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**Dimensions of Alienation and the Postcolonial Context:  
Hegel, Marx, and Fanon**

Thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree requirements

**Master of Arts in Philosophy**

Department of Philosophy

American University in Cairo

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Supervised by: Dr. Surti Singh

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And for all those who lost their lives to the violence that is white supremacy.

## Introduction – Alienation as a Philosophical Phenomenon

To be *alienated* is to experience the world as indifferent to oneself. The alienated person struggles to establish relations with oneself, things, other human beings, or social institutions. He/she does not feel ‘at home’ in the world, but rather feels that they have no influence over it. They are not active participants in the world, but are instead passive objects, controlled by the world’s forces. One is alienated from oneself insofar as one lives according to determinations set by others, rather than by oneself. The phenomenon of alienation overlaps with other concepts such as anomie, inauthenticity, commodification, and reification. Alienation has come to have various meanings in everyday language, and this says something about the widespread nature of alienation. Our alienated interactions with the world, our historical and social experiences, are merely the “experiential content” that find expression in the concept.<sup>1</sup> Contemporary approaches to alienation employ the concept to refer to conditions of “rootlessness” and “homelessness” in an increasingly artificial world, particularly one in which money has come to mediate all relations. Human relations among themselves and to the world have been depersonalized, and commodified. This dimension of alienation refers to reification, a condition in which relations come to take an independent existence, and become powers on their own dominating those who constitute them.<sup>2</sup> The many forms alienation has taken – reification, meaninglessness, instrumentalization, absurdity – has made the concept itself instrumental to diagnosing the crisis of modernity. Central to this discourse is the work of Karl Marx, whose early manuscripts of 1844 powerfully linked the phenomenon of alienation to capitalism. In this thesis, I focus on

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1. Rahel Jaeggi, *Alienation*, trans. Frederick Neuhouser and Alan E. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 3.

2. Ibid

Marx's analysis of alienation in his early manuscripts of 1844 and its subsequent impact on the discourse of colonialism, race, and violence in the work of Frantz Fanon. In order to make this connection, I return to Hegel, whose work had an important impact on both figures. I argue that a Hegelian-Marxist reading of Fanon allows for the transposition of the additional elements of race and violence into the phenomenon of alienation.

In tracing the notion of alienation from Hegel to Marx to Fanon, the purpose of this thesis is to address the actual anguishing alienation experienced by nonwhites in a racial, colonial, capitalist, world.

Everyone has felt the contempt implicit in the term "native", used to designate the inhabitants of a colonized country. The banker, the manufacturer, even the professor in the home country, are not natives of any country; they are not natives at all. The oppressed person, on the other hand, feels himself to be a native; each single event in his life repeats to him that he has not the right to exist. His parents have not brought him into the world for any particular purpose, but rather by chance, *for no reason*; at best, because they liked children or because they were open to a certain kind of propaganda, or because they wanted to enjoy the advantages accorded to large families. No special function awaits him and, if he has been apprenticed, it was not done so as to prepare him to continue the unjustifiable existence he has been leading since birth. He will work in order to live, and to say that the ownership of the fruits of his labor is stolen from him, is an understatement. Even the meaning of his work is stolen from him, since he does not have a feeling of solidarity with the society for which he produces.<sup>3</sup>

Those who suffer from colonialist and capitalist alienation are denied all possibilities of self-determination, separated from their own language, religion, history, culture, social and political institutions. If on Marx's schema, white workers have been alienated from their product, then on Fanon's account, people of color, especially black slaves, have become alienated from their personhood; if Enlightenment reason has been complicit with bourgeois projects, then it has been even more thoroughly corrupted by its accommodation to white supremacy; if liberal

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3. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Literary and Philosophical Essays*. Trans. Annette Michelson, (Vermont: Rider and Company, 1955), 215.

individualism has not always taken white workers fully into account, then it has often excluded nonwhites altogether.<sup>4</sup>

Chapter One lays the foundation for my investigation by taking up alienation in Hegel's work, and examining how the alienated consciousness works its way out of relations of dependence. Chapter Two illustrates how Hegel's notion of the externalization of labor was appropriated by Marx, and how he attempted to bring Hegelian abstraction down to reality, locating alienation in labor under capitalism. With Marx, as discussed in Chapter 3, alienation was used to express fragmentation in human relations to themselves and the world with the growth of industrialization. After evaluating the limitation of classical Marxism, in Chapter 4, I trace the Hegelian and Marxist influence into the work of Fanon, in order to show how new dimensions (namely, race and violence) have resulted in a broader, more inclusive phenomenon of alienation, that applies to most of the non-European world.

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4. Charles W. Mills, *From Class to Race: Essays in White Marxism and Black Radicalism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), xviii.

## Chapter One—The Externalization of Labor in Hegel’s Master-Slave Dialectic

The “Master-Slave Dialectic”, often translated into “Lordship and Bondage” is arguably the most famous and influential section of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. It influenced several discussions and ideas that shaped the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in fields ranging from philosophy, critical theory, social sciences, psychoanalysis and postcolonial studies. In this chapter I examine Hegel’s “Master-Slave Dialectic” in order to lay the foundation for the subsequent chapters. In particular, I discuss the section of the *Phenomenology* entitled “Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage.” It is here that Hegel describes the first encounter between self-consciousness and another self-consciousness, which results in a life and death struggle. As one self-consciousness tries to impose its will on the other, the other self-consciousness also tries to impose its will on the initial self-consciousness. The life and death struggle is only resolved when one concedes defeat and succumbs to the will of the other, hence becoming the slave, while the victor becomes the master. Upon entering into the relation of master and slave, the slave is reduced to satisfying the needs and wants of the master. In performing labor for the master, the slave becomes an instrument whose purpose is that of another.

As Hegel continues to discuss the relationship between master and slave, a reversal occurs. It is only the self-consciousness that has assumed the position of the slave that can realize its ‘self’ through productive labor for the master. As Hyppolite explains, “it is in labor that slave-consciousness manages to externalize itself; in forming things, it forms itself.”<sup>5</sup> The slave’s labor involves working with nature and shaping it into products, which the master simply enjoys.

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5. Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 384.



Through work, the slave-consciousness shapes and manipulates things in the world, and grows aware of its own creativity. The more it comes to create, the more sophisticated its products become, and it begins to see itself reflected in the objects of its creation and recognizes itself in these objects. Its consciousness is now “externalized” in its work. Through its productive activity on things in the world, the consciousness of the slave is externalized outside of itself and acquires permanence as an independent object. Thus, for Hegel, “through work, the bondsman becomes conscious of what he truly is”, and becomes free through work.<sup>6</sup> Despite Marx’s critique of Hegel, the subject of the next chapter, he nevertheless agreed with Hegel that labor serves as a vehicle for self-realization.

### The Double Self-Consciousness’ Struggle for Recognition

Central to the Master-Slave dialectic is the struggle for recognition. This dialectic reveals that other self-conscious ‘selves’ are essential to the discovery of one’s own self. Recognition gives each self-consciousness objective validity, for in the full sense, it means being recognized as an independent, autonomous agent. Consciousness comes to realize that its self-understanding is dependent on it being recognized by another living consciousness. As Kainz writes, “self-consciousness and its other initially find themselves face-to-face in objective, sensuously existent form; a form, nevertheless, in which they do not just see an object, but an echo or reflection of themselves.”<sup>7</sup> According to Rosen, I become conscious of myself in another consciousness.<sup>8</sup> In

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6. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Arnold V. Miller, J. N. Findlay, and Johannes Hoffmeister (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 118.

7. Howard Kainz, *Hegel’s Phenomenology, Part I: Analysis and Commentary*. (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1976), 87.

recognizing that the other desires what I desire, and that the other is the same as I am, this discovery therefore presents itself as a challenge, or a struggle to be overcome. The other, regarded as a rival, must be “assimilated in such a way that he preserves his identity within my own, albeit as subordinate to my desire.”<sup>9</sup> In order to raise their certainty of themselves to the level of truth, each must impose the idea they have of themselves on beings other than themselves. In other words, they must be recognized by the other. In order to affirm themselves, each seeks to negate the life of the other, but this necessitates “the staking of its own life.”<sup>10</sup>

The striving to impose recognition of one’s self on the other becomes a life-and-death struggle, “a fight for pure prestige carried on for the sake of the recognitions of the adversary.”<sup>11</sup> Each self-consciousness’ desire for self-affirmation comes into conflict with the other’s. Each becomes for the other, as another self-affirming being, an obstacle that needs to be overcome. If one of the self-consciousnesses is so dependent on life and unwilling to risk it, it will not attain the recognition to make its independence meaningful. Independence belongs to the self-consciousness that struggles and risks its life to assert its independence. One adversary gives in to the other, submitting to the other, recognizing the other without being recognized by the other in return. In other words, one-self-consciousness enslaves the other.

So, on the one side we have the self-consciousness for whom recognition is important, it is willing to risk its life in order to gain recognition. This autonomous consciousness is that of the master. On the other, we have the self-consciousness for whom life is so important that it will

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8. Stanley Rosen, *G.W.F Hegel: an Introduction to the Science of Wisdom*. (London: Yale University Press, 1974).

9. Ibid, 157.

10. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 113.

11. Alexandre Kojève and Raymond Queneau, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 12.

forgo recognition in order to retain life. The second self-consciousness comes to depend on the first for its life. It is a consciousness that is “content to relinquish selfhood for thinghood.”<sup>12</sup> The slave consciousness, the defeated adversary, by refusing to risk its life has accepted life granted to it by another. On Kojève’s anthropomorphic analysis, this struggle reflects that the human individual who has not dared to risk its life can be recognized as a human-person, but cannot be recognized as an autonomous self-consciousness.<sup>13</sup> The slave has “preferred slavery to death, and this is why, by remaining alive, he lives as a slave.”<sup>14</sup> Yet, in the relationship resulting from the fight, it will appear that neither does the master come to the truth of self-consciousness for which life was risked, nor does the slave entirely lose freedom to the master. Each must now be considered in turn.

