

6-21-2007

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Recommended Citation

Ikeotuonye, Festus (2007) "Connexus Theory and the Agonistic Binary of Coloniality: Revisiting Fanon's Legacy," *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*: Vol. 5: Iss. 3, Article 19.
Available at: <http://scholarworks.umb.edu/humanarchitecture/vol5/iss3/19>

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Connexus Theory and the Agonistic Binary of Coloniality **Revisiting Fanon's Legacy**

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Abstract: This article attempts to conceptualize the violence of colonialism and racism by drawing on Anibal Quijano's model of power. It argues that "racism" is a signifier of the axial agonistic binary relations at the core or 'kernel code' of the convolutions of the modern/colonial habitus. At the core of modernity lies an agonistic binary relation between "order" or "certainty" and the "other" representing the self invented nemesis of order—uncertainty or alterity. Central to this agonistic relationship is the negation of the colonized "other" as a basis for not only the constitution of the self/order but also as the fuel that drives the axial spatial articulation of this Manichean orientation to reality: a mental and spatial articulation that is profoundly alien in the worldviews of most oral and indigenous cultures the world over. Through a cultural critique of Eurocentrism, the article sets out to rescue the liberation thesis of Franz Fanon from the grip of this modern/colonial mechanism of power and its extensions.

Constrained and conditioned by the "closures" of "system," we find ourselves "inside" a vast social-historical-economic construct we cannot escape, cannot get "outside" of. There are variations on this theme, as when the "outside" is not the interdicted place we long for in vain, but rather the exile into which our "ideology" has cast some excluded "other". The "outside" may not exist, perhaps "the other" is only by way of ideological distortion projected as "other," ever denied the status of "the same"...Perhaps the "other" is by definition "beyond" the closure of "our" paradigms, and incorporable within them only through a "violence of the concept."
—K.M Stokes

In a world of conflict, a world of victims and executioners, it is the job of thinking people not to be on the side of the executioners.
—Albert Camus

For years I labored with the idea of reforming the existing institutions of society, a little change here, a little change there. Now I feel quite differently.
—Martin Luther King Jr.

INTRODUCTION

The Fourth Annual Social Theory Forum is organized around the theme of the violence of colonialism and racism and how we can use the insight and legacy of

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Frantz Fanon to engage with the meaning and issues of human liberation. The key concern here then is the violence of spatial and mental colonialism and racism, and Fanon's take on the colonial relations of power.

The term "colonialism" comes from the Latin word *colonia* or *colonus* (settled land, farm, landed estate) and ultimately implies a blank space that can be cultivated or subjected to the designs of the "permanent settler." The usual colonial practice of "population transfer" is indicative of the sturdily installed designs of the colonial habitus. Population transfer is not simply about displacement, land theft, exploitation and reshuffling of people. It is also about the cultivation of epistemological, ontological and geo-historical hierarchy through the subalternization of the local histories of the colonized. This then lends dubious credence to the "universalization" of the settler's local history. I have for this reason avoided the use of that word "emancipation" since it is rooted in the *univers* *de discours* mythologies of European "permanent settler" Enlightenment which Fanon himself rejected and spent his life "abandoning."

The intensity of Fanon's cardinal quest to "abandon" Europe has attracted quite strong criticism from different stand points. Lewis R. Gordon, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, and Renee T. White in their introduction to *Fanon: a Critical Reader* (1996) argue that the anger in Fanon must be contextualized. They see the vehemence in his writing and speeches as a product of the exigencies of the era in which Fanon lived. However, many of Fanon's other critics understood quite clearly that Fanon's vehemence was not simply directed at a synchronic manifestation of a diachronic reality. Most understood that what is at stake for Fanon was a cumulative "ingrained hierarchy of values" that is fundamentally Eurocentric. Angel Rama (1965; 1993) made a passionate case for a transcul-

tural creole outlook by reproving Fanon insistence on African centred cultural autonomy. According to him

Frantz Fanon's cry, "Let's abandon Europe," is nothing but a sentence. It is impossible to abandon what is already ingrained in the creative personality of the Americas, in its mental structure and hierarchy of value...he asserts a non-proved desertion because, in the last analysis, he counts on the support of a non-European cultural tradition that he assumes radically: the black African. (ibid, p 61)

