Blackness-In-Itself and Blackness-For-Itself

Frantz Fanon's Program for Racial Change

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Abstract: Given Jean-Paul Sartre's influence on the theories of Frantz Fanon it would be easy to label Fanon's work derivative. Yet, to do so would be to ignore the many ways in which Fanon developed Sartre's theories of race. Ironically Sartre, who famously criticizes the subordination of individuals and groups to positions of inauthenticity, restricts black existence when he posits the latter as a minor term in a dialectic of freedom wherein blackness will ultimately be abolished. Using this position as a starting point Fanon lays out an implicit theory of race-in-itself, and race-for-itself, wherein blackness struggles to articulate its own existence.

INTRODUCTION

Is another world possible? When viewed through the context of race, Jean-Paul Sartre (1946, 1956, 1963a, 1964, 1975a, 1975b, 1975c, 1988, and 1989) and Frantz Fanon (1967) agree on the possibility of another, more egalitarian world. They also agree on the means by which this world needs will be achieved—temporal re-articulation. Both identify the unity of the temporal ecstasies—past, present, and future—as the key to revolutionary racial change (Sartre 1988; Fanon 1967). However, they seem to disagree on what will be the end result of this revolutionary process, and their seeming disagreement on how to approach this problem reveals key underlying dynamics in their work.

In Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967)—his major theoretical conceptualization of blackness—the emancipatory struggle that subordinated racialized beings undertake is implicitly framed in terms of an in-itself and a for-itself. Rather than having G.W.F Hegel's (1975) "being-in-itself" and "being-for-itself," or Karl Marx's (1978a and 1978b) "class-in-itself" and "class-for-itself," with Fanon's (1967) program for black liberation we find race-in-itself and race-for-itself. The former reflects situations and conditions where forces external to the individual determine the parameters of the individual's racial being. The latter represents situations wherein a racialized being articulates his or her own racial existence. By examining Sartre's theories, racial and otherwise (1946,

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1956, 1963a, 1964, 1975a, 1975b, 1975c, 1988, and 1989), and juxtaposing them with Fanon's (1967) theoretical formulation of blackness we can illuminate new possibilities for investigating the phenomenon of race. Sartre (1988) sees the efforts of blackness to emancipate itself as a subordinated inevitability where blackness sacrifices itself for a greater good. Fanon (1967) takes exception with this, establishing the individuality and primacy of black agency, establishing blackness-for-itself.

THE IN-ITSELF AND THE FOR-ITSELF

Fanon's (1967) implicit formulation of the tension between race-in-itself and race-for-itself has its roots in the work of Hegel (1975 and 1977). Hegel's (1975) formulation of thought-in-itself and thought-for-itself distinction has had an indelible effect on modern social theory, influencing Karl Marx (1978), Martin Heidegger (1962), and Jean-Paul Sartre (1956), all of whom have employed some version of the distinction in their works—works which have strongly influenced Fanon's (1967), either directly or indirectly. By examining the ways in which the distinction is employed in these works we can improve upon our current conceptions of race-in-itself and race-for-itself.

Most relevant to sociology may be Marx's (1978a and 1978b) formulation of the distinction between class-in-itself and class-for-itself. The former represents the immediate oppressive results of capitalism. However, Marx (1978a) finds within this condition the seeds of class revolution. As oppressive as capitalism and its resultant factories are, they create conditions that foster class-consciousness. Two inter-related dynamics are at play. The first is the creation of situations which support the development of class-consciousness in the proletariat. Via the factory, workers realize that they constitute a class. Second, the actual physical structure of the factory, such

as its packed environment, produces a space where the proletariat can realize the nature of modern class dynamics, a situation which creates an environment where workers can unite to form a revolutionary force. When these are actuated the proletarians enact class-for-itself. Like Sartre's (1956) explicit formulation of being-in-itself and being-for-itself (which will be addressed later), and Fanon's (1967) implicit formulation of race-in-itself and race-for-itself, Marx's (1978a, 1978b) take on the in-itself and for-itself owes a debt to Hegel (1975).

