

PhD THESIS

HUMANISM AFTER COLONIALISM

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ABSTRACT

HUMANISM AFTER COLONIALISM

I will argue that the modern can be viewed as a stage of apprenticeship in an ethics of responsibility. The debates on racial slavery in the Americas reveal a fractured modernity, where a counter-discourse of domination coexists with a totalising impulse. The complicity of humanism and oppression marks the consolidation of a racialised, autonomous and rational modern subject defined against its 'others'. However, I suggest that Derridean critiques of humanism, such as those presented in Robert Young's *White Mythologies*, perpetuate the links between humanism and colonialism. The 'game with Hegel' is kept in play through a rigid dichotomy between modernity and postmodernity. By reducing modern discourse to a synthesis between thesis and antithesis, they do not allow for the possibility of non-coincidence between two contraries.

Fanon's emphasis on lived experience, Arendt's enlarged mentality, and Levinas's non-ontological transcendence provide a break with the complicity between humanism and colonialism. While Fanon articulates the perplexities inherent in finding a path from the universal to the particular, Arendt and Levinas give two solutions, one political and the other ethical, to this problematisation. Arendt privileges the safeguarding of a space of plurality through law. Levinas emphasises the ethical relationship between same and Other, where the latter is transcendent and therefore unassimilable by the former. This thesis aims to open and reveal gaps, by pointing to ways of thinking humanism that problematise the common reduction of the humanist legacy to a totalising outlook.

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CHAPTER ONE

ON HUMANISM: NEGOTIATING ALTERITY FROM WITHIN

I. Introduction: The Post-Colonial Dilemma

In *Between Camps*, Paul Gilroy posits a planetary humanism founded on an essence of 'human-ness' that would provide the basis for global solidarity between human beings, thus eliminating the Enlightenment tradition's need for categories, primordially that of race, destined to divide and classify the human. Celebrating the post-modern implosion of identities, Gilroy paradoxically seeks to restore a universalist conception of humanity, an ideal of totality composed of a myriad of differences. Different people, whose bodily existence - or being in the world - is conditioned according to the specificity of their social context, nevertheless share in the universal patrimony of 'human-ness' deriving from the similarity of sources for identification and empathy.

The recurrence of pain, disease, humiliation and loss of dignity, grief, and care for those one loves can all contribute to an abstract sense of a human similarity powerful enough to make solidarities based on cultural particularity appear suddenly trivial. (Gilroy, 2000: 17)

Gilroy's emphasis on the universality of 'species being' is conducive to a distancing from the experience of victimisation: since all human beings partake of a common humanity, they have the capacity to situate themselves 'in between' camps and thus empathise with situations of oppression that they themselves may not have been subject to. The experience of victimisation is not a precondition for speaking on behalf of alterity; in fact, the status of 'in between -ness' allows for the transcendence of a strictly delimited camp mentality patent in what Said terms 'possessive

exclusivism', according to which only blacks can speak about racism, or women about feminism.

The idea that possessing a particular identity should be a precondition or qualification for engaging in this kind of work is trivial. The intellectual challenge defined here is that histories of suffering should not be allocated exclusively to their victims. If they were, the memory of the trauma would disappear as the living memory of it died away. (Gilroy, 2000: 114)

The universality of species being that derives from a non-camp view of history would be inductive to the reassessment of a modernist tradition complicit with the European legacy of colonialism. The failure inherent in the universalist conception of Enlightenment humanism resided precisely in its operation within a historiographical scale defined by the hermetic parameters of the nation-state. Thus, while attempting to classify alterity within a unified narrative of civilisation, Enlightenment humanism nevertheless was predicated upon a hierarchy ranging from the primitive to the civilised. Gilroy's metaphor of 'in between-ness' introduces a new historiographical scale to reassess modernity. Universal humanism thus appears as a non-racial humanism concerned with 'the forms of human dignity that race-thinking strips away'. (2000: 17, 114)

Perhaps above all, this attempt to reconceptualise modernity so that it encompasses these possibilities is relevant to the majority who are unlikely to count themselves as affiliated with either of the principal groups: victims and perpetrators. This difficult stance challenges that unnamed group to witness sufferings that pass beyond the reach of words and, in so doing, to see how an understanding of one's own particularity or identity might be transformed as a result of a principled exposure to the claims of otherness. (Gilroy, 2000: 115)

This change of scale involves an alteration in the temporal scheme used to judge events. According to Gilroy, modernity has been so profoundly ruptured by twentieth-century camps that the latter stand at a threshold demarcating a 'before' and 'after'. This rupture is conducive to a novel ethics which questions the universality allegedly espoused by the modernist legacy, as well as urging for the reconceptualisation of history and tradition according to the notion of a 'compound diaspora identity'. This diaspora, uniting the histories of sufferings wrought by modernity, politicises time, historicity and historicality in two ways: first, by opposing 'western' domination; second, by recognising history as a web, a complex plurality that cannot be unwounded to recover a point of origin. The will to archaism, with its emphasis on the search for authenticity, on one hand, and the will to utopia, with its concomitant estrangement from reality induced by an exclusively future-oriented outlook, on the other, are both transcended by the politicisation of time, the latter which occurs in the present. Linear temporality, or evolutionary teleology, gives way to the syncopated temporal codes of a diaspora whose identity surpasses the dualism of genealogy and geography. (Gilroy, 2000: 87, 122, 126, 341-3, 356)

The diaspora idea encourages critical theory to proceed rigorously but cautiously in ways that do not privilege the modern nation-state and its institutional order over the subnational and supranational patterns of power, communication, and conflict that they work to discipline, regulate, and govern. The concept of space is itself transformed when it is seen in terms of the ex-centric communicative circuitry that has enabled dispersed populations to converse, interact, and more recently even to synchronise significant elements of their social and cultural lives. (Gilroy, 2000: 129)

Reconceptualising modernity from the point of view of the force of raciology in the Enlightenment tradition leads to the establishment of links between transnational histories of trauma. Any particularist considerations of the sufferings of colonial peoples on one hand, and European Jews on the other, are transcended by an optics that embraces their status as 'others' within the manicheistic logic of European imperialism. Residing in between camps entails a decentred comprehension of European history as well as a cosmopolitan ethics that provides the basis for a new, non-racial humanism. (Gilroy, 2000: 80, 84)

It may be better to welcome a change of scale and work toward a more complex picture in a longer time frame, perhaps also within a conceptual scheme that reorients our thinking away from the glamour of ethnos and redirects it to what used to be called "the problem of species being." This could be presented as an exercise in strategic universalism. (Gilroy, 2000: 96)

By resorting to strategic universalism, Gilroy is able to defend the post-modern implosion of essentialist categories such as race whilst paradoxically espousing the universality of 'species being', that is, the specificity of a human identity. According to Gilroy, the transethnic solidarity between human beings patent in the popular media frequently surfaces in the face of other-worldly danger. A new, non-racial humanism on a planetary scale - a planetary humanism -, divorced from the Enlightenment legacy, ought to bring this global solidarity from a utopian future into the present. (2000: 355)

Gilroy is thus using postmodernism to write back against itself: a deconstruction of identities points towards a totality, an ultimate human identity, contrary to the habitual post-modern stance that opposes any form of universalism. Furthermore, despite his argument in favour of the implosion of race, Gilroy is ultimately acknowledging the force of raciology in the construction of reality;

thus, while claiming the inexistence of race on one hand, he simultaneously affirms its validity as a concept, albeit artificial, which nevertheless became reality in the process of constructing reality. *Between Camps* is premised on the existence of race; the will to universality, to a human identity, can only be understood as an attempt to embrace particularities, such as race, sex or class, under an all subsuming totality. Therefore, to simultaneously argue for post-modernism and universality can appear contradictory, if we are to restrict ourselves to the current terms of Gilroy's essay.

Moreover, a post-modern perspective regarding the non-existence of race is an academic privilege. Adhering to this view may be dangerous, for if appearances, the manifestation of being in the world, are not taken into account, one risks alienation from the latter. This is not to deny that the boundaries of what it means to be human are artificial and the product of a constant negotiation (2000: 18); however, taking into account that the only reality we know is that which is negotiated, perhaps it is best to write back against this artifice from within rather than without the 'category' of race. This is the only form of being politically effective, for the political realm is a space of appearances, in which only appearances can be protected by law. Although ideally liberation from race would pave the way for a politics conducive to both individual and social development - by providing 'answers to the pathological problems represented by genomic racism, the glamour of sameness, and the eugenic projects currently nurtured by their confluence' (2000: 41) -, in reality the deconstruction of race within the political realm might leave human beings with no more than their mere humanity to appeal for the defence of their rights. Despite Gilroy's utopianism, he recognises the dilemma inherent in forsaking appearances in politics; his urge for strategic universalism is an attempt to come to terms with the loss of political agency that the post-modern decentring of the subject can easily lead to.

Gilroy's advocacy of 'in between-ness' begs the question of whether it is really possible to situate oneself outside a camp: is not residing 'between camps' a camp in itself? And, similarly to the celebration of the elimination of race, the glamorisation of an 'in between' status may be considered to be a privilege of a cosmopolitan environment: it is debatable whether this concept can retain its celebratory character in contexts which have had little exposure to the commingling of cultures brought about by the fact of colonialism. The laudatory quality of 'in between-ness' risks obscuring the confusion and ambivalence that is often wrought by the existence of a double consciousness that finds itself in but is not of a particular culture. A concept of diaspora that unites histories of sufferings is, furthermore, essentially utopian in that time and again daily experience reveals the particularities that oppose each other within this traumatised 'totality'. The West is generally pointed to as the culprit in the histories of victimisation brought upon humanity; however, if one is to defend a universal humanism, then the universality of terror and sufferings in the non-Western world must also be accounted for. The camp mentality is not necessarily negative; in fact, it can even play in favour of a deconstruction of race. The concept of the nation-state, for example, can be posited as protecting citizens, independently of race, sex, or class, as long as the latter were born within its boundaries. It would thus be important to draw a distinction between the nation-state and nationalism, as well as between race and racism, or sex and sexism, or class and elitism.¹

Gilroy's utopianism derives essentially from the use of strategic universalism to account for a human identity, a species being in opposition to ethnos, without problematising what this human identity consists of. Gilroy is asserting the possibility of defending a universal humanism whilst remaining 'post-modern'. Like Spivak,

¹ The above arguments against Gilroy's utopianism are drawn from Hannah Arendt's views on politics as a space of appearance, and the nation-state as a delimited area within which the rights of citizens can be protected.

he does not appear to be concerned with any incoherence deriving from the attempt to conciliate humanist and anti-humanist standpoints. (Spivak, 1990: 11) However, whereas he defends a strategic universalism, Spivak alludes to a strategic essentialism: whilst Gilroy seeks to eliminate categories such as race, class and sex in favour of a wider universalism inherent in human identity, Spivak seeks to hang on to those essentialisms so as to write back against them.

... as anti-sexism is reactive, it seems to me that there one has to produce a reverse legitimisation of sexism itself. If you just define yourself as anti-sexist you are indeed legitimising sexism. I don't care; as I said, I am not interested in being pure even as I remain an anti-essentialist. It seems to me that that kind of contamination of my own possible theoretical excellence is how situational practice norms my theory. Because if I chose to be pure in that sense ..., displacing the question of sexual difference rather than legitimising it by acting to confront the discourse of the sexist, it seems to me that all I would gain is theoretical purity, which in itself I question in every way. (Spivak, 1990: 12)

Deconstructing race, sex or class would, according to Spivak, be a form of seeking to retain theoretical purity. This goal, however, is impossible, for deconstructivists are themselves 'run by a great narrative even as they are busy protecting their theoretical purity by repudiating essentialism'. (Spivak, 1990: 12) Whereas most anti-essentialists would be anti-universalists, Gilroy is an anti-essentialist universalist. Thus, the great narrative that guides his work - that of universalism - is clearly asserted; however, he distances this universalist humanism from that of the Enlightenment tradition. His is allegedly a 'purer' form of humanism than that of modernity. As such, Gilroy is still placing himself in an essentialist position by opposing modernity and the taxonomical categories that the latter gave rise to.

You pick up the universal that will give you the power to fight against the other side, and what you are throwing away by doing that is your theoretical purity. (Spivak, 1990: 12)

Whereas the universal for Gilroy is that which subsumes race, class and sex, that is, the totality that defines human identity, Spivak claims that the universal is 'what the other side gives us' (1990: 12), an essentialist category that one adopts in order to react against it.

Bhabha's 'unsatisfied universals' make a concession to the impossibility of a utopian totality, a harmonious universality. Rather than positing a humanism synonymous with 'oneness', Bhabha speaks of the need to resort to universals in unsatisfied conditions, a strategy that results in 'unexpected transformations'. Totalisation of an event is unrealisable, for a past tradition acquires a different meaning the moment it is brought into the present.

It is this contingent transformative moment in a citation of the universal which sets up a site which neither is nor is not universal, but which is a partial identification. (Bhabha, 1996: 41)

In essence, Gilroy's planetary humanism is similar to Said's attempt to rearticulate a new humanist outlook in *Culture and Imperialism*. The common experience of imperialism would allow human beings to transcend cultural particularities, thus distancing themselves from the dichotomy between Orient/Occident inherent in Orientalist thought, as well as from nativist discourses aimed at writing back at ex-colonial powers.

Gilroy's utopianism may derive from his disavowal of the particular as something on the basis of which a totality can be constructed (Hall, 1996: 40): race, sex and class are to be deconstructed in

favour of a human identity, the latter which is never defined. We are told that Enlightenment thought distinguished itself by the attempt to constantly test the boundaries of the human; however, what are the foundations upon which Gilroy defends the universalism of a planetary humanism? Moreover, although he alludes to the reassessment of modernity as both an ethical and political project, the harmonious 'wholeness' of his humanism prevents him from analysing the ethical and political implications that may derive from any falling out from this unity.

Strategic universalism begs for an analysis of the psychic, ethical and political components that make up species being; it thus consists in an acknowledgement of the tension between the existence of psychic and biological characteristics that determine the generality of human form on one hand, and, on the other, the social and cultural variations that condition the content of this form. The works of Frantz Fanon, Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas will be used in this thesis to address the possibility for negotiating the tension between essentialism and anti-essentialism within the human condition. By breaking with the complicity between the humanism tradition and colonialism, Fanon, Arendt and Levinas might provide a conceptual framework for a revised humanism. While Fanon's new humanism conveys the universality of the psychic process in identity formation vis à vis an Other, Arendt and Levinas give two solutions, one political and the other ethical, to the problems ensuing from differing cultural expressions of human form.

II. Species-Being: Between Conscious Activity and Nature

Man confirms his real social life in his species-consciousness and in his thought he merely repeats his real existence just as conversely his species-being is confirmed in his species-consciousness and exists for itself in its universality as a thinking being. (Marx, 2000: 99)

Arguing against any differentiation between society and individual, Marx presents man, in his particularity, as part of a wider totality comprising all human manifestations of life. The individual embodies a subjective social existence, which corresponds to a mode of species-life. Although the particularity of subjective thought and the generality of species-being are indeed distinct, thought and being form a unity in that it is precisely through the free conscious activity that man becomes species-being. (Marx, 2000: 99, 90)

Man makes his vital activity itself into an object of his will and consciousness. He has a conscious vital activity. He is not immediately identical to any of his characterisations. Conscious vital activity differentiates man immediately from animal vital activity. It is this and this alone that makes man a species-being. He is only a conscious being, that is, his own life is an object to him, precisely because he is a species-being. This is the only reason for his activity being free activity. (Marx, 2000: 90)

Man's status as a conscious species-being - 'as a being that relates to the species as to himself and to himself as to the species' (Marx, 2000: 90) - is confirmed in the construction of an objective world, deriving from the refashioning of inorganic nature. Man's species-life consists in this reworking of nature, so that the latter becomes his product, or his reality. Species-life thus objectifies itself in the object of work: man 'duplicates' himself both in his mind, as well as in the world he has constructed.

Therefore, when alienated labour tears from man the object of his production, it also tears from him his species-life, the real objectivity of his species and turns the advantage he has over animals into a disadvantage in that his inorganic body, nature, is torn from him. Similarly, in that alienated labour degrades man's own free activity to a means, it turns

the species-life of man into a means for his physical existence. (Marx, 2000: 91)

The alienation of man from man ensues from alienated labour: by alienating himself from his species' objectivity in the world, the individual is opposing not only himself but other men. Thus, alienation from species-being reflects itself in alienation between human beings as a result of a general distancing from the human essence. Moreover, man's self-alienation from himself and nature is projected onto the relationship in which he situates himself and nature vis à vis other men. (Marx, 2000: 92)

Through alienated labour, then, man creates not only his relationship to the object and act of production as to alien and hostile men; he creates too the relationship in which other men stand to his production and his product and the relationship in which he stands to these other men. Just as he turns his production into his own loss of reality and punishment and his own product into a loss, a product that does not belong to him, so he creates the domination of the man who does not produce over the production and the product. As he alienates his activity from himself, so he hands over to an alien person an activity that does not belong to him. (Marx, 2000: 92-3)

Through alienated, or externalised labour, the worker establishes the relationship to labour of a man who is alienated from it. Furthermore, the labourer's relationship to his work is ultimately responsible for the capitalist's relationship to it. The worker's alienation from himself and from nature thus results in the creation of private property. Communism seeks to re-establish man as a communal being by eliminating self-alienation. The return of man to himself is allegedly attained through the abolition of private property, the latter which would pave the way for the approximation between the individual and human essence. (Marx, 2000: 93, 97)

This is communism as the complete and conscious return of man conserving all the riches of previous development for man himself as a social, i.e. human being. Communism as completed naturalism is humanism and as completed humanism is naturalism. It is the genuine solution of the antagonism between man and nature and between man and man. It is the true solution of the struggle between existence and essence, between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species. (Marx, 2000: 97)

The individual's reintegration into human life, ensuing from the abolition of private property - and, therefore, of all alienation -, takes the form of a distancing of man from institutions such as religion, family and state, corresponding to an appropriation of his species-being, that is, his human, or social, being. The movement of history is, according to Marx, the conscious process of man's becoming a communal being. Both man as creator and the product of his labour - the object which represents his own existence to fellow men as well as their existence for him - are simultaneously the outcome and the origin of the movement. (2000: 97-8)

So the general character of the whole movement is a social one; as society produces man as man, so it is produced by man ... The human significance of nature is only available to social man; for only to social man is nature available as a bond with other men, as the basis of his own existence for others and theirs for him, and as the vital element in human reality; only to social man is nature the foundation of his own human existence. Only as such has his natural existence become a human existence and nature itself become human. Thus society completes the essential unity of man and nature, it is the genuine resurrection of nature, the accomplished naturalism of man and the accomplished humanism of nature. (Marx, 2000: 98)

The elimination of alienation entails the emancipation of the senses, allowing the latter to become human, in both objective and subjective terms. When the eye's object is humanised, due to its creation by and for man, the eye itself has become human. Rather than relating to an object as a means towards an end, that is, as a mere utility catering to need and enjoyment, the senses engage with the 'thing' directly, for its own sake. However, not only is man relating humanly to the object, but the thing itself is relating humanly to man.