Rama's *realpolitik* insistence on the invincibility of imperial transformation is in itself characteristic of the universalizing myth of imperial self representation. Manoeuvring within the self referential loops of European Enlightenment and other such "ingrained" European local histories and cultural traditions is at the core of not only the image of Europe as "proved" but also Frantz Fanon's radical non-Eurocentrism. However, there is another side to this debate. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno wrote in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1976: xiv-xviii) that *humanity, instead of entering a truly human state, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism...Myth is already enlightenment, and enlightenment reverts back to mythology.*" This new kind of "barbarism," which Lewis Mumford (1967) described as "The Myth of the Machine" is at the core of not only the central theme of this 4th Social Theory Forum but also the numerous criticisms of Fanon. We must remember that it is the same French/European "axis of be-devil" that produced the discourse of *fraternite*, *egalite* and *liberte*, that also gave us Henri de Boulainvilliers and the "right of conquest"; Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau and the Inequality of the "Human Races"; G. Vacher de Lapouge and the "laws of the distribution of wealth"; Lin-

naeus, Vogt, Nott and *naturphilosophie* school or perhaps, the idea of “race” in Kant’s anthropology.¹ It was also the same “enlightened” power/knowledge nexus that produced the discourse of *liberte* that also produced what Foucault referred to as “dividing practices”; the same “technique of power” that Jacques Ellul (1964: 125) told us...*cannot be otherwise than totalitarian...because...everything is its concern.*” The Spanish colonial practice of *encomienda*, Karl Marx’s “enclosure” of the “commons”; Foucault’s “police” art of cybernetic “governmentality” and Elias’ “organization of the soul” go a long way in mapping the inner and outer dynamics of this tyrannical “concern.” The expansive nature of this totalitarian “concern” is what is often characterised as invincible and “universal” by those Fanon (1965:251-252) criticised for “sterile litanies and nauseating mimicry.” In his own words,

Let us waste no time in sterile litanies and nauseating mimicry. Leave this Europe where they are never done of talking about Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them, at the corner of every one of their own streets, in all corners of the globe...When I search for man in the technique and style of Europe, I see only a succession of negations of man, and an avalanche of murders...Let us try to create the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant birth.

It follows therefore that European local histories, conceptions of man/time/space, precepts, sensibilities and so on cannot encapsulate the “universal” simply by vio-

¹ See Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi. 1997, “The Color of Reason: The Idea of “Race” in Kant’s Anthropology, In E. C. Eze (ed.) *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*. Cambridge: Blackwell.

lently incorporating everything within its self referential nexus of contradictions. What Fanon is concerned about here is not a single contextual episode seen as a deviation from the norm but rather, a successive and axial negation that forms the core of the relational constellation of “coloniality,” not “colonialism.” Fanon encountered this axial Eurocentric implicate order in Martinique and then across the world in France and Algeria. He saw it in the attitudes of not only the middle class Martiniqueans but also in the convoluted national consciousness of the “Greco-Latin Negro” African elite.

It must not be forgotten that genealogically, Fanon was a product of a great transformation in the dynamics of a power/knowledge nexus that spans the period habitually divided into the “slave trade,” Christianization, the “coolie” system, colonialism, nation building, etc. These divisions are of course part of the “rupture” mythology of Western academic conceptualizations. Did the end of “slavery” mean “freedom” or anything resembling “emancipation” for those classified as such? What we have here then, is not an event, episode or deviation but a constitutive and integral part of the history of modernity or perhaps, the modern/colonial world. The peculiar negation and binary inaugurated by the ‘global designs’ of modern power/knowledge nexus is intrinsically linked to the signifier we call ‘racism’—a reflection of this peculiar modern agonistic binary. Therefore coloniality and “racism” are not only constitutive but imperative in the smooth functioning of the modern/colonial world.

As the ‘prophet’ of modernity Zygmunt Bauman (1989: 68) told us, *Racism was indeed resonant with the worldview and practice of modernity.*”The first phrase of the title of this article—“connexus,” seeks to conceptualize the intricacies of this nexus as a value sustaining force that goes beyond the conceptualization of “colonialism” as an abnormal event or episode in the smooth

landscape of modern history. Anibal Quijano's concept of *coloniality of power* is helpful in the sense that it helps me to better conceptualize what is an embryonic work in progress. Connexus—as not only the “con” of the nexus—is a convenient tool that I can use to conceptualize the foundations of the diachronic contradictions encapsulated by Quijano's model of power. A model of power based on a foundational Eurocentric axial contradiction anchored on a specific definition and production of otherness or alterity.

