

[95] Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 18.
[96] Jesmyn Ward (ed.), *This Time: A New Generation Speaks about Race* (New York: Scribner, 2017), 5.
[97] For the analytical model that undergirds much of this psychological and physiological research on racism as a stressor, see Rodney Clark, et.al., "Racism as a Stressor for African Americans: A Biopsychosocial Model," *The American Psychologist* 54, no. 10 (1999): 805-816.
[98] For an in-depth reckoning with this phenomenon, see Dána-Ain Davis, *Reproductive Injustice: Racism, Pregnancy, and Premature Birth. Anthropologies of American Medicine.* (New York: New York University Press, 2019).
[99] Kim D. Jaffee and Janet D. Perloff, "An Ecological Analysis of Racial Differences in Low Birthweight: Implications for Maternal and Child Health Social Work," *Health and Social Work* 28, no. 1 (2003): 9-22.
[100] See, for example, Jing Fang, Shantha Madhavan, and Michael H. Alderman, "Maternal Mortality in New York City: Excess Mortality of Black Women," *Journal of Urban Health* 77, no. 4 (12, 2000): 735-44.
[101] Davis, *Reproductive Injustice,* 3.
[102] For an extended discussion of medical racism, see John M. Hoberman, *Black and Blue: The Origins and Consequences of Medical Racism* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2012).
[103] M. Schlesinger, "Paying the Price: Medical Care, Minorities, and the Newly Competitive Health Care System," *The Milbank Quarterly* 65, suppl. 2 (1987): 270-96.
[104] See, for example, L. M. Burton and Keith E. Whitfield, "Weathering toward poorer health in later life: comorbidity in low income urban families," *Public Policy Aging Rep* 13, no. 3 (2003): 13–18.
[105] London, Scott, Edin and Hunter, "Welfare reform, work-family tradeoffs, and child well-being," 153-155.
[106] Lisa Rosenthal and Marci Lobel, "Explaining Racial Disparities in Adverse Birth Outcomes: Unique Sources of Stress for Black American Women," *Social Science & Medicine* 72, no. 6 (2011): 977-83.
[107] Jioni A. Lewis, et. al., "Applying Intersectionality to Explore the Relations between Gendered Racism and Health among Black Women," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 64, no. 5 (2017): 475-486.
[108] See Elizabeth A. Pascoe and Laura Smart Richman, "Perceived Discrimination and Health: A Meta-analytic Review," *Psychological Bulletin* 135, no. 4 (2009): 531-554 and Yin Paradies, "A systematic review of empirical research on self- reported racism and health," *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 35 (2006): 888–901.
[109] Geronimus, Bound, and Colen, "Excess Black Morality," 726-727.
[110] Rosie Calvin, et. al., "Racism and Cardiovascular Disease in African Americans," *The American Journal of the Medical Sciences* 325, no. 6 (2003): 315-31.

pressure[111] to causing depression and anxiety.[112] The hostilities of the White world, it turns out, can kill both fast and slow.

Fanon's reification critique, then, speaks to a set of ethical obstacles to Black self-determination that are substantive in their own right. After all, no human being should have to face the regular threat of dehumanization or to cope with the anxieties and stresses that such racisms provoke. In this respect, Fanon's work reminds political theorists working in the U.S. today that they must look beyond the structural positions that people occupy in social hierarchies if they are to understand the kinds of disempowerment or injury that they are subjected to. And yet he also points to the ways that Black subjects can adopt understandable yet unhealthy coping strategies to deal with their regular inferiorization and neglect. For example, Black and indigenous people can self-medicate or adopt other bad health habits as a way of coping with the trauma of racism and racial domination.[113] "Without any hope of well-being, addiction becomes pervasive as folks seek to mediate and solace pain," hooks notes.[114] They can fall back into other self-harming behaviours, from unnecessarily risky behavior to suicide.[115] In turn, some young Black subjects may disidentify with and even drop out of school because they don't want to continue to expose themselves to racialized punishments and teacher neglect.[116] Some Black individuals can too look to alternative sources of self-esteem that may provide short-term subjective relief while also supporting practices of domination. "Since black people, especially the underclass, are bombarded by messages that we have no value, are worthless, it is no wonder that we fall prey to nihilistic despair or forms of addiction that provide momentary escape, illusions of grandeur, and temporary freedom from the pain of facing reality," hooks notes.[117] Over the past few decades, critical race theorists like hooks and West have worried that Black communities have turned towards a patriarchal and materialist culture that praises Black men for what they can control and Black people for what they can accumulate.[118] Black men equated power with self-esteem, hooks argues, and Black people across class backgrounds sought to assuage their self-esteem issues through increased consumption and the pursuit of material accumulation.[119]

None of these coping mechanisms, however, poses a serious threat to the regime of White hegemony that continues to subordinate, inferiorize, and exploit Black people in the United States. In this respect, an emancipatory antiracist politics will require a more granular political analysis of the pathological investments that the racially oppressed can develop in order to escape, even if only for a limited time, their subjection. In the next section, I argue that Fanon's analysis of Black alienation can provide just that sort of critical framework, even as the neuroses that he worried about differ from those that assimilate Black subjects to a hierarchical status quo in the contemporary United States.

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[111] Elizabeth Brondolo, Ricardo Rieppi, Kim Kelly, and P. Gerin, "Perceived Racism and Blood Pressure: A Review of the Literature and Conceptual and Methodological Critique," *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* 25, no. 1 (2003): 55-65.
[112] Alex L. Pieterse, Nathan R. Todd, Helen A. Neville, and Robert T. Carter, "Perceived racism and mental health among Black American adults: A meta-analytic review," *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 59 (2012): 1–9.
[113] Pascoe and Laura Smart Richman, "Perceived Discrimination and Health: A Meta-analytic Review," 544.
[114] hooks, *Black Looks*, 25.
[115] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 193-194.
[116] Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Priscilla Ocen, and Jyoti Nanda, "Black girls matter: Pushed out, overpoliced, and underprotected," African American Policy Forum (2015), http://www.aapf.org/publications/.
[117] hooks, *Black Looks,* 19.
[118] West, *Race Matters,* 16-17.
[119] hooks, *Black Looks,* 19.

Fanon and Black alienation

Fanon is worried about more than just the trauma that racisms and colonial oppression can inflict on oppressed subjects. In his work, he also discloses the unproductive coping mechanisms that Black and indigenous subjects can adopt in response to these forms of pervasive dehumanization. After all, the gap between the social and individual subjectivity is a complex terrain where power doesn't just oppress already-existent subjects, but also helps to constitute them as certain kinds of people in the first place. Racisms exert themselves upon bodies, shape their identities and their habits, their desires and their judgment. Fanon deploys the critical concept of alienation in order to problematize the ways that Black and indigenous subjects can interiorise the racist imaginaries that stigmatise and diminish them. Under racial colonialism, he argues, many Black subjects are caught in a "neurotic" posture in which they invest themselves in the symbolic value of a White supremacist order that will continually misrecognize, devalue and dismiss them.[120] "What began on the surface became stratified, transformed into a framework and over time a calcified shell — a second ontology — and a canker, a living wound that eats at, devours and destroys its victim,"[121] Mbembe writes. In particular, I argue that Fanon's analyses of Black alienation reckons with some of the ways that racial oppression can be taken into the body, thereby inculcating in some Black subjects a sets of affective reactions that conscript them into a deeply unjust status quo. For all that Black Americans may no longer be as taken in by the anti-black imaginaries that structure the U.S. social imaginary, Fanon's insights remain instructive when it comes to understanding how some Black individuals in the U.S. can be taken in by forms of "pro-Black" acknowledgement that provide short-term psychosocial benefits while doing little to destabilise structures of domination.[122] Taken together, White supremacist social imaginaries, everyday acts of racism, and the persistent threat of violence and deprivation still prove a potent threat to Black self-realisation. In this section, I provide a preliminary sketch of some of the ways that Black subjects can respond to White misrecognition and its inferiorizations in alienated and unproductive ways.