### Master and Slave: The Rule of the Master

It would seem at the outset that the master is victorious, for this self-consciousness has enslaved another self-consciousness that not only recognizes it as a master, but also labors for it. However, a closer investigation reveals that the master is doubly condemned. Firstly, the recognition the master has gained by subjugating the slave is no recognition at all, since the source of this recognition is from a self-consciousness that has abdicated its selfhood. Kojève describes the idle position of the master at this stage of the dialectic as an ‘existential impasse’,

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12. Quentin Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1993), 129.

13. Kojève’s anthropocentric reading of Hegel equates consciousness, and self-consciousness with the human individual. This particular approach to Hegel influenced generations of French philosophy, including, for our purpose here, the work of Frantz Fanon.

14. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 16.

since the master has fought and risked life for a recognition that has no value.<sup>15</sup> The master receives recognition from enslaved self-consciousnesses, whose dignity and reality is not recognized. The master can only be satisfied by recognition from a self-consciousness that the master recognizes as worthy of purveying recognition. The master, however, only recognizes the slave as an animal or a thing. What the self-consciousness that becomes master wanted, by engaging in the fight, was recognition by another – someone other than itself but who was like it, by another self-consciousness. But what resulted from the fight was that the master came to depend only on a slave for recognition, and to be recognized by an enslaved consciousness is not the same as being recognized by an autonomous consciousness. Since the master's recognition is accorded by a dependent slave, "it does not constitute an objective confirmation of the master's identity."<sup>16</sup> The coerced acknowledgment received from one who is not recognized by the master as worthless, is "more like a temporary truce than a victory."<sup>17</sup> In short, "the master never succeeds in realizing his end, the end for which he risks his very life."<sup>18</sup>

Secondly, the master-consciousness is dependent on the slave for the things it consumes. The master comes to see the world only as a simple means of satisfying one's desire, and in satisfying this desire, the master destroys things in the world. The slave, on the other hand, does not annihilate things by consuming them as the master does. Rather, the slave transforms them through work, by preparing them for consumption. Since it is the slave who exerts all the effort, the master is left only to enjoy what has been prepared by the slave, and "to enjoy negating it,

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15. Ibid, 19.

16. Richard Norman, *Hegel's Phenomenology: A Philosophical Introduction* (New York: St. Martin's Press 1976), 50.

17. Robert Pippin, *Hegel on Self-Consciousness: Death and Desire in the Phenomenology of Spirit*. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), 63.

18. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 46.

destroying, by consuming it.”<sup>19</sup> Whereas the master merely negates by consuming, the slave negates by transforming. Thus, the master “takes to himself only the dependent aspect of the thing and has the pure enjoyment of it. The aspect of its independence he leaves to the bondsman, who works on it.”<sup>20</sup> Work is placed between the master and the world, which the slave works on to conform to the master’s demands. While the master’s relationship to things in the world is only that of enjoyment and consumption, the slave, on the other hand, by working on the world, develops a more significant relationship with things than the master does.

But just as mastery showed itself to be the reverse of what it wants to be, so too will slavery, in its fulfillment and development, become the opposite of what it immediately is. It is the slave who can come to consciousness of what it is to be a self-conscious being. For, “so too servitude in its consummation will really turn into the opposite of what it immediately is; as a consciousness forced back into itself, it will withdraw into itself and be transformed into a truly independent consciousness.”<sup>21</sup> As repressed consciousness, “it will go within itself and reverse and transform itself into true autonomy.”<sup>22</sup>

### Master and Slave: The Labor of the Slave

As the dialectic proceeds, labor sets the slave free. Lauer maintains that Hegel is the first philosopher to have explicitly stated that work is a significant contribution in the development of

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19. Ibid, 18.

20. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 116.

21. Ibid, 117.

22. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 20.

self-consciousness.<sup>23</sup> Norman credits the notion of self-consciousness actively producing itself through work as a turning point in the Master-Slave section, and in the *Phenomenology* as a whole.<sup>24</sup> Rosen argues that “the phenomenon of alienation, and so too the master-slave struggle, arises from the propensity of self-consciousness to make an analytic self-interpretation.”<sup>25</sup> In this section, I explain Hegel’s notion of the embodiment of labor, and how labor helps the slave realize himself through his work.

By working on the world in order to satisfy the master’s desires, the slave comes to exercise its own subjectivity by altering the objects found in the world. “Through work, however, the bondsman becomes conscious of what he truly is.”<sup>26</sup> The slave is in a constructive relationship with the world; the thing is “*aufgehoben* in the full sense of being negated (its being is changed), retained (it continues to be), and lifted up (it has the mark of man’s spirit in it).”<sup>27</sup> In making things, we shape it, modify it, and embody ourselves in our creation. As Hegel notes in his lectures on aesthetics,

Man is realized for himself by practical activity, inasmuch as he has the impulse, in the medium which is directly given to him, to produce himself, and therein at the same time to recognize himself. This purpose he achieves by the modification of external things upon which he impresses the seal of his inner being, and then finds repeated in them his own characteristics. Man does this in order as a free subject to strip the outer world of its stubborn foreignness, and to enjoy in the shape and fashion of things a mere external reality of himself. Even the child’s first impulse involves this practical modification of external things. A boy throws stones into the river, and then stands admiring the circles

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23. Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*.

24. Norman, *Hegel’s Phenomenology*.

25. Rosen, *G.W.F Hegel*, 159.

26. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 118.

27. Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, 133

that trace themselves on the water, as an effect in which he attains the sight of something of his own doing.<sup>28</sup>

By engaging in practical activity, we produce and recognize ourselves. We shape things in the world and impress upon them features of ourselves, and admire them as creations of our own. He or she who works (or who must work) must repress the instinct to immediately consume, since “work is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off; in other words, work forms and shapes the thing.”<sup>29</sup> By working for the master, the slave-consciousness represses its own desires, educates itself, and cultivates its instincts by repressing them. The slave postpones the desire to consume and destroy the thing by first transforming it through work. In working, the slave “transforms things and himself at the same time: he forms things and the world by transforming himself, by educating himself.”<sup>30</sup> In shaping and forming the natural world, the slave can come to find in the product of work “an objective and lasting expression of his own identity.”<sup>31</sup> Work negates by transforming, and it objectifies by making. It also transforms the consciousness of the slave into a more authentic consciousness of itself. By working, the slave learns that “the world is the objective expression of his subjective freedom.”<sup>32</sup> By working for the master, the slave becomes a master of nature, and this mastery that arises from work and from progressively transforming

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28. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. Bernard Bosanquet, and M. J. Inwood. (London: Penguin Books, 1993).

29. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 118.

30. Ibid, 25.

31. Norman, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, 50.

32. Gavin Rae, *Realizing freedom: Hegel, Sartre, and the Alienation of Human Being* (Palgrave Macmillan: UK 2011), 151.

the given world, will be “an entirely different thing from the ‘immediate’ mastery of the master.”<sup>33</sup>

The slave’s labor, objectified, comes to confront him as an independent entity, since “this negative middle term or the formative activity is at the same time the individuality or pure being-for-self of consciousness which now, in the work outside of it, acquires an element of permanence. It is in this way, therefore, that consciousness, qua worker, comes to see in the independent being [of the object] its own independence.”<sup>34</sup> The master, who does not work, produces nothing stable outside of himself. His attitude of immediate satisfaction of desire can never give him complete and definitive satisfaction. Therefore, on Kojève's reading, it is by work that the human being realizes oneself as a human being, since the product of work is his or her own production. The product is “the realization of his project, of his idea; hence, it is he that is realized in and by this product, and consequently he contemplates himself when he contemplates it.”<sup>35</sup>

Thus, for Kojève, in what man makes, he finds a prolongation, externalization, or objectification of his being. It is only in this real, objective product that he becomes truly conscious of his subjective human reality. In and by work, “consciousness establishes itself as a negative-entity in the element of permanency; and thereby it becomes a thing for itself, an entity-existing-for-itself.”<sup>36</sup> This process of externalization is “the case of slave alienation.”<sup>37</sup> Gavin Rae describes externalization as “the process whereby consciousness externalizes itself in

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33. Kojève. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 23.

34. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 118.

35. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 25.

36. *Ibid*, 26.

37. Rosen, *G.W.F Hegel*, 162.



objective form and, through self-objectification, develops a better understanding of its ontological structure.”<sup>38</sup> In shaping things, the consciousness of slave substantializes itself in the product of its labor. In other words, consciousness finds itself in work; what the slave-consciousness makes reveals to it what it is. It grows conscious of itself as a freely acting subject, one that creates what is not yet, and in doing so becomes a self. This process is self-liberating wherein “the human as creative brings itself to be what it is to be human.”<sup>39</sup> The consciousness that works comes to recognize its own product in the world and comes to realize how the world has been transformed by its work. By working, an originally abstract and purely subjective idea that one has of oneself is discovered and revealed to others as the objective reality of one’s humanity. Through work, the act of consciousness finding itself by itself, “the working consciousness becomes its own meaning-or-will; and this happens precisely in work, in which it seemed to be alien meaning-or-will.”<sup>40</sup>

This case of dependence upon a benefactor is one of the contexts in which Hegel sometimes speaks of alienation. In losing its independence, the slave-consciousness becomes dependent upon others for the means through which it wishes to assert its independence and develop its individuality.<sup>41</sup> Rosen argues that alienation occurs when consciousness fails to understand the objects of its creation as externalizations of its own subjectivity.<sup>42</sup> Similarly,

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38. Rae, *Realizing Freedom*, 150.

39. Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, 133.

40. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 27.

41. Richard Schacht, *Alienation* (New York: Doubleday, 1970).

42. Rosen, *G.W.F Hegel*, 173

Louis Dupre maintains that “alienation occurs when consciousness is unable to recognize itself in a particular form which it knows to be its own.”<sup>43</sup>

The dialectic concludes with the originally dependent, serving, enslaved consciousness realizing itself as an autonomous self-consciousness. It is only the enslaved consciousness who can transform the world that fixes it in slavery, through forced work carried out in the master’s service. The slave’s work and obedient service to the master comes to transform and reconstruct both reality and the consciousness of the slave. By transforming the world through work, the enslaved consciousness transforms itself too, and thus “creates the new objective conditions that permit him to take up once more the liberating fight for recognition that he refused in the beginning for fear of death.”<sup>44</sup> If Hegel thought work would set the slave free, from Karl Marx, we learn how the forms of labor and social relations under capitalism prevent labor from being recognized as one’s own. Frantz Fanon takes the argument another step further, by showing how race and violence are additional phenomena that *contribute* to alienation. But first, it is necessary to show how Marx took a philosophically revolutionary step when he proceeded in “grounding Hegel back in reality”.