... the thing itself is an objective human relationship to itself and to man and vice versa ... Need and enjoyment have thus lost their egoistic nature and nature has lost its mere utility in that its utility has become human utility. (Marx, 2000: 100)

Man's senses appropriate the object in their relation to it. All objects are the objectification of man himself, insofar as social reality is constituted by the exercise of man's own faculties. Because society takes form in the object, the individual confirms human reality in his relationship to this object: the objects that concretise his individuality become his own objects. However, the mode of object appropriation relies on the nature of the object as well as the sense-faculty that regulates it.

The eye perceives an object differently from the ear and the object of the eye is different from that of the ear. What makes each faculty distinct is just its particular essence and thus also the particular mode of its objectification, of its objectively real, living being. Thus man is affirmed in the objective world not only in thought but through all his senses. (Marx, 2000: 101)

Marx thus attempts to invert Hegelian subjective idealism by emphasising the importance of sense perception and the relation of man to man, in detriment to that of abstract speculative thought.

Although the alienation, or externalisation, of man is a feature of Hegelian philosophy, man takes the abstract form of mind and is thus a conceptual being. For Hegel, human essence is synonymous with self-consciousness. Any object which presents itself to consciousness is overcome through reappropriation into self-consciousness. Thus, the object of consciousness, produced as alien to man, corresponds ultimately to self-consciousness; in other words, the object is 'objectified self-consciousness'. The movement of return from the object to self-consciousness presupposes the transcendence of objectivity and alienation, so that man is posited as a 'spiritual, non-objective being'. (Marx, 2000: 109-10)

... sense perception, religion, state power, etc., are spiritual beings; for spirit alone is the true essence of man and the true form of spirit is thinking spirit, logical, speculative spirit. The human character of nature and of historically produced nature, the product of man, appears as such in that they are products of abstract mind, and thus phases of mind, conceptual beings. (Marx, 2000: 109)

Considering that Marx regards all objects to be the objectification of man himself, one can argue that his ideas are not very different from Hegelian phenomenology, whereby all alienation of human essence consists in the externalisation of self-consciousness. However, whereas Hegel had presented the alienation of self-consciousness as real, Marx regards the latter as a mere 'appearance', a reflection in thought and knowledge of the real alienation of human essence. (2000: 110-11)

The real, active relationship of man to himself as a species-being or the manifestation of himself as a real species-being, i.e. as a human being, is only possible if he uses all his species powers to create ..., if he relates himself to them as objects, which can only be done at first in the form of alienation. (Marx, 2000: 109)

In Hegelian phenomenology, the negativity of the object is superseded through the externalisation of self-consciousness: by positing itself as object or the object as itself, self-consciousness gains a positive meaning deriving from the 'indivisible unity of being for itself'. Self-consciousness is thus at home both in itself and in its other, to the extent that it has reappropriated the alienated other within itself and thus annihilated the object. (Marx, 2000: 111) The totality of these phases corresponds to the movement of consciousness, in what is known as the Hegelian dialectic of negativity: man creates himself as a process that ranges from externalisation as loss of the object to transcendence of alienation by a return of the object to self-consciousness.

Thus the different forms of alienation that occur are only different forms of consciousness and self-consciousness. Since the abstract consciousness that the object is regarded as being, is only in itself a phase in the differentiation of self-consciousness, the result of the process is the identity of consciousness and self-consciousness, absolute knowledge, the process of abstract thought that is no longer outward looking but only takes place inside itself. In other words, the result is the dialectic of pure thought. (Marx, 2000: 109)

For Hegel, the dialectical movement consists in a negation of the negation that is an affirmation: by relating itself to an object, knowing, or human consciousness, externalises or alienates itself, so that it appears to itself as an object (Marx, 2000: 114); however, this externalisation is subsequently transcended through a reappropriation of the object by self-consciousness, the latter which affirms itself positively through this circular movement comprising a double negation.

... in so far as self-conscious man has recognised the spiritual world ... as self-externalisation and superseded it,

he nevertheless confirms it again in his externalised form and declares it to be his true being, restores it, pretends to be at home in his other being as such ... Here is the root of Hegel's false positivism ... (Marx, 2000: 115)

Basing himself on Feuerbach, Marx argues that the negation of the negation is an 'internal contradiction of philosophy', resulting in a philosophy that ultimately validates its opposite - theology or transcendence - through the act of reappropriation of that which had previously been denied. (2000: 106) Thus, rather than claiming the negation of the negation as the absolute positive, Marx, like Feuerbach, conceives of a positive that is based on itself and that is confirmed by the senses. Because man and nature are considered to be the only true reality by Marx, the affirmation of self-consciousness no longer requires mediation through its opposite.

... atheism is a denial of God and tries to assert through this negation the existence of man; but socialism as such no longer needs this mediation ... It is the positive self-consciousness of man no longer mediated through the negation of religion, just as real life is the positive reality of man no longer mediated through communism as the negation of private property. (Marx, 2000: 104)

Both atheism and communism thus appear as the positive resulting from the negation of the negation: while atheism represents the supersession of theological transcendence in the form of theoretical humanism, communism as the supersession of private property symbolises practical humanism, that is, human life as man's property. Both atheism and communism can thus be seen as stages in the process culminating with human renewal, whereby man is independently affirmed as his own foundation and basis through the very fact of existence. (Marx, 2000: 104, 106, 117)

... atheism is humanism mediated with itself through the supersession of religion, and communism is humanism mediated with itself through the supersession of private property. Only through the supersession of this mediation, which is, however, a necessary pre-condition, does positive humanism that begins with itself come into being. (Marx, 2000: 117)

Hegel posits the dialectical movement as the principle of creation, whereby man produces himself through mental labour, or abstract thought. By nullifying the object, the gesture of eternal return unto self-consciousness converts the negative element within the dichotomy into the real 'self-affirmative act of all being'. Hegelian history can thus account for the act of creation, the origin of species-consciousness or species-life, but it cannot present the true history of man as a 'presupposed subject'. (Marx, 2000: 106)

... for Hegel the process of self-creation and self-objectification as self-externalisation and self-alienation is the absolute and therefore final manifestation of human life which has itself for aim, is at peace with itself and has attained its true nature. (Marx, 2000: 117)

Self-consciousness as self coinciding with itself corresponds to the absolute spirit, God, the idea that is omniscient and reveals itself. Man and nature in their reality are thus mere manifestations of this obscure, 'unreal man and unreal nature'. (Marx, 2000: 117)

The relationship of subject and predicate to each other is thus completely inverted: a mystical subject-object or subjectivity reaching beyond the object, absolute subject as a process (it externalises itself, returns to itself from its externalisation and at the same time re-absorbs its externalisation); a pure and unceasing circular movement within itself... (Marx, 2000: 117-18)

Marx critiques subjective idealism precisely for affirming 'apparent' or 'self-alienated' being, rather than true being, through the movement whereby self-consciousness returns to itself subsequently to having reappropriated its opposite within the same. Instead of allowing the object to be subject by acknowledging its status as a being that resides externally to and independent of man, Hegelian phenomenology allegedly merely confirms the omnipotence of self-consciousness. As such, the negation of the negation in speculative thought does not lead to the affirmation of true being as the absolute positive ensuing from the negativity of apparent being. (Marx, 2000: 115)

For Marx, Hegelian man is an abstract, imaginary being, divorced from objective reality. Because man is a natural, living, sentient being, he can only manifest his being in empirical, sensuous objects. The objective existence of species-being requires that man both have and be an object external to himself: '... to be objective, natural and sentient and to have one's object, nature and sense outside oneself or oneself to be object, nature and sense for a third person are identical' (Marx, 2000: 112):

A being that does not have its nature outside itself is not a natural being and has no part in the natural world. A being that has no object outside itself is not an objective being. A being that is not itself an object for a third being has no being for its object, i.e. has no objective relationships and no objective existence. A non-objective being is a non-being. (Marx, 2000: 113)

The fact that man is a human natural being, a conscious being who takes his life as object, means that he exists for himself: as species-being, man must affirm himself both in his living being as well as in knowledge. Nature as it is immediately perceived is therefore inadequate to species-being, for man works nature by taking it as an object of consciousness and thus transcending its process of origin. Similarly, because man knows his own history,

he can, through conscious activity, transcend his origins. (Marx, 2000: 113)

III. Humanism and Anti-humanism: Between Kant and Hegel

Distinct conceptions of the relationship between nature and human conscious activity lie at the basis of the humanism/anti-humanism debate. Where humanism allegedly privileges the attempt by self-consciousness to coincide with itself, reappropriating an opposite within the same so as to be at home both in itself and in its other, anti-humanism emphasises the independent status of the object in the real world, its capacity to be subject externally to the perceiver's gaze. Marxist thought can be interpreted both as humanist and anti-humanist, due to presenting man simultaneously as creator and product of his alienated condition in the world: while marxist humanism posits man's existence as an absolute affirmation of his own basis and foundation, marxist anti-humanism draws attention to man's objectivity as a natural, living being, who due to having his objects outside himself, is determined by them. This dilemma within marxism derives from the recognition that man is both an active being, the bearer of natural powers, and a passive, vulnerable being, in need of objects from which he is alienated.

Man is a directly natural being. As a living natural being he is on the one hand equipped with natural vital powers and is an active, natural being. These powers of his are dispositions, capacities, instincts. On the other hand, man as a natural corporeal, sensuous, objective being is a passive, dependent, and limited being, like animals and plants, that is, the objects of his instincts are exterior to him and independent of him and yet they are objects of his need, essential objects that are indispensable for the exercise and confirmation of his faculties. (Marx, 2000: 112)

The issue prevalent in marxist debate regarding subject/object distinction can be traced back to the idealist/empiricist argument over the 'true' existence of objects outside the subject's perception of them. Kantian transcendental idealism set the framework for contemporary humanist and anti-humanist positions, having revolutionised the dogmatic idealism of Berkeley as well as the sceptical idealism of Descartes: by positing a dualism between the *noumena* - the thing in itself - and the *phenomena* - the thing as it appears -, Kant overturned the traditional idealist conception of reality as fundamentally mental in nature.

The dictum of all genuine idealists, from the Eleatic school to Bishop Berkeley, is contained in this formula: "All cognition through the senses and experience is nothing but sheer illusion, and only in the ideas of the pure understanding and reason is there truth."

The principle that throughout dominates and determines my idealism is, on the contrary: "All cognition of things merely from pure understanding or pure reason is nothing but sheer illusion, and only in experience is there truth." (Kant, 1977: 113)

Kant, however, simultaneously distances himself from the empiricist position, developed by Hume, according to whom the ordering of cognition derived from experience. For Kant, experience is made possible due to the existence of *a priori* concepts of the understanding, the latter which, allied to the forms of intuition of space and time, empirically organise sense perception by means of the synthetic activity of the intellect. Whereas Hume had attributed causation entirely to sense experience, claiming that the connection between cause and effect derives essentially from an acquired habit of association, 'of accepting something as true, and hence of mistaking subjective necessity for objective', Kant argued that the objective reorganisation of subjective cognitive experience precedes

experience itself: pure synthetic cognitions thus exist prior to any order of perception. (1977: xiii, 22)

This is, therefore, the result of all our foregoing inquiries: "All synthetic principles, *a priori* are nothing more than principles of possible experience" and can never be referred to things in themselves, but only to appearances as objects of experience. (Kant, 1977: 56)

By considering objects of perception as appearances, Kant is acknowledging that the latter are founded upon a thing in itself, which nevertheless remains unknown to the observer. The beings of the understanding - *noumena* - presumed by antiquity to constitute an intelligible world, make their appearance by affecting the sensibility.

For sensuous perception represents things not at all as they are, but only the mode in which they affect our senses; and consequently by sensuous perception appearances only, and not things themselves, are given to the understanding for reflection. (Kant, 1977: 34)

Because sense perception comes a posteriori to pure intuitions, or forms of sensibility, namely space and time, the latter constitute the basis of the empirical, that is, of 'all the actual impressions through which I am affected by objects'. (Kant, 1977: 27) Space and time thus constitute formal conditions of our sensibility which make possible the appearance of objects. If, however, space and time as modes of representation are considered to be determinations of things in themselves rather than proceeding from the subject, the conditions of possible experience, founded on universally valid *a priori* laws, will have been exceeded: illusion might ensue from the attempt to define as universally valid that which is merely a subjective form of sensibility applicable only to objects of perception, that is, to possible experience. By alluding to things in themselves rather than to appearances, the pure

concepts of the understanding would thereby lose their meaning.
(Kant, 1977: 35, 51, 55)

... as there is no intuition at all beyond the field of sensibility, these pure concepts, since they cannot possibly be exhibited *in concreto*, are void of all meaning; consequently all these *noumena*, together with their sum total, the intelligible world, are nothing but representations of a problem, the object of which in itself is quite possible but the solution, from the nature of our understanding, totally impossible. For our understanding is not a faculty of intuition but of the connection of given intuitions in an experience. Experience must therefore contain all the objects for our concepts; but beyond it no concepts have any meaning, since no intuition can be subsumed under them. (Kant, 1977: 59)

By positing that things can never be known in themselves but only as appearances, that is, as 'representations of the sensibility', is Kant not advocating a blatantly idealist position according to which objects exist solely in the mind? Kant, however, claims that where traditional idealism reduces all sense intuitions to thought, refusing any correspondence between these and an external object, his transcendental idealism argues for the existence of things outside our senses, despite such objects revealing themselves merely as appearances rather than as what they are in themselves.

Consequently, I grant by all means that there are bodies without us, that is, things which, though quite unknown to us as to what they are in themselves, we yet know by the representations which their influence on our sensibility procures us, and which we call bodies. This word merely means the appearance of the thing, which is unknown to us but is not therefore less real. Can this be termed idealism? It is the very contrary. (Kant, 1977: 33)

Whereas genuine idealism annihilates the existence of that which appears, Kant's transcendental idealism argues that our senses will never be able to intuit the thing as it is in itself. Unlike Cartesian empirical idealism which doubts the existence of corporeal things, Kant's idealism is constituted by the 'sensual representation of things, to which space and time belong'. It is therefore the faculty of cognition preceding any sensual intuition, rather than our cognition of things, that is transcendental. (1977: 33, 37)

By positing an object that is subject, independent from the perceiver's gaze, Marx is perhaps revealing a greater indebtedness to Kant than to Hegel. However, while Kant argues that one may never know the object as it is in itself, outside the field of possible experience where the thing appears as a representation of the sensibility, Marx affirms 'true being', the absolute positive which is opposed to 'apparent', or self-alienated being. Moreover, where Kant equates the realm of possible experience with that which appears, rather than with the object as it is in itself, it would seem that Marx claims experience as the domain of the thing itself. Thus, although Kantian subject/object dualisms may surface in Marxian thought, the latter nevertheless professes greater faith in the capacity of consciousness to understand that which appears in experience as true being. Marxian thought therefore seems to hover between a Kantian separation of subject and object, and a Hegelian annihilation of this very separation.

Hegel critiques the dualist position on the grounds of contradiction: because Kant excludes cognition from the thing in itself - the *noumena*, or in Hegelian terms, the Absolute, synonymous with truth -, truth remains unattainable, even in the realm of possible experience. While Kant wishes to limit knowledge to possible experience, the realm where the only possible 'truth' may be sought, he simultaneously characterises the thing in itself as the true 'truth', one which is impossible to capture. Kant's 'fear of falling into error', that is, of falling prey to illusion by applying

the principles of reason to that which exceeds possible experience, is for Hegel a 'fear of the truth'. (Hegel, 1977: 47) Hegel considers the divergent forms of knowledge to lead consciousness to the acquisition of true knowledge, the Absolute, where due to a complete experience of itself the soul becomes spirit, knowing itself as it is, coinciding with itself in complete unity. In the realm of the Absolute, consciousness returns to itself as self-consciousness, in a movement whereby it becomes truly spirit by reflecting itself into itself.

It is in itself the movement which is cognition - the transforming of that *in-itself* into that which is *for itself*, of Substance into Subject, of the object of *consciousness* into an object of *self-consciousness*, i.e. into an object that is just as much superseded, or into the *Notion*. The movement is the circle that returns into itself, the circle that presupposes its beginning and reaches it only at the end. (Hegel, 1977: 488)

The supersession of the alienation of the subject from its object of consciousness is achieved by the return to self-consciousness. In the movement whereby the identity of the self coincides with itself, the subject acknowledges the world as his own creation. Thought and being, or abstract essence and Self, or substance and subject, are thus united in the Absolute: consciousness defines existence. (Hegel, 1977: 488-9)

Precisely because existence is defined as Species, it is a simple thought; *Noûs*, simplicity, is substance. On account of its simplicity or self-identity it appears fixed and enduring. But this self-identity is no less negativity; therefore its fixed existence passes over into its dissolution. The determinateness seems at first to be due entirely to the fact that it is related to an *other*, and its movement seems imposed on it by an alien power; but having its otherness within itself, and being self-moving, is just what is involved

in the *simplicity* of thinking itself; for this simple thinking is the self-moving and self-differentiating thought, it is its own inwardness, it is the pure Notion. Thus common understanding, too, is a becoming, and, as this becoming, it is *reasonableness*. (Hegel, 1977: 34)

Because the 'I' that returns to itself cannot be reduced to the 'Self', consisting rather in the 'identity of the Self with itself', it contains its own otherness within itself. The process leading to the transformation of the in-itself to the for-itself, whereby the omnipotence of the 'idea' is affirmed, would not, however, be possible, were it not for prior dialectical preparation, the latter which is manifest in 'the unhappy consciousness', that is, 'the consciousness of self as a dual-natured, merely contradictory being'. (Hegel, 1977: 126, 130, 489)

This *unhappy, inwardly disrupted* consciousness, since its essentially contradictory nature is for it a *single* consciousness, must for ever have present in the one consciousness the other also; and thus it is driven out of each in turn in the very moment when it imagines it has successfully attained to a peaceful unity with the other. (Hegel, 1977: 126)

For Kant, the dialectical process characterises the use of reason, by way of which man seeks to exceed the boundaries of possible experience, the latter which are defined by the principles of the understanding. If the objects of the world of appearance are taken for things in themselves, if the universally valid principles that define experience are applied to the thing in itself, the ensuing conflict may never be resolved due to the 'dialectical illusion of pure reason'.

