

# SELF AND THE OTHER IN THE COLONIAL LIFE-WORLD

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## ABSTRACT

*Though colonialism is an aspect of the imperialist political-economical design, it operates also in the cultural life-world of the natives in order to legitimise the subjugation of the colonised natives by constituting/splitting the reality/life-world into certain units and making them into a hierarchical order. By defining the Orient and the colonised world as exotic, irrational, despotic and mythical, the theatrical representations are enacted by the Occident about the Orient for the consumption of the non-Orient and these representations and modes of perceptions are justified through grids of knowledge systems. Through the manipulative knowledge discourses, the power of the West over the Orient and the colonised masses is legitimised as natural and necessary order of life. The identity of the native is something that the colonial master and his institutions make for the colonised, and not by the will and wish of the native. So the self of the colonised splits into two, which could be reconciled either through the hybrid formation of the self, as propounded by the postcolonial critiques, or through white-washing of the social body. By placing them at the mercy of the Western representations and the perceptions, the colonised wants to become human either through perpetrating violence on the colonial master or through the inheritance of colonial knowledge practices on his social body, according to Frantz Fanon. Interestingly, the colonial knowledge system is inversed by the natives and applied on the West, as a means to emancipate themselves from colonial subjugation. The same tools which were used by the colonial masters to colonise the native are subverted by the natives to liberate themselves from the cultural hegemony of the West. This complex existential phenomenological process and the dialectical relation between the coloniser and the colonised as the process between the self and the other is explored through the theoretical elaborations of W.E.B Du Bois, Frantz Fanon and Edward Said in this article.*

**Keywords:** Knowledge and Power, Orientalist Representations and Perceptions, Colonial Life-world, Double Consciousness, Decolonisation.

## INTRODUCTION

What is colonialism? How does it manifest in reality? What sort of life-world does it provide for the coloniser and the colonised? Does it provide a life-world that is equal and similar to both the sides of this life-world? Does the colonial life-world yield the same consciousness to the promoters of colonialism and to the supposed beneficiaries of it? If not so, can phenomenology address the diabolical or Manichean<sup>1</sup> nature of the colonial life-world? If the colonial life-world is built on the Manicheanism, can we attempt for phenomenological reduction to achieve a 'neutral' understanding of the colonial life-world, without dismissing the myths of colonialism which harps on 'developing' the reality in its own image? Whether such a dismissal will be construed as partisan? By extension, whether knowledge is possible without partisanship, unless the power that operates within the knowledge discourses are not minimised, if not nullified? With these questions in mind, let me attempt to analyse the construction of the self and the other in the colonial life-world, using mostly Fanon's existential phenomenological approach to colonialism.

Colonisation is basically understood as the civilising mission of the West, a mission aimed at the non-West in the pretext of enlightenment rationality with the aid of industrial economy and the cultural artefact. But the question is whether such a civilising mission placed the 'civilised' and the 'non-civilised' life-words in contact? What sort of contact was there between these two worlds? While elaborating the civilising mission of Christianity, Rev. Barde says, if the goods of this world "remained divided up indefinitely, as they would be without colonization, they would answer neither the purposes of God nor the just demands of the human collectively" Continuing in the same breath, Rev. Muller declares, "Humanity must not, cannot allow the incompetence, negligence, and laziness of the uncivilised peoples to leave idle indefinitely the wealth which God confided to them, charging them to make it serve the good of all" (AC 2010: 39). Though these quotations would not suffice to understand the entire spectrum of colonialism, an aspect of the civilising mission of the West becomes evident.

In the eyes of the West, civilisation is equal to colonisation. But according to Aime Cesaire, an Algerian contemporary of Fanon, this civilising mission has the potential for the negation of civilisation it harps on. How? By absolving its responsibility to treat the non-western native on equal footing, and by legitimising the violence, physical and psychical, perpetrated on the non-western masses, the West became de-civilised and perpetuated fascism and Nazism on its own people (AC 2010: 36, 40). Can we call it the dialectics of violence? The self

<sup>1</sup> Manichean is a believer in a syncretistic religious dualism originating in Persia in the third century A.D; a believer in religious or philosophical dualism.

which inflicts violence on the other conveniently forgets the fact of the return of violence to its own body, not in the sense of repayment of the violence by the other, but by the life-world that legitimises and accomplishes the violence on the other. In other words, the modern civilisation advocated through colonising missions of the West, divides the world into two to fulfil its civilising mission; it does not end there; it perpetuates the Manichean tendency on its own body of people. How this becomes possible in the colonial life-world? As colonialism is basically an expression of economic imperialism (JML 2010: 7-8) together with cultural hegemony (JML 2010: 17-8), those elements which do not form the part of this project are termed 'barbaric' (anti-national!); in naming them, an exclusion is justified; and through this exclusionary justice, the civilising mission itself becomes barbaric as a means to achieve this civilisational project. The relation between the colonising subject and the colonised object is not a dialogic process but a process of assimilation and absorption with the ambiguous consent of the colonised native.