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43. Louis Dupre, “Hegel’s Concept of Alienation and Marx’s Reinterpretation of it”, *Hegel-Studien*, vol 7: 220.

44. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 29-30.

## Chapter Two – Marx’s Criticism of Hegelian Abstraction

Between 1842 and 1844, Marx was preoccupied with an intensive study of Hegel, and the work of classic economists, namely Smith and Ricardo. In studying classical economy, Marx traces the influence of economic laws on society, and criticizes the system from a humanistic standpoint.<sup>45</sup> The result of this period was the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, only published in 1932, yet that remains essential to understanding the mainspring of all Marxist theory.

Since the publication of Marx’s earlier writings, a controversy arose whether there were more continuities or changes between them and Marx’s later writings, namely *Capital*. Influentially, Louis Althusser’s publication *For Marx*, formulated an epistemological break between the early humanistic Marx, and the late scientific Marx.<sup>46</sup> This became a decisive moment for subsequent readings of Marx, insofar as commentators were compelled to take a position for or against Althusser. In this chapter I frame my reading of Marx through a lens that views continuity between the early and late Marx, a view that many commentators support. Kedourie, for example, argues that there is clear and undoubted continuity, and that the thoughts of the earlier and later Marx are compatible.<sup>47</sup> Etienne Balibar puts forth the same argument in the *Philosophy of Marx*.<sup>48</sup> Bell, likewise, asserts that for Marx, economics was the practical side of philosophy, and that Marx found, “in the categories of political economy the material

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45. Louis Dupre, *Philosophical Foundations of Marxism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), 121

46. Louis Althusser and Ben Brewster, *For Marx* (London: Verso, 1979).

47. Elie Kedourie, *Hegel and Marx: Introductory Lectures* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

48. Etienne Balibar, *The Philosophy of Marx* (London; New York; Verso, 1995).

expression of alienation: the process of economic exploitation.”<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Dupre writes that Marx’s study of Hegel and classic economics resulted in one powerful synthesis, the *Manuscripts of 1844*, to which Marx remains faithful in his later works.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, when Marx’s work is artificially split into an early humanistic approach and a late scientific theory, and the latter is privileged over the former, the importance of his early theory of alienation for understanding the present context is neglected, an issue that I will take up in more detail in the last chapter where I will discuss alienation in the colonial context.<sup>51</sup>

One point of continuity that Marx himself indicated is that much of his earlier - and later writings - emerged after a study of, and dissatisfaction with, Hegel.<sup>52</sup> While acknowledging his intellectual indebtedness to classical political economy and to philosophy, Marx was able to transform, and to a large extent, integrate both into a new world outlook. This outlook provides us with Marx’s theory of alienation, which is much deeper, more thoroughgoing, and more grounded in material reality than Hegel’s.

In this chapter I explain how Marx himself was explicit about his debt, and how he praised Hegel for grasping the objectification of the slave’s labor as a case of alienation. I then discuss how Marx undertakes in the *Paris Manuscripts of 1844* to bring Hegel’s abstract philosophy down to earth, to set forth the ‘real history of man’ in the concrete terms appropriate to it – those of ‘political economy’.

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49. Daniel Bell, "The "Rediscovery" of Alienation: Some Notes Along the Quest for the Historical Marx" *Journal of Philosophy* 56, no. 24 (1959): 939.

50. Dupre, *Philosophical Foundations of Marxism*, 121.

51. Frank Ruda’s article, “Remembering, Repeating, Working through Marx: Badiou, Zizek and the Actualizations of Marxism” *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 2012/3 (no 261) 293-319, offers an example of two different approaches to making Marx relevant for the present. Badiou remembers a lesson from the early Marx, and Zizek remembers a lesson from the late Marx.

52. Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, translated by Martin Milligan (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1959).

## Hegel and Marx on Labor

In Hegel's "Master-Slave Dialectic", the slave's labor for the master opens the path to self-conscious freedom. The estranged subject is overpowered by the things it has made, and its freedom is realized through reason. For Hegel, "the realization of reason implies the overcoming of this estrangement, the establishment of a condition in which the subject knows and possesses itself in all its objects."<sup>53</sup> For Marx, Hegel's grasp of labor is a great achievement of his

*Phenomenology of Spirit*. As Marx wrote in the *Manuscripts*,

The outstanding achievement of Hegel's *Phänomenologie* and of its final outcome, the dialectic of negativity as the moving and generating principle, is thus first that Hegel conceives the self-creation of man as a process, conceives objectification as loss of the object, as alienation and as transcendence of this alienation; that he thus grasps the essence of *labor* and comprehends objective man – true, because real man – as the outcome of man's *own labor*.<sup>54</sup>

Marx here points to Hegel's recognition that in the process of the self-consciousness' objectification through its own labor, it must pass through alienation. On Hegel's account, as discussed in the previous chapter, this alienation or estrangement is overcome when spirit recognizes the transformation of the world as the product of its own labor. Thus, for Marx, Hegel grasps the essence of labor and grasps the human being – objective being or real humans – as the outcome of their own labor. Individuals become themselves through labor, as "labor is man's coming to be for himself."<sup>55</sup> At the same time, Marx was critical of Hegel's idealist framework, which rendered the human being's concrete activity a mere abstraction.

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53. Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), 260.

54. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 66.

55. *Ibid*, 67.

For Marx, Hegel's idealist framework provided an uncritical picture of economic conditions and could not grasp the specific, historical conditions of capitalist alienation.

Hegel's standpoint is that of modern political economy. He grasps *labor* as the *essence* of man – as man's essence which stands the test: he sees only the positive, not the negative side of labor. Labor is man's *coming-to-be* for *himself* within *alienation*, or as *alienated* man.<sup>56</sup>

The key to the problem was the very nature of work, the process whereby humans become social beings, and why humans were not able to realize their full nature in work, as Hegel maintained. In order to address this problem, Marx took a revolutionary step in grounding philosophy in concrete human activity.<sup>57</sup> Bell argues that Marx transformed a philosophical expression (or a socio-psychological insight) into an economic category.

### Marx's Criticism of Hegel's Concept of Alienation

Despite his praise and incorporation of Hegel, specifically with regards to the externalization of labor, Marx saw that work does not always lead to self-realization. Instead, when labor is performed in alienated conditions, "the object which labor produces – labor's product – confronts it [the laborer] as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer."<sup>58</sup> Lukács argues that Marx distinguishes between objectification (*Vergegenständlichung*), on the one hand, which is a characteristic of all work, and alienation

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56.Ibid.

57.Bell, "The "Rediscovery" of Alienation.", 938.

58.Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 29.

(*Entäusserung*), on the other, which is a specific feature of work under capitalism.<sup>59</sup> Hegel did not make such a distinction, and treated alienation as a “universal, ontological, characteristic of self-conscious spirit.”<sup>60</sup> In this way, Marx’ provides a more critical, material lens to the notion of alienation than Hegel.

Hegel’s notion of alienation is merely an alienation of consciousness, or it is the thought, the consciousness of alienation. Marx argued that by identifying the human being with consciousness, Hegel had “made man into a spiritual, unworldly being and severed his vital relations to nature.”<sup>61</sup> Thus, Hegel develops mystifying, spiritual, and abstract forms of alienation that are themselves alienated, because they only take place in the movement of thought and knowledge.<sup>62</sup>

Hegel having posited man as equivalent to self-consciousness, the estranged object – the estranged essential reality of man – is nothing but *consciousness*, the thought of estrangement merely – estrangement’s *abstract* and therefore empty and unreal expression, negation. The annulment of the alienation is therefore likewise nothing but an abstract, empty annulment of that empty abstraction – *negation of the negation*.<sup>63</sup>

Marx insisted upon the primacy of the material and economic factors in human development, rather than a mystical process of development that takes place primarily within consciousness and self-consciousness.<sup>64</sup> Bell argues that Marx here has,

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59. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (Cambridge: MIT Press 1971), 549.

60. Sean Sayers, *Marx and Alienation: Essays on Hegelian Themes* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 25.

61. Dupre, *Philosophical Foundations of Marxism*, 124.

62. Loyd D. Easton, “Alienation and History in the Early Marx”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 22, no. 2 (1961): 193-205.

63. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 73.

64. Sayers, *Marx and Alienation*, 24.

Taken a concept which German philosophy had seen as an ontological fact, and had given it a social content. As ontology, man could only accept alienation. As a social fact, rooted in a specific system of historical relations, alienation could be overcome by changing the social system.<sup>65</sup>

For Marx, alienation lay not in the philosophical abstraction of labor, but in the organization of labor, which alienated the worker from the process of work, and from the product of work. The way work is organized under the capitalist mode of production has transformed labor itself into a commodity; thus, making the human being into an object to be used by others. As a result, humans are unable to obtain satisfaction in their own activity, and work does not lead to self-realization, as Hegel had maintained.

For Marx, Hegel's critical apparatus was unable to cope with the specific historical origins of alienation under capitalism. Hegel centered everything in thought instead of beginning, as Marx later did, with the material, objective world.<sup>66</sup> Thus, in Hegel's work, alienation is only overcome in the world of thought, and not in the actual world. Instead of achieving a unity between thought and reality, Hegel's theory of alienation only leads to an accommodation of reality. Hegel's philosophy aims to reconcile us to the world as it is, and to teach us that the world is rational and necessarily operates the way it does. The alienated consciousness, the main character in the previous chapter, laments its alienated, and unsatisfying life. Yet at the same time, Hegel proclaims that its existence is not really alienated at all, "if only we place on it the right supernatural interpretation."<sup>67</sup>

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65. Bell, "The "Rediscovery" of Alienation", 939.