Rather than rely on a Marxist anthropology of the productive self, Fanon's conceptualization of alienation draws explicitly on a psychoanalytic framework. He argues that individual subjects require certain kinds of social relations in order to relate to themselves on healthy terms and stabilise their ego development. When that intersubjective scaffolding is missing or otherwise undermined, then individuals can develop disordered habits, attitudes, and desires. As he puts it, "I agree to place [my critique of social pathologies] on a psychoanalytical level: in other words, the 'misfires,' just as we talk about an engine misfiring."[123] In *Black Skin, White Masks*, then, Fanon sets about charting a series of psychosocial neuroses and affective disorders that he argues racial colonialism can produce in the colonized. He diagnoses a number of psychic mechanisms that can pathologize or otherwise inhibit healthy self-relations in racially oppressed subjects — from the phobic rejection of the Black body to the compulsive need for White acknowledgement.[124] And yet he is also quick to stress that these analyses of Black alienation under White supremacy are not meant to be exhaustive. "Many Blacks will not recognise themselves in the following pages," he commented at the outset of *Black Skin, White Masks*. "Likewise many Whites."[125] In this respect, Fanon offers a "procedural" or formal

[120] To be clear, Fanon is using the concept of neurosis in a psychological sense, not in the negative sense attributed in common sense discourse today. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 42.
[121] Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason,* 39.
[122] Like Fanon, I am not blaming this desire for White recognition on Black subjects, but instead on the anti-black environment that produces those pathological investments in the first place.
[123] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 6-7.
[124] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 138-143.
[125] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* xvi.

approach to racialized subjectivation — one that draws on a particular psychological ideal of "healthy functioning" and ethical self-relation rather than a substantive critique of a certain kind of lost Black self.[126] He suggests that a subject can become alienated when they interiorise the ways that they are forced to be "responsible not only for [their] body but also for [their] race and [their] ancestors."[127] In doing so, they lose the ability to rightfully appropriate themselves in the world because they become invested in the raciological "unreason" that dictates who they are purported to be, how they are esteemed or diminished, and what they are meant to value and desire in turn. These inhibited or distorted relations to self can take many forms, but they turn on the social fact that the Black subject "is made to feel inferior" by a racial order whose central institutions rely on his ongoing subordination.[128]

There are two particular problems that Fanon's alienation critique identifies for racially oppressed subjects. First, he worries that many Black subjects adopt troubled attachments to whiteness as the regulative ideal of desirability, capability, and self-esteem. Trapped in an social imaginary that stigmatised and devalued them, "colonised subjects" often fall back into self-negating affective postures, he argues, as they attempt to find stable psychosocial supports for their sense of self.[129] At worst, this can lead some Antilleans to desire to "become" White. "It is commonplace in Martinique to dream of whitening oneself magically as a way of salvation,"[130] he writes. Fanon describes this push to approximate Whiteness as "lactification."[131] As an example, he points to the Antillean abroad in Paris who spends hours in his room working on adopting the correct linguistic habitus — that which identifies someone with "the French from France, the Frenchman's French, French French."[132] Or he highlights the case of Mayotte Capécia, a Black Martinican woman who wrote in the 1940s. In her memoir, Capécia associates whiteness with "beauty and virtue…the color of day,"[133] but such symbolic capital is out of her reach. So she invests in a proximate aim — to be loved by a White man. Yet nothing about this partnership with the White French officer, Andre, is characteristic of "authentic" love. Andre treats Capécia terribly. Nor does she seem particularly invested in him *as an individual,* but instead fixates on his "blue eyes, blond hair, pale complexion."[134] As Fanon sees it, the sort of interracial relationship that Mayotte desires and so prizes is that which prevents her from relating to her Blackness or other Black people on healthy terms. As Sharpley-Whiting notes, "Fanon's critique of Capécia is not related to her interracial relationship, but to the anti-black racist rhetoric she invokes in articulating her desire for white men."[135] Such an anti-black posture requires that the Black individuals deny or negate their own embodied subjectivities. These practices of "lactification," then, replace the healthy social and interpersonal supports of ego development (i.e., family relationships, community support, shared cultural by-ways, learned skills) with a compulsive obsession with the mirage of Whiteness.[136] These alienated subjects "are obsessed with the dream of being wedded to a white man from Europe....they must have a white man, a proper white man, and nothing but a white man," Fanon writes.[137] In this respect, these alienated forms of self-making are doomed to failure. After all, one is always reminded of "the fact of one's Blackness" by the White Other.

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[126] This too is why his politics of disalienation don't involve a substantive commitment to Black separatism or the rediscovery of a distinctive African way of being-in-the-world that unites the Black diaspora.
[127] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 92.
[128] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 127.
[129] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 124-125, 168.
[130] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 27.
[131] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 29.
[132] Quoted on Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 4.
[133] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 27.
[134] Quoted on Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 29.
[135] Sharpley-Whiting, "Anti-Black Femininity and Mixed-Race Identity," 162.
[136] For the importance of social and interpersonal ties to individual ego development, see Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 13.
[137] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 39.

Second, Fanon contends that even those Black or indigenous individuals who seek to reclaim their Blackness as a site of self-worth often remain trapped in a reactionary posture where they are constantly trying to prove their equality with White Others. "Fact: some Whites consider themselves superior to Blacks," Fanon wrote. "Another fact: some Blacks want to prove at all costs to Whites the wealth of the black man's intellect and equal intelligence."[138] This kind of alienated Black subject continually seeks to show to the White Other that Black people are not what the colonial world thinks of them, from proving their erudition to pointing out the civilizational achievements of pre-modern Africa. "In a frenzy I excavated black antiquity," Fanon quips. "The white man was wrong. I was not a primitive or subhuman.; I belonged to a race that had already been working silver and gold 2,000 years ago." [139] At first glance, this desire to be recognised by virtue of one's Blackness as a moral equal or an intellectual peer might seem to be a positive development. The Black subject is no longer entertaining the self-undermining delusion of becoming White. And yet Fanon points out that this demand for recognition does little to disinter the asymmetrical recognition relation that racial colonialism produces. The Black subject may attempt to claim his "Black humanity" but he still remains pathologically preoccupied with "attracting the white world."[140] To unpack how this pathological dynamic takes shape, Fanon revises Hegel's account of the struggle for recognition. In Hegel's account of the master-slave relationship, the slave obtains self-consciousness by turning away from the master and towards the labor that he has invested in the object. But under racial colonialism and its White supremacist schemas, Fanon argues that the Black subject ("the slave") "wants to be like his master…the slave turns towards the master and abandons the object."[141] But this is a psychologically and ethically unstable situation for the Black subject. It places the Black subject in the reactionary posture of always responding to the gaze and evaluations of an unaccountable Other. As Fanon writes, "If the psychic structure is fragile, we observe a collapse of the ego. The black man stops behaving as an *actional* person.[142] The alienated Black subject's actions are destined for 'the Other' (in the guise of the white man), since only 'the Other' can enhance his status and give him self-esteem at an ethical level."[143] In turn, the White subject still has the power to withhold or confer acknowledgement, on his terms.[144] These instances of White affirmation, in turn, might provide some short-term subjective benefits for Black people, Fanon notes, but they do little to deconstruct the broader grids of raciological intelligibility or to challenge the structures of racial inequality that privilege White communities.

Contrary to critics who argue that focusing on the "psychology" of oppression falls back into an ineffective subjectivism, then, I contend that Fanon's alienation critique situates these existential pathologies within the structuring fields of force that produce them and that inhibit individual flourishing. He looks for the social and structural roots of these psychological "misfires" by looking to the broader ecologies that alienated individuals find themselves in. "We shall see that the alienation of the black man is not an individual question...let us say that here it is a question of sociodiagnostics."[145] Throughout his oeuvre, then, Fanon stresses that the fundamental driver of the alienated states that he analyses is the *social*. Discussing a Black patient of his who dreams of becoming White, Fanon comments, "If he is overcome to such a degree by a desire to be white, it's because he

[138] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, xiv.
[139] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 109.
[140] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 33.
[141] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 195.
[142] Fanon is drawing on Nietzsche's conceptual distinction between actional and reactional wills here. In Nietzsche's work, the reactional is "an effect of domination that reiterates impotence, a substitute for action, for power, for self-affirmation that reinscribes incapacity, powerlessness, and rejection." Wendy Brown, "Wounded Attachments," *Political Theory* 21, no. 3 (1993): 402.
[143] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 132.
[144] Oliver, *Witnessing,* 28-29.
[145] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, xv.

lives in a society that makes his inferiority complex possible, in a society that draws its strength by maintaining this complex, in a society that proclaims the superiority of one race over another…"[146] It is the inhumane and inhuman social order that can inculcate neuroses in otherwise "normal" and functioning individuals. His diagnoses, in turn, are located within the particular racial orders out of which they emerge. The Black man from Martinique who wishes to speak the "metropolitan French" is not the same as the Black Martinican intellectual who follows Césaire in embracing his "Blackness" as the source of his self-worth.

The situatedness of Fanon's diagnoses, of course, raises the question of how effective his insights might be for reckoning with the obstacles that Black Americans face in today's United States. After all, Blackness is a more expansive symbolic register in the 21st century United States than it was in 1950s Martinique.[147] A number of subaltern hermeneutic communities have rearticulated Blackness on more affirmative and autonomy-enhancing terms, from the 1960s' Black Power movement to the #BlackGirlMagic discourse on social media. Today, to be Black is not to always-already wear a badge of inferiority. Instead, Black identity has become a site of affirmative affective investment and creative forms of political and cultural solidarity.[148] In particular sociocultural milieus, it confers its own forms of cultural and symbolic capital.[149] The old imaginative hierarchy between Whiteness as sacralised and desirable and Blackness as the profaned and abject has not been fully eclipsed, of course, but its cultural logics have lost some of their hold on the collective unconscious, especially in Black communities.[150] Fanon's concerns over Black subjects' desire for White recognition, then, might seem to speak primarily to a now bygone era in which White supremacist ideologies ran rampant over subaltern Black meaning making. But for all that Mayotte Capécia's alienation may no longer be a norm among Black women seeking intimate partners, I contend that Fanon's alienation critique still discloses key obstacles that confront Black self-determination in the U.S. today. Namely, his work speaks to ongoing forms of colorism in mainstream cultural imaginaries and individuals' choice of intimate partners; to the damaging impact that "stereotype threat" can have on Black people as they seek to negotiate majority-White institutions and expectations; and the tokenistic forms of Black recognition that assimilate certain "non-threatening" Black exceptional into existing power structures.