'... because the thesis, as well as the anti-thesis, can be shown by equally clear, evident, and irresistible proofs - for I pledge myself as to the correctness of all these proofs - and

reason therefore sees that it is divided against itself, a state at which the sceptic rejoices, but which must make the critical philosopher pause and feel ill at ease. (Kant, 1977: 80-1)

Due to the impossibility of proving its assertions by experience, Kant regards metaphysics as inherently dangerous. All propositions become acceptable as long as self-contradiction is avoided, the latter which is easily done because the concepts connected are solely ideas whose content is not to be found in experience. (Kant, 1977: 81) However, because by nature reason is impelled to exceed the limits of experience, having an innate disposition for metaphysics, it cannot stop inquiring into what things in themselves may be.

Reason with all its concepts and laws of the understanding, which are adequate to it for empirical use, i.e., within the sensible world, finds for itself no satisfaction because ever-recurring questions deprive us of all hope of their complete solution. The transcendental ideas, which have that completion in view, are such problems of reason. But it sees clearly that the sensible world cannot contain this completion; neither, consequently, can all the concepts which serve merely for understanding the world of sense, e.g., space and time, and whatever we have adduced under the name of pure concepts of the understanding. (Kant, 1977: 94)

Reason's desire for completeness can only be satisfied by a cognition of things in themselves, an objective which is condemned to fail due to the impossibility of knowing that which transcends the world of appearances. Thus, the only solution to warding off the potential disadvantages to knowledge inherent in the metaphysical pursuit of reason is, for Kant, the setting up of limits deriving from a scientific critique that tames reason's dialectical inferences. These limits consist in the recognition of the

impossibility of reason ever cognising more than the objects of experience. However, reason simultaneously guides us to the objective boundary of experience, that is, to the indication of something that does not strictly belong to experience consisting rather in the 'highest ground of all experience'. The transcendent cognitions of reason - the psychological, the cosmological, and the theological ideas - serve precisely as indicators of the bounds of pure reason: by representing objects of experience in an extended series - the transcendental ideas - that exceeds experience, reason seeks to attach this chain to *noumena*, thus enabling practical principles to become universals from a moral standpoint. (Kant, 1977: 71, 74, 93-4, 101-3)

Natural theology is such a concept at the boundary of human reason, being constrained to look beyond this boundary to the idea of a Supreme Being ..., not in order to determine anything relative to this mere being of the understanding, which lies beyond the world of sense, but in order to guide the use of reason within the world of sense according to principles of the greatest possible (theoretical as well as practical) unity. (Kant, 1977: 101)

By resorting to the transcendental ideas, Kant opposes the materialist, naturalist or fatalist viewpoints, allowing for moral ideas beyond the speculative field. The natural disposition of human reason for metaphysics, that is, for inquiring beyond the realm of possible experience, is partly explained, according to Kant, by the search for moral universals.

Where Kant regards the dialectical inferences inherent in any attempt to think beyond the realm of experience as prone to fallacy - due to the strong possibility of falling prey both to illusion as well as to self-contradiction -, Hegel argues that the 'absolute dialectical unrest' of consciousness leads ultimately to the Absolute, the eternal Unchangeable. However, to reach that stage,

the unhappy consciousness has to traverse a journey of sceptical disorder, in which a battle is waged against itself.

... consciousness itself is the *absolute dialectical unrest*, this medley of sensuous and intellectual representations whose differences coincide, and whose identity is equally again dissolved, for it is itself determinateness as contrasted with the non-identical. But it is just in this process that this consciousness, instead of being self-identical, is in fact nothing but a purely casual, confused medley, the dizziness of a perpetually engendered disorder. It is itself aware of this; for itself maintains and creates this restless confusion. (Hegel, 1977: 124-5)

Responsible for its own unrest, consciousness does not bring its antinomies together, thriving on the separation of the poles of its self-contradiction. However, by becoming aware of its own dichotomy, 'as self-liberating, unchangeable, and self-identical' on one hand and 'as self-bewildering and self-perverting' on the other, consciousness unites with itself.

Its true return into itself, or its reconciliation with itself will ... display the Notion of Spirit that has become a living Spirit, and has achieved an actual existence, because it already possesses as a single undivided consciousness a dual nature. The Unhappy Consciousness itself *is* the gazing of one self-consciousness into another, and itself *is* both, and the unity of both is also its essential nature. (Hegel, 1977: 126)

The rupture, the middle of the two antinomies indicates novelty, the possibility of beginning. From the two poles of reason, the middle breaks and allows for creative growth. The difficulty, however, resides in starting from the middle rather than from either side of an established dichotomy, each of which is a harmonious unity in itself. According to Gillian Rose, most authorships attempt

to camouflage the broken middle, triune in nature, that exposes the tension between the 'universal, particular and singular, in individuals and institutions'. (1992: xii) This tension nevertheless surfaces in 'unconceptualised aporia' within any singular, in difficulties that the conceptual mending of the 'diremption' would prefer to ignore. (Rose, 1992: xiii-xv) Diremption is revealed as paradox, rather than as the resolution implied by contradiction where to A corresponds not-A, following the logic of political economy. Consisting in the 'torn halves of an integral freedom' that do not add up to each other, diremption posits the third as a 'sundered unity' of what was not originally united. The structure of conjunctive 'ands' is that of the singular, the child for whom the parents' marriage appears as a transcendent, pre-existent unity. (Rose, 1992: 236) By mending the diremptions between law and ethics, totalising discourses refuse to suspend, or release, the broken middle which allows for the 'anxiety of beginning' and the 'equivocation of the ethical'.

The pathos of the concept, which is displaced yet emergent in all these attempts to transcend any comprehension of the diremption of law and ethics, shows its fate in the conceptuality and configuration devised in its stead. This is to challenge the prevailing intellectual resignation; to urge comprehension of diremption in all its anxiety and equivocation; to aim - scandalously - to return philosophy from her pathos to her logos. In this way, we may resume reflexively what we always do: to know, to misknow and yet to grow. The middle will then show: rended not mended, it continues to pulsate, ancient and broken heart of modernity, old and new, West and East. (Rose, 1992: 310)

What would be the implication of analysing the humanism/anti-humanism debate in terms of the broken middle? The rupture between a Kantian dualist view advocating a difference between subject and object on one hand, and a Hegelian idealist conception whereby the subject embraces its other within itself has set the

framework for 'contradictory' Marxist accounts of this problematic. Marx's depiction of man as both an active participant in a world of his making and yet a victim of forces beyond his control constitutes the broken middle that informs subsequent humanist/anti-humanist arguments, the latter being prone to subscribe to either one or other of those positions. The marxian problematisation of 'man' can thus be read as releasing the middle, for instead of mending diremptions it articulates the perplexity inherent in any attempt to find a path from law to ethics, that is, from the universal concept to the particularity of each instance. (Rose, 1997: 115)

IV. Dialectical Humanism: Negotiating 'In-Between-ness'

The humanist/anti-humanist debate within marxist thought primordially centred itself on the issue of man's potential to make history through intentional projects and actions: if historical results were human rather than natural processes, history would be equated with anthropocentrism; if, however, individuals were considered incapable of influencing social structures, acting as mere products of social relations, history would then correspond to a natural process. Whereas a humanist view might regard history as the outcome of an immanent human intentionality destined to realise humanity's essence, an anti-humanist outlook could read the historical event to be the manifestation of Spirit unfolding itself in accordance with the transcendental laws, or predetermined necessity, of nature.

Thus, while there appears to be a conflation of the subject/object position in most humanist thought, anti-humanism characterises itself by the separation of subject/object unities, ultimately questioning the validity of any such categories. The trajectory of the debate between humanism and anti-humanism cannot, however, be reduced to simple terms. Subject and object are in fact united and divorced, separated and conflated, within both humanist and anti-humanist trends of thought. However, because

humanism is often represented as embracing three subject/object positionings - the naturalistic, the idealist and the dialectical conceptions -, does it truly make sense to speak of an anti-humanist tendency? Does the humanist outlook not already include anti-humanism within itself?

By assuming a separation between human subjects as bearers of consciousness and an objective external world, a naturalistic humanism encourages an instrumentalist conception of nature, whereby the latter essentially caters to human ends. The subject, situated externally to the natural world, can master the non-human by acquiring knowledge regarding its workings. An idealist humanism, on the other hand, posits reality as a reflection of human thought. However, instead of attributing the world's constitution to individual minds, idealist anthropocentrism often regards the former as the manifestation of a transcendent consciousness - the Absolute Idea -, of which human beings are particular instantiations. Dialectical humanism consists in yet another form of anthropocentrism, whereby subject and object are fused into a totality; while the world is considered to be a product of humanity, humanity is defined by its experience in the world. Thus, while the object exists independently from the subject, the subject nevertheless plays an active role in its constitution through the transformative capacities inherent in human productivity and labour on one hand, and the meaning that human beings bring to their world on the other. Recognising the historicity of the human condition, dialectical humanism avoids the difficulties inherent in universalising narratives that posit the human on one side and the social on the other; however, despite their situatedness, individuals are considered to be autonomous agents constitutive of the social by creating and participating in structures and institutions. (Soper, 1986: 18, 24-5)

If consciousness is in the world, and the relationship is dialectical between that which thinks and that which is thought, then there is no transcendent place from which a

'pure' thought can contemplate the world and its own relation to it. Against the suggestion, therefore, that any humanist thought must rest on an essentialist appeal to an abstract, ahistoric 'being' of humanity, it would seem that dialectical thought is committed to anti-essentialism. (Soper, 1986: 25)

Dialectical anthropocentrism is, nevertheless, liable to be pulled to either one of the diametrically opposite poles of the dichotomy it is sustaining: it encroaches upon idealism, by treating objective reality as deriving from consciousness; it verges on naturalism, on the negation of the reality of consciousness, by emphasising the existence of the external world, of that which is independent to the concept. The tension inherent in the fluctuation between the poles of consciousness on one hand and being on the other, between idealist and realist conceptions, is what the Marxist debates centring on the issue of alienation sought to negotiate. (Soper, 1986: 25)

From the standpoint of the Hegelian Absolute Idea, the Spirit or consciousness preserves each historical moment in its alienation so as to achieve complete self-knowledge. This process of self-transcendence, whereby the Spirit maintains each negation within itself, is essential to the realisation of the Absolute Idea.

The brilliance and originality of this conception lies in the fact that the transcendent Absolute which is the subject of this process of self-realisation through successive 'alienations' is also continuously its own object: it has to include its own 'thought-activity' as part of the process whereby it is established. (Soper, 1986: 29)

Thus, although Hegel's phenomenology seeks to reveal the workings of consciousness, it nevertheless rejects an essentialist metaphysics, that is, a pre-given human essence. The implication of the coincidence of concept and being in the Absolute Idea is that the antagonisms that characterise human history ultimately

lead towards the goal of humanity's realisation. However, does this mean that history is a process without a subject, that human beings are mere instantiations of a transcendental consciousness manifesting itself in history? Or is history a process immanent to humanity, acquiring meaning through the intentions and actions of individuals? (Soper, 1986: 29-30)

The denial of a pre-given human essence, as well as the question of history being transcendent or immanent to humanity, would exert great influence on the attempts by marxists and existentialists to draw up a humanist anti-essentialist conceptual framework. Rejecting metaphysical essentialism, Hegel argued that consciousness only affirms itself when recognised in its independence by another consciousness. Human alienation in labour is thus fundamentally positive, for it is considered to be a fundamental stage in the trajectory towards full human realisation: slave consciousness becomes aware of itself in its own exteriorisation by producing objects for an 'other' through forced labour, and is thus impelled to deny its lack of autonomy. (Soper, 1986: 29)

Rather than regard alienation as inherent in the thought process, Marx, following Feuerbach, preferred to concentrate on the alienation characterising man's materiality. Marx's 'positive humanism' would gradually come to identify the alienated human labour prevalent under the relations of capitalist production as fundamental to the realisation of a true human existence. (Soper, 1986: 35-6)

Hegel had therefore been correct, according to Marx, to insist upon the indispensability of concrete activity to the realisation of spirit; his mistake lay in his failure to take account of that activity in its 'real' or 'sensuous' aspect. His failure, that is, to differentiate finally between the 'sensuous' object and its concept. The implication of this accusation is that Hegel is only able to effect a reconciliation of humanity

and nature by 'spiritualising' nature - by neglecting nature in its 'brute' materiality. (Soper, 1986: 36)

Considering that capitalism consists in a form of production in which property relations originate and are maintained by the economic exploitation of labour, the value of capital derives from its embodiment of labour power. By realising that capitalist forces are sustained by the exploitation of labour, the workers themselves can rationally choose a non-alienated existence, learning to dominate social processes so as to bring about a more humane way of life. Marx thus distances himself from an idealist conception of an ahistoric human essence realising itself in communist society. However, the theory of alienation may be interpreted as essentialist, to the extent that it is presented within the framework of species-being: alienation consists in a loss of freedom that can only affect those who have consciousness.

Although Marx tells us that for alienated individuals 'what is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal', no animal is liable to alienation - because no animal is capable of rationally choosing its mode of existence. The theory of alienation, in short, is rooted in humanist assumptions regarding the potential freedom and constitutive role of human beings in the creation and control of social processes. (Soper, 1986: 37-8)

Alienated processes appear to human beings as natural phenomena operating beyond their control; however, by perceiving themselves as fundamentally responsible for originating and maintaining such processes, individuals become conscious of their capacity to oppose their roles in the reproduction of social life. Real human beings, in historically specific situations, thus substitute the abstract category of 'man' in the making of history: whereas Hegel had depicted history as an evolutionary process of consciousness consisting in the self-estrangement of man - the latter replacing individuals existing in the manifold phases of

history leading to the Absolute Idea -, Marx draws attention to the specificity of the experiential context which transforms 'man' into concrete individuals pertaining to definite historical stages that take place in the real world rather than in consciousness. (Soper, 1986: 38-9)

However, although Marx argues that individuals have the capacity to choose a non-alienated existence, he simultaneously emphasises that the products of their own creation only appear to be autonomous, for in reality 'authors and actors' are grouped in classes and dependent on forces with which they must comply. The fact is that social power originates with the cooperation between diverse individuals, rather than from individuals acting independently to each other; however, because such cooperation arises naturally rather than voluntarily, social power is experienced as an external alien force over which individuals cannot exert control:

Marx and Engels imply that alien forces do in fact determine the will and action of individuals in bourgeois society; that people *do* become mere functionaries in a system of relations apparently possessed of its own dynamic and created independently of those who 'support' it. But it is, of course, precisely for that reason that they aspire to overthrow capitalist relations and speak of the need to replace 'the domination of circumstances and of chance over individuals by the domination of individuals over chance and circumstances'. (Soper, 1986: 39-40)

A humanist reading of Marx would concentrate on his teleological view whereby the end of history coincides with the demise of bourgeois society and the foundation of communism represents an emancipated humanity. Consisting in direct, unmediated relations between individuals who do not depend either on State nor political institutions, communism embodies the abolition of class society as well as of conflictuous relations of production. The new epoch of

humanist consciousness that ensues from the abolition of bourgeois society is characterised by treating that which appears as natural phenomena, operating beyond the control of individuals, as humanly created processes. By eliminating the 'natural' quality of such constructs, communism would emphasise that social power resides in the form of united individuals, exemplified by the proletariat as 'world-historic' agent of universal emancipation.

An anti-humanist Althusserian reading of Marx would focus on the dynamics inherent in the relations of the capitalist forces of production: reduced to the function of *trager* of capitalist relations, individuals are completely subordinate to the structures they involuntarily sustain. According to this view, the theory of alienation is inherently paradoxical, for while upholding an ideal, non-exploitative society which realises true human existence, it does not explain the precise form that social relations should undergo in order to obtain the latter objective. (Soper, 1986: 40, 103)

By projecting an ideal essence of humanity to be realised in an existing or future context, the philosophical anthropology represented in the theory of alienation has, according to Althusser, a purely ethical status. Its ideal of the 'truly human' betrays an *a priori* conception of the meaning of 'human', without theorising the conditions of existence of subjects. Because individuals as given biological entities only become subjects of experience in society, human subjects are inherently ideological: 'it is in 'ideology', says Althusser, that we become subjects, and since we cannot but think of ourselves as subjects, we cannot but live in ideology.' (Soper, 1986: 102)

Thus, any humanist attempt to found knowledge on the subject's experience is fundamentally flawed, for, experience itself consisting in a social effect, subjects are incapable of achieving true knowledge. As long as the subject is taken to be the source of knowledge, the epistemological basis of any theory will inevitably

be ideological. According to Kate Soper, the problem inherent in this anti-humanist view is not the structured foundation of experience, but rather the representation of the individual as a social effect.

For if we play no part in the formation of the structures that dominate us, what sense is there in trying to alter them? If, moreover, the experience of individual men and women is viewed as inessential to their existence, then the category of the 'concrete individual' ceases to have any reference to *human* beings; within the confines of such a theory, one can no longer speak of individuals as 'dominated' by social structures or in need of 'liberation' from them, since they are not thought of as beings with 'interests' to be affected. (Soper, 1986: 106)

Althusser's critiques of Marxist humanism are nevertheless important in that they indicate the necessity of negotiating between evaluative and non-evaluative positions. While it may be important to acknowledge the problems inherent in a depiction of non-alienated existence, Marx's normative account of capitalism as a natural phenomenon that appears to operate beyond the control of those who, through cooperation, are responsible for it remains essential to any view which would wish to challenge the prevalent social context that conditions experience. (Soper, 1986: 103-4)

It is precisely such a view that Soper wishes to convey by arguing for the possibility of redefining human needs in both an ecologically sustainable and economically more just way. While Marx had recognised that the realisation of communism depended on the existence of capitalism's 'civilising influence', the utopian socialist critique was fundamentally nostalgic in its aspirations for an unsullied epoch prior to capitalist alienation. For Marx, the alienated labour embodied in property, or capital, consisted in a 'positivity' that superseded the alienation - or negation - of capitalist relations of production. Many contemporary socialists

would, however, repudiate Marx's positive account of industrialisation in bringing about the demise of limited and fixed modes of division of labour on one hand, and allowing for the gratification of material needs on the other. For, according to Soper, capitalist productivity prevents the realisation of socialism in today's industrialised nations from taking place: while technological domination of nature stifles 'human emancipation', non-equitative generation of wealth does not cater to genuine human satisfaction and has dire consequences for the majority of human beings the world over. Thus, although Marxists have traditionally placed emphasis on changing relations of production, the necessity of transforming the whole mode of production - that is, the forces of production, the technostucture - has usually been ignored. Soper argues that the development of needs and their satisfaction should not be considered as natural 'givens', as natural phenomena dependent on fixed products supposed to ensure their fulfilment. (1986: 42)

A redefinition of needs would entail a non-antagonistic relationship between humanity and nature. The view that posits unlimited human necessities on one hand, and a scarcity of planetary resources on the other, relies on an ontological dualism between human and non-human, whereby nature is presented as a menacing 'other'. The Sartrean account of lack as inherent in contemporary human society derives, according to Soper, from a conception of nature as inimical, as a rigid, unpenetrable materiality.