It might come across as contradictory for me to “denounce” Europe, as Fanon did, while relying on the same framework I am denouncing to get my point across. As I will argue subsequently, this contradiction is a reflection and an outgrowth of the total cultural environment that I have to live in not anything “personal” or reducible to me. I will in fact prefer to present this paper in *igbo*, which is my first language, instead of English, but of course that implies a very limited audience and logistic nightmare in terms of translation. If Rome has already taken over all areas of the world perhaps it makes more sense to not only praise Caesar in Latin, but also to bury him in Latin. It is equally true that any one who is sawing the branch upon which he sits may be holding on to something else. As Wendell Berry wrote in the *Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front*:

...Your mind will be punched in a card and shut away in a little drawer. / When they want you to buy something they will call you. / When they want you to die for profit they will let you know. / So, friends, every day do something that won't compute... / As soon as the generals and politicians can predict the motions of your mind, lose it. / Leave it as a sign to mark the false trail, the way you didn't go. / Be like the fox who makes more

tracks than necessary, some in the wrong direction. Practice resurrection.

Wendell Berry's point is even more crucial if applied to the so called contradiction, conflict or the “contextualized” anger many see in Fanon. The constant reference to the cumulative effect of coloniality as some remote platform for “choice,” “worldly culture”² or an existential site of Freudian or Lacanian psychoanalysis is for me a “false trail”—a Western middle class preoccupation. The rapper Notorious B.I.G said it in his song “Everyday Struggle.”

For most of “us” that “relate” to the undersides of this cumulative “struggle,” it is not simply a matter of ceaseless fabrication of ruptures within a culturally informed conception of time/space. Albert Einstein throughout his life tried to tell us that *The distribution between past, present and future is only an illusion, even if a stubborn one.* This “stubborn” culturally informed understanding of time/space, persons and peoplehood in terms of the great “rupture” is pivotal to the construction of a world predicated on a binary struggle. The “struggle” is therefore not reducible to an abstract evocation of contradiction, dilemma, choice and Lacanian psychoanalysis predicated on the same Eurocentric power/knowledge nexus that informs the struggle. For those on the underside of the colonial agonistic binary it is indeed an everyday struggle of wishing it wasn't so “devilish.”

AGONISTIC BINARY AND THE NEXUS OF CONTRADICTION

In this article my aim is to address a wide range of issues that Frantz Fanon as a lived experience encapsulates. Fanon's biographer David Macey (2000: 29) contends

² See Béji (1997). Also see Mignolo 2000.

that, "...if there is a truly Fanonian emotion, it is anger. His anger was in response to his experience of a black man in a world defined as white, but not the 'fact' of blackness." Macey's analysis while generally sympathetic and attentive to the complicated trajectories of Fanon's life takes on the usual paternalistic Eurocentrism when it comes to what Fanon's anger was in response to. Fanon's anger was not simply due to his own individual experiences because according to Fanon, there are "Negroes" not simply one "Negro." Fanon's anger was directed at the Eurocentric implicate order defined by and as "white." This implicate order was inaugurated through a process of serial agonistic negation of its self-invented category of "blackness." The abstract facticity of blackness is not what Fanon was interested in by any stretch of the imagination. Fanon's interest was on the autonomous historical contents buried under that category of blackness; historical contents whose burying not only lend dubious credence to the projected inner beast of the colonizer but also creates an existential deviation on those classified as black by such historical subalternization and negation. In essence, Fanon's project can be summed up by his explicit intent not only to abandon Europe but to restore the autonomy and cultural dignity displaced by the violent "mechanism" of the colonial "Manichean world." This colonial Manichean world does not refer to one single cultural context but the total cultural environment that emanates from that axial agonistic binary.

The Social Theory Forum offers an opportunity to explore the issues outlined above with the aim of reclaiming Fanon from the aforementioned Eurocentric Manichean rubric. I would like to start by outlining what my main arguments are and subsequently, tease out those arguments within the limits allowed by the present volume. Before outlining my main arguments, I want to reemphasize the fact that we are using Western concepts, precepts,

sensibilities and language within an institutional structure and arrangement subsumed in the Western culture of "scholarship." One cannot escape a large circle by drawing smaller circles within that large circle. This might come across as simplistic, but I can assure you that simplification is integral to the total cultural environment that underpins Eurocentrism. Again, simplification is necessary given the conditions and "constraints of system" as KM Stokes will say. The relevance of this point is to emphasize the fact that we are manoeuvring within a discursive space completely dominated by a specific principle of knowledge and orientation that is Eurocentred (Mignolo and Tlostanova 2006). It is, however, important to point out that Eurocentrism is not simply reducible to a mere calculus of contents usually venerated by those who are enthusiastically seeking "equality." It is the terms of engagement and orientation to reality that is ultimately more crucial in determining outcome and output. As Germaine Greer argues in her book *The Whole Woman* (1999:3), "equality has been a poor substitute for liberation." The importance of the latter point to the issue at hand is that Eurocentrism is the specific rationality of Quijano's *coloniality of power* and the implicate order whose dominance produced the anger in Fanon. Therefore it is important once again to point out that the conditions that produced Fanon's famous "commitment" is still with us as we speak. Having made this point clear, I will then like to go on and outline the central arguments of this article. Next, I will explore the issues that surround Fanon's legacy and the question of how Fanon can be reclaimed from the grip of Eurocentrism through a critique of its avatars.