66. Raya Dunayevskaya, *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

67. Allen Wood. *Karl Marx* (New York, Routledge, 2004), 13.



A fundamental point of difference between Hegel and Marx emerged in the latter's emphasis on nature; Marx noted that in Hegel's work, it was "as if ideas floated somewhere between heaven and earth, as if the brain was not in the head of the body of man living in a certain environment and at a specific historic period."<sup>68</sup> In contrast, Marx asserted that the driving force of development was not simply thought, but rather the whole of the human being, beginning with the individual's alienation from his or her labor process. Instead of treating self-consciousness as the moving actor experiencing alienation in the world, Marx brings to center stage "real, corporeal *man*, man with his feet firmly on the solid ground, man exhaling and inhaling all the forces of nature."<sup>69</sup> For Hegel, the human being was equivalent to self-consciousness, whereas for Marx,

*Man* is directly a *natural being*. As a natural being and as a living natural being he is on the one hand endowed with *natural powers, vital powers* – he is an *active* natural being. These forces exist in him as tendencies and abilities – as *instincts*. On the other hand, as a natural, corporeal, sensuous objective being he is a *suffering*, conditioned and limited creature, like animals and plants. That is to say, the *objects* of his instincts exist outside him, as *objects* independent of him; yet these objects are *objects* that he *needs* – essential objects, indispensable to the manifestation and confirmation of his essential powers. To say that man is a *corporeal*, living, real, sensuous, objective being full of natural vigor is to say that he has *real, sensuous objects* as the object of his being or of his life, or that he can only *express* his life in real, sensuous objects. *To be* objective, natural and sensuous, and at the same time to have object, nature and sense outside oneself, or oneself to be object, nature and sense for a third party, is one and the same thing.

*Hunger* is a natural *need*; it therefore needs a *nature* outside itself, an *object* outside itself, in order to satisfy itself, to be stilled. Hunger is an acknowledged need of my body for an *object* existing outside it, indispensable to its integration and to the expression of its essential being.<sup>70</sup>

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68. Raya Dunayevskaya, "The Theory of Alienation: Marx's debt to Hegel" in *Marx's Philosophy of Revolution in Permanence for Our Day: Selected Writings*, ed. Franklin Dmitryev. *Studies in Critical Social Sciences*, Vol: 25 (October 2018)

69. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 68.

70. Ibid, 69.

On Marx's view, the human being is a natural being, endowed with instincts and belongs to nature and actively engages with it. At the same time, the human being is an objective being, because the objects of his instincts, the objects that the human desires and needs, exist outside of the individual. The individual is dependent on these objects and needs them to express his or her life. Thus, the individual is also a *suffering* being, conditioned and limited, and in this way, no different than animals and plants. In the quotation above, Marx refers to hunger as an example of a natural human need that is to be fulfilled by an object from the outside world. In addition, humans exteriorize themselves in the natural, objective world. Our relationship to the world is active, for not only do we shape the world, but as part of the world, we are also shaped by it.<sup>71</sup>

Under capitalism, humans are hardly able to realize themselves in their projects of labor. The existence of an entire class of coerced individuals, forced to sell their labor power under the conditions of capitalism, bears witness to 'the complete loss of man'. In the organization of work and the conditions of labor, humans have ceased to be "ends" for themselves and become "means" for the aggrandizement of others. For Marx, the solution to the real, alienated conditions of capitalism could not be resolved by the premise that "human life is always meaningful to those who have the wisdom of spirit to lay hold of this meaning."<sup>72</sup> According to Marx, lack of wisdom is not the cause of the systematic alienation he observed in modern bourgeois society. Rather, we experience alienation because we live in conditions that make a fulfilled, worthwhile mode of life impossible.

As we have seen in this chapter, alienated labor, the lot of the proletariat, thus becomes with Marx a social, historical, and economic category. The fact that the proletariat really exist, as

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71. Dupre, *Philosophical Foundations of Marxism*, 124.

72. Wood, *Karl Marx*, 14.

living people going on with their daily lives, gives living witness to the fact that the truth has not been realized. Departing with Hegelian philosophical structures that placed man's struggles in abstract, transcendental principles, Marx grounds the struggle of man in the historical reality of his living and working conditions. Against Hegel, who had believed that alienation, or the failure to realize one's potential as a self lies in the abstract development of consciousness, Marx had seen that alienation was rooted in work.

The next chapter examines how in alienated labor, there is a twofold loss: workers lose control over *conditions* of work, and workers lose the *product* of their labor. This dual conception appears in a different form in Marx's later writings. The loss of control of work is referred to as *dehumanization*, occasioned by the division of labor, and intensified by technology. The loss of control of the product is present as *exploitation*, because a portion of man's labor, surplus value, is appropriated by the employer.<sup>73</sup> A critical study of how labor and social relations are alienated under capitalism sheds light on one of the most prominent phenomena of alienation; how labor enslaves rather than liberates us.

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73. Bell, "The "Rediscovery" of Alienation", 943.

### Chapter Three – Marx: Alienated Labor and Social Relations under Capitalist Society

As we have seen, both Hegel and Marx regard labor, understood here as productive activity, as that through which the individual personality expresses and thereby realizes itself.<sup>74</sup> As Hegel had shown in the “Lordship and Bondage” section of the *Phenomenology*, consciousness gives itself concrete embodiment through formative activity. It was through engaging in labor for the master that the enslaved consciousness came to realize itself. “In the work one does, self-existence is externalized and passes into the condition of permanence.”<sup>75</sup> Marx appears to have incorporated this understanding by the time he wrote the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* in 1844, where he writes how the product of the worker’s labor is “an *objectification* of labor, in which his labor becomes an object, assumes an external existence.”<sup>76</sup> Through the production of objects, the worker “duplicates himself not only, as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore he sees himself in a world that he has created.”<sup>77</sup> Marx often refers to this process as *externalization*.<sup>78</sup>

However, unlike Hegel’s slave who was able to emancipate himself through his work, Marx holds that in capitalistic society, work does not in fact contribute to self-realization. Rather, it prevents the worker from objectifying his or her personality and realizing one’s individuality

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74. Schacht, *Alienation*

75. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 118.

76. Marx, *Manuscripts of 1844*, 31.

77. Marx, *Manuscripts*, 32.

78. Readings that centralize the place of the Master-Slave dialectic in the *Phenomenology* can be found in the work of Marcuse, Kojève, and Hyppolite, who also argued that the dialectic inspired Marx’s philosophy. Chris Arthur, on the other hand, maintains that Marx critically appropriated the whole of the *Phenomenology*, and particular the final chapter, Absolute Knowing. For this particular interpretation of Marx, see Chris Arthur, “Hegel’s Master/Slave Dialectic and Myth of Marxology”, *New Left Review* no. 142, 1983.

through it.<sup>79</sup> In his criticism of Hegel for not distinguishing between alienation and objectification and in reinterpreting the character of labor under capitalism, Marx has put forth a more adequate, social appropriation of Hegel's thought.<sup>80</sup>

In this chapter, I address the four forms of alienation described by Marx in the *Paris Manuscripts of 1844*. In the section "Estranged Labor", Marx argues that the four dimensions of alienation are all aspects of a single system, and they are all rooted in alienated laboring activity. "But when society is in a state of progress, the ruin and impoverishment of the worker is the product of his labor and of the wealth produced by him. The misery results, therefore, from the *essence* of present-day labor itself."<sup>81</sup> Under the domination of the capitalist mode of production, the nature of labor has been perverted. Workers have become mere instruments in the production process of external goods. Labor has lost its "human significance and worth" and comes to be regarded as something to be exchanged for a wage. Work does not satisfy the worker's needs and does not perform the function of self-objectification, rather, in return for a salary; work is placed under the direction of another. Moreover, this perversion is apparent in the fact that the laws of the market come to determine the direction, nature, and end of human activity. In other words, "the materials that should serve life come to rule over its content and goal, and the consciousness of man is completely made victim to the relationships of material production."<sup>82</sup> The alienated person becomes an abstraction since he/she has "lost touch with all human specificity. He/she

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79. Schacht, *Alienation*.

80. Moishe Postone. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

81. Marx, *Manuscripts*, 6.

82. Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, 273.

has been reduced to performing undifferentiated work on humanly indistinguishable objects among people deprived of their human variety and compassion.”<sup>83</sup>

### Estranged Labor in the Manuscripts of 1844

#### *Alienation from the Product of Labor*

Even though Marx follows Hegel’s usage of the notion of the embodiment of labor, Marx clearly distinguishes between externalization and/or objectification on the one hand, and alienation on the other. In Marx’s understanding, the worker is said to be alienated from the product of his/her labor when he/she, “confronts it as *something alien*, as a *power independent of the producer*. The product of labor is labor which has been embodied in an object, which has become material: it is the *objectification of labor*.”<sup>84</sup> In Marx’s account, “this realization of labor appears as *loss of realization* for the workers; objectification as *loss of the object and bondage to it*; appropriation as *estrangement*, as *alienation*.”<sup>85</sup> An individual is considered to be alienated from the products he or she creates when the objects in question are experienced as something remote and foreign, and the individual no longer experiences them as their own. Under the capitalistic system of production, labor does not result in products that are the objective embodiment of their makers.

On the contrary, products of labor come to have no relation to the worker’s interests or personality. The product of the worker’s labor is alien to him/her, since the worker does not

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83. Bertell Ollman, *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in a Capitalist Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 134.

84. Marx, *Manuscripts*, 29.

85. *Ibid.*

choose to make it, or how to make it, or what becomes of it, but is directed to do so. The worker cannot use the products to maintain his or her existence, or use them in further productive activity, for all of his or her products are the property of another. Additionally, labor under capitalism results in a one-sided enrichment of the object since, “the more the worker spends himself, the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects which he creates over and against himself, the poorer he himself – his inner world - becomes.”<sup>86</sup> The worker grows subservient to what he/she has lost since the product of their labor comes to have “an *external* existence, it exists *outside him*, independently, as something alien to him, and becomes a power on its own confronting him. It means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien.”<sup>87</sup> Rather than controlling the objects of their creation, workers fall under their domination.