Fanon's example of Mayotte Capécia and her alienated love for a blonde, blue eyed man has drawn particular critical attention, both for its presumed misogynist and heteronormative tendencies[151] and for its purported exaggerations of Martinican "negrophobia."[152] To many readers, Mayotte's obsession with Whiteness may seem like an extreme case. And yet colorism and anti-blackness remain regulative norms in the mass-market beauty industry today.[153] This remains true even as certain "Black" traits are fetishized and co-opted by "safer" White women's bodies.[154] (Or as the somatic proto-type of White femininity — the Barbie doll — is dipped in paints of various colors.)[155] As Tressie McMillan Cottom puts it in *Thick,* "by definition, black women are not beautiful except for any whiteness that may be in them."[156] These judgments often come not just from a White-centric

[146] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 80.
[147] At the time at which Mayotte Capécia was writing, Martinican society struggled to conceptualize Blackness as a positive trait, as anything other than a "stain" to be worked against and avoided at all costs. Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 22.
[148] Thanks to Sarah Yerima for stressing this point with me.
[149] Emirbayer and Desmond, *The Racial Order,* 92-94.
[150] This is in part why social psychologists have found that possessing a strong sense of racial identity can insulate Black people from the stresses of racism. Monica Williams, et.al., "The Role of Ethnic Identity in Symptoms of Anxiety and Depression in African Americans," *Psychiatry Research* 199.1 (2012): 31-36.
[151] Bergner, "Who Is That Masked Woman?"
[152] Chancy, "Subjectivity in Motion," 434.
[153] Bonnie Berry, *Beauty Bias: Discrimination and Social Power.* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007).
[154] Rankine, *Citizen,* 35-37.
[155]Ann duCille, "Dyes and Dolls: Multicultural Barbie and the Merchandising of Difference," in *The Black Studies Reader,* eds. Jacqueline Bobo, Cynthia Hudley, and Claudine Michel (New York: Routledge, 2004), 268.
[156] Cottom, *Thick,* 43.

culture industry and White Others; they too can be repeated and enforced by Black parents and Black communities against their own, hooks notes.[157] Toni Morrison, of course, famously addressed this problematic in her first novel in which a little Black girl named Pecola Breedlove fiercely desires to have blue eyes.[158] "Part of Morrison's genius had to do with knowing that our cracked selves are a manifestation of a sick society, the ailing body of America, whose racial malaise keeps producing Pecolas," Hilton Als writes.[159] For all that the social imaginary has shifted since Morrison published *The Bluest Eye* in 1970, making room for more diverse conceptions of beauty and physical attraction, the equation of blue eyes and light skin with desirability and self-worth continues to shape aesthetic and erotic standards in many Black and other nonwhite communities.[160] One needs only to look to the booming business in skin-lightening and hair-relaxing products (as well as to the rise in "ethnic-correcting" plastic surgeries) to see that the controlling whiteness of beauty norms remains a source of alienation for many Black and nonwhite subjects.[161] Yet Black women are not wrong to fear that they will be deemed less attractive or desirable because of their dark skin or kinky hair. Sociological data shows that anti-black racism still cathects the judgments that individuals are making about sexual and intimate partners.[162] In turn, such negative forms of misrecognition can be incredibly damaging in a gendered order in which women are only told they are valuable as long as they are desired.[163] "My friends were all the wounded people/The black girls who held their own hands,"[164] Hayes writes.

Anti-blackness may still cathect mainstream beauty norms and Black people's judgments of desirability, yet African Americans in the U.S. today largely reject the racist notion that they are intellectually inferior or less capable than their White counterparts. Instead, they (rightly) attribute the racial disparities in educational and professional outcomes to racism and lack of opportunity. But even when Black people don't believe them, these pejorative conceptualisations of Blackness can still take their toll. Namely, as social psychologists have studied, Black subjects can experience the threat of these stereotypes as stressful in ways that inhibit their performance.[165] As a person whose social identity is read in prejudicial ways, "you know then you could be seen and treated in terms of that stereotype," social psychologist Claude Steele explains. "And if you care about what you're doing, the prospect of being judged and treated this way can be upsetting, distracting, and can interfere with your functioning in this situation."[166] For example, in numerous controlled experiments, researchers have found that Black children who are told they are taking a test based on intellectual capacity do worse than they do on a test that is framed on terms that don't invoke the relevant performance-related stereotype.[167] At the subjective level, psychologists like Steele have posited a number of neural or physiological mechanisms that might transform the experience of stress into inhibited cognitive faculties, including anxiety-induced inefficiencies in mental processing. In this respect, then, the literature on "stereotype threat" distinguishes between a subject's knowledge of a racialized trope, on

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[157] bell hooks, *Rock My Soul: Black People and Self-Esteem* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2004), 51.
[158] Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (London: Vintage, 1999).
[159] Hilton Als, "Toni Morrison's Profound and Unrelenting Vision," *The New Yorker,* Jan. 27, 2020, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/02/03/toni-morrisons-profound-and-unrelenting-vision.
[160] Cottom, *Thick,* 34-37.
[161] Kathy Davis, *Dubious Equalities and Embodied Differences: Cultural Studies on Cosmetic Surgery* (Lanham, MD: Rosman and Littlefield, 2003).
[162] For example, the founder of the OkCupid dating site, Christian Rudder, released analysis of the site's data that found Black women were the most likely users to respond to messages but the least likely to receive a response back. Christian Rudder, "How Your Race Affects the Messages You Get," *OkTrends,* Oct. 5, 2009, https://www.gwern.net/docs/psychology/okcupid/howyourraceaffectsthemessagesyouget.html.
[163] "This low self-esteem [among Black women] may lead them to self-sabotage in areas where they may have the skill to excel." hooks, *Rock My Soul,* 53.
[164] Terrance Hayes, *American Sonnet for my Past and Future Assassin* (New York: Penguin Books, 2018), 55.
[165] See Claude M. Steele and Joshua Aronson, "Stereotype Threat and the Intellectual Test Performance of African Americans," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 69.5 (1995): 797-811; Claude M. Steele, "A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance," *American Psychologist* 52 (1997): 613-629; and Geoffrey L. Cohen, Julio Garcia, Nancy Apfel, and Allison Master, "Reducing the Racial Achievement Gap: A Social-Psychological Intervention," *Science* 313 (2006): 1307-1310.
[166] Claude M. Steele and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "A Conversation with Claude M. Steele," *Du Bois Review* 6:2 (2009): 251.
[167] Steele and Aronson, "Stereotype Threat," 809.

the one hand, and their self-esteem, on the other.[168] As scholars like Steele argue, the latter cannot be assumed to be impacted simply because an individual subject demonstrates a practical knowledge of anti-black prejudice.[169] But even if they have not interiorised White America's racist beliefs about Black people's intellectual capabilities, say, Black people's performance can still be harmed by the social circulation of those controlling images. Entering White spaces, the Black subject is be put on guard. Even if individuals do not believe the "historical-racial schema" that the White Other has constructed for them, the stress of challenging those racist expectations can still be taken into the body in ways that hinder individual self-realization.

At worst, some Black individuals can attempt to avoid stereotype threat altogether by divesting themselves from these key social, economic, and political institutions altogether. As Fanon notes, individuals who feel threatened often "withdraw" their affective investments in those arenas in order to protect their egos from negative self- or social evaluations.[170] Similarly, in their studies on racial stereotype threat, social psychologists have noted that repeated exposure to pressurised situations at school might lead some Black students to "disidentify" with academics altogether, redirecting their subjective attachments in other directions that might appear to be emotionally more promising even as they are less materially beneficial.[171] Hyper-exploited or excluded from conventional labor markets, criminalised from a young age, trapped in under-resourced schools and neighbourhoods, and struggling with the austerity cuts to the welfare state, many young Black people are confronting a bleak set of economic, political, and social choices when it comes to securing their own well-being.[172] If frustrated enough in their attempts to make a life "in the system," then it can appear as if there is no point in continuing to make an effort at all, at least when it comes to integrating into White-led institutions and social spaces. Trapped inside himself with little to invest in or to hope for, the Black subject can even fall back into a nihilistic posture.[173] In the U.S. today, Cornel West worries, many Black people are often caught in a deep-seated nihilism, brought on by "the lived experience of coping with a life of horrifying meaninglessness, hopelessness, and (most important) loneliness" under White supremacy.[174] Black nihilism too is a reaction to a racial order that continues to brutalise, ignore, and exterminate Black people, regardless of the partial relaxation of the racial apartheid regime in the U.S. The African American — especially the young black man — stands in a different existential relationship to death than does his White counterpart.[175] Regardless of their class background or professional success, Black people are well aware that they could be killed, at random, without provocation, just going about their daily lives. Combined with the regular experience of losing people you love, this existential posture of being-towards-death can strip the world of meaning, longevity, worth.[176] As Hayes writes, "I lock you in an American sonnet that is part prison,/Part panic closet, a little room in a house set aflame./I lock you in a form that is part music box, part meat/Grinder to separate the song of the bird from the bone."[177] Again, and as many Black nationalists have cautioned, such separatist impulses are not irrational.[178] Nor are these practices of