Examining *Hegel's Logic* (1975) we can gain an understanding of his conceptualization of thought-in-itself and thought-for-itself. For Hegel, thought is the instrument of philosophy. The thought of philosophy represents the "highest and most inward life" of the mind (Hegel 1975:15), and it serves as the object of the mind "in distinction from" the sensuous objects of the mind. A type of "'reflective' thinking, which has to deal with thoughts as thoughts, and brings them into consciousness," (Hegel 1975:4), philosophic thought originates in "data and postulates." The latter are un-contextualized. This spurs reflective thinking to remedy this problem, to contextualize its origins; this desire to solve this issue is the "necessity" of thought. In response to this necessity, the desire to contextualize data and postulates, thought becomes "speculative thinking," which is the thinking of philosophy.

Thought serves as the object of the mind. As such,

> [thought] comes to itself; for thought is [the mind's] principle, and its very unadulterated self. But while thus occupied, thought entangles itself in contradictions, i.e. loses itself in the hard and-fast non-identity of its thoughts, and so, instead of reaching itself, is caught and held in its counterpart.

This result, to which honest but narrow thinking leads the mere understanding, is resisted by the loftier craving of which we have spoken. That craving expresses the perseverance of thought, which continues true to itself, even in this conscious loss of its native rest and independence, 'that it may overcome' and work out in itself the solution of its own contradictions. (Hegel 1975:15)

Here (1975) focuses on two elements of thought as an object of the mind: thought entangled in its contradictions and thought immersed in the necessity of contextualizing "data and postulates." These two elements represent thought-in-itself and thought-for-itself respectively. In its "natural state of mind" thought rests within the sensuous and conclusions drawn from the senses. For Hegel (1975), this "unrealized universality," this period of generality, is thought-in-itself. The movement of thought beyond this initial generality is thought-for-itself.

An even clearer conception of the in-itself, especially as it relates to Fanon's (1967) temporal/racial ontology, is present in the work of Sartre (1956). As mentioned before, Sartre (1956) addresses being-in-itself in a manner similar to Hegel (1975). In defining being, Sartre (1956) frames it as "the inherence in itself without the least distance…not a connection with itself. It is itself. It is an immanence which can not realize itself, an affirmation which can not affirm itself, an activity which can not act, because it is glued to itself" (27). In this formulation of being-in-itself, and its concomitant formulation of being-for-itself, we find a clearer conception of race. Whiteness, as a type of being, as a form of race, can not move away from race because it is obsessed with race; and the dynamics of nature and nothingness which define it. Similarly, as far as moving away from racial

oppression, blackness must also shed it's attachment to what it is. These movements, the shedding of the intrinsic temporal nature of race, blacks and/or whites will represent race-for-itself. Sartre (1956) defines the "for-itself" as "being what it is not and not being what it is" (28). That is blackness nor whiteness should completely abandon what they are. They must be what they are, while not being what they are. Empirical research on how this latter dynamic is carried out in the social sphere will represent a key step in the understanding of race and racial oppression. Race-in-itself and race-for-itself come to life in the tension between the work of Sartre and Fanon.

THE PROBLEM OF RACE

Frantz Fanon's (1967) perspective on race is radically different from that of Jean-Paul Sartre (1946, 1956, 1956, 1963a, 1964, 1975a, 1975b, 1975c, 1988, and 1989). The importance of this difference hinges on the influence that both of these scholars have had on the study of race—Sartre (1946, 1988, 1989) influencing Fanon (1967), and Fanon influencing a number of major racial theorists (Gordon 1995; Roediger 1999; and Hill-Collins 2000). While it would be easy, given the lengths to which Fanon draws upon Sartre, to label Fanon's racial theories derivative, any such action would be the result of a failure to understand the nuanced ways in which Fanon advanced Sartre's theory. In doing so Fanon rejected a central idea of Sartrean negritude. While Sartre (1988) positions negritude as a subordinate entity that will move society as a whole forward, Fanon posits blackness as for-itself. With blackness-for-itself, a manifestation of race-for-itself, we have the rejection of the given dynamics of blackness. With blackness-for-itself an individual who is black seeks to establish for his own self what his blackness is.