In his book, *Orientalism*, Edward Said quotes Isaiah Berlin to understand the anti-empirical reality of colonial representations. Isaiah Berlin says, "In (such a) ... cosmology, the world of men (and, in some versions, the entire universe) is a single, all-inclusive hierarchy... what are the relations of coordination and subordination between the goals of the various goal-pursuing entities in the harmonious pyramid which they collectively form. If this is a true picture of reality, then historical explanation, like every other form of explanation, must consist, above all, in the attribution of individuals, groups, nations, species, each to its own proper place in the universal pattern... This attitude is profoundly anti-empirical" (EWS 1978: 70). In Gramscian terminology, it is called hegemony where the dominant elite rules over the dominated through the consent of the dominated to subjugate themselves within the orchestrated pyramidal pattern of reality. This pyramidal construction of reality, where the different parts of the reality are assigned a place within the structural pattern of the pyramid, is of representative nature, and not empirical. For Edward Said, the articulation of the colonised self in the Oriental literatures is of the model of theatrical re-presentation; hence it is anti-empirical.

*Orientalism* talks about how the colonised people were mis(s)-re-presented by the West. "Orientalism responded more to the culture that produced it than to its putative object, which was also produced by the West" says Said (EWS 1978: 22). In that sense, it is not merely anti-empirical, but it is anti-dialogical too. Since, the texts produced by the Oriental scholars were for the consumption of the West; it did not talk to the people of the East. The dialogue between the colonial master and the colonised subject was not possible in such a situation, as the relation is that of the superior and the inferior, and hence it is neurotic, according to Fanon. From the position of this neurosis, the self and the other in the colonial life-world are explained by Fanon.

While analysing colonialism phenomenological, Fanon says, “colonialism includes not only the interrelations of objective historical conditions but also human attitudes toward these conditions” (FF 1986: 62). Though such attitudes are fundamentally based on the reality of the objective socio-economic conditions of the colonial world, they are subjective too. It is not psychological, but it is built on the inner relationship between the consciousness and the social context (FF 1986: 72). But the social context is a skewed reality. Speaking about the Algerian colonial context, this skewed reality is based on the collective unconscious of the white about the black. This collective unconscious springs from the racist social structure, where the white never felt inferior to the black whereas the black never felt superior to the white (FF 1986: 68). As this skewed reality is based on the exploitative social structure, it affirms the exploitation culturally too, like an ‘edict of a biblical nature’ (FF 1986: 65).

And the white man is the victim of the unconscious – the myths about the black – as the black is foreign to the white and so the black is represented as obscure. The unconscious becomes conscious through the displacement of it on the black, and in the process the black is the victim of white civilisation. This unconscious is expressed through the collective catharsis through comics, games and cartoons (FF 1986: 112-3, 135, 147-8). In this process, the unconscious white victim survives through the victimisation of the other, making the other as the inferior to the victim. Here, the alterity for the black is not the black, but the civilising white master. Hence, the black ceases to exist, but exists *with* the European and not *as* the black (FF 1986: 70-2). The inferiority and the non-existence of the black are due to the presence of the white, and hence the black wants to bleach him/herself to become white.

This collective unconscious, though it has its basis in economic structure of reality, is also due to the perception of the black or the East as the exotic other. The lack of awareness of the life-world of the others, a cause of neurosis, is replaced with theatrically managed representations of the other through the manipulative knowledge practices, if Said is called for to explain this process. “The Orient then seems to be, not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe. An Orientalist is but the particular specialist in knowledge for which Europe at large is responsible, in the way that an audience is historically and culturally responsible for (and responsive to) dramas technically put together by the dramatist” (EWS 1978: 63). The non-familiar is familiarised through the theatrical imaginations of the textual and other discursive practices.

In this representative reality of the colonialism, where Manichean neurosis is the norm, let us see how the self and the other are constructed through the discussions of Fanon. He wishes, as a psychiatrist, to make his

patients and readers not only conscious of the unconscious through existential phenomenological analysis, but also to act in the direction of a change in social structure (FF 1986: 74).