Such a viewpoint, however, not only reproduces the imperialism of much classical humanism (which sees nature as an alien in need of civilisation rather than an ally we may need ourselves to learn to emulate in certain respects); it also conflicts with a vision of a socialist future based on a harmonisation of human needs with those of ecology, and it encourages the view that human relations, together with the

institutions and structures they generate, must be seen as oppressive. (Soper, 1986: 74)

Although acknowledging the finitude of global resources, Soper urges for the repudiation of arguments which place the blame of scarcity on nature: if world consumption were to remain within the limits of what ought to be consumed, these very limits would allow for quite a reasonable living standard throughout the globe. The only solution to the existing tension between humanity and nature thus consists in a political negotiation catering to the interests of both. Such an agreement would entail the transformation of contemporary structures of production and consumption. For Soper, to argue that alienation is caused by scarcity is to unwittingly comply with the current definitions of human needs and their satisfaction. (1986: 73-4)

V. Human Need: Between Nature and Culture

Soper's position in favour of a redefinition of human needs borders on both a humanist and antihumanist conceptual framework: while the presupposition that needs can be redefined is anti-humanist, the idea that there may be such a thing as 'human needs' hinges on an essentialist notion of what it means to be human. The issue of needs as being either natural or historically induced lies at the basis of the question of whether or not it is possible to transform contemporary structures of consumption. Does the existence of a product create a corresponding need, or does the need determine the product? The tension between an anti-humanist perspective of need as redefinable according to production strategies and essentialist representations of need as innate is only resolvable by acknowledging a conceptual distinction between the form and content of human need. In effect, the human condition is characterised by a tension between the existence of psychic and biological needs that determine the generality of human form on one hand, and, on the other, social and cultural variations that condition the content of this form.

It is a distinction between a need viewed as content, where it is its specificity that counts, and whose explanation can never refer us to an anthropological history, but only to the nature of the individuals and socio-economic relations contemporaneous with its existence, and that same need viewed as a historical development - a conception in which it is the form of which the need is the development which counts, whose explanation will precisely refer us to the historical development of human beings, and therefore lead us into the consideration of the abstract biological and psychological needs that are the element common to all our specific needs, and by reference to which we are alone enabled to view them as particular developments. (Soper, 1981: 122)

Thus, while the psychological and biological characteristics that determine the form of human needs are 'natural' to the extent that they refer us to a common essence underlying their historical development, the specificity of the content of needs is historically created and therefore artificial. (1981: 113) According to Kate Soper, a theory of needs which attempts to achieve closure within any one of these two perspectives - essentialist or anti-essentialist - will necessarily remain one-sided:

... the 'theory of needs' is doomed as a theory if by theory is meant conceptual resolution, homogeneity of concepts, coherent systematisation. For this is a theory, if it deserves the name, whose theoretical statement is to the effect that all theorisation about needs must necessarily live in the field of forces created by the antithetical poles of relativism and essentialism. (1981: 123)

The problem with any theory of needs is its reliance on a particular definition of needs which reflects the value system of the society that produced it. Economic or sociological definitions of need, or

facts that refer our needs to psychological or biological aspects of human constitution can only be interpreted in light of a pre-defined theory of needs. (Soper, 1981: 29) Thus, attempts to clear the criterion of needs of an evaluative-political perspective are doomed to fail, for there can be no 'neutral' or purely factual outlook on needs.

It has, however, been in terms of a fact-value distinction that the debate between humanist and anti-humanist conceptions of need has polarised itself. Soper argues that Marxism is uniquely helpful in thinking about needs due to its allusion to biological and psychological traits inherent in human nature on one hand, and, on the other, to the transcendence of the natural restrictions of human nature afforded by capitalism's development of productive forces. While Marx's moral insurgences against capitalist relations of exploitation focus on the mental and physical degradation ensuing from the performance of certain tasks contrary to average levels of physiological and psychological endurance, his admiration for capitalist productivity emphasises its civilising influence in eliminating obstacles to consumption. According to Soper, the importance of Marxist theory resides in this aporia, or unresolved tension between the anti-humanist and humanist outlooks on need (1981: 31, 107, 136) :

For this value ... lies precisely in the extent to which it exposes, almost by way of its own internal inconsistencies, its aporia, the problems it conceals in the guise of its solutions, the inevitable involvement of questions concerned with the satisfaction of needs with questions concerned with their determination. (1981: 213)

The negotiation of the tension between humanism and anti-humanism should acknowledge that because needs do not exist as factual demands, they can in part be determined by the forms of gratification found in any society. Thus, although general human needs share a common essence by virtue of certain 'natural'

biological and psychological traits pertinent to the species, the content and fulfilment of these needs is conditioned by a politics involving the 'allocation of social labour time and the distribution of use-values' in any particular society. (Soper, 1981: 212)

But to accept this is, of course, to be returned precisely to the question of 'true' need, and to be brought face to face with the impossibility of providing any answer to the question: 'what do human beings need?' or 'what are human needs?' in terms of some set of 'facts' whether about our 'nature' or about what we in fact consume. We are forced, in other words, to recognise that if these questions are answerable, they are so only in the form of a series of political decisions-acts, in the form of a series of choosings-positings of values beyond which there can be no further appeal, and which themselves must reveal the 'truth' of our needs. (Soper, 1981: 18)

Because there is no escaping the normative-evaluative dimension of needs, every definition of need is inherently political. As such, the very argument that represents need as irreducible to biological and psychological 'nature' as well as non-identifiable with its forms of satisfaction involves a value judgement on the human condition. The revelation of a suppressed politics of need leads to the recognition that the ends which justify the means are not neutral. (Soper, 1981: 18, 216) A conscious evaluative choice of the ends will necessarily determine the means used to attain these ends. Thus, although experience is socially determined, human beings are not reducible to social effects; the fact that human consciousness can take life as its own object and thereby choose to challenge social structures that condition experience demonstrates that human beings are ultimately responsible for forces of necessity that supposedly operate beyond their control and, moreover, can act together to instigate change.

These initiatives ... bring into prominence not only the interrelationship between means and ends and the oppressive nature of any politics that tries to deny it, but also the interrelationship between the exercise of individual political power and the exercise of State power. (Soper, 1981: 217)

VI. Negotiating the Tension: Fanon, Arendt and Levinas

By attempting to empty theory of any evaluative-normative content, anti-humanism suppresses the politics inherent in discourses concerning the human condition. In the name of relativism, or the will to implode the universal subject of Enlightenment humanism into a plurality of differences, anti-humanism relinquishes regulative ideas such as the appeal to 'truth' or a common essence as the foundation for moral or aesthetic response. The 'hyperindividualism of proliferating "difference"' eliminates the recourse to transformative projects ensuing from the classification of societies as 'capitalist', 'patriarchal' or 'totalitarian'. Collective political cooperation or action is thus discouraged. (Soper, 1990: 149-50)

But even in this overdrive deconstruction retains its ethical gesture. For why want to disturb the tyranny of 'identity' thinking and its binary logic, if not in order to reclaim for attention - to have us identify - the 'difference' or 'otherness' it forecloses? Why, for example, hint at the 'utopias' of 'difference' ... if not because it is thought ... that a fuller identity can be found in a world that has broken free of the constraints of the 'constructed' subject? Who ... is enjoying the escape from the tyranny of binary straitjackets, if it is not the subject in the Enlightenment conception? (Soper, 1990: 150)

This ethical contradiction within postmodernism mirrors the traditional dilemma concerning morality in marxist theory: to what



extent is there a normative dimension in a conceptual framework that regards morality as an ideological discourse of bourgeois relations, and attributes 'immoral' actions to social and economic determination? This paradox is connected to the vaster question of whether human beings are free agents or socially determined: while an anti-humanist perspective usually favours an environmentalist response, a humanist outlook traditionally emphasises the responsibility of the autonomous moral subject in choosing a particular course of action. According to Soper, however, anti-humanist argument tends to 'secrete humanist rhetoric' (1986: 128; 1990: 151):

For if it is true that subjects are entirely coopted by society, then where does one locate the emancipatory impulse to free people from the cultural forms which it is implied by the theory are 'responsible' for their cooption? (1990: 152)

Thus, if contemporary post-modern critiques of dominant rationalities share with marxist anti-essentialism the desire to transcend social constructions of the subject by appealing to an element of moral autonomy, this recourse to essentialist strategy should be openly recognised. (Soper, 1990: 153)

This does not mean denying the role played by environmental factors in determining behaviour, or the extent to which we acquire our selfhood in and through the complex grid of practices and discourses which constitute our society at any given moment. But it does mean recognising that selves are not automatically instituted, that there is a self which is *in relationship* to the world by which it is constructed, and that even as we acknowledge our own dependency on a social universe which always comes to us in conceptualised form, this conceptualisation is dependent on subjects who are reflecting upon and constantly renegotiating the forces of construction. (Soper, 1990: 153-4)

Thus, although human beings are cultural products, they are nevertheless actively involved in their own production. The conscious subject of experience, or personality, allows for social progress, 'making more of the self than what we are made of'. The negotiation of the tension between nature and culture, between subject and environment, between individual autonomy and social conditioning, between anti-essentialism and essentialism lies in the interstices between these dichotomies: this middle ground allows for a recognition of aporia, of a permanent diremption within the dualistic conceptual framework that characterises reflection on the human condition. (Soper, 1981: 154)

Taking into account the conflicting nature of human actions and search for happiness, any monist psychological conception of humanity is doomed to failure. Anti-humanism's focus on difference, alterity and cultural relativism aims at a holistic, non-oppositional comprehension of the human condition, where a myriad of pluralities can paradoxically join to form a universal totality, a human 'oneness' on Gilroy's planetary scale. Humanism, on the contrary, always already contains alterity within itself; consisting in a dichotomous structure composed of itself and its other, its inner diremption allows for 'process and pain' (Rose, 1992: xiii), for evolution and growth to occur.

No human being possesses *sureness of self*: this can only mean being bounded and unbounded, selved and unselved, 'sure' only of this untiring exercise. Then, this sureness of self, which is ready to be unsure, makes the laughter at this mismatch between aim and achievement comic, not cynical; holy, not demonic. (Rose, 1997: 125)

While anti-humanist thought both in its leftist and post-modern dimensions seeks to 'keep the mind out of hell', conveying an idealistic vision of humanity as freed from conflicts and tensions, the humanist tradition is much 'truer' to life in allowing for gaps, ruptures, discontinuities within the human condition.

The tradition is far kinder in its understanding that to live, to love, is to be failed, to forgive, to have failed, to be forgiven, for ever and ever. Keep your mind in hell, and despair not. (Rose, 1997: 98)

The humanist dialectical tradition can contribute to contemporary post-colonial theory by teaching the latter to accept aporia, the existence of a permanent, irresolvable tension resulting from the clash of opposites and allowing for the possibility of growth and novelty. The singularity inherent in the anti-humanist aspirations for a non-conflictuous, peaceful, unreal world in which differences happily reside side by side thus gives way to an oppositional, dualistic conceptual framework that posits the forever incomplete negotiation between anti-essentialist and essentialist dichotomies.

In line with the humanist tradition, the works of Fanon, Arendt and Levinas exemplify the attempt to negotiate the tension between essentialism and anti-essentialism. While Fanon can be read as problematising lived experience in terms of the psychic and biological needs pervading the human condition, Arendt gives primacy to the political, that is, the historically created and therefore artificial content that the form of needs acquires. Levinas, in turn, seeks to go beyond the nature vs. culture dichotomy by transcending the realm of ontology in a gesture of metaphysical transcendence, or ethics, whereby identity and alterity relate to each other as two separate, unequal entities that do not fuse into a totality.

Each of these authors conveys a different understanding of the subject/object dichotomy: where Fanon appears to advocate the eradication of conflict in an emancipated future society, in which subject and object coincide, Arendt acknowledges the existence of permanent tensions between subject and object only controllable through the force of law in the public realm, the latter designed to preserve the freedom of 'naturally' unequal individuals on one

hand, and, on the other, to promote the connection between human beings and the world in which they live through word and action. Levinas wishes to escape the subject/object ontological opposition altogether, placing emphasis on the inequality inherent in the relationship between identity and alterity, where the Other, situated on an infinitely higher plane to oneself, exceeds any attempt to contain it within the same. This incapacity to subsume the Other is ethics.²

The similarity between these three authors, however, resides in their reliance on the autonomous moral subject. Although Fanon represents black identity formation as occurring through a displacement process whereby the black person judges himself through the eyes of 'white' colonial society, he nevertheless appeals to the conscious subject of experience to challenge the prevalent social and economic context that human beings are ultimately responsible for maintaining in existence. Thus, despite the possibility of interpreting Fanon as a Lacanian *avant la lettre* - due to his focus on identity constitution as a product of social and cultural forces -, he nevertheless remains committed to an existential humanism which functions as a philosophy of action providing the foundations for collective cooperation in transformative social processes.

Influenced by Alexandre Kojève's interpretation of Hegel, Fanon's new humanism consists in an empirical anthropology which promotes the dualism between man and nature: on one hand he reduces the Spirit to the historical becoming of man, refusing to acknowledge the former as external to the human historical world, and, on the other, he recognises the specificity of the human condition as characterised by the desire for the other's desire. However, Fanon's adherence to an eschatological view positing a conflict free, emancipated future society can shed a 'provisional' light on his dualistic philosophy, converting the latter into a stage to be superseded on the trajectory towards a non-contradictory,

² The term 'Other' indicates the absoluteness of Levinasian alterity.

universal singularity. To what extent does Fanon's view of the split process of black identity formation betray a possible wish for a more perfected, non-divisive outlook regarding the psychic constitution of humanity?

Arguing for the non-resolution of the Freudian dualistic structure of Id and Ego, Soper claims that the two parts are not engaged in a permanent attempt to annihilate each other but rather in a productive tension that seeks to promote genuine gratification:

... we encounter two different lines of interpretation here: *either* the Id is taken to be the locus of our 'true' needs and it is thus supposed that the process of de-repression must correspond to a process of subordination of Ego to Id, of Reality Principle to Pleasure Principle, *or else* it is the Ego that is regarded as the locus of 'true' need and human happiness must therefore depend on the denial or eradication of the needs deriving from the Id. (1981: 166)

The will to transcend Freud's dichotomous structure denies the dialectic of human happiness expressed in the relationship between Pleasure Principle and Reality Principle. Based on a false dualism between nature and culture, this argument interprets what are in fact different types of instinctual needs, both of which have 'natural' origins and are subject to specific cultural conditionings, as a simple struggle between biology and society.

... so far from regarding either Id and Ego as the privileged source of our potential happiness, Freud insists upon the idea that psychic well-being is itself only accomplished through the reconciliation of the two. It is therefore mistaken to interpret Freud's slogan as suggesting the annihilation of the Id (all Ego, no Id...), for it is on the contrary a slogan about the desirability of their effective synthesis - where synthesis means synthesis, and not an Hegelian identity in which all differences have disappeared. (Soper, 1981: 170-1)

Advocating that nothing in Freud's theory indicates that primacy is to be given either to Ego or Id, Soper claims that the only reason for believing the contrary resides in the pre-Marxian oppositions of 'nature versus culture, biology versus society, head versus heart and reason versus passion'. According to Soper's reading of Freud, the secret to full gratification is the achievement of compromise between Ego and Id. While Ego represents the demands of reality, its rationality is nevertheless attentive to the 'passions' of the Id, seeking to gratify its wishes in the most realistic way possible. However, if Ego and Id are indeed complicit, and the Ego is not inherently repressive, why is it that the synthesis between Pleasure Principle and Reality Principle, which works in the interests of both, is so difficult to attain? The thwarting of the synthesis occurs due to the existence of a third mental region, the Super-Ego, which 'watches over' Ego and Id.

...from the standpoint of its implications for the construction of any future and more humane society it is the essential dualism of the Freudian perspective that should be stressed, since the repression which Freud associates with the Super-Ego is the contingent effect of specific social circumstances that are in principle removable. (Soper, 1981: 173-4)

However, this does not mean that the existence of the Super-Ego is negative, or that its elimination would further human emancipation or happiness. Like the Ego, it should be regarded as an agency conducive to 'harmonisation' and gratification due to its mitigation of the pitiless Ego-Id search for pleasure, allowing for the '*real other*' to be taken into account. Through the Super-Ego, alterity is no longer regarded as a threat to immediate personal happiness but rather as a condition of genuine satisfaction. (Soper, 1981: 174-5)

The Super-Ego in Freudian theory takes the place of law in Arendt's attempt to defend human plurality in the public realm.

Arguing that equality is one of the most uncertain aspects of the human condition, Arendt focuses on the differences inherent in human beings within the social realm so as to emphasise the necessity for the domain of law to defend human beings as equal in their inequalities. Although Arendt sponsors the Heideggerian view that humanity and the world form a totality, her 'being in the world', with the consequent fusion of subject and object, is founded on political participation in the community rather than on a primordial unity between Being and being.

... Heidegger argued for an 'existentialist' philosophy which would register the 'in-the-worldness' of the human individual and refused primacy to the subject of that world. According to Heidegger, all dualisms of subject and object, consciousness and being, humanity and nature, are a secondary and 'inauthentic' derivation from the primary unity of Being (*Sein*) with human Being (*Dasein*). (Soper, 1986: 57)

Arendt argues that human beings take responsibility for the care of the world through a *sensus communis*, a 'sixth sense that fits our five senses into a common world' (Arendt, 1978: 81). This perception that we share with others regarding the reality of a common world in which we live is political in that it assumes an inter-human relativity. By adjusting the subjective perceptions of our private five senses to the reality of an objective world that we inhabit with others, the faculty of judgement draws us away from our 'natural givenness', our unique individuality, and confers upon us a sense of identity deriving from expression and action in a world that belongs to us all. For Arendt, it is because we appear to others that our identity is confirmed. Heidegger, likewise, had claimed that although Being manifests itself through the diversity of objects constituting the world, it only appears when acknowledged and understood by human beings. (Soper, 1986: 57)

This means that for Heidegger..., there can be no objective understanding of history, and to suppose otherwise is to succumb to 'inauthenticity' - to be oblivious to the true nature of Being, to approach it as 'thing-like', as meaningless factuality. (Soper, 1986: 58)

Due to the inexistence of the 'thing-in-itself', the world appears to human beings as already meaningful. Heidegger rejects traditional humanism for presupposing what is 'truly human', that is, for assuming knowledge of Being. Claiming that humanist ontology derives from an already existing conceptual framework of beings as a whole, Heidegger opposes 'metaphysical evasions' that would define humanity by reference to the 'animal' or the 'natural'.