A tale about the development of an

anti-Semitic fascist, "The Childhood of a Leader" (1975c), is one of Sartre's first statements on the nature of racism. One of the key dynamics is the protagonist's failure to understand who he really is:

> Some people get up at night and talk and walk around still sleeping: Lucien had read that in the *Petit Explorateur* and he thought that there must be a real Lucien who talked, walked, and really loved his parents at night, only as soon as morning came, he forgot everything and began to pretend to be Lucien. (Sartre 1975c:91)

In the bulk of the story Lucien is "still sleeping." When he wakes up, he wakes up to his desires. As a child, Lucien comes to expect admiration, and he spends his life looking for this thing that he uses to define himself. Initially, it is easy to come by. His early situation—that of a child, and the son of a factory owner—elicits the reverence which he desires. Then, as times change, as the workers develop a stronger class-consciousness, as the supposed preconsciousness of his early years reveals itself as obnoxiousness, the respect that he craves is harder to come by. As he grows, he becomes more and more responsible for his situation, "[Now] it seemed that he had been suddenly condemned to be big for the rest of his life" (Sartre 1975c:94), a responsibility which weighs on Lucien,

> [As] soon as Lucien caught himself showing the beginnings of a fine sensation or an original impression, he began to tremble: 'Now it is starting,' he thought. He would willingly have wished to have only the most banal, stupid perception. (Sartre 1975c:111)

Having no understanding of himself, Lucien is consumed with what others think of him. He seeks to make himself impenetrable. To do so he will assume the mantle that others have foisted upon him. First, he submits to pederasty. Leaving that behind, he finds his personality in anti-Semitism.

Lucien's attraction to anti-Semitism stems from its ability to grant him power over others. He lacks a sense of himself. With the power of anti-Semitism his own fears melt away, granting him a sense of self. Part of this attraction originates in the comradeship he has with his fellow anti-Semites. Belonging to a group lessens the burden of having to understand who you are. The group provides you with ideas and an identity. Furthermore, with Jews, Lucien finds an entity that can embody all of his fears and anxieties. Having had a problematic relationship with a fellow student, Berliac (who is Jewish), the one person who can and would reveal Lucien's homosexual experiences, Lucien is able to reframe his fear of Berliac as a reaction to the abomination that is Jews; doing so makes Lucien real in his own eyes, and in the eyes of his comrades, one of whom, after hearing one of Lucien's anti-Semitic diatribes states, 'You're a real one, you are'" (Sartre 1975c:134). His actions also garner the praise of his father, who states, "Lucien must learn the job of being a man'" (Sartre 1975c:135). These initial concepts: lack of self-understanding, the sense of power racism grants, the comforts of group affiliation, and the search for an entity which can embody fears and anxieties are ones that Sartre develops in later writings about race.

The situations faced by individuals plays a major role in the dynamics of race. "Man is defined first of all as a being 'in a situation' (Sartre 1946:59), a situation being something that a person,

> …cannot be distinguished from, [as] it forms him and decides his [possibilities, even though] it is he who gives it meaning by making his choices within it and by it. To be

in a situation, as we see it, is to choose oneself in a situation, and men differ from one another in their situations and also in the choices they themselves make of themselves. (Sartre 1946:60)

The true core of Sartre's theories of race can be found in his opus, *Being and Nothingness* (1956), where he provides a detailed exegesis on the nature of situations. However, his first formal declaration about race was *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1946). In it, Sartre makes a series of major points about the situation of Jews, many of which also come into play in his analysis of the situation of blacks (Sartre 1963a, 1988, and 1989). It is the racist (i.e., anti-Semite in his position as a member of a privileged racial group) who creates the subordinated racialized being. In doing so, the racist frames the nature of Jews as a "metaphysical essence," "Jews are the way they are because that is their position in the world." In the midst of their situation, Jews can be either inauthentic, or authentic. The latter represents freedom for Jews.

Richard Wright said, "'There is no Negro problem in the United States, there is only a White problem'" (Sartre 1946:152). Similarly, there is no Jewish problem. There is an anti-Semite problem, only the anti-Semite being haunted by freedom. For him, anti-Semitism is "a choice of himself, he chooses the irremediable out of fear of being free; he chooses mediocrity out of fear of being alone" (Sartre 1946:27-28). Like, another major 20$^{\text{th}}$ century scholar of race—Gunnar Myrdal (1944)—Sartre (1946) foregrounds the role of the white working-class in the production and dissemination of racism. The white worker finds himself with that which men have in common—a certain condition, "an ensemble of limits and restrictions: the inevitability of death, the necessity of working for a living, of living in a world already inhabited by other men. Fundamentally this con-