The hostility of the alienated product lies in the powers that govern it. The first of these powers is the “other” for whom the product is made, and the second force is “the set of economic laws which govern the behavior of capital and thereby the system of production under capitalism.”<sup>88</sup> In terms of the first power or force that produces the alienation of the worker from the object of labor, Marx notes that it involves the fact that another person is lord of this object. Not only is the product not related to the worker's personality, it serves another at the worker's expense. In return for wages (the means of mere subsistence), at the cost of the worker's own self-realization and often at the cost of his/her own physical well-being, the worker produces

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86. Ibid.

87. Ibid.

88. Schacht, *Alienation*, 94.

products another desires. What the worker creates becomes an instrument of another's will, and the worker's product thus contributes to his/her own oppression.

Secondly, workers' products are not only controlled by others, but also by impersonal forces. These are the sets of laws governing capital and the market, for "alienation is apparent not only in the fact that my means of life belong to *someone else*, but also that an *inhuman power* rules over everything."<sup>89</sup> The product of the worker's labor is governed by these laws, rather than by the worker's own will, and it is in this sense that it is alien from him/her. The product of labor satisfied the demands of the market at the cost of the worker's physical well-being and personal self-realization.

#### *Alienation from the Act of Production*

In the second form of alienation, Marx focuses on the form labor has taken in the economic structure of capitalist society. After asking "what, then constitutes the alienation of labor", Marx replies,

First, the fact that labor is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his intrinsic nature; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He feels at home when he is not working, and when he is working he does not feel at home. His labor is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is forced labor. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it. Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labor is shunned like the plague. External labor, labor in which man alienates himself, is a labor of self-sacrifice, of mortification. Lastly, the external character of labor for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own, but someone else's, that it does not belong to him, that in it he belongs, not to himself, but to another.<sup>90</sup>

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89. Marx, *Manuscripts*, 33.

90. *Ibid*, 30.



Instead of liberating the worker, the form labor has taken in modern society enslaves him/her, reducing the worker to an object. One whose labor is alienated does not feel at home in the work one does; work is “avoided like the plague”, has no connection with one’s interests and is not an expression of one’s personality. The alienated worker relates to his/her work as “an alien activity not belonging to him; it is activity as suffering, strength as weakness, begetting as emasculating, the worker’s *own* physical and mental energy, his personal life.”<sup>91</sup> Labor becomes a burden one is forced to assume under the threat of starvation. Marx documents how labor “mortifies his (the worker’s) body and ruins his mind” in *Capital Vol. I*, where he reports physical distortions such as underdeveloped muscles, bent backs, stunted sizes, and death pale complexions. Capitalist labor reduces the worker to “a mere fragment of his own body”, “a living appendage of the machine”, and with time, the worker comes to look the part.<sup>92</sup>

If the worker's labor is an alien, forced activity that does not belong to him or her, then it must belong to someone else, for “if the worker is related to his own activity as to unfree activity, then he is related to it as activity in the service, and under the domination, coercion and yoke, of another man.”<sup>93</sup> The overlord determines the form, intensity, and duration of labor, as well as the kind and number of products, and the working conditions. The result is that the worker, “only feels himself freely active in his animal functions – eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal. What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal.”<sup>94</sup> Work, which ought to distinguish the worker as a human being, has become

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91. Ibid, 31.

92. Ollman, *Alienation*, 139.

93. Marx, *Manuscripts*, 33.

94. Ibid, 30.

such a burden and devoid of agency and choice that the worker comes to enjoy the animal functions of eating and drinking more than producing. Thus, the worker experiences a form of self-estrangement.

### *Alienation from the Species-Being*

In the third form, Marx conceives of alienation as an estrangement and separation of individuals from their human essence, arguing that “the unique configuration of relations which distinguishes the individual as a human being has been transformed into something quite different by the performance of capitalist labor.”<sup>95</sup> For Marx, what distinguishes humans from animals is that, “as a conscious being, man in his creative activity transcends the mere satisfaction of his individual, physical needs.”<sup>96</sup> Humans have the consciousness necessary to look at objects from a distance, and are able to produce beyond the immediate means of subsistence. Because of this, the entire world becomes a possible object of the individual's activity. However, in capitalist society, this potentiality is not actualized. All the natural objects to which the individual is related are the property of another. The labor through which the worker becomes a universal, species-being is estranged and turned into animal labor and the worker's life activity is reduced to a means to satisfy individual physical needs. As Marx writes,

In degrading spontaneous activity, free activity, to a means, estranged labor makes man's species life a means to his physical existence... Estranged labor turns thus man's *species being*, both nature and his spiritual species property, into a being *alien* to him, into a means to his individual existence.<sup>97</sup>

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95. Ollman, *Alienation*, 151.

96. Dupre, *Philosophical Foundations of Marxism*, 127.

97. Marx, *Manuscripts*, 32.

Alienated life makes it impossible for individuals to affirm, confirm, or actualize themselves.

Self-actualization is an activity of the self that leads to a meaningful life; it is the life of the self that recognizes the worth it has.<sup>98</sup> Marx regards the development and exercise of essential human powers to be what is vital for the meaningfulness of human life and for the self-worth of human beings. On a larger scale, the self-actualization of the human essence is “the extent to which the human being as a *species being*, as a human being, has become himself and grasped himself.”<sup>99</sup>

Capitalism as a system of labor and social arrangements fails to “accommodate the potentialities for self-actualization which the social powers of production have put within people’s reach.”<sup>100</sup>

As Marx writes in *Capital*:

Within the capitalist system all methods of raising the productive power of labor are effected at the cost of the individual laborer; they mutilate the laborer into a fragment of a human being, degrade him to an appendage of a machine, annihilate the content of this labor by turning it into torture; they alienate from him the mental and spiritual potentialities of the labor process in the same measure as science is incorporated into it as in independent power.<sup>101</sup>

Marx’s materialist conception of history led him to regard production as the fundamental human function, and the development and exercise of productive powers as man’s most basic aspiration. He claims that “the productive life is the life of the species”, since work is the chief means through which we express and develop our human powers. Labor under capitalism cripples human faculties instead of being what it should be, “a medium for man’s true self-fulfillment, for the full development of his potentialities; the conscious utilization of the forces of nature that

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98. Wood, *Karl Marx*, 21.

99. Marx, *Manuscripts*, 32.

100. Wood, *Karl Marx*, 45.

101. *Ibid.*

should take place for his satisfaction and enjoyment.”<sup>102</sup> This form of alienation finally leads to the last form, alienation from others.

### *Alienation from Others*

Thus, if the product of his labor, his labor objectified, is for him an *alien, hostile, powerful object independent of him*, then his position towards it is such that someone else is master of this object, someone who is alien, hostile, powerful, and independent of him... Every self-estrangement of man from himself and from nature appears in the relation in which he places himself and nature to men other than and differentiated from himself.<sup>103</sup>

In capitalist society, other workers become means for satisfying individual needs. Motivated solely by self-interest, others are not regarded as one's fellows, but as means to personal ends, or as limitations to one's own liberty. Alienation takes the form of “antagonism based on a feeling of rivalry and the anticipation of attempted counterexploitation. It is grounded in a self-centeredness which attends only to private advantage, and in a self-conception which excludes any idea of sociality.”<sup>104</sup> Each individual, consumed by their own desires and needs, views the others they encounter as rivals to one's self. In a society operated by self-consumed individuals, any idea of a sociality is impossible. Isolated from and set against one another, individuals come to relate to one another through the commodities they exchange, rather than as actual persons.

Marx's four forms of alienation demonstrate that capitalist society has erased the most distinctive qualities that set humans apart from other living creatures. From Marx's time to our own, capitalism has accelerated and intensified, currently determining the entire mode of life in

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102. Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, 277.

103. Marx, *Manuscripts*, 31.

104. Schacht, *Alienation*, 104.

nearly every country in the world. Labor worldwide has come to be divided, fragmented, and alienated. Because capitalism, and its form of alienated labor, persist in our world today, Marx (and by extension, Hegel) continue to be relevant in helping us understand alienation. However, just as Hegel's philosophy had limitations for Marx, so too does Marx's philosophy have limitations.

### The Limitations of Marx's Philosophy

While Marx provided the most comprehensive and sophisticated critique of capitalism, his work neglected colonialism and its negative impact on the majority of the world's non-white population. Fanon, on the other hand, critically engaged and sought to apply Marx to racism, colonialism, *and* capitalism. Just as Marx incorporated yet extended Hegel as we saw in Chapter Two, Fanon similarly employs Marx yet also highlights his limitations and deficiencies when it comes to analyzing the colonial and post-colonial world.

Fanon's approach is understandable given that the world he lived in and experienced was drastically different from Marx's own. Marx had not lived long enough to see capitalism expand to become a central paradigm of modernity, forcing itself into almost every country in the world. Everywhere the West colonized, it brought in its wake the capitalist mode of production, the division of labor, the concept of a modern, sovereign state, and the ideological tools that legitimized all of them by necessity. The new state apparatuses that Europe imposed in all her colonies were designed to train, discipline, and control the colonized subject. With the destructive forces of colonialism traveled the thought structure that modern Europe had cultivated, largely an Enlightenment-inherited structure. Hallaq puts forth the argument that it is

the uniquely European thought structure that was the prior condition that made colonialism possible. European colonialism is characterized by subjugation, slavery, coerced labor of indigenous people, and processes designed to reengineer them as new subjects. To do all of this, Europeans must “have already been in possession of, or in the process of possessing, a worldview.”<sup>105</sup> This worldview included a negative stereotype of the ‘Other’, including “attitudes of civilizational condescension” which regarded Africans, Arabs, and Orientals as “inferior and underdeveloped”.<sup>106</sup> Colonizers aimed to create a new identity for the colonized, a new way of being in the world, a new human, complete with a new epistemology for living and for dealing with others.

Racism, and dealing with others according to the premise that they are inferior, is largely absent from Marx’s own writings. Because of this, Fanon asserted that, “Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem. Everything up to and including the very nature of precapitalist society; so well explained by Marx, must here be thought out again.”<sup>107</sup> Marx himself had not been concerned with the colonial question, and when he did comment on the phenomenon, it was only secondary to his primary preoccupation, the critique of capitalism. When it comes to investigating the alienating nature of racism and colonialism, as well as the intersections between racism, colonialism, and capitalism, Marx’s work is inadequate and underdeveloped. For example, while Marx shows us how one class can

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105. Wael Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism: A Critique of Modern Knowledge*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 20.