... the essence of the human being is too little heeded and not thought in its origin, the essential provenance that is always the essential future for historical mankind. Metaphysics thinks of the human being on the basis of *animalitas* and does not think in the direction of his *humanitas*. (Heidegger, 1998: 246-7)

Like all metaphysical definitions, naturalistic attempts to explain humanity completely misunderstand its essence, due to presupposing what this very essence is in the act of describing it. According to Heidegger's critique of metaphysics, the dignity of man is achieved once his condition as 'shepherd of being' is recognised. An authentic mode of existence therefore implies heeding the call to preserve the truth of Being through the rejection of subjectivising thought - the latter which judges events from the point of view of the subject - and simply allowing to 'let things be'.

Heidegger argues that it is ultimately up to human beings to choose between an 'authentic' or 'inauthentic' mode of being. For Arendt, human beings are inherently autonomous subjects whose freedom is characterised by the capacity to initiate a new series in

time through action. However, it is precisely due to the unpredictability and irreversibility of the consequences of human action, completely free from any 'law of necessity', that primacy must be given to law as a vehicle to preserve the living space of freedom between men.

By placing emphasis on 'being in the world', Heidegger wished to overcome the subject/object dichotomies inherent in metaphysics. Aiming to overthrow the categories of 'essentia' and 'existentia' altogether, Heidegger did not believe that the existentialist inversion of the concept according to which essence precedes existence would lead to 'authenticity'. Similarly, Levinas posited the dismantling of essence and existence by superseding the ontological realm of being and not-being. Opposing traditional metaphysics, Levinas aimed to establish a philosophy of metaphysical transcendence, or ethics. Confronting me from a dimension of height, the Other is absolute in that he can never be contained by the same. The possibility for ethics arises in the realisation of the separation between identity and alterity, in the infinite obligation towards the Other created by the inability to subsume him within any totality.

Levinas's metaphysical transcendence thus affords an escape route both from Husserlian phenomenology and Heideggerian 'being in the world': while Husserl had represented consciousness as 'intending' the object - thus closing himself within the subject -, Heidegger had focused on a world that appeared as 'already intended', indissociable from human purpose. (Soper, 1986: 57) Writing against the primacy of the One, of Totality, Levinas seeks to reconcile Western thought with the concept of rupture and diremption. While traditional ontology was founded on the idea of a return of the other to Unity, to the Eleatic being from which alterity had severed itself, Levinas claims that the human condition is inherently dualistic, for identity consists in 'being for the Other', an Other which always remains excessive to that very identity.

Nevertheless, in order for identity and alterity to engage in a relationship in which the two parts do not fuse into a totality, identity itself would already have to exist as a whole. Because identity does not lack, because it desires an Other which will not fulfil a satiable need, it exists for the Other due to not needing the latter to complete a totality. In other words, it bears a non-satiable, unquenchable desire for an alterity that is always excessive to itself. Levinas can, in this sense, be read as positing an autonomous moral subject who, conscious of its absolute conditionality on alterity, its complete dependence on otherness, nevertheless constitutes itself as a non-divisive whole before being able to engage in an ethical, dualistic relationship with the Other.

CHAPTER TWO

SLAVERY AND THE NEW WORLD: WHAT IS HUMAN?

I. Introduction

The development of slavery in the Americas will be explored in this chapter to illustrate the redefinition of subject constitution that marked the emergence of modernity, whereby an increasingly consolidated notion of self-centredness in terms of the autonomous European subject was to gradually replace the medieval theological imagination which posited a fundamental similitude between the microcosm and the macrocosm, linking the terrestrial to the divine. The epistemological break between old and new brought about by modernity was incoherent, obeying no grand narrative of progress: the medieval and the modern co-existed with each other in the form of a tension between the religious and the secular as witnessed in the disruptions that the confrontation with alterity in the Americas brought to the conceptual framework that had prevailed in Europe from 'Judeo-Christian times to the Renaissance'. The New World, as a terrain that defied certainties, had to be mastered in the 'guise of the Old', so as to allow for a rebirth of a waning order. Responding to the violence of shattered beliefs, the violence of genocide, ownership, forced conversion, subjection, subjectification and knowledge characterised the conquest of the Americas. However, the birth of modernity contains within itself a 'counter-discourse of domination', a self-critical and self-reflexive conscience that questions modernity's totalising impulse. (Venn, 2000: 109, 112-3, 122, 146, 149) These two currents within a broken, incoherent, non-linear modernity are patent in the charting of the development of New World slavery, namely in the discussions centring on the definition of 'human-ness' and its association with the concepts of reason and freedom, the latter understood essentially as the exercise of self-determination and ownership.

Between the late fifteenth and early eighteenth centuries, the institution of slavery in the New World acquired distinctive characteristics, firstly under Iberian metropolitan tutelage and subsequently within the framework of a market-oriented plantation system, based on private initiative. The encounter between the inhabitants of the New World and the Spanish *conquistadores*, in 1492, marks the cornerstone of the scission between the Middle Ages and Modernity, issuing in an epoch distinguished by the sedimentation of European, national and racial consciousness, fostered both by moral confrontation with alterity, as well as by the mechanisms of economic growth. The voracious European demand for New World produce would gradually convert a scholastically dominated, feudalistic world order revolving around the Pope into a bourgeois-centred, entrepreneurial order based on cooperation between states.

This transformation would only be achieved with the takeoff of seventeenth-century plantation slavery in the Caribbean and North America, which catered to the needs of a new consumer culture on the basis of a regime of intensive exploitation, differing from earlier practices of slavery due not only to its entirely commercial character - thus anticipating some traits of capitalist industrialism - , but also to its highly racialised ideology. The emergent 'civil slavery', which nourished itself on networks spreading across and beyond the Atlantic, was the result, in the plantation colonies, of the colonists' emancipation from the metropolis. (Blackburn, 1999: 8, 10, 335)

The racial character of New World slavery was thus, according to Robin Blackburn, invented by European entrepreneurs working independently from state authority. Contrary to commonly held views attributing slavery in the Americas to the policies of metropolitan state initiative, based on a divorce between state and civil society, Blackburn argues that "the spontaneous dynamic of civil society is also pregnant with disaster and mayhem". (1999: 6)

Until shortly before 1600 American slavery was a relatively modest adjunct of feudal business and feudal imperialism. But following the rise of the slave plantation - first in Brazil around 1580, and then, in a more sustained way, in the British and French colonies from about 1650 - American slavery became an outgrowth and adjunct of the European transition to capitalism. ... The oxygen required by the European furnace of capitalist accumulation ... was supplied by the slave traffic and the plantation-related trades. (1999: 376)

During the period of expansion of 'civil slavery', the Atlantic traffic reached its peak, with West European ships, laden with slave cargoes and productive inputs from European manufacturers, sailing from trade posts on the African coast to the New World plantations, the latter yielding raw materials - namely sugar, cotton, tobacco, cacao and other agricultural products - that would return to Europe by sea.

The clear signs of a new international order based on capitalistic market relations arising from the exploitation of New World resources provoked a struggle between modern and medieval conceptual frameworks in Spanish intellectual thought. Spain's preoccupation with justifying its colonisation of the Americas on a legal basis, emphasising the necessity of papal approbation for any step taken in the colonial enterprise, reflected an attempt to incorporate a new, market-oriented system into an existent medieval scholastic conceptual framework of alterity. The fact that no other nation felt subsequently compelled to justify either its bid to colonise or its reliance on slavery reveals a gradual naturalisation of the link between skin colour and slave status, which was to characterise seventeenth century racial ideology. Distinguished by the problematisation of issues regarding infidel status, Spanish imperialist policy sought to provide a legal basis for conquest, within a Catholic tradition dating from the thirteenth

century, already proving the infidel to possess dominium, that is, the right to property and self-government.

One can thus trace the sedimentation of 'white' consciousness through the encounter with the radical alterity of the New World by outlining the various phases that marked the evolution of slavery in that continent, focusing namely on the attitudes of the different European nations vis à vis the practice of slavery, as well as on their respective justifications for indulging in the Atlantic traffic. In this chapter, I propose to analyse the link between the rise in racial consciousness and the arguments used to validate the increment of slavery in the New World, polarised around dichotomies of human/animal, savage/civilised, barbarism/culture, all of which operated within a hierarchical taxonomic structure allocating each entity a fixed place in a tree of origins. Furthermore, the conceptualisation of slavery, within the Western tradition, as a deprivation of dominium will be examined, so as to reveal the extent to which the concept of humanity itself is linked to the idea of the right to property and self-government.

II. On Dominium as Absolute Property

It is not the condition of slavery that must be defined in terms of absolute notions of property, as is so often attempted; rather, it is the notion of absolute property that must be explained in terms of ancient Roman slavery. (1982: 32)

According to Orlando Patterson, modern definitions of slavery in terms of the civil law notion of ownership or absolute property read the history of human thought in reverse. The habitual legalistic definition of slavery as 'the status or condition of a person over whom any or all the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised' is critiqued by this author precisely for failing to distinguish any particular category of persons: proprietary claims and powers can be applied to any 'free' human being. Moreover,

Patterson considers that the conventional equation of slavery with a lack of legal personality - that is, the absence of the person as 'bearer of rights and duties' - is a Western social fiction, attested to by the jurisprudence in slaveholding societies regarding the delicts of slaves: the primary characteristic of the institution of slavery lies in the absolute power of the slavemaster over his slave, entailed by the very fact that only slaves entered the relationship as a substitute for death, falling prey to alienation from natal ties, absence of honour and lack of public recognition. However, the total power of the slavemaster over the slave does not mean that slavery can be defined in terms of a deprivation of freedom. Pre-modern, nonslaveholding societies did not value freedom as an ideal: individuals longed to integrate themselves within a network of power and authority to achieve social recognition, but they did not aspire to be free. Likewise, most non-Western slaveholding communities were not acquainted with the concept of 'freedom' before contact with the West. (Patterson, 1982: 21, 22, 26, 27, 32, 340)

In societies dominated by the 'personalistic' idiom of power, that is, where relations of subjection were transparent so that individuals directly depended on others and habitually had others dependent on them, the polarisation between slaves and non-slaves was reduced. Measured along a power continuum, the status of persons consisted in the potential claims exercised on others: social standing was determined by the extent to which individuals could elicit 'claims and privileges' from others, because all persons were regarded as objects of property. (Patterson, 1982: 18, 27)

Property is, according to Patterson, important in defining the status of the slave; however, contrary to customary definitions, the slave's condition was not due to being the object of property, but rather to his not being the subject of property. The extent to which a person was a subject of property was gauged by the degree to which he could evoke protection from those surrounding him: the

powerlessness of the slave derived from his dependence on a single person - the slaveholder - for protection. Reliance upon a network of protective power was thus sought by slaves in detriment to freedom, understood in the "modern 'bourgeois' sense of isolation from the influence of others". (Patterson, 1982: 28)

In the 'materialistic' idiom of power, coercion is concealed or denied, presented as a kind of freedom. Capitalist societies are paradigmatic of this negation of real power entailed by the mediation of property and commodity fetishism. The transition from the personalistic to the 'materialistic' idiom of power is characterised by a system of property in which "a right to things is realised through a hold on persons" to one in which "a hold on persons is realised through a right to things". The ancient Roman socio-economic context exemplifies this development toward a materialist idiom of power, where relations of subjection were mediated through land and slaves. The problems presented by the existence of large-scale slavery led the Romans to elaborate laws of property inspired on a new legal concept: the notion of dominium, defined as the absolute ownership of tangible things. (Patterson, 1982: 18, 28)

While ancient Greece thrived on a developed system of slavery in its urban and industrial sectors, the strictly defined social divisions between citizen and non-citizen dispensed with the need for legal specification: the clear distinction between Greek and non-Greek meant that despite the large number of slaves, there was no risk of confusing slaves with 'freeborn' Greek citizens. The Roman context differed from the Greek in that it was based on inclusion; manumitted slaves were awarded citizenship, and freeborn citizens could not resort to clearcut social divisions to defend their status. The Romans thus turned to the 'legal fiction' of dominium, or absolute ownership, for social clarification.³ (Patterson, 1982: 30-1)

³ Slaves in Ancient Greece were nevertheless considered to be a kind of property, belonging to the private realm of the owner's household

The three constituent elements of the new legal paradigm - *persona*, *res*, and *dominium* - modelled directly the three constituent elements of the master-slave relationship - master, slave, and enslavement. (Patterson, 1982: 31)

The specificity of Roman legal codification resided on one hand in its preoccupation in safeguarding private property, a category which included chattel slavery, and, on the other, in its disregard for the slave's ethnic origin. (Blackburn, 1999: 34-5)

The connection between the appearance of large-scale slavery in Rome and the notion of absolute ownership is manifested in the very etymology of the word 'dominium'. Whereas in the third century B.C. the word 'dominus' meant slavemaster rather than owner, by the first century B.C. the term 'dominium' had shifted from slaveholding to absolute ownership of property. (Patterson, 1982: 32)

Patterson's argument regarding the influence of dominium on the Western juridical conception of slavery comes across as slightly problematic, however, in the New World context. The notion of dominium, defined by the ancient Romans as absolute ownership, was qualified by medieval canon lawyers as a right to property and self-government. The debates concerning infidel dominium that distinguished the Spanish colonial process point to a close relationship between being human and possessing dominium: however, the crucial issue lay in determining whether or not the infidels in question possessed rationality so as to be worthy of dominium. Thus, according to the basic premise of this line of argument, if man is to be fully human, he must possess dominium;

alongside women and domestic animals. Because Aristotle considered that the law of nature deemed all things to exist with an end in view - that is, to be used by man -, war was a perfectly legitimate means for obtaining property, be it wild animals or natural slaves. (Blackburn, 1999: 35)

nevertheless, his humanity does not hinge on possessing dominium, but rather on being in the full capacity of reason. Men fit for slavery were defined by their limited rationality, and the slave condition was regarded by many as a transitional phase permitting the native to educate himself in the ways of civilisation, thus improving his reasoning potential. The concept of chattel slavery is thus perhaps not the most adequate to describe slavery in the Americas under an Iberian dominated, papally-centred world order. However, from the late sixteenth century onwards, with the demise of papal power and its gradual replacement by an order based on market-oriented state cooperation, the Roman notion of the slave as private property was revived, influencing the development of plantation slavery.

Patterson's premise of an existing dichotomy between 'personalistic' societies with transparent power relations on one hand, and 'materialistic' societies with camouflaged relations of subjection on the other, is, moreover, difficult to confirm on the basis of New World slavery. In fact, instead of camouflaging coercion, the incipient capitalistic relations of the plantation colonies had the effect of fomenting a clearly defined structure of domination between blacks and whites.

III. On Dominium: Christendom and the Infidels

The framework of the relationship between Christian and non-Christian societies was moulded by canon, or ecclesiastical, lawyers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Abstract philosophical and theological concepts were thus incorporated into canon law, which sought to apply theory to practice by regulating Christian relations with the non-Christian world. (1994: 16) Because canonists tended to regard non-Christians as an undifferentiated mass grouped under the category *extra ecclesiam*, juridical principles and practices oriented towards one sector of people who did not belong to the Church could be equally applied

to any other sector, independently of being heretics, schismatics, Jews, or infidels.

Thus, when canonists came to consider the situation of non-Christians who lived beyond the bounds of Christendom, they began by extending previous discussions of non-Christians living within Europe to fit the new peoples whom they encountered. (Muldoon, 1979: 3)

The non-Christians living within Europe were, for the most part, Jews and Muslims. In the twelfth century, the canonists' interest in the latter was resumed to concern about the influence such people might have on Christians. Canonists did not develop a theory of relations with infidel societies, for they saw no reason why the Church, rather than autonomous Christian states, should attempt to establish contacts with non-Christian states. (1979: 4, 5) In the mid-thirteenth century, however, Sinibaldo Fieschi, or Pope Innocent IV (1243-1254), a reputed canonist, established a juridical basis for a theory of Christian relations with infidel societies. This basis consisted in a commentary on a decretal - a papal judicial decision - of his predecessor, Innocent III (1198-1216). The decretal, *Quod super his*, concerned the problems posed by the impossibility of fulfilling a vow taken to go on crusade to the Holy Land. While Innocent III had centred the discussion on the settlement of the debt in question, Innocent IV preferred to focus on the justice of the crusade.

In commenting on this decretal, Innocent IV raised the obvious question: "is it licit to invade the lands that infidels possess, and if it is licit, why is it licit?" By raising the question in such general terms, ... Innocent IV set the stage for a wide ranging discussion of papal relations with infidel societies. Furthermore, the very form of the question indicated that peaceful relations between Christians and infidels were possible, if not probable. (1979: 6)

The theory of the just war was, from then on, to provide the background to four centuries of debate in judicial contexts about the foundations upon which relations between Christians and non-Christian societies could arise. Rather than restricting himself to the notion of a just war of defence for the Holy Land, a theme which canonists had previously discussed, Innocent IV argued that because Muslims had seized the Holy Land in an unjust war, the Pope had the right to order an invasion so as to restore Christian control of that territory. (1994: 16; 1979: 6) The crux of the matter, however, lay in another issue: did Christians have the right to occupy territories, other than the Holy Land, under Muslim control? Or, in other words, could Christians legitimately dispossess infidels the world over?