[168] Steele and Gates, "A Conversation with Claude M. Stelle," 252.
[169] Steele and Aronson, "Stereotype Threat."
[170] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 33.
[171] In turn, the only students not to exhibit this hobble on their testing performance are those that don't care. Claude M. Steele. Inzlicht, M., McKay, L., and Joshua Aronson, "Stigma as ego depletion: How being the target of prejudice affects self-control," *Psychological Science* 17 (2006): 262-269.
[172] Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor.*
[173] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 33.
[174] West, *Race Matters,* 14.
[175] Geronimus, Bound, and Colen, "Excess Black Mortality in the United States," 720.
[176] West, *Race Matters,* 14-16.
[177] Hayes, *American Sonnet for My Past and Future Assassin,* 11.
[178] West, *Race Matters,* 99. See also chapters on Black nationalist figures like Martin Delaney, Marcus Garvey and Stokely Carmichael in Melvin Rogers and Jack Turner (eds.), *African American Political Thought: A Collected History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

misidentification and divestment the "fault" of Black people in the U.S. today. As Fanon stresses, "If there is a flaw, it lies not in the 'soul' of the individual, but in his environment."[179]

It is no surprise, then, that Black subjects faced with constant diminishment and erasure would seek out alternative forms of recognition. But the revaluation of Blackness as a site of freedom-enhancing identification is not always a straightforward exercise. Not all demands for recognition are emancipatory. As Fanon reminds us, the important questions for the social critic become *who* is empowered to bestow recognition and *on which terms*. In particular, antiracist critics ought to worry about the ways in which state and institutional recognition of particular Black subjects can come at the expense of a more radical politics that seeks to dismantle an exploitative economic regime.[180] There is a substantive difference between interracial encounters that take place on "democratic and human" terms and those which rely on the limited and asymmetrically positioned presence of racial Others in a tokenistic sense. Fanon's critique of the Black subject who regularly seeks to prove his self-worth to the White Other, then, should provide a cautionary note about newfound calls to celebrate a "diversity" ethic in social institutions. The liberal affirmation of Blackness and Black people in the U.S. today often comes under the guise of corporate "diversity" measures and an aesthetic of visual difference. Black professionals in White workspaces are often tokenized, trotted out for the company brochure while given little power to challenge anti-black racism among their colleagues or to advance up the corporate ladder at the same rate as their White co-workers. In turn, Black elected officials are often deployed as "racial" intermediaries between White powerbrokers and poor minority communities. Whether willingly or not, they have become a part of the strategic alliance that stabilizes a racial order that continues to brutalize so many of the Black poor and to racially subordinate Latinx, Asian, indigenous and other nonwhite peoples. "The more individual black folk have gained power and status within the existing social structure, the less concerned they've been with dismantling that social structure," hooks notes.[181] In contemporary America, African Americans may climb to higher positions within various stratified social hierarchies, but they often are only welcome on the terms that White gatekeepers provide and police. As Gramsci reminds us, the compromises that the ruling political elite are willing to strike with subaltern groups only go so far.[182]

Consumer capitalism too has found new ways to profit from the commodification of racial and ethnic difference. Blackness sells today, and the symbolic status that this racial stamp of "authenticity' brokers can both be a site of subjective esteem and systemic exploitation or marginalisation. Consumer-facing corporations have learned how to market "celebrations" of diversity, including the fetishistic fascination with the Black body.[183] As duCille points out, the makers of the Barbie Doll added a Black Barbie doll line once they realised that they had an untapped market — but they did so only if they didn't have to change their production costs.[184] Images of Black people are used to sell all sorts of products today, from sportswear to pharmaceuticals. Yet these self-same corporate entities have deflected calls for substantive change when it comes to their racialized labor practices (from hires to promotions to pay to dismissal) or to their discriminatory targeting of Black consumers (from payday loans to subprime mortgage lending to inflated costs for Black-facing consumer products).[185] Nor does this "global trade in North American Blackness" guarantee that even those Black artists and entrepreneurs who have capitalised on their talent will have control over how they

[179] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 188.
[180] Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks,* 41.
[181] Hooks, *Writing Beyond Race,* 20.
[182] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 170.
[183] Gilroy, *Against Race,* 214.
[184] duCille, "Dyes and Dolls," 267.
[185] Gilroy, *Against Race,* 250.

are seen or monetised.[186] Instead, much of this capital accumulation goes to a corporate music industry that remains predominantly White.[187] This leads Ann duCille to wonder if "the current fascination with the Black or colored body — especially the female body — [is] a contemporary version of the primitivism of the 1920s? Is multiculturalism to postmodernism what primitivism was to modernism?"[188] The commodification of stereotyped African American blackness can provide new forms of symbolic status for a select group Black personae willing to "perform" the part,[189] but it does little to dismantle the regulative norm of anti-blackness which continues to determine the lesser life chances for the bulk of Black communities in the U.S. "[M]arginalized groups, deemed Other, who have been ignored, rendered invisible, can be seduced by the emphasis on Otherness, by its commodification, because it offers the promise of recognition and reconciliation," hooks writes.[190] Rather than organise against racial capitalism for Black liberation, thinkers like Gilroy and West worry that many Black people have turned instead towards an ethic centered around spectacular consumption.[191] As musician Vince Staples puts it, "Man, I need to fight the power, but I need that new Ferrari."[192]

Uncritical forms of U.S. multiculturalism, therefore, can produce two forms of recognition-driven entrapment. First, there is the liberal assimilationist trap in which political parties and corporate entities seek to win Black subjects' consent to systems that expropriate their electoral force and adopt a thin and tokenistic aesthetic of "ethnic diversity" — while in both instances refusing to cede any real control or material reparations to Black communities. And second, there is a newer, neoliberal trap in which late capitalism has offered an exceptional few the deserts of elite status in exchange for the widespread expropriation of Black cultural and aesthetic "artefacts" to market to global audiences. Neither form of social recognition offers a productive way forward when it comes to challenging and dismantling racial hierarchies. These tokenistic acknowledgements might provide limited benefits for a select few Black individuals, but they also embed them within a social formation that works to their disadvantage and that relies on their participation to further stabilise its functioning.[193] Mainstream institutions can value Blackness as a cultural commodity and Black communities as a political asset or economic consumer base while leaving a racialized status quo largely intact. After all, the ease with which White consumers and audiences can "affirm" or celebrate limited facets of Black culture and Black artists does not mean that they have rejected the institutional apparatuses, practices, and norms that continue to oppress Black people. The White world is often only capable of granting certain kinds of esteem and symbolic value to Blackness, but that they do so still on *their* terms — terms which often trap Black individuals in certain kinds of visibility and certain narratives of possibility. This is what Coulthard refers to as the "strategic 'domestication' of the terms of recognition."[194] Under this reading, then, these celebrations of difference pedal only an "ethnically spiced" but unthreatening sameness.[195] They mark the site of a normalising and unfree assimilation to a deleterious power hierarchy. This is not to say that some Black people have decided to sacrifice racial solidarity on the altar of their own self-advancement, although that can happen. The problem here is structural rather than subjective. In this respect, the contemporary racial order

[186] Keith Ngus, "The Business of Rap: Between the Street and the Executive Suite," in *That's the joint: the hip-hop studies reader,* eds. Forman and Neal (New York: Routledge, 2004), 525-540.
[187] Eric K. Watts, "An exploration of spectacular consumption: Gangsta rap as cultural commodity," in *That's the joint: the hip-hop studies reader,* eds. Forman and Neal (New York: Routledge, 2004), 607.
[188] duCille, "Dyes and Dolls," 269.
[189] Murali Balaji, "Owning Black Masculinity: The Intersection of Cultural Commodification and Self-Construction in Rap Music Videos," *Communication, Culture & Critique* 2, no. 1 (2009): 27.
[190] bell hooks, *Writing Beyond Race,* 26.
[191] Gilroy, *Against Race,* 206, 268-270; West, *Race Matters,* 16-17.
[192] Vince Staples, "Lift Me Up," track 2 on Summertime '06, ARTium and Blacksmith, 2015.
[193] Nor is there any guarantee that those Black exceptionals who do manage to assimilate won't suffer from any psychological costs. hooks, *Black Looks*, 21.
[194] Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks,* 40
[195] duCille, "Dyes and Dolls," 268.

works by fragmenting the Black community along class lines, making room for a nonthreatening minority of Black individuals to move up the social hierarchy while also continuing to neglect, survey, and incarcerate those who cannot be productively exploited or controlled. Fanon problematizes just these tokenistic forms of "multicultural" recognition that often provide certain "exceptionals" with the opportunity to assimilate into the upper echelons of U.S. economic and status — but often at the expense of their own psychological well-being[196] and without posing any serious risk to the institutions of racial domination.