The main argument has been that the aforementioned Eurocentrism did not only shape Fanon's project of transatlantic "African" liberation, it also shaped what is usually perceived as the "contradictions"

and “tensions” in Fanon’s life and ultimately, how Fanon himself is generally perceived and understood. Through exploring the grip of Eurocentrism, I would like to highlight the issues of what Fanon would have looked like from the points of view of those “wretched of the earth” he committed himself to, and to whose cause he considered himself a “slave.” Weeks before his death, Fanon wrote to a friend, Roger Tayeb:

We are nothing on earth if we are not in the first place the slave of a cause, the cause of the people, the cause of justice and liberty. I want you to know that even when the doctor had given me up, in the gathering dusk I was still thinking of the ... peoples of the third world, and when I have persevered, it was for their sake. (in Geismar 1973:185)

By bringing in the outlooks of the “peoples of the third world” I hope to hint at the lessons we could learn from the Fanonian project of a non-European orientation to reality, conceptions of the person and peoplehood and ultimately, the definition of relatedness and autonomy. Frantz Fanon’s rejection of the modern/colonial hierarchical categories of white and black anticipates the relatedness and autonomy of the igbo word *anyi or oha*, in the sense of the Australian Aboriginal use of the metaphor³. That is, relatedness and autonomy as simultaneous instead of the bounded and mutually exclusive formulations of the

³ That is in the sense of the integrated perception of the self and world widespread in most of the traditional cultures found in non-Western parts of the World. Edge (1994) offers an insight into how *it is possible to maintain both relatedness and autonomy* in traditional societies. Indeed, Edge argues, “for the Aborigines they are merely two sides of the same coin.” Western Anthropologists refer to the many variations of this integrated perception as “Totemism.”

Western discourses on “identity,” “difference,” the person, peoplehood or nation. Edge contends that:

In the west we fear collectivity, thinking that we will lose our autonomy and our individuality, as citizens under fascism and communism experienced. In fact, quite the opposite is true in the kinds of collectivity that I have described. In particular among the Aborigines, there is no loss of autonomy. Indeed, quite the opposite occurs: not only does a person retain autonomy, but it is fundamental. Even more radical than that, I want to argue that more individuality is found in this brand of collectivism than there is in western individualism. (Edge 1994:49)

This Aboriginal simultaneous or dyadic conceptualization of relatedness and autonomy rescues Fanon from the characteristic ethnocentric and reductive criticisms of those who want to reduce Fanon to the logocentric epistemic discourses of modern Europe. In the *igbo* language, a white person is approximately described as ‘onye (person) ocha (bright)’ or ‘nwa (child) bekee (fair complexion)’. The human being or diachronic process is emphasized rather than the mutilated “ruptured” synchronic snap shot emphasized by the agonistic binary European gaze. This is true of a lot of indigenous people’s conception of the human being. According to Germaine Greer (2004),

From first contact, the leaders of many Aborigines saw that sharing of the land would be possible only if the whitefellas could be drawn into the Aboriginal system. They pursued a deliberate policy of cooption, hoping to civilise the invaders into abandoning their inap-

propriate concepts of ownership and exclusivity. The most frequently repeated version of the initial attempt at negotiation tells us that the Aborigines, upon first seeing white men, they thought they were their own dead kin “jumped up,” that is, resurrected as white men.”⁴

The idea of an agonistic binary rupture in time/space conditioned by an incremental distance between persons, peoplehood and local histories based on the hierarchical distribution of reason is specifically Western. There is ample evidence to suggest that the view of the world as an eternal binary struggle was not universal, “mutual” or even “normal.” There are no equivalents of modern binary thinking in the *igbo* view of the world. We can safely contend that the idea that all cultural prejudices or chauvinism correspond to the idea of “race” is demonstrably false. In *Towards the African Revolution* (1964), Fanon reminds us that colonialism and racism are not constants of the “human spirit” since there are cultures with racism and cultures without racism. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz argues in *Local Knowledge* (1983: 59) that

The Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational cognitive universe, a dynamic centre of awareness, emotion, judgement, and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against a social and natural background is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world’s cultures.