dition is nothing more than the…ensemble of abstract characteristics common to all situations" (Sartre 1946: 60). While the overall condition of the white working-class, and their individual situations are alienating they do offer opportunities for freedom. Most famous is Marx's (1978a and 1975b) idea that while the condition of the working class is alienating, it also produces an environment that will forge the working class into a revolutionary force for freedom. However, with Sartre (1946) this freedom would start with individuals enacting radical changes in their situations, a move that must be accomplished bereft of the company of others. Having made the choice to not attempt to alter their alienating condition out of fear of loneliness, the working class must find a way to deal with its frustrations and a target for its natural (given the problematic nature of capitalism) hostility. The solution is anti-Semitism, which, "represents, therefore, a safety valve for owning classes, who encourage it and thus substitute for a dangerous hate against their regime a beneficent hate against particular people" (Sartre 1946:44).

Expressly avoiding rationality, the anti-Semite frames the racial being of Jews as a "metaphysical essence."[1] Using a Manichean framework, Jews are evil, representing the oppressive nature of the condition in which the white working-class finds itself. And they are always evil, because they are evil. No evidence to the contrary will ⁄ can be considered because such evidence is always faulty in that it fails to remember that Jews are always evil, and whatever seeming good deed that they've done, or positive characteristic that is attributed to them, is just a misrepresentation of their evil.

For the anti-Semite, Jews have an atemporal character. They (as Evil) never change. And they cannot change. An excel-

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[1] This is Essence in the Hegelian (1975) sense.

lent formulation of atemporality can be found in Sartre's (1964) novel, *Nausea*. In it, the love interest of the protagonist confronts the protagonist, describing their relationship as such, "What a fool you are! Naturally, I don't need to see you, if that's what you mean. You know you're not exactly a sight for sore eyes. I need you to exist and not to change. You're like that platinum wire they keep in Paris or somewhere in the [neighborhood]. I don't think anyone's ever needed to see it" (137). Anti-Semites need Jews and they need Jews to be atemporal. Only in their atemporality can Jews embody the hostility that white workers develop in the capitalist condition.

"The Jew is over-determined" (Sartre 1946:79). Dealing with this condition, Jews can be either inauthentic or authentic. The inauthentic choose to exist within the parameters anti-Semitism and other outside forces establish for them. In authenticity, someone who is Jewish chooses to be Jewish, and chooses what it means to be Jewish. Inauthenticity is flight, "inauthentic Jews are men whom other men take for Jews and who have decided to run away from this unsupportable situation" (Sartre 1946:93). And, inauthenticity is an act of bad faith, wherein a person is "concealing the truth from himself, though he knows [the truth] in his heart" (Sartre 1946:99). Whereas the inauthentic Jew flees his condition, the authentic Jew chooses himself as a Jew and comes to term with his Jewish condition.[2] Rather than being "over-deter-

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[2] While reducing a minority group to a singular entity (i.e., the Jew, the Negro, etc.) can be a marginalizing phenomenon, Sartre's use of "the Jew" (1946), and "the Negro" (1948) should be framed within the context of his existentialist position. Each individual has a specific situation. Hence, in navigating, and ultimately choosing either inauthenticity, or authenticity, with everyone (not just Jews and blacks) the influence of the group recedes into the background. While there are groups of inauthentic and authentic Jews, the movement towards either inauthenticity or authenticity is the burden of *the* individual. Hence, the phrase, "the Jew."

mined," the authentic Jew "makes himself a Jew."

For Sartre (1946) authenticity is the means by which a better world can be articulated. However, his response to the Jewish question (1946), while providing a detailed description of what authenticity is, does not go far in outlining how authenticity can be produced. In the end, Sartre (1946) states, "[The] Jew, like any authentic man, escapes description" (137). Later in his career, in a preface to a collection of West Indian and African poetry, Sartre (1988) provides a more detailed description of how black authenticity can be produced. Through this work, "Black Orpheus" (1988), Sartre serves as one of the major interlocutors of Fanon (1967).