This is not to say that the problems facing Black Americans today can be reduced to the *subjective* obstacles to self-determination that racisms produce. As a broad range of sociological research has demonstrated, Black people in the U.S. today still face a heavy raft of *objective* barriers to the social and ideological supports necessary for self-determination, in either an individual or a collective sense. Many Black activists and critical race theorists have rightly worried about focusing on the psychological component of Black suffering in case those analyses can be weaponised by conservative thinkers looking to "blame the victim" for their own predicament. After five decades of conservative politics that has lambasted Black communities for their "culture of poverty" and "broken homes" while overseeing significant cuts to the welfare system and a shift towards militarised policing, these concerns are not misplaced.[197] My analyses here do not seek to blame victims of racial oppression for their own powerlessness. I do not want to overstate the role that Fanon's concepts of reification and alienation play in the reproduction of the existing racial order. White supremacy and anti-black racism — compounded by and further entrenched through the intersectional problems of Black poverty, state and market neglect, and the incarceration complex — are what is to blame for the interlocking oppressions that Black people must negotiate in contemporary America.

But by refusing to look at the subjective problems of disaffection and disempowerment, political theorists can fall back into a voluntarist account of agency that treats Black subjects as superhuman, resilient, and incapable of being "beaten down" by White domination. These so-called "psychological" issues are of substantive importance for theorising the emancipation of oppressed peoples *and* for explaining why so many racially dominated subjects continue to participate in social institutions that exploit and brutalise them.[198] In particular, these "affective disorders" can have serious political consequences when it comes to effective antiracist struggle. Feelings of inferiority, despair, and disappointment can lead individuals to "withdraw from the field" all together, choosing instead short-term pleasures that offer limited glimpses of autonomy over long-term investment in a self-determined life or in collective struggle.[199] This is where Fanon's alienation critique is useful. He refuses to presume the existence of Black resistance, in an a priori sense, nor does he evacuate the possibilities of Black agency and self-determination. Instead, his diagnostic paradigm treats Black subject formation and agential empowerment as problematics in their own right. If we think of individual agency as a site of sociopolitical conditioning rather than as a pre-given ontological capacity of all human subjects alike, then racial domination begins to pose a new set of questions related to the construction of individual interiority and the subjective preconditions for resistance. Such a critical perspective becomes all the more important today, now that racisms have adopted more subtle and more gradated forms in structuring the social formation. One cannot simply presume that the Black subject will assume the appropriate anti-racist consciousness. Hall cautions against this temptation "to use 'black' as sufficient in itself to guarantee the progressive character of the politics

[196] bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 21.
[197] I certainly do not want to endorse the racist narratives that blame Black poverty and suffering on the Black community's own failures. Both are clearly the consequences of a degrading, oppressive, and racist system.
[198] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 53.
[199] Hooks, *Talking Back*.

we fight under the banner—as if we don't have any other politics to argue about except whether something's black or not."[200] Antiracist struggle, Angela Davis points out, must be about more than just securing an equal opportunity for Black people to serve as neo-imperialists in the U.S. state department.[201]

Yet if political theorists truly want to understand the reproduction of racial hierarchies in the U.S. and other postcolonial contexts today, then they will have to look to an existential problemspace that Fanon admittedly leaves undertheorized — that of White subject formation and the learned habits of racial deflection and disavowal. In the conclusion, I offer some brief exploratory thoughts on what Fanon's diagnostic lens might reveal about the existential and ethical obstacles facing White subjects as they seek to adopt ethical self-relation in a profoundly unjust and inhumane social order.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that Fanon's alienation critique provides a useful problematization of the subjective obstacles that White supremacy poses for Black self-determination. This is not a crude argument about Black subjects "not knowing they are oppressed." Instead, Fanon takes as his problemspace the systematic experience of racist reification and asks what that regular source of depersonalisation and threat does to the subjects whose existential conditions and security are shaped by them. His alienation critique, therefore, provides a more nuanced theory of racial oppression than what is available in many liberal accounts, which tend to focus on obvious forms of external coercion or measurable indices of social inequality. This is because he relies upon a more complicated, nuanced, and variegated account of individual subjectivation. In this respect, his psychosocial diagnoses, then, provide a non-reductive method for thinking the disjuncture between having formal access to social institutions and being empowered to take advantage of those opportunities. As Toni Morrison writes in *Beloved,* "Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another."[202] In this respect, Fanon's diagnoses traverse the dialectic between individual freedom and social meaning, between self-realization and self-definition, under conditions of racial hierarchy. To understand the conditions of Black self-determination in the United States today, political theorists must too pay attention to the "internal" problems — both affective and volitional — that can displace the ego and misdirect individual agency in self-negating or self-defeating ways.

In this dissertation, I have argued that Fanon's materialist method provides a better way forward for antiracist theory and praxis. I do not have the space to fully explore what such a sociogenic critique of the U.S. racial conjuncture would look like, but in the later part of this chapter, I did offer some provisional remarks about how Fanon's diagnoses of anti-Black reification and Black alienation under White supremacy might be helpfully translated to the North American context. In particular, I argued that his critical work on racist reification and the injury that it inflicts on Black subjectivities speaks to the stress and trauma that even small instances of anti-black aggression and diminishment can take on Black people. In this respect, Fanon's work presaged the current research showing that the stresses of racism can produce serious health disparities between Black people and their White counterparts, regardless of class background or educational level. In turn, he too helps to explain

[200] Hall, "What Is This Black in Black Popular Culture," 475-476.
[201] Davis, *Abolition Democracy,* 67.
[202] Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (London: Vintage, 1997).

how racially oppressed peoples today can adopt (understandable) but disempowering coping mechanisms like nihilistic misidentification or a desire for White recognition in an attempt to protect themselves from anti-black stigma. (The latter is often a problem for members of the Black professional and middle classes, who have gained limited access to key social institutions in the White world but who remain precariously integrated and whose admittance is often structured on deeply unfair terms.)[203] Under asymmetrical conditions, the Black subject's desire to be recognised is often not the sign of an emancipatory interest but may instead reflect a form of "cruel optimism" that invests them in a social order that works to oppress and denigrate Black people. Or it could reflect a more strategic pursuit of Black middle-class or elite interests at the expense of a concerted strategy of political solidarity with the Black poor and working class, as Gramsci might read it. Fanon's work demonstrates that acts of racialized recognition can be fraught with ethical, social, and political consequences that stand in direct opposition to Black subjects' flourishing. Following Fanon's example, I argue that antiracist critics should look to more conjunctural modes of critique that can reckon with how racialized ideologies and racisms remain entangled with power, violence, and institutional domination. Without a critical account of how practices of racialized recognition are playing into the reproduction of racial hierarchies, they are unable to distinguish those instances in which the state or social institutions weaponize Blackness for their own gain. This sets the stage for a messier version of critique, but one which does a better job of grappling with how racial hierarchies work to naturalise and interiorise themselves in those which they advantage and those which they dominate.

[203] hooks, *Writing Beyond Race,* 20.

Conclusion

Analyzing the role of race in the United States is a complex, shifting terrain, difficult both to describe and to theorize. Racialization is not in any straightforward sense a moral problem or an epistemological one. Instead, it is better conceptualized as a political constellation that works through relations of "power-knowledge-difference," as Hall puts it. As I argued in Chapter 1, racisms are ideological phenomena which consolidate a meaningful difference our understanding of what it means to be human. They operate through discourses of difference and social technologies of perception to classify and categorise a multiplicity of human beings into "essential types." In so doing, they mystify the social genesis of existing hierarchies, turning what is produced through practices of domination, expropriation, and violence into seemingly natural phenomena. It is the apparent objectivity of racial differences that has helped to make the 'race' concept so productive — and so difficult to contest — even as social orders change over time. But these racial categories are consolidated out of dynamic, contested, and shifting ideological terrain. At a discursive level, they vary from conjuncture to conjuncture, across time and space. Nor do these racial ideologies *function* in the same way across discrete social formations. Contrary to what social epistemologists like Fricker argue, then, social critics must do more than reveal the epistemic failures embedded within raciological reason. All racisms are grounded in epistemological bad practices, but they cannot be challenged or unmade on the plane of abstract signification or epistemic validity alone. The key question confronting the critic, then, is what these ideological encodings *do* at the level of individual and institutional praxis. This is where I argued that a practical concept of ideology, in turn, proves productive. To do so, I look to Marxist thinkers like Lukacs and Gramsci, who both rejected the notion that "ideology" was a concept predicated on "duping" the oppressed subject into accepting his own exploitation. Instead, they linked questions of ideology back up to the practical knowhow that individuals develop to "successfully" navigate their worlds.[204] As Fanon points out, ""The racist in a culture with racism is therefore normal. He has achieved a perfect harmony of economic relations and ideology."[205] In this respect, the pragmatic mode of ideology critique I outlined aims to link these "chains of signification" back up to the non-discursive forces and mechanisms that turn certain ideological codes into ones that reinforce domination and further stabilise a racist order.