## MANICHAISM OF THE COLONIAL LIFE-WORLD

We have already seen that the colonial life-world is based on an unequal relation between the colonised and the coloniser, based on the Manichean neurosis. Hence, an analysis of the objectivity of the various prejudices prevailing in the colonial environment requires a dialectic which needs a constant adoption of positions, feels Fanon (FF 1986: 33). From both sides of reality, how the colonial life-world produces meaning for the oppressed and the oppressor needs an examination, if one wants to come to an objective understanding of the mechanisms of the colonial life-world. Basically, it needs to be reminded at the beginning of the phenomenological analysis of the colonial life-world that it is not enough to stick to a position, either coloniser or the colonised, but shifting of positions is necessary. Because, “The Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation” (FF 1986: 42-3). Hence, shifting between the positions of the coloniser and the colonised gives us a window to look into the presumptive nature of the colonial life-world, in order for a later exercise of phenomenological reduction to reach a humane world. Shifting of positions means that the world is not one, but segmented/compartmentalised into two.

Further, this colonial life-world of Algeria which Fanon talks about is of the nature of graded inequality with different identities, ranging from black, mulatto, Arab and white. Within the identity of black, the worldview is further divided into Senegalese and Martinician<sup>2</sup>. With such a wide array of differentiated identities, the worldview of each identity is constructed differently in respect of other identities.

While talking about the relation between the woman of colour and the white man, he says, “It is our problem to ascertain to what extent authentic love will remain unattainable before one has purged oneself of that feeling of inferiority or that Adlerian exaltation, that overcompensation, which seem to be the indices of the black *Weltanschauung*” (FF 1986: 28-9). Though this inferiority is built upon the economic foundations historically, still by quoting the work of Mayotte Capecia’s *Je Suis Martiniquaise*, he says, ‘one is white above a certain financial level’ (FF 1986: 29). For Mayotte, the white and black represent two poles of a world, each sealed into its own whiteness or blackness in a full narcissistic cry. The protagonist of this novel tried to cross it by pouring her inkwell on his (her white lover) head to blacken/nitrify himself; she failed. So she now attempts to bleach her

<sup>2</sup> One can compare this with Indian reality where such a graded inequality is perpetuated through casteism or the *varna* system.

own body and mind by laundering it. What she wants is a kind of lactification, says Fanon (FF 1986: 31-3). This racial conflict co-exists in her body.

W.E.B. Du Bois would call it ‘double consciousnesses. By referring to the racial reality of America, Du Bois says, “The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, - a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body... The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife – this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self... to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows” (WEBD 1903: 3-4).

After giving Mayotte a child, her white lover, Andre, leaves her, to carry the *white message*, with an instruction to Mayotte that ‘You will bring him up, you will tell him about me, you will say, ‘He was a superior person. You must work hard to be worthy of him’’. In this way, the white man gifts his civilisation whereas the black woman cannot seize it permanently, except having his progeny within her (FF 1986: 36-7).

The black woman’s relation with a white man is to become white. But the mulatto’s relation with a white is not only to turn white, but also to avoid slipping back to become black. In both the cases, however, they undergo a phenomenon called as *affective erethism*, an abnormal response to a stimulus, with an attempt to acquire what is prohibited by aspiring to win admittance into the white world which does not accept them because of its own self-determined superiority (FF 1986: 32, 38, 42).

On the other hand, when a white woman accepts a black man, there is automatically a romantic aspect. It is a giving, not a seizing. But in the case of the black relation to the white woman, there is feeling of giving and grasping the white world to make it his own. But this winning is possible at the level of dream, idea and knowledge. Because, in the colonial civilisation, the black is uncivilised whereas the black student is civilised, the contradiction persists in spite of his having acquired the knowledge of the civilisation. It turns into the conflict of being and having. He rejects what he loves to turn towards what attracts him. The other has thwarted him, yet it is only from this other that he expects improvement. He puts himself as the proof in order to prove something; “unable to be assimilated, unable to pass unnoticed, he consoles himself by associating with the dead, or at least the absent.” He slips into the abandonment neurosis, only to externalise the neurosis by way of revenge in

marrying a white woman. The white man agrees to give his sister on the condition that ‘you are not black, you are extremely brown’. He marries the white woman, not out of love, but out of the satisfaction of being the master of her (FF 1986: 32, 45-59).