"Black Orpheus" (1988) represents one of Sartre's clearest statements on authenticity, black or otherwise. Yet, in many ways it is the second part of Sartre's statement on black authenticity. Authenticity while not necessarily being mediated by inauthenticity, is nevertheless contrary to inauthenticity. And, one of Sartre's earliest formulations of racial inauthenticity—that of blacks, and that of whites—can be found in his play, *The Respectful Prostitute* (1989). In this play, (Sartre 1989) we find a more concise picture of the problems that prevent us from articulating a better world.[3]

In *The Respectful Prostitute* (Sartre 1989) we see three examples of inauthenticity: that of Lizzie, that of The Negro, and that of Fred. Lizzie's flight was from her social status. Eventually, the Senator convinces Lizzie to sign a statement exonerating his nephew,[4] but this event is preceded and followed by the Senator laying out a scenario where her helping to free his nephew will raise her prestige with the boy's matronly mother and the town folk. Using a Sartrean lens, the Senator does not, and cannot, convince Lizzie to sign the statement. Individuals choose how to deal with their situation. Lizzie chooses to believe the story the Senator was telling her because

doing so granted her (albeit briefly) the respectability that she craves. Despite all of the terrible things that Fred has done to her, at the end of the play she agrees to become his mistress because of the status such a position will give her.

Of all of the characters in *The Respectful Prostitute* (1989), Fred is the most inauthentic. Yet, at the end of the play, he is the only character who embraces any level of authenticity. Fred's inauthenticity revolves around his relationship to Lizzie, who, by embodying flagrant sexuality and serving as a surrogate for The Negro, mediates Fred's relationship to Nature.[5] Throughout the first act, Fred denies both the pleasure he accrued from his assignation with Lizzie, and the fact that Lizzie found their time together enjoyable. He pretends he was drunk when he told her he loved her. Fred's denial is further highlighted by one of Lizzie's questions, and his response to the question,

Lizzie: But tell me this! Tell me this, my boy. If you came up here with me to talk business, did you have to sleep with me? Huh? Why did you sleep with me, you bastard? Why did you have to sleep with me?

Fred: Damned if I know." (Sartre 1989:257)

The irony, of course, is that Fred is completely aware of why he slept with Lizzie. He slept with her because even though The Negro hadn't raped her (a fact which he knew), sleeping with her provided Fred with a way to subsume himself in that which The Negro represents. "It's not natural," (Sartre 1989: 273), this is how Fred frames his desire for Lizzie. It was a thought that came to him, as his desire for her erupted as he gazed upon the swaying body of a black man, a strange fruit, heretofore unconnected with whole affair. That moment was the start of Fred's authenticity. Afterwards he goes back to Lizzie, confesses his feelings for her, and makes her his mistress.

Fred ultimately chooses to honestly confront his situation. The Negro does not make that choice. To be fair, in describing the situation of the subordinated racial being, Sartre (1946) says that authenticity means living in an unlivable situation. The Negro's situation is definitely unlivable.

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[3] *The Respectful Prostitute* (Sartre 1989), whose plot takes place over the course of two days in a small Southern town in the U.S., was first performed in 1946. Lizzie, a prostitute, has just finished an interlude with her first customer in the town in which she had just arrived the night before. The Negro comes to the door and pleads with her, asking her to explain to the white people hunting him that he did not rape her. There has been a dust-up on the train on which they had both arrived. While he never tried to rape her, she declines to actively take up his cause, promising to tell the truth if anyone puts the question of his innocence to her.

It turns out that on the train two drunken white men, who launched an unprovoked attack on two black male passengers, of which The Negro was one, also tried to violate her. The blacks fought back, blackening the eye of one of their assailants. The offending black man was shot and killed. The Negro jumped off the train, becoming the subject of a manhunt, whose justification was the fabricated story of his rape of a white woman. While addressing The Negro at the door of her hotel room, Lizzie's client, Fred, is hiding in the bathroom.

Fred is the cousin of the white man who killed the black passenger. The plot revolves around the attempts of Fred and his father, The Senator, to get Lizzie to exonerate Fred's cousin, paving the way for the sanctioned lynching of The Negro.

[4] Technically Lizzie didn't sign the statement. The Senator takes her hand and "forces her to sign." It's telling that given the power that Fred, Fred's cousin, and the Senator held, they did not, and maybe could not, simply lie to get Fred's cousin freed. The society in which they existed demanded Lizzie's complicity, even though more likely than not everyone seeking to punish The Negro for his mythical crime, knew that he had not tried to rape her.

[5] The ways in which the subordinated racialized being embodies Nature can be found in the work of Sartre (1988) and Fanon (1967). For example, blacks embody the primal and the fertility (Sartre 1988).