106. In *Restating Orientalism*, Wael Hallaq criticizes Edward Said's *Orientalism* and its exclusive focus on a literary analysis. In contrast, Hallaq deals with the actual destructive violence of colonialism on the modern ground. Throughout the book, Hallaq connects the colonialist practices on the ground with the structure of Enlightenment thought. He argues that colonialism reflects the constitution of a thought structure that modern Europe cultivated.

107. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin Books 1963), 31.

enrich itself at the expense of another, he does not even consider the question of how one *race* can grow rich at the expense of another. This is where new critical theoretical concepts and categories are needed.

Fanon employed some aspects of Marxism in order to theoretically critique what he saw as a white supremacist, capitalist, and colonialist world. In employing Marxism as a theoretical tool, Fanon was able to build on and extend Marx in order to engage phenomena and struggles that Marx had not considered. Challenging Marx's Eurocentrism brings forth several questions that are important to consider in our current investigation of dimensions of alienation and the postcolonial context, the most important being: what is the relationship between capitalism, colonialism, and racism? Eurocentric Marxism has to a large extent neglected, or downplayed, the ways that capitalism, colonialism, and racism intersect and overlap, producing systems of violence, exploitation, and oppression for the non-white populations of the world.<sup>108</sup> It "negates the concrete realities of the interconnections and intersections of racism and colonialism with capitalism in the life-worlds and lived-experiences of the wretched of the earth."<sup>109</sup>

This is why Hegelian-Marxist philosophy is inadequate to explain the alienated condition of nonwhites. Fanon's key contribution lies in his moving away from a purely economic Marxist analysis to placing a greater emphasis on the psychological, sociopolitical, and ideological dimensions of alienation suffered by nonwhites. By placing race and racism at the center, Fanon's key struggle was not an idealist one as Hegel's had been, or a class struggle as Marx had

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108. However, more recent literature such as Kolia Linder's "Marx's Eurocentrism: Post Colonial Studies and Marx Scholarship" contest the view of Marx as Eurocentric. Linder argues that Marx's treatment of non-Western societies evolved throughout Marx's life, and gradually he came to reject Eurocentric assumptions.

109. Reiland Rabaka, *Forms of Fanonism: Frantz Fanon's Critical Theory and the Dialectics of Decolonization* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2010), 146.

maintained. Despite the fact that Fanon was equally critical of capitalism, for him the primary struggle was between the white colonizer and the nonwhite colonized.

Just as Marx's critique of capital had arisen out of a specific historicity, so too should Marx's analysis be altered "to encompass and suit the needs, as well as address the current neocolonial crisis, of the racially colonized's particular time and circumstances."<sup>110</sup> The following chapter discusses Fanon's mission, to "rethink social transformation in light of the anti-imperial onuses that both colonialism and capitalism present, and specifically, - in contradistinction to comrade Karl Marx's corpus – to people of color, to racialized people."<sup>111</sup> In substituting Marx's "laboring proletariat" with "the wretched of the earth", Fanon contributes to Marxist discourse by bringing in the categories of antiracism, anticolonialism, *and* anticapitalism.

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110.Ibid, 195.

111. Ibid.



## Chapter Four - Fanon: New Phenomenon of Alienation

As a psychiatrist and revolutionary activist, Fanon approaches the problem of alienation under colonialism by analyzing its historical, economic and psychodynamic aspects. In order to fully grasp the case of the alienated individual under colonialism, it is necessary to also bring into account the philosophical heritage and the role that consciousness plays. Fanon's psychoanalytic approach, largely based on his first-hand experience as a black man, allowed him to describe the alienation of the black man in general, and the Antillean, African, and Algerian in particular. By reading Fanon through Marx and Hegel, this chapter aims to extend the previous dimensions of alienation discussed in order to understand the specific case of the colonized subject of Fanon's time. I argue that colonialism, racism, and their modern manifestation of 'racial colonialism' infiltrate every sphere of the colonized subjects' being, even his/her inner psyche. It is thus necessary to return to the dialectic, as Fanon himself did in his first book, *Black Skins, White Masks*, where he devotes an entire section on Hegel. I then turn to evaluating the extent to which Fanon can be described as a Marxist, and see how Marx's analysis on alienation impacted Fanon's discourse on colonialism, race, and violence.

### The Master-Slave Dialectic, Revisited

In *Black Skins, White Masks*, Fanon takes up Hegel's analysis of the Master-Slave dialectic in his critique of Western colonialism. According to Fanon, the dialectic is relevant to human relations in the colonies, if it is adjusted with a focus on violence and race. He begins by reminding his readers how Hegel had maintained that "self-consciousness exists in itself and for itself, in that, and by the fact that it exists for another self-consciousness; that is to say, it is only

by being acknowledged, or recognized.”<sup>112</sup> Fanon’s understanding of recognition is the same as Hegel’s; it is a demand to be recognized for “the dignity and worth of one’s being.”<sup>113</sup> In Fanon’s understanding of the dialectic, each subject seeks to affirm itself and is “seeking absoluteness.”<sup>114</sup>

Extending Hegel, Fanon writes that “man is human only to the extent to which he tries to impose his existence on another man in order to be recognized by him.”<sup>115</sup> While acknowledging that the need to be recognized is a human attribute, Fanon suggests that “the extent of the imposition of one’s existence on an other becomes the measure of humanity, in other words, one can only be human if one ensures that one imposes oneself on an other successfully.”<sup>116</sup> Hallaq proposes that this attitude, this drive to impose, is a constitutive element of modernity, and its source is European Enlightenment thought.

Scheler also argues that modern (Western) man possessed an innate drive, which “sprung from an underlying, a priori will- and value-structure centered upon the desire to dominate the material world.”<sup>117</sup> Argentinean-Mexican philosopher Enrique Dussel argued that it was the *ego conquiro* that made Descartes’ *ego cogito* possible, that “I conquer, therefore I am” became the foundation of “I think, therefore I am”. The foundation thus becomes a subject that perceives himself as the center of the world because he conquers the world. Dussel argues that this

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112. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

113. Peter Hudis, "Frantz Fanon's Contribution to Hegelian Marxism." *Critical Sociology* 43, no. 6 (2017), 868.

114. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1967), 192.

115. *Ibid*, 216.

116. Charles Villet, "Hegel and Fanon on the Question of Mutual Recognition: A Comparative Analysis." *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 4, no. 7 (November 2011), 42.

117. *Ibid*.

foundation is mediated through the *ego extermino*, “I exterminate, therefore I am”.

Enlightenment-based phenomena, such as the domination of nature, have contributed to the conditions of modernity.<sup>118</sup> However, Hallaq argues that this was not an event but, “a structure and a systemic process of thought that made domination a way of living in and seeing the world, an attitude, which explains why the destructiveness of nature and subjection of human beings to its forces were thoroughgoing and commensurately systematic.”<sup>119</sup>

A reinterpretation of Hegel’s Master-Slave dialectic under these conditions finds that: when a white European with this mindset encounters a nonwhite non-European, “it is on that other being, on recognition by that other being, that his own human worth and reality depend. It is that other being in whom the meaning of life is condensed.”<sup>120</sup> One is human if the other recognizes them as human, but according to Fanon in the colonial context, the white settler does not regard the black native as human, since he/she does not measure up to the standard of whiteness (of humanity). The black native, robbed of all humanity, is regarded as, “partly human, partly animal, completely thing and object, and is there solely to perform labor.”<sup>121</sup> Fanon diverges from Hegel by showing us that when the element of race is added into the equation, recognition is not possible in the asymmetrical relationship between the white master and the black slave. The white master finds the black slave laughable, and simply wants the slave to perform labor. Completely marginalized by the white masters, black people come to “inhabit a

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118. For a seminal reading of enlightenment reason and the domination of nature see Horkheimer and Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Herder and Herder), 1972.

119. Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 88.

120. Fanon, *Black Skins*, 217.

121. *Ibid*, 220.

zone of non-being.”<sup>122</sup> The master is not even interested in receiving recognition from the slave, whose very humanity is denied; instead “what the master wants from the slave is not recognition but work. But since no amount of labor can earn the slave recognition from the master *when the slave is black*, the slave’s work fails to confirm his essentiality. Therefore, he is less independent than the Hegelian slave.”<sup>123</sup> Failing to attain the independent consciousness outlined by Hegel, the black slave seeks to gain recognition by aspiring for “values secreted by his master”, or in other words, the slave attempts to mimic the master and become white.<sup>124</sup> The internalization process and the resulting inferiority complex is discussed further in a following section.

Hegel had also shown how through objectifying himself in his work, the bondsman could become free. The master, relating to the things in the world only through the slave, loses his freedom and is reduced to dependence. According to Fanon, however, this possibility of achieving liberation through labor is not open to the colonized slave. The colonized slave is reduced to an “object” or a thing in his colonizer’s mind in particular, and in the colonial world, in general. Aime Cesaire’s colonial equation reminds us that “colonization = thingification.”<sup>125</sup>

Colonization, I repeat dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an *animal*, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform *himself* into an animal. It is in this result, this boomerang effect of colonization, that I wanted to point out.<sup>126</sup>

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122. Ibid, xii.

123. Hudis, “Frantz Fanon’s Contribution to Hegelian-Marxism”, 869.

124. Fanon, *Black Skins*, 195.

125. Cesaire 1972, as cited in Rabaka, *Forms of Fanonism*.

126. Ibid.

According to Cesaire, colonialism dehumanizes both the white colonizer and the nonwhite colonized. As the colonizer “dominates the colonized person’s life-world and language-world, the colonized experiences not merely dehumanization, but *deracination*, which means literally, to pluck or tear up by the roots; to eradicate or exterminate.”<sup>127</sup>

In this section, I have revisited Hegel's struggle for recognition in order to show that when Fanon adds the element of race, the outcome differs for the white master and the black slave. Before examining the categories of race and violence on their own accord, it is necessary to revisit the thoughts of Marx as well. The following section highlights how Fanon accepts certain Marxian assumptions, but situates them in the Third World, and how understanding Marx's classical work can help us understand Fanon's new phenomenon of alienation.