The relation of the black man towards the white man is that of ‘gifting without end’. Quoting a story about St. Peter at the gate of heaven, receiving a white, a mulatto and a black, Fanon says that the black was quite happy with a wide smile to carry the bags of the white and the mulatto, when asked them individually what do they want. Here, Fanon says that the black cannot take pleasure by being insular to the white; he seeks admittance to the white world. Ego-withdrawal as a successful defence mechanism is not possible for the black, so he needs always the approval/recognition of the white (FF 1986: 34, 36).

In all these relations of the people of colour, “there is a constant effort to run away from his (her) own individuality, to annihilate his (her) own presence... Negro, having been made inferior, proceeds from humiliating insecurity through strongly voiced self-accusation to despair. The attitude of the black man toward the white, or toward his own race, often duplicates almost completely a constellation of delirium, frequently bordering on the region of the pathological” (FF 1986: 43). But the white, being entangled in the superior relation to the coloured people, have no problem in realising his neurotic self due to their position of social authority. Is it possible for us to explain this whole issue of neurosis of the middle class black through Sartre's notion of bad faith?

## **SELF AND OTHER IN COLONIAL LIFE-WORLD**

“For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man. Some critics will take it on themselves to remind us that this proposition has a converse. I say that this is false. The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man. Overnight the Negro has been given two frames of reference within which he has had to place himself. His metaphysics, or, less pretentiously, his customs and the sources on which they were based, were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilization that he did not know and that imposed itself on him” (FF 1986: 82-3). In relation to the civilising colonial mission of the West, the Blackness is imposed upon the black with no hope for ontological resistance. His/her being is sealed into objecthood. The black becomes a non-being. This non-existence is not due to his feeling inferior to the white, but the black body encounters difficulty in the development of bodily schema. Sealed into the historicity, and being responsible for the body, the black race and the black ancestors, “corporeal schema crumbled, its place taken by a racial epidermal schema. In the train it was no longer a question of being aware of the body as a third person but

in a triple person... It was not that I was finding febrile coordinates in the world. I existed triply: I occupied space. I moved toward the other... and the evanescent other, hostile but not opaque, transparent, not there, disappeared. Nausea..." (FF 1986: 84).

Invoking Hegelian dialectics between the self and the other, Fanon explains how the black is denied of his existence. The reciprocity between the white and the black is curtailed due the racial epidermalisation of the black. "It is in the degree to which I go beyond my own immediate being that I apprehend the existence of the other as a natural and more than natural reality. If I close the circuit, if I prevent the accomplishment of movement in two directions, I keep the other within himself. Ultimately, I deprive him even of this being-for-itself" (FF 1986: 169). When the dialogical circuit between the self and the other is cut off, the only possible resolution of the conflict between the self and the other is to accept the other as it poses itself, which is different from natural reality. In the process, the self also is supposed to accept the recognition offered by the other. Hence the relation between the self and the other in the colonial life-world is built on the elimination of the agonistic conflict that exists between the equally free individuals. Taking a clue from Sartre, Fanon says, "Human reality in-itself-for-itself can be achieved only through conflict and through the risk that conflict implies" (FF 1986: 170). But in the case of the colonised human, the in-itself-for-itself is never possible, as the relation between the self and the other in the colonial life-world is built upon inequality.

When the recognition from the colonising other is impossible for the colonised self in the present, the colonised self undertakes a fanciful flight into its past history, that is, Negro culture and the magico-social structure of Negritude, to assert itself in the face of the colonising subject. "From the opposite end of the white world, a magical Negro culture was hailing me... I had rationalized the world and the world had rejected me on the basis of color prejudice. Since no agreement was possible on the level of reason, I threw myself back toward unreason... Out of the necessities of my struggle I had chosen the method of regression, but the fact remained that it was an unfamiliar weapon; here I am at home; I am made of the irrational; I wade in the irrational" (FF 1986: 93). Out of this regression comes the assertion of the self which went unrecognised as human by the colonising other. Here one may remind oneself of the nationalist discourses which harp on the past glory, to counter the colonial discourses against the native. Here, in the assertion of colonised self in the glory of past history, the Negro feels rehabilitated and recognised as a human, no longer a zero in the face of the 'civilising' coloniser. This remarkable rediscovery of the human self, against the polemical self of the coloniser, made the Negro to feel that "The white man was wrong, I was not a primitive, not even a half-man, I belonged to a race that had already been working in gold and silver two thousand years ago" (FF 1986: 97-99).