He's being hunted by virtually a whole town, accused of a crime that he did not commit. However, Sartre (1989) is clear in categorizing The Negro as inauthentic in an exchange that he has with Lizzie when she suggests he employ violence as a means of self-defense,

> The Negro: I can't shoot white folks.
>
> Lizzie: Really! That would bother them, wouldn't it?
>
> The Negro: They're white folks, ma'am.
>
> Lizzie: So what? Maybe they got a right to bleed you like a pig just because they're white?
>
> The Negro: But they're white folks. (271)

The Negro's situation is unlivable. He is out-gunned and out-numbered. However, his refusal to employ physical violence, despite the unjust threat to his life represents inauthenticity because he has chosen to live his situation via the dictates of others. In the end, The Negro survives. Throughout the play he flees and he hides. While these two modes of being do enable survival, they do not enable an authentic existence for blacks. However, Sartre (1988) laid out the framework for authentic black existence in his essay "Black Orpheus."

To a certain degree, Blacks, unlike Jews, have authenticity thrust upon them,

> He must oblige those who have vainly tried throughout the centuries to reduce him to the status of a beast, to recognize that he is a man. On this point, there is no means of evasion, or of trickery, no 'crossing line' that he can consider: a Jew—a white man among white men—can deny that he is a Jew, can declare himself a man among men. The Negro cannot deny that he is Negro, nor can he claim that he is part of some abstract colorless humanity: he is black. (Sartre 1988:296)[6]

While authenticity is not a given for blacks, they are forced into situations which demand their authenticity; they are "[backed] up against the wall of authenticity" (Sartre 1988:296).[7] Placed in this situation, the type of benefit that Marx (1978a, 1978b) sees in the factory is produced. The intense pressure of anti-black racism, and the inability of blacks to escape their situations and condition, will eventually produce a unity of *all* oppressed people. Yet, this unity will be preceded by a "moment of separation or negativity," an "antiracist racism."

Sartre (1988) finds black authenticity in negritude, "a certain quality common to the thoughts and conduct of Negroes" (297), which manifests in a poetry, itself originating in the "feeling of frustration that one has when confronted with a language that is supposed to be a means of direct communication" (302). This frustration with colonial/non-native languages mirrors the frustrations that blacks have with colonial society. In both instances, blacks are thrust into situations that, while presented as egalitarian, fail to meet both the needs and efforts of blacks.

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[6] Obviously, in this passage Sartre (1988) is reducing blackness to phenotypical characteristics. This raises the question of how the authenticity of blacks who fail (and pass) the "brown-paper bag" test. An excellent, albeit fictional, account of the choices of authenticity and inauthenticity made by such individuals can be found in Nella Larsen's *Passing* (1929).

[7] This seems to be a direct reference to Sartre's (1979a) story "The Wall," in which members of a resistance movement are slated to be executed (i.e., lined up against a wall and be shot). The wall also serves as a complex metaphor in "The Room" (1979b), where a metaphorical wall separates a woman from her husband, the latter possibly being insane.

In Sartre's (1988) negritude, blacks find the black soul by finding the meagerness of white culture. This mission can be either objective or subjective. On the road to objectivity one finds the artistic expressions (e.g., dances, chants, etc.) of African peoples. Subjective negritude closely coincides with Fanon's (1967) temporal program, calling for blacks to descend into themselves, in the sense of becoming a Black Orpheus, "[diving] under the superficial crust of reality, of common sense, of reasoning, in order to touch the very bottom of the soul and awaken the timeless forces of desire…the radical negation of natural laws and of the possible, a call to miracles" (Sartre 1988:309), as it takes a miracle to overcome the impossible situation of the subordinated racial being.

RACE-FOR-ITSELF: FANON'S REJECTION OF SARTRE

Fanon's rejection of Sartre occurs at two levels; he rejects conceptualizations of blackness wherein blackness is charged with mediating whiteness, and he rejects the conceptualization of blackness as a minor term in a dialectic that supersedes blackness itself, establishing the parameters of race-for-itself. With the first condition, blacks represent the "'children of the world.'" As such, they, and their way of life, represent a temporary primitive respite from the iron cage of modernity. Blackness, when the time is right (according to this way of thinking), mediates whiteness. This mediation of whiteness is at the core of Fanon's (1967) rejection of Sartre (1946, 1988, and 1989).