### Marx's Theory of Alienation, Revisited

As we have seen in Chapter 3, Marx's theory of alienation represented the denial of our human powers, our nature as social beings, and the denial of species-being. Marx had shown how because of the alienated conditions of labor, our productive abilities are organized and appropriated by others, making us incapable of expressing ourselves and our humanity through our work. Alienation with Marx therefore, is an inevitable feature of capitalism, where we are all condemned to sell our labor power to others in a relation defined by exploitation. Fanon extends Marx's theory of alienation by asserting that race, like class, represents a denial of our species-

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127. Ibid, 111.

being.<sup>128</sup> Humanity is denied because our productive activity no longer reflects it, and he/she who is not recognized by others in a social relationship is denied their humanity as well.

Colonialism involves the political domination, economic exploitation, and the separation of colonized people from their individuality, culture, and their entire way of being prior to the colonial encounter.

Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: "In reality, who am I?"<sup>129</sup>

Hand in hand, colonialism and capitalism are forced into the colony, with racism justifying the objectification of the colonized. Fanon argues that the colonial relationship can only be understood in capitalist terms. On a global scale, the relationship between the capitalist and the proletariat is transformed into the global relationship between core and periphery countries. And similar to the exploitative relationship between the capitalist and the proletariat, the international relationship is based on exploitation as well, since

The wealth of the imperial countries is our wealth too... For in a very concrete way Europe has stuffed herself inordinately with the gold and raw materials of the colonial countries: Latin America, China, and Africa. From all these, under whose eyes Europe today raises up her tower of opulence, there has flowed out for centuries toward that some Europe diamonds and oil, silk and cotton, wood and exotic products. Europe is literally the creation of the Third World. The wealth which smothers her is that which was stolen from the underdeveloped peoples.<sup>130</sup>

For Fanon, capitalism and racism are structurally connected. The economic antagonism of the class struggle appears in a different form internationally; expressed in terms of

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128. Daniel Egan, "Frantz Fanon and the Construction of the Colonial Subject: Defining "The Enemy" in the Iraq War" *Socialism and Democracy* 21:3 (2007), 142-154.

129. Fanon, *Wretched*, 250.

130. *Ibid*, 102.

colonizer/colonized, settler/native. For Fanon, the exploitative relations of production are embodied in exploitative, racially oriented relations of colonialism.<sup>131</sup> His project of disalienation involved the abolition of class as well as race. The Marxist influence in Fanon's work appears when we consider that for Fanon, "colonialism represents the systematic underdevelopment of the periphery to the benefit of the core; racism is the ideological component of this process of underdevelopment".<sup>132</sup> Marx's analysis of alienation influenced Fanon's treatment of the colonial problem, and with time he came to understand racial conflicts in relation to class conflicts.<sup>133</sup> As he states,

The Negro problem does not resolve itself into the problem of Negroes living among white men but rather of Negroes exploited, enslaved, despised by a colonialist, capitalist society that is only accidentally white.<sup>134</sup>

Forsythe argues that as a sociologist and a philosopher, Fanon's work was based on certain fundamental assumptions and premises that were largely Marxist in nature, which Fanon later modified to the conditions of the Third World.<sup>135</sup> Similarly, Nursey-Bray agrees that the account of alienation that Fanon develops is essentially a Marxist one, "in so far as it is a condition that is a result of social factors, and one which social change can remove."<sup>136</sup> Marx's theories impacted Fanon's positions on the role of violence, economic determinism, emancipation, but most importantly for our argument here, the concept of alienation. The conditions of the alienated

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131. Paul Nursey-Bray, "Marxism and Existentialism in the Thought of Frantz Fanon" *Political Studies* no. 20 (1972): 152-168.

132. Egan, "Frantz Fanon and the Construction of the Colonial Subject", 144.

133. Dennis Forsythe, "Frantz Fanon, the Marx of the Third World", *Phylon*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (2nd Qtr., 1973): 160-170.

134. Fanon, *Black Skins*, 202.

135. Forsythe, "Frantz Fanon, the Marx of the Third World".

136. Nursey-Bray, "Marxism and Existentialism", 162.

laborer, the main character in Chapter 3, becomes a universal category with Fanon for whom "the negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation."<sup>137</sup> Just as the white workers in Marx's account were alienated from themselves, their labor, and their surroundings, so too

The black man is insulated and feels insignificant, whence his constant pre-occupation with attracting the attention of the white man, his concern with being powerful like the white man... He is constantly pre-occupied with self-evaluation and with the ego-ideal... the question is always where he is less intelligent than I, blacker than I, less expectable than I.<sup>138</sup>

Despite these similarities, Fanon contributed to the discourse on alienation in a way that Marx could not. One of Fanon's greatest legacies is his phenomenological emphasis on the psychological alienated traits of the colonized personality. Marx had not made such a contribution in explaining the alienated worker. Despite his employment of Marxist categories, Fanon breaks with the classical Marxist stance by asserting that race is the major determinant in the evolution of society, not economics.<sup>139</sup> For Fanon, the racial structure is what conditions the dehumanization of the colonized, as he writes in sociological terms in his later works, like Marx did in *Capital*,

The settlers' town is a well-fed town, an easy-going town; its belly is always full of good things. The settlers' town is a town of white people, of foreigners. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs.<sup>140</sup>

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137. Fanon, *Black Skins*, 51.

138. *Ibid.*

139. Nursey-Bray, "Marxism and Existentialism", 153.

140. Fanon, *Wretched*, 32.



The following section examines the colonized subject that experiences the dimensions of alienation inherited from Hegel and Marx. Those living under the pressure of the colonial value system, and its system of labor and production, become alienated and are robbed of their identity. The imposition of values also turns the colonized against themselves, and they play a part in negating their own identity. Divided against themselves, colonized people are the epitome of the alienated individuals.

### Racial Colonialism

To start, it is important to distinguish between ‘colonialism’ and ‘racial colonialism’. While colonialism has perhaps always existed in world history, what distinguishes the European experience is that their colonialism intersected and intertwined with racism. European colonialism aimed to change the constitution of the colonized subject, to discipline it, subjugate it, and fashion it in new ways. Racism “ideologically undergirds and provides a wrongheaded, racist rationale for the division of the world into *white human beings* and *nonwhite native subhuman things*.”<sup>141</sup> Fanon asserts that Europe did not only set out to colonize the nonwhite world, but to *racialize* it. As he writes,

For it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence. The settler owes the fact of his very existence, that is to say his property, to the colonial system... You do not turn any society, however primitive it may be, upside down with such a program if you have not decided from the very beginning, that is to say from the actual formulation of the program, to overcome all the obstacles that you will come across in so doing.<sup>142</sup>

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141. Rabaka, *Forms of Fanonism*, 114.

142. Fanon, *Wretched*, 36-37.

These ‘obstacles’ include the people of the society to be colonized. Programs of reengineering the colonial subject involved changing their laws, their ways of living, and the socioeconomic relationships that had existed for centuries. Fanon writes that,

The white man is sealed in his whiteness. The black man in his blackness... Concern with elimination of a vicious circle has been the only guide-line for my efforts. There is a fact: White men consider themselves superior to black men. There is another fact: Black men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect... White civilization and European culture have forced an existential deviation on the Negro. I shall demonstrate elsewhere that what is often called the black soul is a white man’s artifact.<sup>143</sup>

The world in which the nonwhite, colonized individuals find themselves is not a world of their own creation and social construction, but rather it is one dominated by white supremacy. Even when whites are not physically present, their ideas and values are ideologically omnipresent. Modern conceptions of the Negro, the black, the African, and the Arab, have been socially constructed and produced in reaction to “European and European American conceptions of the alleged inferiority of blackness and the supposed sanctity of whiteness.”<sup>144</sup> The supposed inferiority of all that is non-white is shunned as other, evil, and ugly, for “is not whiteness in symbols always ascribed in French to Justice, Truth, Virginity?... The black man is the symbol of Evil and Ugliness... *In Europe, the black man is the symbol of Evil.*”<sup>145</sup> In Europe's colonies, however, color intertwines with wealth, since

The economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem... It is neither the act of owning factories, nor estates, nor a bank balance which

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143. Fanon, *Black Skins*, 9, 10, 14.

144. Rabaka, *Forms of Fanonism*, 55.

145. Fanon, *Black Skins*, 180, 188.

distinguishes the governing classes. The governing race is first and foremost those who come from elsewhere, those who are unlike the original inhabitants, 'the others'.<sup>146</sup>

What determines a person's position in the colony is not his/her relation to the process of production, but rather the race to which that person belongs. Rabaka takes this a step further by stating that "one is human because one is white, and that one is white insofar as one is human."<sup>147</sup> Colonialism negates the history, identity, and humanity of the racially colonized. He/she no longer exists on their own terms, for their lived and concrete actuality, their unique life-worlds and life-struggles have been defeated and conquered.

As pertains to our discussion on alienation, the phenomenon of white supremacy has a direct consequence on the colonized subjects: the white supremacist conception of blackness impacts the nonwhites' conception of themselves. White supremacy's conception of all that is nonwhite, its imposition of negative stereotypes, results in alienation for all nonwhites living under such structural domination. Living under a collective consciousness that dehumanizes them, the colonized subjects' alienation is reflected in the fact that, with time, these dehumanizing values of white supremacy come to impact the nonwhites' conception of themselves. Alienation manifests when the colonized surrender to the pressure of discrimination, and develop the features ascribed to them by the racial stereotype.<sup>148</sup> The internalization of values is an expression of the colonized's alienation. Fanon argues that even the unconscious psyche of the colonized is racially colonized by the ideologies of white supremacy:

In Europe the Negro has one function: that of symbolizing the lower emotions, the baser inclinations, the dark side of the soul. In the collective unconscious of *homo occidentalis*,

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146. Fanon, *Wretched*, 33.