This further leads to the modern predicament offered by scientific and objective rationality. When the black was celebrating the ‘unreason’ of the past glory, the presence of the modern predicament threatens his/her self. This predicament was accentuated by the presence of the colonising master who defines the self with racial and colour prejudices. “Thus my unreason was countered with reason, my reason with “real reason” (of the scientifically colonising self)... I wanted to be typically Negro – it was no longer possible. I wanted to be white – that was joke. And, when I tried, on the level of ideas and intellectual activity to reclaim my negritude, it was snatched away from me. Proof was presented that my effort was only a term in the dialectic” (FF 1986: 101).

It is quite interesting to note, as Sartre explained it through the protagonist of *Nausea* reflecting under the chestnut tree, that the black existence is not merely rooted in his individual self; but it is kneaded in the blackness, the facticity of being black in the white colonial world. For, “In terms of consciousness, the consciousness is held out as an absolute density filled with itself, a stage preceding any invasion, any abolition of the ego by desire” (FF 1986: 103). The rediscovery of the black self is only a term in the dialectic which needs transcendence in the colonial life-world of the black, a driving out of myself from myself, a flight into the colonising self. While we discuss the self in the cultural terms, it should not be understood that culture is static and absolute in itself; with due recognition to the fact that culture is ever-changing, dynamic, fluid and plural-in-itself that Fanon writes this. It is an existential account of the encounter of the white colonising self by the coloured and colonised self.

Fanon argues against Sartre that “Jean-Paul Sartre had forgotten that Negro suffers in his body quite differently from the white man. Between the white man and me the connection was irrevocably one of transcendence” (FF 1986: 106). In existential parlance, the transcendence is part of becoming that happens out of the free choice of the authentic human. But in the case of the colonial life-world, this is a highly charged-up atmosphere where the choice is not based on the freedom of the individual, but the forged-up necessity of colonialism, cooked up through the grid of knowledge and systems. The colonised self is forced to transcend its own ‘native’ self, as the ‘native’ is represented as inferior and exotic. The encounter does not happen in an atmosphere of equal opportunity, though colonial masters wanted to civilise the world with one of their enlightenment virtue of equality, but in a life-world that is Manichean. Writing in the times of anti-colonial struggles, Fanon does not argue for avoiding the transcendence of the colonised self to reach out to the colonising other, but for him, this transcendence should not be built upon the violence of reasoning. But in his later book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, it should be noted that he argues for the retaining of colonial scientific machinery in the process of building the nation in the post-nationalist epoch. In other words, the colonial system is not a rational system, but a rationalising system – so the dissent and critique are necessitated.

Sartre, in his Rome Lectures of 1961, raises an important point in the case of subjectivity. “The exteriorization of subjectivity implies something like giving it institutional form” (JPS 2014: 104). How to escape the institutionalisation of the self in the face of the institutions of social power which tries to make the subject as an object? The absence of social power presupposes and necessitates the political power to gain a share or equilibrium in the social power. Being true to authentic existential living based on existential freedom, Fanon tries to build a definition of the oppressed self, avoiding the definition imposed on them by others. In the words of Sartre, “What is essential in subjectivity is knowing oneself only outside, in one’s own inventiveness, and never inside. If subjectivity knows itself inside, it is dead; knowing itself outside it does indeed become an object, but an object in its results, and this leads us back to a subjectivity that is not really objectifiable” (JPS 2014: 107).

Fanon’s description of the colonised self in the colonial life-world basically tries to avoid, as Sartre says, the conformity of the self to the existing colonial social power and its past solidified culture-historical self as well as it resists the coloniser’s attempt to object-ify the self of the oppressed.

## **DECOLONIZATION – AN ANTI-COLONIAL EMANCIPATORY DISCOURSE**

As discussed earlier, Fanon explains the colonial world as a world divided into compartments, as a world cut in two and as a world characterized by the dichotomy it imposes upon the whole people. “By its very structure, colonialism is separatist and regionalist. Colonialism does not simply state the existence of tribes; it also reinforces it and separates them” (FF 1963: 37-38, 45-46, 94). The divisions are not an extension of the socio-economic structure or the economic superstructure of the colonial society; but the colonial world is by nature Manichean. In order for its sustenance, the colonial world needs to be Manichean. That is the reason why Fanon offers a great space for the analysis of the importance/significance of violence in the process of decolonization, for decolonization itself is a violent phenomenon; it is quite simply the replacing of a certain “species” of men by another “species” of men; it is about total, complete and absolute substitution; its proof of success lies in a whole social structure being changed from the bottom up; it is a program of complete disorder because it changes the order; it is experienced by the colonizers in the form of terrifying future; it makes the last to be the first and the first to be the last in a historical process; more importantly, decolonization is the abolition of one zone, its burial in the depths of the earth (FF 1963: 35-37, 41, 46).