In this dissertation, I contended that political theorists could find a viable model of antiracist critique by looking to Frantz Fanon's work, specifically to his sociogenic method of analyzing racial colonialism. His sociogenic critique insists on returning racial identities and the hierarchies that produce them to the material and ideological conditions of their emergence. Political theorists, then, are tasked with denaturalizing and challenging racialized constructions of the human within particular conjunctures, rather than working from abstract accounts of liberal personhood. In doing so, he points the way towards an antiracist politics of disalienation that seeks to dismantle the structures and discourses that continue to oppress Black and other nonwhite peoples. I argued that Fanon's method should be read as a version of immanent social criticism. Like other social critics, he situates his critique within concrete conjunctures — from French Martinique after World War II to French Algeria during its anticolonial struggle. In particular, he begins from the traumas and pathologies inflicted by racial colonialism. In this respect, his work is problem-focused, rather than a straightforward form of normative political theory. As he notes, European humanism's celebration of "Man" has done little to prevent Europe from colonizing, enslaving, and murdering other men in

[204] Rehmann stresses in particular how vital Gramsci's philosophy of praxis was to his account of ideology as a differentiated field of symbolic and social relations. Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology,* 130.
[205] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution,* 40.

their colonial projects. Fanon treats neither racial fact or humanist norm as stable and isolated facets of analysis, but instead reflexively considers how power relations work to shape what discrete racial subjects know about the world and how they evaluate that world. In particular, Fanon interrogates how racial orders can obstruct or otherwise corrode the social preconditions for individual self-realization, thereby trapping some racialized subjects in pathological habits or unhealthy attachments. As he puts it, "both the black man, slave to his inferiority, and the white man, slave to his superiority, behave along neurotic lines."[206] These subjective problems, however, are fundamentally symptoms of broader social pathologies, Fanon points out. In that sense, they cannot be challenged at the psychological level alone. Instead, what racial orders require is a collective struggle to dismantle racist institutions and provide more symmetrical conditions of mutual recognition. He calls this the project of "disalienation."

In order to achieve this dialectical reading of racial oppression, Fanon's sociogenic method combines two analytical moments. On the one hand, he carries out a materialist and conjunctural critique of how particular racial worlds are constructed and reproduced. On the other, he adopts the first-person vantage point to disclose how racialized subjects experience and respond to these structures of domination. Fanon's critical theory therefore combines — and improves upon — facets of both Foucault's genealogical and Honneth's Left Hegelian phenomenology of misrecognition. Like Foucault, Fanon analyzes the historical *a priori* of racial conjunctures, thereby treating 'race' as a contingent phenomenon that emerged out of and legitimates certain kinds of Euromodern conquest, domination, dispossession, and violence. Nowhere is this disclosive critique of the racial "world" more fleshed out than in his book on French Algerian settler colonialism, *The Wretched of the Earth.* Many of the techniques that Fanon analyses, particularly with respect to French Algeria, are reminiscent of Foucault's own diagram of power relations in *Discipline and Punish.* Both thinkers seek to disclose the emergent strategies for regulating the Other, and they look to institutional apparatuses, the built environment, juridical regimes of laws and taboos, and concrete practices of state discipline in order to do so. But the broader diagram of power relations they outlined differ in substantive ways. In his genealogical excavations, Foucault pays attention to what he later termed the biopolitical — namely, a specifically late modern form of political rationality that sought to control European populations by "fostering and administering life." In turn, Fanon outlines the other face, so to speak, of this biopolitical project. Namely, he argues that the colonial order doesn't need to ideologically or politically neutralize Black or indigenous communities. Instead, the colonisers developed new strategies, technologies, and tools for policing, disciplining and containing them. In turn, unlike Foucault, who embraced an anti-essentialist ethic of individual self-fashioning, Fanon offers a more robust normative framework for separating out "healthy" from "unhealthy" forms of self-relation. Whereas Foucault's genealogical method offers little in terms of normative judgment as to which practices we might find problematic and how we might go about replacing them, Fanon takes a step beyond the first stage of denaturalizing 'race' and looks too to the ethics of racial subjectivation and the harms that such practices of racist ascription and racial identification can inculcate.

To do so, Fanon embraced an existential phenomenology that uncovers and challenges the pathological forms of self-relation that racial colonialism can produce, particularly in oppressed and colonized subjects.[207] He contends that critical theories must be equipped to negotiate the set of existential crises and psycho-social pathologies that racial orders proliferate. Like Honneth, then, he foregrounds a humanist account of how oppressive or exploitative social relations can distort individuals' relations to themselves, to other human beings, and to the right or healthy forms of self-

[206] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 42.
[207] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, xv.

determination. Both thinkers, too, foreground the Hegelian struggle for recognition in their conceptualisation of individual subject formation, and both see the experience of moral disrespect as inculcating in the disrespected individual a desire for the appropriate acknowledgement from the Other. In a straightforward sense, Honneth's account of misrecognition is structurally assimilable to the everyday experiences of racial profiling and racist domination. To be racially targeted is to be wronged, to be dealt a blow by the Other. For Black and native subjects, these racist forms of interpellation force them to confront the fact that they are human beings whose full humanity is denied, who can be represented as "infrahuman" and therefore treated as if they were animals or objects. Yet Honneth's critical theory of recognition leaves a lot to be desired when it comes to reckoning with racial oppression and the kinds of existential obstacles it can present for oppressed Black and nonwhite subjects. As I argued in Chapter 3, Honneth's critique proves, at best, naively and, at worst, ideologically invested in an optimistic account of Euromodern institutions like the bourgeois family, the liberal representative state, and the capitalist market. He also centers an overly idealistic account of intersubjective recognition, one that removes the oppositional struggle between the subject and its Other and instead grounds the relation on a presumed dynamic of mutual care. This means that his theoretical apparatus avoids the complexities of psychosocial subject formation by assuming a fairly linear relation between the lived experience of racist misrecognition and the actualization of antiracist resistance. To a large extent, his universalist ambitions prove to be his undoing. In the push to provide a formal model of the ethical life, Honneth separates the subjective indexes of pathology from the objective conditions of oppression, domination and violence that regulate specific social orders.

Fanon, in turn, offers a more productive way for balancing the dialectical nature of subjectivation in racial orders. This is, to a large extent, because he does not shy away from the psychoanalytic and psychological discourses like Honneth does. As I argued in Chapter 5, he brings together the existentialist Marxists' work and his psychological training to offer his own version of the alienation critique. Whereas Lukacs deployed the concept of "reification" to describe the instrumentalist objectification inflicted by industrial capitalism on social life, Fanon uses it to diagnose the ways that Black subjects and White subjects are, in divergent ways, displaced from ethical relations to their own self-determined agency in the world. In turn, he looked to what might today be called relational psychoanalysis for a series of "thick ethical concepts" that could diagnose how individual subjects might react in alienated ways to the inhumane social orders in which they were embedded. Under racial colonialism, then, Fanon indicts what he sees to be cases of racial "neuroses" among White and Black subjects, from the anxiety of the Black Martinican in Paris trying to speak "properly" to the "affective ankylosis" of the White subject who has no empathy for Black suffering. Neither the White European subject nor the Black or indigenous colonised subject can stand in a right relation to his actions in the world and to his ethical character under colonial domination. But Fanon focuses in particular on the ways that colonized subjects can internalise hierarchies of value that privilege Whiteness and view Blackness, indigeneity, and other forms of racial difference as inferior, deviant, dangerous, polluting, wily, irrational, animal-like, uncontrollable, uncivilised, etc. This can take two forms. On the one hand, colonized subjects can internalise anti-black norms so fully that they develop a pathological desire to "become" or approximate Whiteness, either by adopting White habitus or acquiring other forms of symbolic capital normally reserved for White people. On the other, Blacks and indigenous subjects may not accept the White world's derogatory view of them, and yet they are still obsessed with proving their equality and worth to White Others. Neither posture towards the White Other, Fanon demonstrates, provides a healthy way forward for Black subjects.