Just as blacks, in the above discourse, through their supposed primitivism, mediate whiteness, with Sartre (1988), Fanon (1967) finds blacks mediating whiteness once again. Fanon (1967) agrees with a lot of Sartre's (1988) thoughts on black authenticity. However, he takes serious exception

to their teleological nature. Quoting Sartre (1988), Fanon (1967) identifies the main offending passage,

> '[Negritude] appears as the minor term of a dialectical progression: The theoretical and practical assertion of the supremacy of the white man is its thesis; the position of negritude as an antithetical value is the moment of negativity. But this negative movement is insufficient by itself, and the Negroes who employ it know this very well: they know that it is intended to prepare the synthesis of or realization of the human society without races. Thus negritude is the root of its own destruction, it is a transition and not a conclusion, a means and not an ultimate end.' (Fanon 1967: 133)

In Fanon's (1967) eyes, with this formulation (Sartre 1988) fate plays the pivotal role in the journey of the Black Orpheus. Lacking free will and agency, negritude/black consciousness is reduced to a footnote, and blacks are once again relegated to mediating white subjectivity, "And so it is not I who make a meaning for myself, but it is the meaning that was already there, preexisting, waiting for me" (Fanon 1967:134). This is because, with Sartre (1988), "negritude is the root of its own destruction, it is a transition and not a conclusion, a means and not an ultimate end" (Fanon 1967:133). Analyzing this position, Fanon (1967) finds that Sartre (1988) has blocked the source of "the experience of being black" (Fanon 1967:134), as he had made blackness "preexisting," and an "absolute destiny." Fanon (1967) criticizes this perspective because it deprives blacks of agency. They have no true role in their own becoming. In fact, as a minor dialectical they have no true becoming.

To his interlocutor, Fanon (1967) posits a conceptualization of blackness that is for-

itself,

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

Ironically, just as this conceptualization of blackness, an example of what I am calling race-for-itself, coincides with both the Hegelian (1975) and Marxist (1978a and 1978b) conceptualizations of the for-itself, it also coincides with the Sartrean (1956) conceptualization of the for-itself,

> Negation comes from the for-itself. We should not conceive this negation as a type of judgment which would bear on the thing itself and deny concerning it that it is the for-itself; this type of negation could be conceived only if the for-itself were a substance already fully formed, and even in that case it could emanate only as a third being establishing from outside a negative relation between two beings. But by the original negation the for-itself constitutes itself as not being the thing. Consequently the definition of consciousness which we gave earlier can be formulated in the perspective of the for-itself as follows: 'The for-itself is a being such that in its being, its being is in question in so far as this being is essentially a certain way of not being a being which it posits simultaneously as other than itself. (Sartre 1956:242)

Negation originates in the for-itself. Similarly, blacks in Sartre's (1988) negri-

tude negate the articulation of blackness (i.e., blackness-in-itself) that is imposed on them from external sources, "he [undertakes] to ruin systematically the European knowledge he has acquired, and this spiritual destruction symbolizes the great taking-up of arms by which black men will destroy their chains" (Sartre 1988:301). Most importantly, race-for-itself is "a certain way of not being a being, which it posits simultaneously as other than itself" (Sartre 1956:242). Whiteness, the situations and conditions of other subordinated racial groups, and race-in-itself are all alternate beings against which blackness-for-itself establishes itself.

It's hard to put Sartre's (1988) subordination of blackness in context. Having established the nature of external articulations of inauthenticity (Sartre 1946), Sartre (1988) restricts blackness to an inauthentic position. In his theory (Sartre 1988) the major function of blackness is to mediate whiteness. It may be a more positive mediation, in that blackness represents the means by which society will advance, but it is a mediation nonetheless.

While it's hard to put this in context, this dynamic is fruitful. Hegel (1977) identifies contradictions as a site where we better glean the workings and principles of a system. With Sartre (1946, 1956, 1963a, 1964, 1975a, 1975b, 1975c, 1988, and 1989) we have the foundations of post-colonial theory. Further examinations of these contradictions—contradictions best brought to light in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) and his implicit conceptualization of race-in-itself and race-for-itself—will further our understanding of the underlying nature of race, and blackness.

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