The Manichaeism of colonial conditions is beyond the intellectual-rational exercise, if one analyses it purely from the emancipatory praxis of the colonized masses. In the terminology of R.K. Merton, the adoption of

the Manicheism by the colonial world is a ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’ (RKM 1957: 423)<sup>3</sup>. “What began as a figment of the imagination eventually becomes a reality. This process is accelerated by the real sanctions and administrative measures which draw their justification from the racial fiction: the colonized is lazy, hence punitive measures are legitimate; he is unproductive, hence he has to be paid low wages; he is stupid, hence he must be protected in his own interest; he is stupid, hence police brutality and ‘stern justice’ are necessary to control him”, says Renate Zahar (RZ 2010: 23). Further, quoting Memmi, Zahar says, “Colonization produces the colonized just as we have seen it produce the colonizers” (RZ 2010: 24). The fictitious imaginations and their rationalizations affect both the colonizer and the colonized. The defacing/dehumanisation of the suppressed makes the suppressor to be inhuman. By rationalising the fictitious normatively of the colonized and the colonizer, the fluidity/transformability of the existential aspects is got rid of from actuality. The self-fulfilling prophecy works through the logic of circularity in colonial discourse.

Albert Memmi describes this self-fulfilling prophecy of colonialism thus: “The bond between colonizer and the colonized is thus both destructive and creative. It destroys and recreates the two partners in the colonization process as colonizer and colonized: the former disfigured into an oppressor, an uncouth, fragmented human being, a cheat solely preoccupied with his privileges, the latter into a victim of oppression, broken in his development and accepting his own degradation” (AM 2003: 133).

But there is a chance for the transformation of this inhuman settler into being human through different forms of exploitation. Sartre opines that “Crammed with (exploited) riches, Europe accorded the human status *de jure* to its inhabitants. With us (Europeans), to be a man is to be an accomplice of colonialism, since all of us without exception have profited by colonial exploitation... the European has only been able to become a man through creating slaves and monsters” (FF 1963: 25-26).

However, in case of the natives it is a different story altogether. “The terms which the settler uses when he mentions the native are zoological terms” and by declaring natives to be insensible to ethics and their traditions, their myths as the sign of poverty of spirit and as a deforming element, the natives are excluded from the benefits of the colonial exploitation (FF 1963: 41-42). This type of Manichaeism of the settlers produce a Manichaeism of the native, says Fanon. If “the settler’s work is to make even dreams of liberty impossible for the native”, then “the native’s work is to imagine all possible methods for destroying the settler”. If “the appearance of the settler has meant in the terms of syncretism the death of the aboriginal society, cultural lethargy and the petrification of

<sup>3</sup> The self-fulfilling prophecy is, in the beginning, a *false* definition of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the originally false conception come *true*.

individuals, for the native, life can only spring up again out of the rotting corpse of the settler” (FF 1963: 93). Thus, the transformative conditions are usurped by the natives from the colonizer only through violence.

It is also important to know how Christianity, language and science serve colonialism in abetting/reifying the Manichaeism of the colonial world. Fanon says, “The church in the colonies is the white people’s Church, the foreigner’s church. She does not call the native to God’s ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor”. With its insistence on forgiveness, it produces an ersatz conflict among the natives. In the colonial context, a good Christian means a good slave, a steady, devoted boy, a good commander’s chain gang captain (FF 1963: 42, 67, 86).

In the case of language, Ziauddin Sardar mentions in his Foreword to *Black Skin White Masks* that there are 134 synonyms for whiteness with positive connotations in *Roget’s Thesaurus*, while there are 120 synonyms for black and blackness but none with positive connotation. While speaking about his experiences, Fanon mentions about white man’s equivalential chain of references about the black. In this chain of equivalences, the body is related with blackness and consequently it is equated with language and soul as black. The vast number of linguistic expressions makes the black man the equivalent of sin, by virtue of an ethical transit (FF 1986: xiii, 139, 146, 148). The virtues are embodied on the black and blackness which makes possible the construction and repetition of Manichaeism of colonialism.

As noted earlier, the Manichean world of colonialism produces the Manichean world of the native as a dialectical reaction. The illness of moral consciousness which is accompanied by auto-accusation and auto-destruction, takes hetero-destructive forms among the natives, says Fanon. For, the melancholic native does not commit suicide but he kills (FF 1963: 299)<sup>4</sup>. In the sphere of psycho-affective equilibrium of the native, we may find that colonial system of Manichaeism becomes the source of violence.