Innocent IV sought answers to these questions in biblical examples as well as in Roman law, focusing on dominium as the right to hold private property on one hand, as well as the right to exercise self-government on the other hand. Quoting from Genesis, he argued that all property was held in common, when the world was first created. This phase corresponded, in Roman law, to that in which all men were free and slavery non-existent. However, the need for private ownership of property ensued from conflict amongst the descendants of Adam. In this context, it was legitimate to seize unoccupied territory but wrong to appropriate oneself of land belonging to another, thus giving rise to clear distinctions between 'mine and thine'. Roman law would subscribe to the evolution of mankind according to laws of property, from common to private, by insisting that the natural law which dictated relations between free men in the beginning of time was gradually replaced by the law of nations, allowing for the sedimentation of private property, slavery, and war. (1979: 8)

According to Innocent IV, the bearer of legitimate authority in any society possessed the power to enforce justice on those who were recalcitrant in following the laws that governed the relationship between people. Lawful authority, deriving from God, was

exercised, in primitive societies, by the power of the patriarchs. However, as society became more complex, the prince replaced the patriarchal figure as bearer of legitimate authority. The beginning of political society, as opposed to patriarchal rule, was marked by the election of Saul as king of the Israelites. For Innocent IV, this biblical event proved that "all rational creatures" could legitimately exercise the right to self-government. (1979: 8)

By the laws that were common to all men, private property and self-government were the right of all men. Even in the contemporary world, infidels continued to enjoy these rights without interference because these rights were as common to all men as the sunshine that warmed all men, Christian and infidel alike. As a consequence, it was not licit for the Pope or anyone else to wage a campaign to deprive infidels of their property or their lordship simply because they were infidels. (1979: 9)

In this manner, Innocent destroyed the argument authorising Christians to wage war against infidels on the basis of the Church's responsibility for the souls of all men. According to Muldoon, had Innocent IV terminated his discussion on the rights of infidels at this point, he would not have played a role in the evolution of international law and relations. (1994: 17) However, he developed his argument further, by arguing that the right all rational creatures had to private property and to self-government was not absolute: the legitimate exercise of dominium did not exempt those who possessed it from being judged by a higher authority, that is, the Pope. Because the Pope had the responsibility of ensuring the spiritual well-being of mankind, he ought to guide all human beings towards salvation, not only those who were members of the Church. As God's agent on earth, the Pope therefore had the obligation of exercising judgement of all people, according to the law to which they were subject - Christians by Christian law, Jews by Jewish law and infidels by natural law -, anywhere rulers failed to implement sanctions

against infractors of the law prevalent in their respective societies. In other words, Innocent IV defended that papal jurisdiction over infidels was *de iure*, becoming only *de facto* if natural law, the law known to all men, was violated. (1979: 22) Accordingly, only those non-Christian societies whose members did not unjustly occupy Christian territories or infringe upon natural law were safe from Christian attack. (1994: 17) The problem, however, was that despite the clear definition of Jewish law in the Pentateuch, natural law, allegedly known to all human beings, remained ambiguous in content. As such, violations of natural law that would permit the conquest of an infidel society were vaguely described as 'sexual perversion or the worship of idols'. (1994: 17)

What this means, of course, was that when the Pope was evaluating the actions of an infidel who was acting in accord with his own legal tradition, he had to evaluate the actions in question not according to the laws of the individual's society but according to natural law as the Pope defined it. (1994: 19)

The Pope's emphasis on the legitimacy of infidel dominium, the 'natural right of all men', thus revealed itself as qualified to the extent that it required submission to papal consideration. Innocent IV's argument illustrates his desire to simultaneously defend both the independence of infidel societies, as well as the Pope's responsibility for the souls of all people everywhere. This contradictory objective mirrors the earlier canonist intent to defend the autonomy of secular Christian power, whilst justifying papal intervention in the secular sphere in certain contexts. At issue was the question whether all legitimate authority within Christendom ought to be mediated by the Church. While the dualists defended the independence of the secular from the temporal, due to the ruler receiving power from God through the people, the hierocrats refused to recognise the legitimacy of secular power that was not mediated through the Church.

The dualist position recognised the secular power as an autonomous sphere of jurisdiction not under the regular and direct control of the Church. In the dualist view, the Pope possessed an indirect power over secular rulers, however, because as members of the Church they were subject to ecclesiastical jurisdiction. (1979: 9)

At stake in the debate between dualists and hierocrats were opposite views favouring direct or indirect papal intervention in secular affairs. In formulating the foundations of a framework to deal with relations between Christians and infidels, Innocent IV was sponsoring the dualist line of argument; he claimed an indirect power over infidels based on spiritual preoccupations. On the other side of the divide, representing the hierocratic position, was Innocent IV's student, Henry of Segusio, or Hostiensis (d.1270), who rejected the notion that infidels possessed dominium, that is, the right to property and self-government. According to Hostiensis, the right to dominium solely belonged to Christians, since the coming of Christ.

Infidels, by the very fact of not being Christians, were sinners, so that when Christ became incarnate, infidels automatically lost their right to hold property and lordship legitimately. As Peter and his successors were the vicars of Christ, they too had the power to deprive infidels of office and lands. (1979: 17)

Because infidel rulers occupied territories and power that now legitimately belonged to Christians, the Pope could intervene directly in infidel societies to establish the suzerainty of Christians. As such, Hostiensis defended the subjection of infidels to Christian rulers *de iure*. (1979: 17) Although one might be induced into thinking that the Hostiensian view regarding the lack of dominium in infidel societies would be favourable to the Papacy, it was fiercely rejected on the grounds of potentially paving the way to the heresy of Donatism. By resting dominium on the state of

grace, Hostiensis was defending a position perilously close to that of the donatists, according to whom sinful priests could not exercise sacramental authority. (1994: 20)

This theological opinion was rejected by the Church as heretical, in part, at least, because the donatist teaching involved the definition of the Church's nature: if the efficacy of a sacrament depended upon the personal qualities of the minister, the Church as an institution would dissolve into a series of sects led by those believed to be sinless. The orthodox position was that a validly ordained priest who administered the sacraments according to the prescribed ritual was legitimate minister of the sacrament even if he himself was in the state of sin. (1979: 16)

Transposed to the civil realm, this argument was to be used to assert that only rulers in the state of grace held legitimate political power. By advocating the latter claim, Hostiensis could be accused of heresy for he was extrapolating arguments about the nature of the Church to the political order.

Subsequent discussions centring on Christian relations with the non-Christian world were to base themselves on the Innocentian and Hostiensian positions. Despite the differences inherent in the two views, revolving principally around the indirect or direct nature of papal power, both Innocent and Hostiensis agreed that baptism should be a voluntary act and that the first phase of Christian entry into non-Christian territories should consist in the arrival of peaceful missionaries. (1979: 17) For Innocent IV, papal responsibility for the souls of all men justified war in instances where infidel rulers created obstacles to the free entry and movement of Christian missionaries. However, the Pope was careful to emphasise that secular Christian rulers could not take the matter into their own hands and declare war against infidels on the grounds that the latter were blocking missionary access into non-Christian territories. Waging war ultimately required papal

authorisation, for at stake was a spiritual objective (1994: 18, 19): infidels who were targeted by a Christian invasion had to be guilty either of occupying previously Christian lands, or to have violated the terms of natural law. (1979: 16) Because it was in the nature of all human beings to praise God (1994: 18), any attempt to prevent the entry of missionaries in infidel territories could be considered to be a violation of natural law. Nevertheless, although the free exercise of Christian activities might necessitate, if opposed, the use of force, baptism required the voluntary consent of the individual. (1994: 18) The model which served to regulate Christian relations with Jews within Christendom came to serve as a guideline for Christian relations with infidels. Significantly, despite the possibility of Jews being compelled to attend Christian sermons and to burn the Talmud due to its presumable distortion of a genuine Jewish tradition - according to the Pope's definition of the latter -, they could not be coerced into baptism. (1994: 18)

Here the Pope was distinguishing clearly between the kinds of behaviour in which non-Christians engaged that the Pope could regulate, by force if necessary, and baptism, an act that required voluntary acceptance. The Pope's responsibility for the salvation of infidels was restricted to ensuring that their rulers placed no obstacles in the way of preaching the Gospel. Once the freedom to preach existed, the papal role ended and responsibility for the salvation of these souls was theirs individually. (1994: 18)

The Innocentian-Hostiensian discussions revolving around the infidel right to dominium had grown directly out of the crusades against the Muslims on one hand, and the threat of Mongol assault on the other. The decline of the Mongol empire during the fourteenth century brought an end to the relations between the Papacy and Asia; these contacts had sought to establish peace in Eurasia as well as to win allies to the anti-Muslim cause. (1994: 21) During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, canon lawyers would continue to apply the notion of infidel dominium as their

thirteenth century predecessors had defined it, to a situation that was exceeding the boundaries of the debate between Innocent IV and Hostiensis.

IV. On Dominium: The Iberian Experience

i) The Canaries

The discussion of dominium in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries continued to take place within the framework of Catholic thought laid down by Innocent IV's commentary on the decretal *Quod super his*. The role the Papacy was to play in the legitimation of the conquest of the New World was foreshadowed by events concerning conflicting claims between Portugal and Castile over the Canary Islands in the fifteenth century. In 1434, Pope Eugenius IV (1431 - 47) forbid further Christian occupation of the Canary Islands on the grounds that European explorers had terrorised a number of Christian converts among the native population, thus giving priority to territorial over spiritual objectives. However, two years later, in 1436, Eugenius issued the bull, *Romanus Pontifex*, offering the islands permanently to Portugal.

The discussion on the rights of infidels in the papal court ensued from King Duarte (1433-38) of Portugal's request that the ban on Christian activities in the Canaries be lifted so that the Portuguese could continue to convert the Canarians. Because the islanders lacked common religion, law, or organised government, the Portuguese claimed that their proselytising work would bring civilisation to a people who lived a wild and primitive existence, 'little better than that of animals'. (1979: 121) Although Duarte avoided a clear allusion to the issue of infidel dominium, he nevertheless broached it indirectly by assuring the Pope that the Portuguese sought to protect the islanders from oppression and exploitation, thus always keeping in mind the moral necessity of the spiritual and physical well-being of the native population. He justified the attack that had caused the original papal ban on

expansion in the Canaries on the grounds that the natives' had presented ferocious resistance.

Thus, although Eugenius might not have agreed with Duarte's interpretation of the rights of infidels, the King's letter had nevertheless provided other motives for permitting the conquest. Because the islanders were fierce, they would presumably not allow the peaceful entry of missionaries in their territories. On the basis of Innocent IV's arguments, the Pope would be fully justified in allowing the use of military force so as to enable the free exercise of Christian activities. Furthermore, Duarte's claim in favour of the Christian responsibility to civilise and baptise primitive man could be justified under Innocent IV's assumption that the violation of natural law required subjection to papally authorised judgement. (1974: 124) Eugenius thus gave permission to the continuation of Portuguese expansion in the Canaries, by resorting to the legal framework concerning infidel dominium.

In *Romanus Pontifex*, Eugenius authorised the Portuguese to oversee the conversion of the remaining infidels in the Canary Islands, regardless of where they lived. Taking his theme from Duarte's letter, Eugenius stressed his role as Christ's vicar on earth. Because the earth and its fullness belonged to Christ, the Pope, His vicar, could exercise Christ's authority over all and everything on earth. (1979: 129)

ii) The New World

The necessity for papal approbation that marked Iberian expansion in the Atlantic and the west coast of Africa in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was to influence the Castilian colonial enterprise in the New World during the sixteenth century. Preoccupation with the legitimation of the conquests made in the Americas was of primary importance in Spanish intellectual life of the time, which inspired itself on canon law to elaborate a theory

of peaceful relations between Castile and the native inhabitants of the Americas. (1994: 21)

Castilian and Portuguese expansion had been regulated by a long series of papal bulls, which allocated lands free from Christian rule to either Portuguese or Castilian ecclesiastical responsibility: Castile and Portugal were granted a monopoly of trade with regions their agents 'discovered', in exchange for ensuring the conversion of infidels. Columbus's discovery of the New World presented the same dilemma as had previous explorations: the prevalent question was under what circumstances could Queen Isabella of Castile and King Ferdinand of Aragon lay claim to the Americas. The Papacy was once again called in to resolve the matter, issuing three bulls in 1493 - the most famous entitled *Inter caetera* -, which continued the fifteenth century tradition of dividing ecclesiastical responsibility of the newly discovered land between Castile and Portugal.

Inter caetera integrated Castile's acquisition of the New World into the history of the reconquest which had terminated with Muslim defeat in Granada, in precisely 1492, the year of Columbus's arrival in the Americas. After seven centuries of crusading activity dedicated to ridding Spain of the Saracens, the Catholic monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, were at last free to extend the boundaries of Christendom by divulging the Gospel to infidels beyond Christendom. Alexander VI (1492-1503) was careful to avoid any direct allusion to infidel dominium, focusing instead on the necessity to convert, civilise, and protect the inhabitants of the Americas, a mission which would be accomplished through Castilian ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Papal responsibility for the salvation of all men's souls would thus be fulfilled. (1979: 137-8) The publication of *Inter caetera*, and several related bulls, marked the change from medieval to sixteenth century relations with the infidels. The encounter with the New World raised questions, already tackled by medieval scholasticism, concerning the nature of secular and temporal power, as well as Christian relations with

non-Christian societies, within a new context. (1994: 22-3) The novel circumstances in which the colonisation of the Americas occurred were characterised by a rift between the Castilian government's perception of the conquest and the *conquistadores'* actions in the New World.

The royal goal was to prevent the creation of a noble class capable of flouting the monarchy. As a result, the Castilian government's protestations about the abuses of the *conquistadores* and its assertion of interest in the spiritual well-being of the Indians were related to its own interests. (1979: 140)

The Spanish concern with the legitimation of the conquest also reflected the monarchy's customary policy of securing an orderly integration of new territorial acquisitions into the system of royal government. Ultimately, Castile sought to maintain the right order of the world on the basis of the legal tradition that had begun with the Innocentian-Hostiensian debate in the thirteenth century, an objective which countered the solely profit-oriented initiatives of the *conquistadores*. The *Requerimiento*, issued in 1512, reflects the extent to which Castile wished to earn papal approbation of the conquest, by seeking to justify the latter in terms of the existing legal framework concerning infidel dominium. Basically, the *Requerimiento* consisted in a legal statement that the Spanish read out to the native inhabitants of the Americas before attacking them, in which they explained both the reasons for their presence as well as the motives of the conquest.

Critics from Las Casas to the present have been scandalised by the vision of a friar reading this statement to an audience composed of trees or empty huts, or hurling its words at the backs of fleeing, uncomprehending Indians, terrified by the sight of armed strangers. There is no evidence that the text was ever translated into any American tongue so that the

natives might have some opportunity to understand it. (1979: 140)

Muldoon claims that the *Requerimiento* nevertheless made sense within the context of the medieval legal framework that characterised the Castilian system of government. Upon hearing the statement of Christian beliefs - in which it was stated that the Church was responsible for the spiritual well-being of all human beings -, the Indians were expected to allow the peaceful entry of missionaries into their territories. The refusal of the infidels to admit the *conquistadores* would justify the use of coercion against them to protect the missionaries who preached the Gospel, thus ensuring the free exercise of Christian activities in non-Christian societies. According to Muldoon, the *Requerimiento* allowed the Spanish to conquer the New World on the basis of a legal ritual, only superficially in keeping with Innocent IV's views on infidel dominium. (Muldoon, 1979: 140; 1994: 27; Las Casas, 1992: 32-3)

The Dominican friar, Bartholomé de Las Casas (1474-1566), a former colonist in the New World, had become an ardent defender of Indians' rights after undergoing conversion. Seeking to expose the cruelty of the *conquistadores* to Ferdinand of Aragon and to his successor, Charles V, Las Casas's works emphasise that the *Requerimiento* deprived the Indians of their natural right to property and self-government. In other words, he considered the Spanish legal statement to espouse the Hostiensian view that infidels, usurpers of land and lordship that rightfully belonged to Christians, did not possess dominium. The *Requerimiento*, however, had been drawn up by the lawyer Juan Lopez de Palacios Rubios, precisely because Innocent IV's opinion on the rights of infidels had been recognised by the Castilian court: infidel possession of dominium obliged the Spanish to legitimate their conquest on the basis of the alleged refusal of Indians to allow the peaceful entry of Christian missionaries into their lands. As such, Muldoon considers Las Casas to have missed the spirit of the *Requerimiento*. (1979: 141)

The problem lay with Las Casas ... not with Palacios Rubios. The friar did not appreciate that the Innocentian opinion about the rights of infidels did not absolutely forbid an invasion of an infidel society. Both Hostiensis and Innocent IV had concluded that Christians could lawfully invade and subdue an infidel society; they differed on the grounds that would justify the invasion. (1979: 141)

Palacios Rubios would presumably have been only too aware of the dangers inherent in advocating a Hostiensian position, which might have paved the way to a charge of heresy by Castile's rivals. Having experienced a legal conflict with the Portuguese over the Canaries in the fifteenth century, the Castilians were anxious to avoid the accusation of illegal conquest before the Papacy by a rival Christian power. In that context, the Pope could withdraw the license from the Castilians and award another nation the responsibility for proselytising amongst the Indians. Thus, in line with Innocentian views that recognised infidel dominium, Palacios Rubios drew up the *Requerimiento* with the objective of legitimating the conquest of the Americas on the basis of what was regarded to be a just cause, papal responsibility for the spiritual well-being of all men. (1979: 142-3)

The legitimacy of the Castilian conquest of the Americas became a predominant theme in the discussions held by theologians, scholastic philosophers, and lawyers in the flourishing sixteenth-century Spanish academy. In 1550, Las Casas and the theologian Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (1490-1573) confronted each other in a debate before a royal commission organised by Charles V to assess the legitimacy of Spanish overseas expansion. Sepúlveda, as a defender of the conquest, based himself on Aristotle's definition of natural slavery to argue that because the Indians were by nature inferior to Europeans, they were clearly destined to

slavery.⁴ (1979: 143; 1994: 27) In opposing this argument, Las Casas inspired himself on previous canonistic discussion regarding infidel dominium.

Another major contribution to the debate about the legitimacy of Spanish expansion was the theologian Francisco de Vitoria. Following in the line of Innocent IV, Vitoria argued that the legitimate conquest of the Americas had to be built upon a morally justifiable basis: because important moral and spiritual issues were at stake, Vitoria believed that priests, rather than lawyers, ought to settle the question. Drawing on a scholastic tradition that reached back to the thirteenth century, Vitoria represented the debate as essentially concerning a conflict between the infidel right to property and self-government on one hand, and the Christian right to invasion on the other. In this context, Vitoria asked whether the infidels possessed dominium, and if so, how could the Spanish justify depriving them of the latter.

Vitoria began his discussion on dominium by opposing the Aristotelian notion of natural slavery: contrary to what defenders of the conquest habitually claimed, Vitoria argued that because all men shared a universal nature, 'some could not be natural slaves while others were natural masters'. (1979: 144) The Indians thus had as much right to dominium as the Spanish. Vitoria went on to analyse the fifteen claims habitually put forth to defend the conquest of the Americas, seven of which he judged invalid for presupposing that the Spanish could act unilaterally towards the Indians. (1994: 32)

⁴ Aristotle's notion of natural slavery embraced class-like and racial characteristics, referring to the barbarian who tended to make concessions to others, and whose physical strength outweighed his rationality. Natural slaves thus needed the guidance of independent beings, endowed both with civilisation and the full use of reason. (Blackburn, 1999: 35)

Vitoria opposed claims regarding universal temporal jurisdiction by either the Holy Roman Emperor or the Pope. Because self-government was a natural right of all men, the Spanish could not allege the necessity of a single government, under the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, that would embrace both Christians and non-Christians. Regarding universal papal authority, Vitoria claimed that the latter concerned the spiritual rather than the temporal sphere. Las Casas would come to support Vitoria's view, for he believed that the Pope could not issue licenses that would deprive the Indians of their temporal rights; while the legal tradition regarded the Pope as the ultimate judge of the primacy of rights - having the power to declare war in the event of hostility towards the free movement of missionaries in infidel lands, so as to preserve the spiritual well-being of non-Christians -, Las Casas considered this to be a violation of infidel temporal rights, and as such, an illegitimate basis for Spanish conquest of the Americas.

Vitoria diverged from the traditional Innocentian approach by arguing that the Pope could not claim spiritual jurisdiction over non-Christians. The refusal of infidels to embrace the Christian faith in the sequence of having the *Requerimiento* read out to them could nowise provide a basis for their conquest by the Spanish, for baptism under such conditions would indicate either 'lightness of mind or fear of Spanish retribution', neither of which were suitable motives for conversion. (1979: 147) The same logic applied to the apparent acceptance of Spanish lordship by native inhabitants, who in most cases did so not voluntarily but out of fear.