Nevertheless, trying to address these

⁴ Germaine Greer. *The Guardian* (UK) Saturday June 19, 2004

issues from a non-Western perspective while presenting entirely new problems and challenges will hopefully enable me to reclaim Fanon from the Eurocentric gaze. The aim of course is to Africanize his legacy because ultimately, that was the goal for Fanon. I would try not to repeat the very well known details of Fanon’s books and speeches or detail of his biography since there are so many books on that subject. My focus will be on how the Fanon we all think we know can be problematised with the aim of revealing something beyond the Eurocentric image imposed on Fanon by both benevolent and malevolent imperialists. Finally, I want to use Fanon as a basis for confronting what Bourdieu and Wacquant described as “the cunning of imperialist reason.” As I will always insist, we are wholly in the “master’s” house, using the master’s tools and featuring in the master’s show as projections of the master’s innately contradictory inner beast.

DEFINING THE LATERAL SHADES OF THE MINSTREL SHOW

Before proceeding, I would like to pause here and define the key concepts that I have been using in this piece. This will serve as a background to my argument and provide me with a foundation upon which to build my secondary and tertiary expositions.

For the sake of clarity, I will first of all define “coloniality of power,” since it is better established and far better formulated than my wretched but “sexy” phrase “connexus.” After defining coloniality, I will then go on to define *connexus* which is really only different in emphasis. While coloniality of power mainly deals with what Dussel (1996) described as “undersides” of modern coloniality, *connexus* theory focuses on the metaphysical core of the modern/colonial beast. According to Quijano,

What is termed globalization is the culmination of a process that began with the constitution of America and colonial/modern Eurocentered capitalism as a new global power. One of the fundamental axes of this model of power is the social classification of the world's population around the idea of race, a mental construction that expresses the basic experience of colonial domination and pervades the more important dimensions of global power, including its specific rationality: Eurocentrism. The racial axis has a colonial origin and character, but it has proven to be more durable and stable than the colonialism in whose matrix it was established. Therefore, the model of power that is globally hegemonic today presupposes an element of coloniality.⁵

As Quijano suggested above, a key element of this modern classificatory model of power is the binary articulation of a new planetary geohistorical and biocultural identities based on the idea of "race." This entailed the process through which corporeality or body/nature was violently separated from "non-body" ("subject," "spirit" or "reason"). The colonization of the body/nature by the secularized forms of the "spirit/soul" is the central plot of the Cartesian epic which also is the nerve centre of the modern/colonial world (Veroli 2002). As Nicolas Veroli put it,

"After the rain there must come the sun" goes the old French proverb. Similarly, after doubt there comes certainty in the Cartesian epic: I have doubted everything that

⁵ See Anibal Quijano (2000, <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nepantla/v001/1.3quijano.pdf>). Also see Walter Mignolo 2000.

could be doubted, and must thus come to the conclusion that the only thing I cannot doubt is my own existence as the one who doubts. But who am I? The inquiry must turn from the question of existence to that of identity: what is this "I" that doubts? The theoretical task, henceforth, is that of constituting the cogito, the subject, as a purely homogeneous substance that will contain no trace of alterity. "I" must be "I" and not another. Since, as it turns out, I can only be (with absolute certainty) a thing that thinks, a thinking thing, that is, the opposite of a material or extended thing, corporeality will be the stand-in for alterity, for the threat of heterogeneity. (ibid: 5)

The implication of this binary separation is that it embodies a radical view which did not only ascribe the values of certainty and uncertainty on the mind and body/nature respectively; it also became the model on which to organize and classify the world in scales, scopes, meters, graphs and the usual allochthonous hierarchies and cartographies of mind, bio-culture and space. Additionally, the shift from the questions of existence⁶ to that of "identity" not only marked the move to a *ceteris paribus*⁷ conception of spaces, persons and peoplehood but also serves as the foundation of what Foucault described as disciplinary power and bio-politics. The classification and reclassification of the planet's population based on this Cartesian split between mind and body came to represent the foundational binary principle that was used to organize and manage bodies, spaces and cultures.

⁶ Note that Fanon spoke of "existential" not "identity" deviation.

⁷ See Alvin Toffler's preface to Illya Prigogines's *Order Out of Chaos* (1984) New York: Bantam.