Instead, Fanon stresses, what is needed is political and social transformation that dismantles the racial hierarchies that make Black lives matter so little and that deconstructs the social field that treats Black

subjects as if they were infrahuman. Pursuing Black self-realization, in this respect, cannot be a task for one ethical, anti-racist individual — or even a small group of them — alone. It must be carried out through a collective politics of struggle. And to be successful, Gramsci argues, such a struggle must work to build coalitions across different racial groups and class segments in an attempt to change the balance of forces in their favor. The forging of such a political solidarity does not come cheap; it takes compromise, concession, and ideological work. As Fanon points out, an anticolonial or nationalist movement that relies on the mere fact of racial identity alone to drive its agenda and motivate its members is at risk of fragmentation and erosion. "Racialism and hatred and resentment — a legitimate desire for revenge — cannot sustain a war of liberation," he notes.[208] Nor is even the achievement of cross-class Black solidarity enough to wage a successful anti-racist struggle in social formations like the United States. The U.S. might be on its way to becoming a "majority-minority" nation by 2045, but the Black community will constitute only about 13 percent of the country's population by that time.[209] As Yamahtta-Taylor points out, to get anything done on an antiracist, anticapitalist agenda, then, Black people — particularly Black working class and poor people — will need to work together with other subordinated racial minorities and exploited workers. "While it is true that when Black people get free, everyone gets free, Black people in America cannot 'get free' alone," she notes.[210] But of course just because the objective conditions for anticapitalist and antiracist solidarity exist between, say, Black workers and Latinx workers, doesn't mean that such a solidarity will actually materialize in concrete struggles or that it will hold up to the crosscutting ideological and political forces that set subaltern groups against one another — of which working-class racism is only the most obvious.[211] As Gramsci reminds us, building coalitions across these different subject positions and situations requires paying careful attention to the differences and making an effort to work across them. They can't simply be wished away.[212] This is an antiracist politics without guarantees,[213] yes, but it is also one that eschews the fatalism inherent to many ontological accounts of anti-Black racism — where there is no difference between yesterday's racial traumas and today's, nor could there be without an epochal overthrow of the system.

My reading of Fanon, then, diverges in significant ways from those that circulate in contemporary literature around 'race,' difference, and colonialism. First, I argue that Fanon's work is best understood as a kind of materialist analysis, even as that materialism might look different than the more economistic interpretations that predominate in Black Marxism. He remains all too aware of the importance that racial colonialism, as well as its postcolonial iterations, play in the setting of limits of what can be achieved in the Global South, regardless of a community's political will. In turn, his later analyses of the Algerian anticolonial struggle reflect the fact that native subjects often adopted divergent political alignments depending on how close they stood to the settler class or what kinds of advantages they reaped from the existing colonial economy. Yet what makes Fanon a historical materialist thinker, in my view, is not the fact that he problematizes capitalism's role in the production and reproduction of European imperialism, but that he always traces the appearance of racial worlds back to the concrete practices, institutions, architectures, discourses, and imaginaries that make them self-evident limitations on the possible. In this respect, Fanon might have undertheorized racial capitalism, as thinkers like Robinson allege, but his analyses are directed in a more Gramscian direction. What interests him, fundamentally, is the political work that goes into producing and stabilising social formations predicated upon domination, exploitation, and violence. Under Fanon's

[208] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 111.
[209] William H. Frey, "The US will become 'minority-white' in 2045, Census projects," *The Brookings Institute,* March 14, 2018. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2018/03/14/the-us-will-become-minority-white-in-2045-census-projects/.
[210] Yamahtta-Taylor, *From Black Lives to Black Liberation,* 194.
[211] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 53.
[212] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince,* 30-31.
[213] I borrow this from Hall, who used it to describe an open-ended version of Marxism. Hall, "The Problem of Ideology," 44.

critical theory, then, political theorists might not fully grapple with the systemic imperatives that drive certain kinds of investment in the Global South's cheap labor markets, but they are better equipped to understand how differently positioned class segments within certain national conjunctures work to strategically consolidate their advantage. As Stuart Hall points out, these political and ideological problemspaces are not ancillary or epiphenomenal to the "more serious" plane of capitalist production. "[U]ntil one has shown how 'objective economic crises' actually develop, via the changing relations in the balance of social forces, into crises in the state and society, and germinate in the form of ethical-political struggles and formed political ideologies…one has not conducted a proper kind of analysis," he writes.[214] It is this concrete investigation of the complex and overdetermined relations of force active in a given racial conjuncture that Fanon provides, particularly in his later political writings on French Algeria.

In this respect, I've argued that Fanon's materialism — for all that it might not take the conventional form — proves a significant advantage for his critical theory, both when it comes to its diagnostic potential and to its politics. In particular, it means that Fanon's sociogenic analyses do not fall back into the reductive Manichean logic that some of his critics allege. Whereas thinkers like Charles Mills set up their political theory based on the White/Black antagonism, he remains skeptical that such an ideological horizon can always accurately describe the objective reality of racial formations. Instead, he treats this "delirious Manicheanism"[215] (White/Black, etc.) as a set of ideological norms that are only ever metastable and always open to revision and contestation. His account allows for the agential possibility that these racial hierarchies could be unmade, that they are responsive to the actions and political imaginings of everyday actors and are not an insurmountable suture that renders us into absolute strangers. Such a methodological move may be out of step with globalist or worlds-systems accounts of power, but it provides an analytical flexibility and a sense of optimism that is crucial to countering the closures of raciological thought. The concrete level of analysis — that of events and practices, institutions and narratives, technologies of population management and techniques of self — is much more complicated and overdetermined than these dyadic accounts of Oppressor/Oppressed provide for. It opens up the space for theorizing "race" in relation to crosscutting stratification orders of gender, class, and sexuality. And it allows for the specificities of distinctive racisms and racializations to be situated in their material relations to one another, as opposed to flattening them into a singular paradigmatic frame. As Fanon points out, the objective conditions against which the Black American struggles are not the same as those which the Black African faces, even as they may share the subjective experience of suffering from White racism.[216] The phenomenology of racist reification might be similar, but he stresses that the "relations of force" which produced those experiences are not. Effective antiracist critique must be capable of recognising and accounting for those objective differences between the U.S. White settler state and the African postcolony.

Fanon's work, therefore, provides a corrective to the "ontological turn" adopted by Mills in his theory of the racial contract and by Wilderson in his Afro Pessimism. Attempts to theorize racial oppression from a social ontology predicated on a Manichean divide between the White and the nonwhite run into both analytical and political pitfalls. As I've argued, Mills and Wilderson both replace a historical and intersectional reading of Blackness with a quasi-theological account that grounds the Black subject in shared trauma. In doing so, they reduce many Black subjectivities, crosscut with other sites of identification and subject formation, to an essential, categorical Same. Such a dyadic paradigm, at best, marginalizes and, at worst, denies the ways that racial oppression intersects with a host of other

[214] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 11.
[215] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 160.
[216] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 173.

regimes of domination, from late capitalism to the patriarchal regulation of gender roles. This picture of a primary and insurmountable cleavage between the West and the rest, White and Black, too can block more considered critiques of postcolonial societies as they negotiate new challenges — many of which cannot be explained through direct forms of White Anglo-European coercion or dispossession, but instead relate to internal power dynamics within postcolonial states or to global capital flows. Rather than reading different kinds of racialization, dispossession, and political domination on relational terms, both Mills' radical Black Kantianism and Wilderson's Afro Pessimism deny the linkages between Black suffering and other forms of subjection under late capitalism and its neo-imperial Euromodern diagrams of force. This ontological turn limits both thinkers too when it comes to the politics of antiracist struggle. On the one hand, these Manichean accounts of domination can neglect the importance of building political solidarity among differently racialized groups. On the other, they can fall back into the trap of treating the Black subjects as a readymade political agent. There is not an obvious and direct connection between the experience of racism and the emergence of a critical antiracist consciousness. By contrast, Fanon is deeply concerned with the work that goes into building an emancipatory collective subject out of disparate interests, factions, and class segments. Reading him through his profoundly historicist lens, then, reveals how Fanon provided a way of "thinking the racialization of the world that, with unwavering consistency, eschews both the evasion and the hypostatising of race." [217]

I also insist on reading Fanon as an ethical humanist, contrary to some postcolonial critics' interpretations of his work. The possibility of a "new Human" lies at his ethical horizon, as both a practical standard for rejecting dehumanising social relations and as a utopian aspiration for the possibility of a world that empowers that which is "most human in man: freedom."[218] His humanism is distinctive from the ratiocentric Human subject and thin formal injunctions that characterise Euromodern liberalism. As I explored in Chapter 2, such abstract accounts of moral equality often remain mired in the "impotence of the mere ought" when it comes to diagnosing how contemporary racial orders continue to reproduce societies structured in racial dominance. Fanon too underscores that antiracist and anticolonial struggle will require an alternative to this Euromodern humanism "where they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them."[219] His humanist critique, then, has a two-fold function: first, it aims to continue to demystify the over-representation of Euromodern Man; and second, it seeks to anticipate the ways in which the human might be freed from the political closures set up by ethno-nationalist and racist regimes. As Fanon puts it, "We must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man."[220] As numerous commentators have noted, Fanon's humanist ethic remains under-developed in this second sense. Yet by looking to the negative critiques Fanon advanced of racial colonialism, in particular, I contend, one can reconstruct his conception of ethical self-determination. His humanism was rooted in and responded to the concrete urgencies of inhumanity, as Gilroy might say.[221] By looking to the alienated inhumanity of racial regimes, Fanon put forward a notion of freedom that was more robust than the juridical conception of the person found in much of the liberal rights' discourses. In his view, emancipation entails having the social and psychological supports that one needs to creatively determine one's own actions, free from the distorting force of racialized masks. As he writes, "In the world I am heading for, I am endlessly creating myself."[222] Fanon replaces an ethic of racialized being with an ethic of antiracist becoming. And by treating the question of the human not as an anthropological given but as a social fact whose provenance must be studied in particular socio-

[217] Sekyi-Otu, "Postcolonial Critical Imagination," 8.
[218] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 197.
[219] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 251.
[220] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 255.
[221] Gilroy, "Fanon and Améry," 26.
[222] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 204.

historical circumstances, then, Fanon's sociogenic critique gets beyond the mere rhetorical plea to "treat everyone equally, regardless of skin color."