The legitimate titles defended by Vitoria alluded to the universal right, embracing both Christians and infidels, to take charge of their own political destiny. As such, everyone was entitled to freedom of travel for commercial or religious motives, or to protection from tyrannical rule. Thus, the universal right to travel where one wished without interference underscored the right of missionaries to preach in non-Christian territories. (1979: 148) This contrasts with the traditional Innocentian emphasis on papal

responsibility for all men's souls as justifying the right to secure the peaceful access of missionaries abroad. Vitoria, however, did agree with Innocent IV in that infidel hostility to missionaries would fully justify a declaration of war against them. However, the subtle difference between Vitoria's view and that of Innocent IV is that while the former argued that the Spanish could claim the New World on the basis of a papal license, conferring responsibility for the conversion of native inhabitants, the latter focused on papal responsibility for the spiritual well-being of all men.

Vitoria advocated a contract theory of government, in which rulers held power on the basis of popular consent. Here, he was following Innocent IV's opinion that all human communities had the right to select their own rulers; Las Casas would later add the legal doctrine "what affects all must be approved by all" to Innocent's conclusion, in a gesture that may be reminiscent of Vitoria's position concerning this issue. (1979: 151) Although Vitoria considered voluntary submission of the ruled to the rulers to be a prerequisite of good government, any violation of the subjects' rights by the authorities could justify Christian intervention even against the will of the local population. Here, the higher good, the saving of lives, would win over the lesser good, infidel dominium. (1979: 149) The danger, however, was that the Spanish could be claiming control over the Indians for the latter's benefit, while in reality taking advantage of the situation for the sake of personal interest. The spiritual welfare of the Spaniards would thus be at stake, for they might lose their souls due to their hypocrisy towards the native inhabitants of the Americas.

In 1609, Hugo Grotius published his first treatise on international law, *Mare liberum*, with the objective of negating the legitimacy of Castilian and Portuguese conquest of the Americas on the basis of Alexander's bull *Inter caetera*. Grotius argued that the Indians' right to property and self-government could not be challenged on the grounds of their status as non-Christians. Accordingly, papal grants awarding domination of the New World to Christian powers

were invalid, because the Pope had no jurisdiction over infidels. (1994: 30)

It was in the context of the waning of papal power and the rise of a new world order that the scholar-bureaucrat Juan de Solórzano Pereira (1575-1654) sought to defend the Spanish conquest of the Americas. His *De Indiarum Jure*, written in the seventeenth century, attempts to respond to debates originating in a medieval legal framework on one hand, and in contemporary Protestant circles on the other. The objective of *De Indiarum Jure* was first and foremost the attempt to firmly establish Spain and its colonies within a Catholic world order. As such, more than a humanitarian response to the detrimental effects of Spanish colonisation on the indigenous populations of the Americas, Solórzano's treatise consisted in a debate about the right order of the world.

Dealing with various arguments that Vitoria had considered, Solórzano claimed that the only legitimate title to the Spanish possession of the New World was as the result of a papal license. Whereas Vitoria had discussed the legitimacy of the Castilian conquest in the initial stages of Spanish and Portuguese overseas expansion, when the two Catholic powers had no rivals in the colonial enterprise, Solórzano found himself justifying Spanish imperialist legitimacy in a context in which the papal right to restrict conquest to Spain and Portugal was clearly doubted. Thus, the defence of the papal jurisdiction upon which the Spanish justified the legitimacy of their overseas possessions had to be given priority in the wider debate over the validity of the conquest itself.

In Catholic circles, while the existence of the Papacy was, of course, not in question, the nature and extent of its jurisdiction certainly was. Catholic rulers and their advisers could call upon a long tradition of opposition to papal involvement in temporal matters to reject the Castilian and Portuguese monopolies in the Indies. On the other hand,

Protestant reformers were now attacking the very existence of the Papacy itself. The Papacy and the clerically dominated Church structure that it headed was, in Protestant terms, a deformation of the true Christian Church that was now in the process of being reformed. (1994: 35)

While Vitoria had engaged in a scholastic discussion concerning the possession of infidel dominium, Solórzano was forced to extend this debate by focusing on the evolution of papal authority within the Church and on the defence of its validity. According to Solórzano, the illegitimate claims entitling Spain to the possession of the Americas made no reference whatsoever to papal jurisdiction in conferring responsibility over newly discovered territories to a Christian power. Because lack of papal authority could lead to unruly expansion and the continuation of unmediated rival territorial claims, the New World risked becoming the site of a 'land rush' the moment any Christian power was to claim the Americas on the grounds of either fulfilling divine will or accomplishing a civilising mission. Where the illegitimate titles to the Americas could potentially conduce to chaos in the world order, the title securing Spanish conquest of the Americas on a papal license would provide for an orderly and stable process of expansion. The right order of the world was thus ensured by the Papacy's regulation of relations between Catholic and non-Christian societies. (1994: 36)

For the Spanish, this emphasis upon papal grant, not discovery and conquest or direct divine grant, meant that they had to defend their continued possession of the New World in the terms of Alexander VI's bulls, that is, in terms of papal responsibility for the salvation of the infidels. (1994: 37)

V. Confrontation with Alterity

i) Columbus and the New World

The issue of infidel dominium only arose in the context of societies deemed to be primitive by the Castilians: while Christian Europeans had traditionally focused on trade rather than domination in their encounter with what they considered to be the relatively developed societies of China and Japan, populations who lacked trade, government, and other components of civil society were regarded as their inferiors. (Muldoon, 1994: 23)

When at the end of the Spanish Reconquest Columbus set forth on his first voyage of discovery, he planned to head for the lands of the Great Khan to initiate commercial links, opening a sea route permitting access to the spice trade. Abiding by a long-standing European idea, he also wished to spread the Catholic faith, in a religious alliance with the Far East oriented against Islam. Instead of the sophisticated subjects of the Great Khan that he had expected to encounter, however, Columbus found the naked, innocent and child-like inhabitants of a previously unknown land. (Ife, 1990: xvii, xix)

By perceiving the inhabitants of the Caribbean islands in the same terms as they had perceived, for example, the Canary Islanders, the advisers of Ferdinand and Isabella shaped the way in which Columbus and those who followed him dealt with the inhabitants of the Americas. (Muldoon, 1994: 23-4)

As matters stood, the basis for peaceful relations between Christian and infidel societies based on trade did not apply to American Indians. What role, then, were these non-Christians to be allocated within the framework of European thought? How were they to be envisaged by Christians? (1994: 24) In the debates regarding the legitimacy of the Spanish conquest of the New World, there were those who argued that infidels could be temporarily deprived of dominium as part of the process of acculturation and Christianisation. According to Solórzano, authors such as Sepúlveda - whom Las Casas confronted in the 1550 debate at Valladolid -, considered the Indians to be

wild, barbarians, disorderly, and rustic, as is commonly noted, so that they scarcely seem worthy of the name human; and consequently they can and ought to be subjected to our kings and to be deprived of supreme *imperium*, jurisdiction and control of their lands and their persons, so that, finally being brought to a humane and civilised level of existence ... they might become worthy to be rendered capable of the Christian faith and religion. (Solórzano in Muldoon, 1994: 40)

The relation between the conversion of the native inhabitants and a wider civilising process had already been expounded on by the Church, which based itself on the picture drawn up by Columbus's description of the Indians.

... he described the people whom he encountered as simple, timid folk who went about naked, had no metal except some gold, and who apparently did not hold private property. These people did not even seem to have any form of government. Columbus described a society of childlike individuals, where simple people lived simple lives in an environment like that of the Garden of Eden. (1994: 39)

This dream-like paradise was marred, however, by periodic fights between tribes, with episodes of looting and cannibalism. Columbus justified the subjugation of these people to the Spanish on the basis that they would embrace the true God, know greater social development, and gain greater protection in their combats against each other. (Muldoon, 1994: 39-40) Some authors note, however, that despite living in an epoch wrought with medieval religious superstition, Columbus revealed a surprising degree of tolerance in his representation of ethnological phenomena.

The more significant of his contributions to the history of ethnological ideas were his ... simple descriptions of the customs and the appearance of the island peoples ... so far

as he knew, there were "no human monstrosities" such as thronged the pages of medieval cosmographies and travel tales ...⁵ (Hodgen, 1964: 20)

Boon remarks that in Columbus's time, geographical distance from Europe bore little determination on ideas of monstrosity. Citing L. E. Huddleston, Boon argues that neither the ideas of 'Europe' nor of the 'New World' played a role in Columbus's description of his encounter with the Americas.

Columbus did not question the existence of men in the New World because he did not know it was a New World. The realisation of this fact was a gradual one not fully made until the reports of the Magellan Expedition of 1519-1521 became available. There was, therefore, no reason to marvel at a New World filled with New Men because neither phenomenon was recognised as such.⁶ (Huddleston in Boon, 1982: 35)

Later, however, Columbus would fall prey to fabricating native stereotypes of the Americas by mixing the biblical innocence of Paradise with images of degradation and the fall of man, in a gesture paralleling both the primitivistic convention of the noble

⁵ The medieval anthropological tradition inspired itself not only on the biblical account of the origin of mankind, but also on the writings of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, as transmitted by Pliny, Pomponius Mela, Solinus, Isidore, Vincent, Bartholomew, and Sir John Mandeville. Herodotus's vivid descriptions of human cultures were, according to Hodgen, to be deformed by his followers, who revealed a morbid fascination for the 'unnatural' or the 'abnormally human'. (Hodgen, 1964: 20-1, 29, 38, 40)

⁶ Magellan's chronicler Pigafetta gave birth to a famous ethnological legend, in 1520, by describing the inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego as Patagonians, or "big feet". According to Boon, these diabolical giants consisted in a blend of myths from the Old Testament, ancient Cacotopian legends, and medieval satanic hybrids. Although the gigantism myth had been empirically dispelled by 1670, it nevertheless was revived by Enlightenment scientific taxonomy. (Boon, 1982: 37-41)

savage living in a prelapsarian Golden Age, and the anti-primitivist theological conception of the Indian as the symbol of a degraded humanity distinguished by corruption and lawlessness. (Boon, 1982: 35; Hodgen, 1964: 370, 378)

However, according to Boon, the fact that the Caribs were described as well-formed, kind, clean, engaging in language, elaborate fishing technology and monogamy revealed that they could become members of the Church. Papal authorisation of the Spanish conquest of the Americas aimed precisely at converting those who had potential to become acculturated in European ways but were as of yet "going unclothed, and not eating flesh", living primitive but innocent lives. (Muldoon, 1994: 40) However, the lack of consensus regarding the problematic definition and classification of the Indians led Spanish intellectuals and royal bureaucrats to grapple with the following question within the debate about the legitimacy of the conquest: did the responsibility conferred by the Pope on the Castilians to convert the inhabitants of the New World also include a civilising mission?

ii) On barbarism

It was in the context of proving the validity of the Spanish invasion of the Americas that Solórzano discussed whether or not the Indians were barbarians. According to the author of *De Indiarum Jure*, the term barbarian originally referred to strangers, alluding to those who had no knowledge of the Greek language, and subsequently to persons not subject to Roman jurisdiction. In antiquity, a foreigner could easily lose barbarian status: the outsider who mastered Greek or who acquired Roman citizenship and adhered to Roman ways was reintegrated into the community with ease. Although originally only signifying 'foreigner', the term 'barbarian' came to acquire a moral and cultural judgmental quality when applied to the Berbers of North Africa, who occupied a territory known as Barbaria which was later modified to Berberia. (Muldoon, 1994: 41)

More properly and more frequently ... it customarily refers to those who are rude and ignorant or dominated by a certain natural fierceness or (moral) blindness, those who deviate from the commonly accepted rule of human existence, those who do not use right reason, and those who do not employ the laws and practices consonant with natural reason ... (Solórzano in Muldoon, 1994: 41)

Solórzano here reveals his acquiescence to an important change in the status of the barbarian: no longer does it allude to the person who cannot speak Greek or who is not subject to Roman rule, but rather to the non-rational individual. Defining the barbarian of the Greek and Roman tradition as someone lacking reason derives, according to Solórzano, from the Hebrew tradition's conception of the *brutus*, the savage, uncivilised creature, guided by natural impulse alone, ignorant of the political or social standards inherent in civilisation. The ancient Greeks, like the Hebrews, also acknowledged the existence of uncivilisable non-rational beings. Although these savage creatures bore the physical appearance of men, they were not fully human due to their lack of reason: the Socratic tradition considered reason, not external appearance, to be that which distinguished men from animals.

The debate regarding the legitimacy of the conquest of the Americas thus revolved around the status of the Indians within the categories of mankind.⁷ Did the native inhabitants of the New World correspond to the classical definition of the barbarians of antiquity, who simply indulged in ways of life different from those of the Europeans, or were they akin to beasts, an inferior species

⁷ Confrontation with the indigenous peoples of the New World led Europeans to rethink the monogenic thesis according to which all human beings had a single origin: the cleavage between the civilised Old World and the savage New indicated that mankind was no longer a 'single homogeneous species or unit'. (Hodgen, 1964: 375-6, 405)

lacking reason, human only in form?⁸ The classification of the Indians in the hierarchical tree of humanity would thus determine the treatment meted out to them by the Spaniards. (1994: 42)

The writings of Amerigo Vespucci (1451-1512) and Peter Martyr (1457-1526) described the Indians as wild, promiscuous, lawless, exhibiting animal-like behaviour and only in appearance resembling humanity. However, whereas Vespucci and Martyr judged the Indians behaviour according to moral and religious standards, the Jesuit missionary and defender of the Indians, Joseph Acosta (1539-1600), sought to prove the natives' status as barbarians on rational grounds: because, as Aristotle had foreseen, man was by nature a political animal, the criterion for civilised behaviour was determined by the capacity to live in organised communities. Acosta therefore read the current lack of stable political authority amongst the Indians of the Americas as a sign of barbarism inherent in the repudiation of organised society

The question then was how could the Castilians proceed in their mission to convert the native inhabitants of the Americas if the latter lacked stable and disciplined political authority? Did the work of Christianisation require the prior acculturation of the Indians in the ways of a stable political community? If it was proved that the Indians belonged to a lower form of life, primitive and non-rational, then their right to dominium, to property and lordship, could be defied. However, if these people were not true human beings, they would offer no potential to being converted to Christianity either: understanding the Eucharist and other intricacies of the Christian religion would be beyond their capacities. (1994: 44-5) Once the barbarous nature of the Indians

⁸ The anti-primitivist view of the New World native was contemptuous of a common humanity; the role that had been allocated to human monsters in the Middle Ages was now transposed to the naked and menacing savage, who at most represented a degraded humanity seen through the teratological fantasies of classical mythology. (Hodgen, 1964: 358-9, 363, 365)

had been fully established, their subjection to Spanish jurisdiction would be fully justified: because of their natural servility in Aristotelian terms, a barely human people would find it advantageous to be guided by 'those wiser than themselves'.

If such people "cannot be led to the good and the right (way of life) by means of teaching and reason, they ought to be placed under a yoke as wild animals are placed under a yoke" and so coerced into behaving correctly. (1994: 46)

Unlike Sepúlveda, who drew on the Aristotelian argument of the naturally servile to defend that the Indians were designed by nature to be slaves, Solórzano calls upon a paternalist duty of the conqueror to help his inferiors surpass their ancestors' ways of life.

iii) On the Indians' humanity

Because papal authority was extended only to human beings, demonstrating the humanity of the Indians was essential to the Spanish if they were to ground the legitimacy of the conquest of the New World on Alexander VI's *Inter caetera*, the bull which awarded the Castilians responsibility for the conversion of infidels. If the Indians were considered to be non-rational, beast-like creatures, human only in form, the terms of the *Inter caetera* would no longer be relevant, thus opening the occupation of the Americas to any power who wished to embark on the colonial enterprise. However, any argument in favour of the humanity of the Indian would have to account for the validity of Spanish jurisdiction over a people who, being rational, possessed dominium. This led Solórzano to distance himself from the discussion concerning the anthropological classification of the Indian, focusing instead on the historical experience of peoples who evolved from a primitive to a civilised state. According to Solórzano, because European peoples had themselves, in remote times, passed through a barbarous stage, living like savages unfamiliar with organised communities,

the Indians too could be expected to follow in European footsteps and eventually reach a state corresponding to that of civilisation.⁹ (Muldoon, 1994: 49)

Thus, rather than considering barbarousness to be an innate characteristic that destined the Indian to eternal servility, Solórzano places emphasis on education and training as crucial in introducing the barbarian to civilisation. (1994: 50) It was therefore important to prove the Indians' rationality, for this would imply that they had the potential to achieve 'a better state of moral development' through acculturation, that is, that they could ultimately be taught to use their reason to the utmost. (1994: 51) If, as Acosta had argued, the standard of civilisation was to be gauged by the capacity to live in an organised community, then the Indians would, according to Solórzano, with the proper orientation, abandon their primitive way of life that permitted them to live outside a political community, and return to the level of existence from which their ancestors had fallen.

This argument based itself on the Aristotelian tradition, which considered the city to allow for the concretisation of the highest human potential, an objective which would be achieved through the means of government. Although organised communities corresponded to the natural way of life dictated by reason, some peoples fell from this level of existence as they spread throughout the world, guided by the imperatives of physical force in their increasingly animal-like condition.¹⁰ Despite their limited

⁹ While the medieval conceptualisation of the universe considered the savage to have simply preceded European man in logical and spatial terms, the former was endowed, by the Moderns, with historical priority within a progressive sequence comprising savagery, barbarism, and civility, through which all cultures allegedly had passed. This gave rise to the pervasive notion that savages were identical regardless of cultural or temporal specificities. (Hodgen, 1964: 451, 508, 446)

¹⁰ Aristotle's view of organised communities as corresponding to a universal natural norm from which man may have fallen due to

rationality, however, these people could not be considered true barbarians for they were potentially civilisable human beings who could return to an organised community (*politice*) under the right guidance. In fact, Solórzano claimed that, if rightly taught, the Indians could be expected to follow in the footsteps of peoples such as the Greeks, Latins, Gauls, and the very ancestors of the Spanish, all of whom reached the very pinnacle of civilisation within a political framework, despite having once been considered barbarians. (1994: 61)

iv) On the deprivation of dominium

a) The political argument

If the Indians shared a common humanity with the Spanish as rational beings, on what grounds could the Castilians justify depriving them of dominium? Taking into account that Spanish domination served the purpose of bringing the Indians to their full reason through acculturation, thus enabling the natives to climb from a primitive to a civilised level of existence, Solórzano argued that their loss of dominium could be justified on the grounds that it was a temporary necessity ultimately intended to benefit the Indians. Once the Indians had abandoned their uncivilised ways, adhering to European standards of behaviour, the period of Spanish 'tutelage', the duration of which remained unspecified, could end with the natives assuming self-government.