Martin Heidegger argued in his book on Nietzsche that

...when it (the Cartesian cogito) is nonetheless thought through in its metaphysical import and measured according to the breath of its metaphysical project, then it is the first resolute step through which modern machine technology, and along with it the modern world and modern mankind, became metaphysically possible for the first time. (Heidegger 1982: 116)

Quijano argues that without the “expulsion of the body from the realm of the spirit” the notion of “race” in its modern sense would not have been possible. The notion of “inferior races” relies on the treatment of these inferior races as “objects” of study, “correction,” domination, exploitation and discrimination precisely because they are not “subjects” or “rational subjects.” This lack of “rationality” is seen as the defining quality of those races who like the natural world represents as Georg Simmel put it, the personification of those irrational, instinctive, sovereign traits and impulses which aim at determining the mode of life from within” (Simmel 1964: 413). It is then understandable why Thomas Jefferson wrote in his book *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1781) that in the faculties of memory and imagination the “Negro” appears to be equal to “whites.” But that when it comes to reason and rationality they (Negroes) are inferior since none can be found capable of “tracing or comprehending the investigations of Euclid.” However, Jefferson argues that these reason-challenged Negroes “are more generally gifted than whites with accurate ears for tune and time” (Levine 1978: 4). In other words, “Negroes” and the “others,” alongside the natural world, came to be seen as blank or empty mental and physical spaces without history, or perhaps, “raw materials” sub-

jected to “gardening,” “design,” “cultivation” and “weed poisoning” (Beilharz 2001). The extent of this hostility is easily confirmed by the fact that the modern world view sees the growing distance from nature and the “image of its origin” as “progress” and development. According to Walter Mignolo (2005:114)

The idea that humanity is universally defined by the separation from nature first emerged in seventeenth-century Europe and developed in tandem with the industrial revolution, as the appropriation of land increased, accompanied by the increasing demand for natural resources.

It is again crucial to bear in mind that this “universally defined” split is by no means universal. The cleaving of mind from nature is again specific to the Western world. This was quite clear to a progeny of Africans enslaved by Dutch “settlers”:

We of the khoïn, we never thought of these mountain and plains, these long grass lands and marshes as a wild place to be tamed. It was the whites who called it wild and claimed it was filled with wild animals and wild people. To us it has always been friendly and tame. It has given us food and drink and shelter even in the worst of droughts. It was only when the whites moved in and started digging and breaking and shooting, and driving off the animals, that it really became wild.” (André Brink 1983:21)

PARTICULARISTIC “SACRAL” ROOTS OF ABSTRACT “UNIVERSALS”

Scholars like Eric Voegelin (1987) attributed the binary balkanization of mind and body/nature that Mignolo linked to

the origins of modernity to a much earlier period in the European history of ideas. Whatever the discrepancies in time frame, most scholars agree on the fact that it is uniquely Western.⁸ Most agree that this basic binary between bastions of rationality/order and irrationality/chaos underscore the modern Baconian ideology of gaining “power” via the colonization, unveiling or “decoding” of nature’s hidden truths or knowledge (gnosis). This binary articulation of the struggle between order and its negation disorder is primarily Christian,⁹ but it was fundamentally reworked by the Hermetic doctrine in Europe not in Latin America or Africa. Rosicrucians were a Hermetic or perhaps “Gnostic” group whose explicit objective was to discern the hidden order of nature with the aim of gaining power over and through it. The Baconian mantra of “knowledge is power” inverted by Michel Foucault in his “power/knowledge” couplet only makes sense in the light of the Hermetic doctrine that underscores both.

In his book *Sacralizing the Secular: The Renaissance Origins of Modernity* (1989), Stephen McKnight argues that the modern age of progress, science, technology, capitalism and secularism is rooted in European religious thought. McKnight’s main point is that the modern idea of “progress,” “development” and “mathematicalization of reality” came out of Renaissance Hermeticism that hinges on the theology of people like Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, etc. Eric Voegelin has shown that the twelfth-century theologian,

⁸ See Ilya Prigogine (1997:11-12) who argues that The concept of a passive nature subject to deterministic and time irreversible laws is quite specific to the Western world. In China and Japan, nature means “what is by itself.” See also Dennis Kwek (2003) and Nak-chung Paik (2000).

⁹ By “Christian,” I am specifically referring to the Pauline Christianity that originated in the Roman Empire that was transformed by the Reformation in Europe.

Joachim of Fiore was pivotal to the emergence of the specific conception of time that became emblematic for both modernity and the modern liberal project which he also linked to Gnosticism. Rene Descartes and his master Isaac Breeckman were both inspired by Christian Hermeticism and its Rosicrucian counterpart. Men like Henry Cornelius Agrippa, Giordano Bruno, Tommaso Campanella and the Rosicrucian mathematician Johannes Faulhaber provided the core ideas in the thinking of people like Francis Bacon, Boccaccio, Thomas Hobbes, Robert Boyle, August Comte, Karl Marx and even Jeremy Bentham, Machiavelli and Galileo. While of course secularism came out of the schism and discontent mainly instigated by the moral monopoly of the Roman Catholic at that time, Christianity and Gnosticism remain the “ghost” in the machine of both secularism and the modern order of things or perhaps, row of grades. Western intellectual giants like Francis Yates, Eugenio Garin, D. P Walker, A.J. Festugière made similar arguments about the “sacral” roots of modern secularism. Marx Weber, Karl Lowiths and Lewis Mumford all traced the roots of the modern social order back to western Christian institutions like the monastery and the calculus ethic. We all know who invented the mechanical clock, “individual moral responsibility” and the modern calendar. These mental and spatial organizing “tools” are fundamental to the reconfiguration of time and space that made modern capitalism, modern social orders and the modern image of the individuated “self” possible. This specific and particularistic definition of time, space or “humanity” and, the basic principle of knowledge that underpin them, based on this foundational agonistic binary¹⁰ of mind/body or nature, rational/irrational, certainty/uncertainty, order/chaos, became the template that was used to organize the world as we know it.