As regards the relation between culture and colonialism, colonial system thrives with the distortion of the native culture. Colonialism is not content with its rule upon the present and the future. “By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it” and so cultural estrangement among the natives is so characteristic of colonial epoch. As a consequence, the turning to the cultural past and cultural claims of the native intellectual is not a luxury but a necessity in any coherent program of decolonization (FF 1963: 210-211).

<sup>4</sup> This is the case with the common masses of the native whereas the native intellectual behaves in a different way, according to Fanon.

Thus Fanon discusses about many aspects of decolonization as a process that does not only happen in the economic realm, but also a process that is supposed to happen in the realms of culture, social structure and language. He discusses about disalienation in his *Black Skin and White Masks* as a psychiatrist concerned with the colonized individual of Algeria; here he uses mostly the methods of existential phenomenology and psychology to explain the process of disalienation of the individual, as a process of decolonizing the individual. However, in his *The Wretched of the Earth*, he discusses decolonization as a collective communal project against the colonialist discourses. It is quite interesting to note that even within the Fanonian description of colonialism and decolonization, we find a variety; one discusses it from the psychological and existential phenomenological standpoint, whereas the other discourse discusses colonialism as collective experience of the colonized from the socio-cultural, social-psychological and socio-economic standpoints.

## CONCLUSION

In colonial life-world, the formation of self is determined either in the derivative reactionary discourses of national sovereignty or in the re-presentational discourses of colonial sovereignty. The self cannot be articulated beyond the confines of these assumed sovereignties, otherwise it will be branded as deviant and exotic. Even in the post-colonial context, the self is conferred a civil identity. The national and socio-cultural identity of the self is understood as the progressive destiny of individual human element, as a transformation from nature to culture. This imaginary direct relation between the social authority and the individual interest is objectified through the 'Rule of Law'. Even beyond the colonial era, the colonised nations accept and emulate the definition of the self as the 'national self', as a mimetic continuation of the colonial life-world and as a reactionary discourse against the colonial world view. "The Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation" (FF 1986: 42-3). This is colonial situation where everyday life revolves around a 'constellation of delirium' and neurosis, explains Homi Bhabha. The cultural mummification of the colonised by the coloniser, with the aid of Orientalist scholars, considers the culture of the native as archaic and inert entropy. Thus, the colonial worldview turns the idea of human, not merely into self and the other, but it enshrines the self with its own 'Otherness', with its inertia. This intentional act of the coloniser, the colonised self gets alienated from its being, as a desire for the Other of the self; whereas the reactionary national derivative discourses take upon the inert 'Otherness' as its identity (cultural nationalism) of the self, the colonised native wants to bleach his body to become a white in order to respond to its own alienated self. The initial intentionality of the colonised self needs to bracket out its neurotic responses to the colonial life-world, if it has to emerge as humanised self. The current nationalist discourses can be understood, in this way, as the de-historicised alienated

self which relates itself with the mummified culture of the past, not as a dynamic emergence of the self towards its unrevealed dimensions of horizons. In the process of de-historicising the self, the self is de-personalised too.

Further, as we witnessed during the analysis of the understanding of Fanon on colonial life-world that such a phenomenological exercise warrants the constant shifting of positions in order for the proper grasp of its reality, such a shifting of positions underlines the basic split of reality into two, that is, the life-world of the oppressor and that of the oppressed. If phenomenology, in its purest generalisation, operates with the notion that the oppression itself is a common-sense psychological notion that needs to be bracketed out in order to understand the reality in its proper and objective sense, the question arises regarding the validity of Fanon's analysis. To put it in other words, the phenomenological exercise, which considers the reality of exploitation itself as the common-sense psychology which needs to undergo phenomenological reduction in order for the objective understanding of reality, cannot understand the division of reality as real and actual, but can only lead to an elitist understanding of reality.

In the context of Fanonian discourse on colonialism, Fanon's criticism of Sartre's antipathy, due to his being French, needs to be mentioned. Fanon understands colonialism as it is experienced by the native. Addressing the Europeans, Sartre has clearly stated in his preface to *'The Wretched of the Earth'* that Fanon speaks of colonizers often, but never to them; that he speaks to the colonized only; that he demonstrates the tactics of colonialism for his brothers and his aim is to teach them to beat the colonizers at their game (FF 1963: 10).