147. Rabaka, *Forms of Fanonism*, 138.

148. Renate Zahar, *Frantz Fanon: Colonialism and Alienation: Concerning Frantz Fanon's Political Theory* (New York: Monthly Review Press), 1974.

the Negro – or, if one prefers, the color black – symbolizes evil, sin, wretchedness, death, war, famine... In Martinique, whose collective unconscious makes it a European country, when a “blue” Negro – a coal-black one – comes to visit, one reacts at once: “What bad luck is he bringing”. The collective unconscious is not dependent on cerebral heredity; it is the result of what I shall call the unreflected imposition of a culture. Hence there is no reason to be surprised when an Antillean [a black person] exposed to waking-dream therapy relives the same fantasies as a European. It is because the Antillean partakes of the same collective unconscious as the European.<sup>149</sup>

As we have seen so far, being born with a particular skin color has consequences. The ideologies that dichotomize people, beginning in Europe, spread with Europe, reaching the people living under her rule. A cultural conflict ensues when an individual is confronted with, on the one hand, their people’s traditional culture, values, and beliefs, and on the other, the imposed culture and its own set of values. With time, this tormented individual adopts the foreign norms enforced on him or her through the school, books, and the press, and interiorizes the racial stereotype the colonizer has of him or her. It is to this phenomenon of alienation that we now turn.

### Cultural Imposition and the Colonized Subjects’ Inferiority Complex

Fanon introduces a new category of alienation, resulting not only from labor or physical violence, but psychological and ideological violence. Cultural imposition shifts the worldview of the colonized, from how they viewed the world prior to being colonized, to the white supremacist worldview, which normalizes the ideologies of white supremacy and encourages the negation of all what it means to be black. Fanon is not surprised, then, when the nonwhite wants to be white since “through the collective unconscious the Antillean has taken over all the archetypes belonging to the European... There is no help for it: I am a white man. For

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149. Fanon, *Black Skins*, 190-191.

unconsciously I distrust what is black in me, that is, the whole of my being.”<sup>150</sup> Alienation for Fanon has both economic and intellectual aspects, his focus being mainly on the analysis of the latter. Emphasizing the Marxist heritage, Fanon asserts that the economic conditions of alienation are what constitute the psychological phenomenon. He describes how alienation appears in the form of psychic conflicts,

In the first case (that of the intellectual), the alienation is of an almost intellectual character. In so far as he conceives of European culture as a means of stripping himself of his race, he becomes alienated. In the second case (that of the worker), it is a question of a victim of a system based on the exploitation of a given race by another, of the contempt in which a given branch of humanity is held by a form of civilization that pretends to superiority.<sup>151</sup>

The causes of the colonized’s alienation can be traced to their “internalization of a historically and economically determined inferiority.”<sup>152</sup> As Fanon shows, “It is apparent to me that the effective disalienation of the black man entails an immediate recognition of social and economic realities. If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process – primarily, economic – subsequently, the internalization, or better, the epidermalization, of this inferiority.”<sup>153</sup> The racial stereotype, the supposed inferiority of the nonwhite, is applied, “first, to other blacks and eventually, after the traumatic realization that they are black too, even to themselves.”<sup>154</sup> Alienated behaviors appear in the colonized’s attempts to compensate, over-adapt, and of course in their self-hatred. Living under such conditions, the alienated colonized subject struggles to find him/herself in their traditional culture, and in the culture of their

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150. Ibid, 191.

151. Ibid, 223.

152. Zahar, *Frantz Fanon: Colonialism and Alienation*, 28.

153. Fanon, *Black Skins*, 184.

154. Zahar, *Colonialism and Alienation*, 41-42.

oppressors. Upon realizing that their attempts at adapting and conforming to white culture will never result in equality, or humanize them in any way, they turn to their traditional values and systems, often with hatred, because they have internalized the racist stereotype that all that is nonwhite symbolizes evil, primitive and ugly.

Fanon describes what it means to phenomenologically *live* and *experience* blackness in an antiblack racist world, and the consequences of blacks' internalizing anti-black racism. He emphasizes that "blackness is dialectically inextricable from whiteness, and also controversially claims that blackness – as most blacks live and experience it – is actually a creation of, and a reaction to, whiteness – white history and culture, and white civilization and racial colonial imagination."<sup>155</sup> Similar to Hegel's slave who eventually began to see himself as the slave he was in the eyes of his master, so too does Fanon's slave come to internalize the racial stereotype designed by his colonizer. As a victim of personal and institutional prejudice and discrimination in his/her own land, the colonized "end up by actually developing the features ascribed to them by the racial stereotype."<sup>156</sup> These racist stereotypes are accelerated by the actions of the colonizers on the ground, by the sanctions and violence which draw their justification from their constructed racial fiction. Since the colonized is lazy, punishment is legitimate; since he/she is unproductive, he/she must be paid low wages, and since they are savages, brutality is necessary to control them.

What began as "little more than abstract figment of the white supremacist colonial imagination eventually became a concrete and excruciatingly crueler part of the already inhuman

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155. Rabaka, *Forms of Fanonism*, 54.

156. Zahar, *Colonialism and Alienation*, 23.

racial colonial reality.”<sup>157</sup> The result is a colonized individual who is “excluded from all social institutions, cut off from his own history, deprived of his own language, and of all possibilities of untrammelled self-expression.”<sup>158</sup> By internalizing the white supremacist antiblack construction of blackness, the colonized come to despise and distrust their blackness. Alienated from themselves, they negate themselves in embracing whiteness, without realizing that what they reject are racist constructions and misrepresentations. It is in this way that the nonwhite becomes a perpetuator and collaborator to white supremacy. This brainwash, however, is not entirely an unconscious process since

The white man chooses the black man for this function, and the black man who is white also chooses the black man [to represent “the original sin”]. The black Antillean is the slave of this cultural imposition. After having been the slave of the white man, he enslaves himself. The Negro is in every sense of the word a victim of white civilization.<sup>159</sup>

The tragedy then, is the nonwhites’ participation in their own alienation, enslavement and colonization by desiring and working towards *being* white. In the world that colonialism has created, the world as it currently and actually exists, to be white is to be human, and to be nonwhite is to be subhuman, if one can be considered human at all. “In whites’ efforts to impose white supremacist and Eurocentric values and beliefs on the nonwhite cultures they roguishly racially colonized in order to become superhumans (“whites”), they crudely created subhumans (“nonwhites”).<sup>160</sup> The dialectic of blackness and whiteness, clearly rooted in Hegel’s Master-Slave dialectic can be summed thus,

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157. Rabaka, *Forms of Fanonism*, 121.

158. Zahar, *Colonialism and Alienation*, 23.

159. Fanon, *Black Skins*, 192.

160. Rabaka, *Forms of Fanonism*, 67.

The feeling of inferiority of the colonized is correlative to the European's feeling of superiority. Let us have the courage to say it outright: *It is the racist who creates his inferior...* One can hear the glib remark: The Negro makes himself inferior. But the truth is that he is made inferior... The disaster of the man of color lies in the fact that he was enslaved. The disaster and the inhumanity of the white man lies in the fact that somewhere he has killed man.<sup>161</sup>

In conclusion, Fanon tell us that, “the Negro problem does not resolve itself into the problem of Negroes exploited, enslaved, despised by a colonialist, capitalist society that is only accidentally white.”<sup>162</sup> Whether the racial-capitalist-colonialist society is “accidentally white”, is besides the point. What concerns us here is our world is dominated by a system that is both colonial and capitalist in nature. Since capitalism has forced itself into the colony, the colonized is forced under capitalist conditions of labor, which makes him/her a victim of estranged labor, as discussed in Chapter 3. Secondly, colonialism fueled by racism, results in the colonized being alienated from their own traditions and cultures, as well as from the foreign culture and people that have colonized him/her.

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161. Fanon, *Black Skins*, 93, 145, 231.

162. *Ibid*, 202.



## Conclusions

This thesis has attempted to bring a new philosophical approach to the phenomenon that is alienation. As a subject of inquiry in many academic disciplines and as a feature of modernity, alienation is a critically important discourse worthy of investigation in its own right.

By returning to Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic, we could see how alienation could be overcome through labor. The alienated consciousness was able to work its way out of the relations of dependence. However, Marx showed that under capitalist conditions of labor, this freedom was not possible. With Marx, we saw new dimensions of alienation between the individual, their labor and their surroundings. Extending Marx to the non-European world, we found that capitalism, racism, and colonialism intersect. By reading Hegel and Marx into the work of Fanon, we examined the alienation that arose because of additional elements: race and violence. Fanon showed us how the colonized subject is alienated from themselves, their colonizers, their own cultures and traditions, as well as those of the colonizers'. By focusing on the alienation of the colonized nonwhite subject, I have attempted to show that their specific form of alienation is a result of dimensions envisioned by Hegel, Marx, *and* Fanon.

Colonialism, and the colonialist project to reengineer colonial subjects, forever changed the world. White supremacy continues to be a paradigm of modernity, and for the nonwhites of the world, their alienation has three dimensions. Firstly, their traditional means of work, and relations to the land and means of production have been torn apart since they became a colony. Capitalism forces itself into the colony, and nonwhites become victims of alienated labor, like their white working counterparts. Secondly, they are alienated on account of their acute

consciousness of white supremacy, and their consciousness that they are not white. Thirdly, nonwhites alienate themselves in internalizing white supremacist myths and stereotypes.

In the world shaped by colonialism, nonwhites are not allowed to exist on their own terms. Alienated from themselves, they are excluded from recognition, and are placed beyond the boundaries of human rights. Racism dehumanizes nonwhites, reducing the “natives” into subhuman “things” or “objects”. The education nonwhites receive, which is necessary if they are to survive, advances the notion that they really are inferior, that the white master is powerful because he/she *should* be.

Capitalism, colonialism, and racism overlap and intersect to create a system of violence, oppression and exploitation. To be “modern” in today’s day and age depends on how well a non-European state imitates European imperial politics, culture and thought. However, Europe should not be the model for what it means to be modern, civilized, cultured, or human. Fanon encourages intellectuals to decolonize their minds, and to develop a critical, revolutionary, praxis, that incorporates the positive contributions of the oppressor’s culture, as well as their indigenous traditions, culture, and thought.

In his own words,

European achievements, European techniques, and the European style ought no longer to tempt us and to throw us off our balance. 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. The human condition, plans for mankind, and collaboration between men in those tasks which increase the sum total of humanity are new problems, which demand true inventions<sup>163</sup>

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163. Fanon, *Wretched*, 312.

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