What is interesting about this period for us is that such history puts the modern

binary into the proper historical context and denies it the dubious claim of “universal.” In any case, this agonistic binary contains an inherent contradiction which not only drives the process but also subsumes its entire systems dynamics. Nicolas Veroli (2002) offers an interesting model that allows us to grasp not only the reoccurring base contradictions integral to this axial agonistic binary but also the connecting dialectic that maintain the nexus of contradictions that sustains the process. According to Veroli,

Descartes extirpates from his system precisely what he must invoke in order to constitute it: the imagination. Furthermore, this imagination which he extirpates (or attempts to extirpate), he characterises as what could never produce his system of “clear and distinct ideas” under any conditions, even though it is the condition of possibility of his thought. (Veroli 2002: 2)

What Veroli is getting at here is that any entity that colonizes its own condition of possibility is obviously trapped in a fundamental dilemma. The Cartesian cogito’s dilemma arises out of the fact that the cogito must colonize alterity in order to attempt to secure the homogeneity of its essence embodied in its concept of “order” because only on such a basis can the antagonistic separation of mind/body, reason/imagination, coloniser/colonised be maintained. But equally, this violent homogeneity-based identity of the cogito has to be constantly steered, watched, pursued, accomplished and secured by force or “historical

¹⁰ The term “Manichaeic binary” can be misleading since it suggests mutual exclusivity instead of a dialectic, i.e., that the category of white, mature, civilized, rational, subject, etc., depends on its self-invented negation of “black,” irrational, etc., for its “stability.”

lactification,” because it is constantly resisted. This dilemma is what I am trying to conceptualize with the “connexus theory.” To appreciate the scale of this dilemma, crisis or nexus of contradiction, it is pertinent to once again cite Veroli, who argues that:

The cogito constitutes itself with the exuberance of a pure act that will transform it into the paradigmatic spectator. Its problem, henceforth, will be that of managing the imagination—that is, the image of its origin—in order to protect its own integrity from this other that is itself, to “cement it forever after into a foundational principle.” Whatever it does, however, the cogito cannot destroy the imagination: it must preserve it in order to preserve itself. And yet, it must contain it so as to assert its self-identity. At heart then, the cogito is a concept of crisis. (Veroli 2002: 7)

The Cartesian reason-enabled process also converts the surplus energy gained through this interior colonialism into an external one—an external and spatial projection of reforming energy aimed at getting the world within and without to conform to or perhaps be “pacified” into the cogito’s self image of instrumental rationality or reason. Of course this will never happen since what has been “pacified” is the cogito’s own inner beast projected onto this other. As Thomas Hobbes stated, the leviathan empire without is an augmented consciousness of the distinctively modern leviathan umpire within. Thus, coloniality and its consequent hangover described as “racism” is an inherent tendency of the modern/colonial habitus.¹¹ ‘Connexus’ therefore can be defined as the

¹¹ See a detailed take on these themes in Festus Ikeotuonye (2006:71-102) in Lentin and Lentin (eds) *Race and State*, Cambridge Scholars Press.

nexus or spirals of contradictions that came out of the modern violent split between mind and body/nature. The 'modern/colonial' is fundamentally constituted on this contradictory split but its authority is based on the concealment of this contradiction through external projections and consequently, an extremely hostile intolerance of this externally projected contradiction or "image of its origin."

My mother used to say that the "white" man walks around with sackcloth and a stick soaked with the blood of his previous victims. When he comes across a new victim he simply repeats the process of covering them with the same sackcloth and beating them with the same stick. This of course allows the habituated beater to claim that those at the receiving end of the beating are all the same thereby deploying Giles Deleuze's synthesis of repetition as "habitus" formation.

CONCLUSION: FANON AND GEO-HISTORICAL LOCATION

Any discussion on Fanon of course presents us with the same difficulties and contradictions we face in discussing coloniality through the same principle of knowledge that created the subject of discussion. We are confronted with the questions of how culture, domination and the thorny issue of complicity are framed within a discursive space shaped by the same force we are trying to define.