In chapter 5, I sought to translate some of Fanon's analytical insights from his racial conjuncture to that of the contemporary U.S. Racist reification and normalised anti-blackness continue to pose significant ethical-existential problems for Black self-realization in today's U.S. racial order. Today, then, social critics have to do more than look at the "objective" problems of external interference, coercion, or domination. In this respect, I gestured towards some of the ways in which Fanon's alienation critique could generate insights about how the U.S. racial order works to disempower, exhaust, and misdirect Black subjects in ways that hinder their own flourishing. Fanon's alienation critique could potentially help theorise Fanon's phenomenology of racist dehumanization — and the anxieties that it provokes in Black and nonwhite subjects — helps to explain how Black communities are systematically exhausted by U.S. racism in ways that can hurt their health and dissuade them from engaging in politics. In turn, his account of the alienated coping strategies that Black Martinicans adopted in the face of French racism identifies some likely dead ends for Black Americans looking for recognition from U.S. institutions. As Fanon cautions, not all symbolic affirmations of Blackness are autonomy-enhancing. Some desires for recognition can only serve to further confirm the authority and superiority of the White world. Fanon's concerns over how the colonised bourgeois subject can be "assimilated" to the European power structure in a "middle-management" role, in particular, look prescient when it comes to the current era of U.S. corporate "multiculturalism." Yet Fanon never falls back into the conservative trap of blaming Black subjects for these unproductive ways of coping with the trauma of racist domination. Instead, he consistently ties his psycho-social account of alienation more directly to the structural terrain of asymmetrical power relations. In this respect, the real emancipatory work has to be done at the level of the social — it has to involve dismantling the economic and political hierarchies that oppress Black and nonwhite subjects.

In this dissertation, however, I have not had the space to carry out a Fanonian sociogenic critique of the U.S. racial order. I hope that, by highlighting some of his method's theoretical and ethical advantages to crude or overly abstract approaches to thinking 'race' and racism, that I have made a sufficiently strong case for why such a project may be fruitful. In particular, I think that future work in this vein could explore a number of problematics, from the U.S.'s neoliberal shift to a more punitive form of racial population management to the growing White ethno-nationalist backlash against multiculturalist integration. The re-emergence of racist rhetoric and violence, White ethnonationalist ideologies, and authoritarian codes of national and political belonging amid the fracture and precariousness introduced by global capitalism should give renewed urgency to these debates over Whiteness and citizenship. Fanon's insights into the epistemic and affective nature of White mystification could prove especially instructive when it comes to reckoning with two interrelated problems: first, the routine practices of White denial and second, the politics of White alienation.[223]

Many White subjects adopt self-distancing postures in order to deny their own complicity with racial domination or exploitation. Perhaps even more so than other Americans, White subjects continue to engage in practices of racial discrimination and racial inequality today. And yet they often take ideological shelter in a politics of ethical disavowal in which they can deny acting in racist or problematic ways. "One can promulgate racist imagery and ideas without having any interest in

[223] For all that Fanon stressed that racial colonialism prevents the White colonizer from relating to the native or Black subject as if they were a full and equal human being, he was not particularly interested in theorizing the existential pathologies that afflict the colonizer. But there are suggestive traces of this analysis in his work. For example, he analyses the pathological neuroses of a French police officer who regularly tortured Algerians in *The Wretched of the Earth*.

identifying oneself as a racist," Imani Perry notes. "Americans have a long tradition of reconciling inconsistencies between professed values and cultural practices.[224] These defensive attitudes can take many discursive forms, from the performative disclaimer ("Not to be racist, but…") to the simultaneous acknowledgement and dismissal of white privilege ("As a white, middle-class, cis-het woman, I cannot understand X, but I think….") to the reactionary cry of self-inoculation ("Not all white people!"). These habituated silences, cultivated ignorance, and affective disinvestment in Black lives, in turn, have a tendency to block White subjects from taking responsibility, both for their own racialized praxis and for the broader racial order that they have played a primary role in constructing and over whose institutional functioning they continue to control. This is why Baldwin indicts White Americans not just for the violences they inflict upon Black people in routine, mundane ways, but for the fact that they are also are engaged in a concerted project of denial that they are doing so. Fanon's reification critique, in turn, could help to situate these "bad-faith" epistemic practices back in a broader structuring field of political and economic relations, rather than just viewing them on overly psychological or moralistic terms as individual flaws that can be "trained out" of people.

But Fanon's alienation critique too could provide a more critical framework within which to situate and problematize White subjects' experiences of dislocation, displacement, and demographic anxiety — some of which are tied to explicitly ethno-nationalist imaginaries, others of which are more ambivalent. Increasing numbers of White Americans are finding themselves in a subjective crisis over their racial identity.[225] As the U.S. political mainstream has transitioned away from outright celebrations of White supremacy, many liberal White Americans can no longer stand in an easy relationship to Whiteness. Instead, they often succumb to affective complexes of shame and guilt over their racial privilege, their ancestors' immoral deeds, and their own "privileged" position in the social stratification order. Sometimes these psychosocial reckonings can force White subjects to critically interrogate their own social positioning with an eye towards becoming antiracists. These affects, however, are not always politically productive, as social psychologists have pointed out. Guilt complexes can also be paralysing. Feelings of shame can sublimate into reactionary positions of anger, frustration, and contempt. And the fear of being called racist or of stepping "wrong" when it comes to the fraught interpersonal dynamics of interracial encounters can motivate many White subjects to steer clear of Black people or of engaging with antiracist politics.

In turn, other White Americans have responded to the economic and political dislocations of the neoliberal era, many White subjects in rural and suburban America have embraced political subjectivities founded once again on an earnest investment in Whiteness. White individuals who understand themselves as "White" in a proud, ethno-nationalist sense often conceptualize that social role as entitling them to a certain degree of respect, status and insulation from non-white people. They therefore might experience themselves as alienated if they are subjected to a changing social order in which Black and brown people are moving in social spaces, winning symbolic approval, and taking material resource and opportunities that were once deemed to be exclusively theirs. These reactions are particularly potent, Fanon reminds us, when these White subjects feel their material and symbolic advantages are precarious.[226] Yet paradoxically, these White anxieties and ensuing investments in White ethno-nationalism might predispose working-class and middle-class Whites to join reactionary political formations that obstruct the possibilities of more sustained economic and social transformation — changes that would often be to their long-term advantage. As Marxists have long pointed out, an interracial coalition of working people would stand a much greater chance of

[224] Perry, *More Terrible and More Beautiful,* 22.
[225] For an extended discussion of this problem and its potential progressive solutions, see Linda Martín Alcoff, *The Future of Whiteness* (London: Polity, 2015).
[226] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 131.

challenging the hegemony of the overwhelmingly White capitalist class.[227] The valorization of White racial identity, however, provides cheap thrills for little payout. Its symbolic and psychosocial rewards are not worthwhile concessions if they harness White workers to an exploitative and increasingly hierarchical economic order.

The case of White alienation in a society like the contemporary United States reminds us that this political phenomenon is normatively ambivalent. Alienation and other forms of dispossession, as emergent structures of feeling, can spur regressive changes just as easily as they do progressive ones. This ambivalence is something Fanon's work makes space for. A Fanonian reading of White politics today would neither uncritically accept the felt alienation of many White Americans, nor would it ignore or leave its psychosocial "structure of feeling"[228] unaddressed. The United States, of course, is not alone among the postcolonial contexts to see this resurgence of White ethno-nationalism. By weaponizing the logic of multicultural identity politics, White nationalist and fascist groups today are recoding racisms as efforts to protect and promote whites' "cultural" heritage and their "distinctive" ways of life across the Global North — often with dangerous effects. If it is to take the reproduction of racial and social hierarchies seriously, then, antiracist critique will need to take more seriously the ethical and existential problems raised by the practices of White subject formation, across distinctive ideological constellations and class segments. Fanon's sociogenic criticism, I suggest, might be just the place to start.

[227] Yamahtta-Taylor, *From Black Lives Matter to Black Liberation,* 215-216.
[228] I borrow this concept from Raymond Williams. Williams, *Politics and Letters,* 148.

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