Another interesting aspect of the cultural contestation of post colonialism is the inversion of the logic of colonialism; the use of the tools that colonial structure provided to contest its own masters. This is clear in the statement of Sartre on Fanon's colonial discourses; for, Sartre says, "The black Goncourt's and the yellow Nobels are finished; the days of colonized laureates are over. An ex-native, French-speaking, bends that language to new requirements, makes use of it, and speaks to the colonized only: "Natives of all underdeveloped countries, unite!"... If he (Fanon) demonstrates the tactics of colonialism, the complex play of relations which unite and oppose the colonists to the people of the mother country, it is for his brothers; his aim is to teach them to beat us at our own game" (FF 1963: 10). This statement shows that one of the methods of postcolonial cultural contestation is the inversion or subversion of the logic of colonialism.

Even if, say, that the phenomenology accepts the reality of exploitation, what theoretical ends it has for the decolonisation project, becomes another question. For Fanon raises a pertinent question regarding what it

means to be civilised, modern, human and objective in the parlance of whites. “From time to time, he (black) has fought for Liberty and Justice, but these were always white liberty and white justice; that is, values secreted by his masters” (FF 1986: 172). To become objective in this scheme of colonial life-world, it is necessary to cease being a black. “For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man” (FF 1986: 82-3), is the dictum of the colonial life-world. In this case, where the phenomenological reduction of the blackness would lead to? Will it lead to the whiteness, if the white also do not undergo the phenomenological reduction of their whiteness?

This returns us to the age-old problem of the universal and particular. The dominance of western culture and its attendant project of globalisation should not be confused with universalism. Fanon surely wants to transcend the ethnic perspectives and affiliation to wage anti-colonial struggle in the name of universal human values. Taking a clue from Nicholas Harrison, Ziauddin Sardar states in his foreword to *Black Skin and White Masks* that the universal needs to be relativised and historicised in terms of localised reality (FF 1986: xvii). This stand is mostly taken by the postcolonial scholars too.

Further, consciousness is understood as the outcome of one’s social existence (KM 1984: 21). Edward Said says, “One can have no quarrel with such an ambition in theory (to be non-political, scholarly, academic, impartial, above partisan or small-minded doctrinal belief), perhaps, but in practice the reality is much more problematic. No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of a society. These continue to bear on what he does professionally, even though naturally enough his research and its fruits do attempt to reach a level of relative freedom from the inhibitions and the restrictions of brute, everyday reality” (EWS 1978: 10). If there is a relation between the life-world and one’s consciousness, then what we really mean by the word ‘objectivity’ also becomes a problematic.

In summary, I would like to state that a system of thought seems to be the answer of all maladies of the world, if one tries to operate with the tools provided by the same system. But the system should stand the scrutiny of other systems of thought as well. A system will become universal only when it engages itself in dialogue with other systems of thought, not in its exclusion from other systems. With the emergence of post-structuralism, post-Marxism and postcolonial studies, the knowledge, which we believed to be true and absolute once, comes under scrutiny from a whole set of problems that they raise.

The shift in knowledge systems, from the paradigm of subject and object to that of individual and the social and to that of the oppressor and the oppressed, has thrown before us quite a new set of problems that were unknown to the system which elaborated its whole system of thought on the relationship between the subject and the object of perception. The question as to how the systems of thought which developed within the colonising countries, if it does not question the colonial system identifying itself with the oppressed colonial subjects, are suitable to understand the problems of the colonised masses becomes so relevant today. It does not mean that these various systems of thought are irrelevant for the colonised, just because they developed from the colonising countries, but it should stand the scrutiny of the questions raised from the colonised masses too. The systems would be useful for analysis if they are subverted/inverted to suit the requirements of the study of colonialism from the standpoint of the colonised.

I would like to end with the words of McLeod who, while discussing about post colonialism, says thus: “The act of reading in postcolonial contexts is by no means a neutral activity. *How* we read is just as important as *what* we read... the ideas we encounter within post colonialism and the issues they raise demand that conventional reading methods and models of interpretation need to be rethought if our reading practices are to contribute to the contestation of colonial discourses to which post colonialism aspires. Rethinking conventional modes of reading is fundamental to post colonialism” (JML 2010: 33-4). This would awaken us to the challenges that the post-colonial context throws to the existing systems of knowledge. An existential phenomenology which does not accept the Manichaeism of the reality could not address the problems of the oppressed. Towards this end, the phenomenological methods need to be fine-tuned, on the lines of what Fanon says about colonialism, if it has to serve the emancipatory aspirations of the colonised and the suppressed – as the notion of emancipation itself is built on the understanding that there is unequal and compartmentalised reality.

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