If we understand coloniality as constitutive of the making and remaking of the modern world, then it is not unfair to argue that many of the problems that inflamed Fanon's passion, in spite of the naïve optimism of people like Francis Fukuyama, are still with us today. We are still facing the same brutalities of spatial colonisation by those whose "ways of life" are predicated on "resources" extracted on the pain of extinction of those whose ways of life are dis-

missed as eggs that has to be broken to make "civilized" omelette. There are several examples of this, ranging from the indigenous peoples of the Amazon, Africa to Asia. In his book *Savages* (1996); Joe Kane reveals to us the present day reminder of this binary articulation of coloniality by quoting a representative of the Huaorani "Indians" of the Ecuadorian Amazon who wrote a letter to the U.S. president saying:

The whole world must come and see how the Huaorani live well... We live with the spirit of the jagua. We do not want to be civilized by your missionaries or killed by your oil companies. Must the jagua die so that you can have more contamination and television?¹²

In the prologue of the same book Joe Kane lamented that,

for all the ruckus being raised, all that could be said with certainty about the Huaorani...was that American oil companies coveted their land, American missionaries their souls, American environmentalists their voice. But no one knew what the Huaorani wanted. No one knew who the Huaorani were.¹³

The depth of the violence of colonial negation can not be properly appreciated through the prism of the Eurocentric idea of a "world divided into compartments, a motionless, Manicheistic world." Fanon wrote in the *Wretched of the Earth* (1963:51) that "The settler makes history and is conscious of making it... he constantly refers to the history of his mother country, he clearly indicates that he himself is the extension of that mother country." Fanon understood that the displacement of the local histories

¹² Quoted in Kane (1996: 4).

¹³ *Ibid.*: 10.

of the colonized alongside the projection of the inner contradictions of the “settler” on those whose lands, souls and voices are coveted is at the core of coloniality. If we use Quijano’s conceptualisation of coloniality as a basis it becomes easy to understand what is often seen as the contradiction and tension between Fanon’s insistence on cultural autonomy and his often cited “non-racist humanism.” Fanon (1952/1986: 135) in reply to Sartre’s charge of Negritude as “antiracist racism” and Sartre’s attempt to liquefy “Negro” identity into the Hegelian *aufhebung* of a “raceless” society, insists that

I am not a potentiality of something, I am wholly what I am. I do not have to look for the universal. No probability has any place inside me. My negro consciousness does not hold itself out as black. It IS. It is its own follower. This is all that we blacks are after, TO BE.¹⁴

For Fanon, the bid to “be” includes the attempt to abandon the existential deviation and agonistic binary which he realised is a fundamental formulation of Europe. The dominant readings of Fanon remind me of the tendency in the Western academia to see African history as the history of Europeans in Africa—or in this case, the Europe in Fanon. The irony of this is that this is precisely the source of Fanon’s anger and the basis of what he described as “existential deviation.” As Fanon knew so well, the struggle to exorcise or provincialize Europe is by no means easy since the fight is not simply with what one has internalised within a European centred environment. It was also about the fact that the space that the transient Fanon had to live in was organised in accord to a diachronic principle of

¹⁴ Also see N. Pityana, in H. Van der Merwe and D. Welsh, eds. (1972: 180) *Student Perspectives in South Africa*. Cape Town: David Phillip

knowledge that ultimately referred back to Europe and Europeans.

In sum, it is not simply enough to point to the contradictions in Fanon, as if Fanon existed in a vacuum devoid of political and economic forces, or perhaps that Fanon was living in a historical condition of his own choosing. Fanon’s journey from Frantz to Ibrahim epitomises his insistence on geo-historical and cultural autonomy. But equally important, his death in the “warm embrace” of the CIA (the institutional embodiment of the fluidism¹⁵ “grey-area” speak popular in the academia) highlights yet again the contradictions of a cumulative colonial situation that is irreducible to Fanon. It is equally misleading to simply reduce Fanon to a register of the colonial webs of significance inside of which he was born, because as Fanon himself says, there is not only one Negro, there are Negroes.

It is against this background that Fanon’s ambivalence towards the category of “blackness” or perhaps the European middle class formulation of that category must be understood.

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¹⁵ The need to “dissolve” or liquefy seems to be part of what Fanon described as historical “lactification.” The goal of the fluidist perspective is to “blend in with” the colonial scenery since any epistemic container can shape the fluid’s observable structure. Fluids, given their capacity to assume the shape of any container they are put into can be described as molecular prostitutes. In other words, fluidism is a good metaphor for assimilating to power (Samman 2006).

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