Solórzano drew on Acosta's three categories designed to measure the development of non-European societies to explain the legitimacy of Spanish domination. The first category would be composed by organised communities, such as China and Japan, whose government, laws, literary skills, and economy manifested the right use of reason. The second category consisted of peoples,

dispersion brings to mind the diffusionist biblical argument, according to which a rupture in the original Adamic culture leads to Cain's exile and to the wanderings of his progeny. (Hodgen, 1964: 258)

such as the Incas and Aztecs, who despite living in organised communities, did not possess writing skills, thus living within a civilised context of stability but ignorant of the more sophisticated aspects of society. The third category comprised those unfamiliar with organised society, having no fixed abode, living in the wilderness, knowing neither law nor authority, except provisional war chiefs. (Muldoon, 1994: 67-8)

Acosta's scale of social development is akin to an evolutionary schema ranging from the primitive to the civilised. Accordingly, human beings would have progressed from utter simplicity to political organisation, and finally to 'natural society' distinguished by trade and culture. European societies corresponded to the zenith of this evolutionary scale, for not only did they possess all of the characteristics corresponding to Acosta's first category, but they were Christian as well. This upward progression culminating in the *polis* could be regarded as conflicting with the Aristotelian notion according to which because human beings naturally live in organised communities, those who do not abide by this universal norm constitute a degenerated form of humanity. Acosta, however, defended that his categories of development applied only to the peoples of the New World, thereby indicating that they were not universal: in his attempt to avoid applying this evolutionary schema to the Old World, he may have been evading a potential conflict with Biblical tradition which did not contemplate a state of 'primeval savagery'.¹¹ By claiming that the descendants of Noah adopted savage ways in the process of their migrations by land to the Americas, Acosta was actually sponsoring a degenerationist view in line with the Biblical tradition according to which all human beings had a common origin, from which they degenerated in the course of their migrations motivated by original sin. (Rowe in Muldoon, 1994: 71)

¹¹ The theological tradition was degenerationist, holding the universal human condition to consist in postlapsarian corruption. As such, the savage would only be more corrupt than the rest of humanity. (Hodgen, 1964: 378)

However, because it was the political, not moral, development of society that determined whether or not it could be the object of European occupation, the Indians could not be deprived of dominium on the grounds of being barbarians or infidels. (1994: 69) Thus, rather than suggesting conquest of the Indians, Solórzano argued for the creation of a single republic, under temporary Castilian tutelage, comprising both Spaniards and indigenous peoples.

... in the *respublica* that would develop, Spaniards would not dominate Indians nor would Indians dominate Spaniards. Such a consummate equality lay in the future, however, because all the Indians, those of the second class as well as those of the third, "appear by far less intelligent and wise than the Spaniards." (1994: 73)

Thus, for the time being, the foundation of a Spanish and Indian political community would obey the rules of reciprocity inherent in hierarchical society, wherein weaker individuals followed the orientation of the more powerful, rather than those of egalitarian government, based on social contract, or voluntary consensus among equals. The fact that political authority was not built upon agreement but existed to 'advance the common good of all' led to the conclusion that the Spanish conquest of the Americas could indeed be validated on the grounds that the Spanish were assisting the Indians to move from the third class to the second, and from the second category to the first.

So, even though the Indians were "free men and masters of their goods," nevertheless "they were not sufficiently learned to govern themselves appropriately and in a political manner" ... Thus, the Spanish kings had the responsibility for governing these people until they possessed the levels of civilised and Christian behaviour that Acosta identified with the first class of non-Christian societies. (Muldoon, 1994: 74)

Solórzano therefore grounded the legitimacy of the Spanish conquest on two bases: firstly, because the Spanish had themselves passed from a primitive to a civilised state, they comprehended this progressive process and could help the Indians achieve the same goals; secondly, bound by the 'precept of charity', Christian rulers had a particular duty in assisting the Indians attain a higher level of existence due to the requirements inherent in the papal grant which awarded the Castilians responsibility for the conversion of infidels. To leave unsocial men to follow a primitive, uncivilised existence would be as morally wrong as allowing someone to harm others: such unrestrained actions would constitute a breach of true human freedom, the exercise of which required, according to Solórzano, 'discretion and moderation'. The subjugation or enslavement of the Indians by the Spanish would thus not consist in a violation of their dominium, for the final objective of allowing them to ascend from a primitive to a civilised state would ultimately work to their advantage. (1994: 66, 75-6)

b) The legal argument

Acosta's three categories of socio-political development, on the basis of which non-European societies were to be judged, presupposed a universal standard against which the behaviour of every community could be measured. Any attempt to 'help' the Indians evolve from the third class to the second, or from the second category to the first, would thus take place against the background of a set of universally applicable norms inherent in natural law. The medieval conception of the latter derived from Roman legal thought, giving it a slightly different slant. Whereas the Romans had defined natural law as a universal human norm partaking of the natural order, Thomas Aquinas considered that rationality and instinct would coincide in the gesture that led human beings to follow eternal law by means of the natural. (Muldoon, 1994: 77, 79)

To the extent that natural law was a matter of instinct, it was something written on the hearts of human beings, all of whom shared it and were, therefore, subject to it. To the extent that natural law was rational participation in the eternal law, all rational creatures possessed the capacity to comprehend it. (1994: 79)

Isidore of Seville (560-636), whose ideas so heavily influenced medieval thought, interpreted the Roman distinction between natural law (*jus naturale*) and the law of nations (*jus gentium*) as respectively allusive to the prelapsarian and postlapsarian levels of human existence. Corresponding to an ideal order where all people were free and all property was held in common, there being neither war nor slavery, natural law contrasted with the law of nations pertaining to the real world distinguished by competition, private property, war and enslavement. (1994: 78)

One consequence of this conception of the origin of these two laws was the broad conclusion that by Adam's fall, "man passed out of the state of nature into the state in which the conventional institutions of society," that is, the characteristic elements of the *jus gentium*, are necessary. Thus even slavery could be seen in a positive light, as part of a "disciplinary system by which the sinful tendencies of man may be corrected." (1994: 78)

While the scholars who debated the legitimacy of the Spanish conquest of the Americas accepted natural law as inscribed on the hearts of men, the precise definition of the latter was somewhat vague. As such, common accord on the content of natural law was achieved regarding marriage, freedom, and education; however, more than specifying the terms of natural law, the various intellectuals engaging in this discussion preferred to point to the behaviour potentially consisting in violations of it. If the Indians of the Americas were breaching natural law through barbaric

practices such as 'cannibalism, idolatry and human sacrifice', then the Spanish could legitimately withhold dominium from them 'during a period of correction' which would end once the Indians had assimilated a civilised code of conduct. (1994: 79-80)

Natural law would thus provide both guidelines against which the behaviour of the Indians could be measured and a set of goals toward which the Spanish would direct them. Underlying all these positions, however, was the assumption that the inhabitants of the New World possessed the capacity to know the universal norms of the natural law. Their failure to live up to them was, therefore, culpable. (1994: 80)

The issue of the existence of a universal norm, embodied in natural law, put the Indians in an ambiguous position. While on the one hand, the natives were recognised as rational human beings, whose right to dominium could not be infringed upon, they were, on the other hand, subject to judgement and conquest by Christians on the grounds of violating natural law, precisely because, as rational beings, they ought to have been familiar with the terms of the latter. (1994: 80, 94) In his commentary on the decretal *Quod super his*, Innocent IV had argued that when infidels were found to have violated the natural law, the Pope was fully justified in punishing them. Solórzano, however, stressed that 'men should not assume the role of God in their relations with other societies', and that the Pope, having no authority over non-Christians, could not permit the conquest of infidels on the grounds that they were violating natural law. The ultimate goal of bringing the Indians to a higher level of existence ought to be solely accomplished by the peaceful entry of missionaries into the New World. However, if infidels had been instructed in the Christian faith but still continued to indulge in their barbarous conduct, then Solórzano stated the Pope would indeed be fully justified in punishing them for violating the natural law.

Thus, the Church did have the right to punish infidels who violated natural law by employing the services of Christian rulers who would act under papal direction. The presumption was that the Spanish would not use force against the Indians until after the Spanish had peacefully instructed them in the errors of their ways. (1994: 93)

VI. Slavery in the Spanish New World

Spanish slavery in the Americas followed a feudalistic pattern, combining both tributary forced labour as well as outright enslavement of the native Indian population. If the Indians did not resist Spanish entry, readily accepting the terms of the *Requerimiento*, they would be subject to tribute exactions, whereby forced labour would be exchanged for silver earnings, the latter ending up in Royal coffers as part of the taxes levied on the community to which the Indian belonged. If, on the other hand, the Indians were hostile to Christianisation and Castilian domination, they would be submitted to a regime of enslavement, known as the *encomienda* system: conceded by the royal government to colonists who had rendered service to Spain, the *encomienda* consisted essentially in an estate containing Indian slaves bound to their master, the *encomendero*. (Blackburn, 1999: 129; Galeano, 1997: 31)

During the first forty years of Spanish conquest of the New World, the *encomienda* or *repartimiento* system prevailed with the objective of either food cultivation for the colonists or washing for alluvial gold. The site of the first Castilian landfall having been the Antilles, this region's population, mostly of a hunter-gatherer type, was unaccustomed to the rigours of the intensive work required both by the sugar-mill and gold-panning, the latter involving long periods of immersion in water and thus increasing susceptibility to disease. Slave-raiding expeditions into the American mainland brought back more labourers into Santo Domingo and Cuba. However, the death toll was unusually high, due to illness,

overwork and resettlement of the indigenous populations. Extrapolating from the Antillean example to the American mainland, the pattern of decline among the native Indians reached catastrophic dimensions within a century: totalling around 50 million in 1500, the population of the New World counted a meagre 8 million by 1600.

Having confronted strong resistance on the part of the Indian peoples of the Antilles, the Spanish sought to avoid the threat of rebellion by employing leaders within the Indian communities to work with the *encomenderos*. Thus, by fusing pre-Columbian and Hispanic forms of domination and exploitation, the Castilians were able to divide the tasks of 'procurement and invigilation' with elite members of the indigenous population. (1999: 133) In the sequence of the uproar among Spanish clerics and intellectuals indignant at the mistreatment of Indians by the colonists - with special relevance to Las Casas' role in divulging this issue abroad -, the Royal Court was alarmed that whilst provoking further indigenous resistance, the rapacious actions of the *conquistadores* could lead rival Christian powers to take the matter to the Pope, accusing Spain of violating the terms of *Inter caetera*. Moreover, royal officials realised that the profits deriving from enslavement or the *encomienda* system were difficult to control, working to the advantage of the individual colonist. Thus, while the New Laws of 1542 banned the practice of slavery as well as the *encomienda* regime, an attempt to control 'wayward' *conquistadores* took the form of a solid central administration consolidating an elaborate tribute system. (1999: 130, 134) However, the enslavement of Indians did not entirely cease, and royal concern consisted in a cosmetic corrective device to cover up for the continuation of exploitative practices.

Thus, although in 1601 Philip III had issued a decree abolishing forced labour in the mines, he simultaneously sent covert orders allowing for the continuation of the latter to ensure the stability of production levels. Similarly, according to a survey of labour

conditions in the Huancavelica mercury mines, conducted by Solórzano between 1616 and 1619, workers habitually died within four years due to the debilitating effects of bone marrow poison absorption. Nevertheless, both Philip IV and his successor Charles II decided to maintain the *status quo*. (Galeano, 1997: 39)

In addition to collecting tribute from the *mita* system of forced labour, the Spanish authorities taxed mine owners. The system essentially worked in a self-perpetuating manner, feeding any earnings paid to the Indians back into the colonial economy either through levies imposed upon wages or through the workers' purchase of victuals, clothing, tools and shelter, all of which were sold at high prices in the mining districts, thus permitting cash to return to the royal coffers. While the foodstuffs and clothing sold on the *altiplano* had themselves been obtained as tribute from native communities - whose low wages and payment in kind prevented the development of a cash economy, which in turn restricted the expansion of any potential domestic market -, other manufactured goods which could be bought by the mine labourers often had a European provenance. (Blackburn, 1999: 146) This curtailed the possibility of industrial development in the Americas while allowing the latter to become the market for an increasingly dynamic Western economy showing signs of an incipient capitalist mode of production. (Galeano, 1997: 30)

The fact that demand for both gold and silver as well as agricultural products from the Americas remained unabated in Europe meant that the Spanish had to keep up production levels despite the decimation of great part of the indigenous population. African slavery originating from the Atlantic slave trade thus played an important role in the colonisation process due to a number of reasons. Firstly, the royal treasury earned a substantial amount of money by selling licences - the *asientos* - permitting the importation of slaves by a merchant - usually Portuguese - who would then proceed to sell his slaves to individual colonists. Secondly, African slaves were deemed to be physically more

resistant and hardy than their Indian counterparts: those who had survived the voyage from the African coast to the New World had created immunity to a variety of illnesses. Thirdly, because Africans had no ties to the New World, they would be less likely than the 'treacherous' Indians to either run away or to rise up in rebellion against their masters; it was widely held that, if treated correctly, African slaves could even strengthen the power of Madrid, for they were oblivious to Europe's political and religious rivalries. (Blackburn, 1999: 134, 141-2)

Massive African slave imports only became significant during the period ranging from 1595 to 1640, long after the New Laws had been issued forbidding the practice of slavery. Until 1596, there had been great preoccupation on the part of royal authorities to preserve the New World as a Castilian feud; other nationalities, as well as other Spanish subjects of non-pure lineage were thus banned from settling in the Americas. (1999: 141-2)

VII. The formation of Spanish national identity

The year 1492 had important repercussions on the consolidation of Spanish national identity. Not only did it mark the discovery of the New World, but it also signalled the completion of the Spanish *Reconquista* - thus consolidating Christian victory over Muslim culture in Spain, the repression of which would last until the seventeenth century -, as well as the expulsion of Jews from Spanish territory. The achievement of religious and political unity, constructed on the basis of an imperialist Castilian Catholic hegemony, would lay the foundations of Spanish national identity, firstly defined against the Jewish and Muslim others and subsequently against the Indians of the New World. It was, therefore, no coincidence that 'Jews, Moors, foreigners and heretics' were banned from settling in the Americas. This prohibition was a direct result of the climate of increasingly 'intolerant homogenisation' that affected, throughout fifteenth and sixteenth century Spain, not only Jews and Arabs, but also the

New Christians, that is, those who converted to Christianity or who descended from such converts. The principle of *limpieza de sangre*, or untainted blood, was implemented to prevent *conversos* from obtaining royal or professional appointments. At the root of the promulgation of laws concerning pure lineage was the envy of plebeian Spaniards against what they considered to be an alliance between the aristocracy and the *conversos*, permitting many of the latter to hold office. Once *limpieza de sangre* had been instituted, *conversos* were regularly persecuted on the basis of clandestinely practising former religious rites. The situation worsened between 1480 and 1520, when the Inquisition attempted to wipe the *conversos* off the map of an ethnically pure Spain through imprisonment, fines, exile, or burning at the stake. (Blackburn, 1999: 48, 135)

Although the 'religious-racial stigmatisation' of New Christians had dire consequences in terms of obtaining employment, submission to tax exactions, persecution, and - in some cases - death at the hands of the Holy Office, it nevertheless did not contemplate enslavement of this segment of the population. According to Blackburn, this might have been due to the fact that because many of the *conversos* had the bearing of gentlemen (*hidalgos*), it might have appeared dishonourable to subject them to menial jobs. (1999: 49) Likewise, the Morisco New Christians who were ultimately expelled from Valencia between 1608 and 1612 were, for the most part, not enslaved for two plausible reasons: firstly, had they been enslaved and sent to the Americas, they might have constituted a substantial threat to Spanish authorities who continued to envisage the conquest of the New World as a crusading opportunity to form a Christian bulwark against Islam; secondly, the Spanish recoiled at the unseemly option of selling the Moriscos as slaves to Muslims, for the latter would only have bought them if completely convinced of their infidel status, that is, of their not practising the Islamic faith; although the Muslims did consider the Moriscos to have betrayed the Muslim faith, the Spanish authorities were unable to recognise this, for expulsion

occurred precisely on the grounds that these Moriscos continued to clandestinely practice Islamic rites. (1999: 54)

Slavery was an institution which allowed for subordinate or correctional inclusion, not the total exclusion or suppression that was the eventual fate of the Jews and Moors. (1999: 53)

VIII. Slavery in the Spanish context

While slavery had declined in much of Europe during the thirteenth century, being replaced by serfdom, the Reconquest in Spain allowed the former to reappear despite its having been extinct in Northern Spain during the eleventh century. Significantly, the kingdoms of the North of Spain were precisely those that managed to resist Muslim occupation. There thus appears to be a correlation between confrontation with Islam and the revival of the Iberian practice of slavery, the latter playing a role both in expanding Christianity as well as in compulsory acculturation of the infidels. (Blackburn, 1999: 38, 46, 49)

Koranic law prohibited the enslavement of Muslims. Christians and Jews under Islamic rule were also not to be subject to this practice, as long as they lived peaceably and paid tribute. Because only infidels were deemed fit for slavery, this practice was used as an instrument to convert 'outsiders into insiders'. Though not leading directly to manumission, the conversion of infidel slaves to Islam would improve their status in terms of acquisition of rights. Free persons who became Muslim would gain immunity against enslavement.

According to Blackburn, Christendom was born out of a clash with Islam: the ideological and military threat represented by the Arab incursions into the Iberian peninsula and southern France dating from 711 allowed Christianity to define itself. Eager to ward off the Muslim menace, Charlemagne pressed for a new doctrine of enslavement forbidding traffic in Christian slaves. Similarly to the

Islamic Holy Law, Charlemagne's principles defended that conversion could lead to an increase in the rights of slaves, though not to their manumission. (1999: 39, 50) Despite having been regarded as controversial in the Carolingian epoch, Christian enslavement by co-religionists was never effectively put to an end due to the conflictuous political events that were taking place in the eighth century, ultimately leading to the break-up of the Empire.

Paradoxically, the absence of a strong central power both discouraged rural slavery and ruled out regulation of the slave trade. It also permitted new Saracen incursions into Southern France and Italy, accompanied by deliberate attempts to incite slaves against their masters. (1999: 43)

This situation ultimately led to a decline in enslavement, for Christians sought to prevent further Muslim exploitation of the prevailing social tensions between the servile classes and their masters. The gradual diminution of slavery was accompanied by the social ascent of a local landholding nobility, upon whom hitherto free peasant villages would grow increasingly dependent. Thus, the consolidation of the feudal order in Europe occurred alongside the completion of the conversion of the population to Christianity. With the growing success of Arab military might in Spain, the Carolingian ban on Christian slave traffic was reawakened. (1999: 38, 43, 44)

The foundation of religious orders dedicated to securing the freedom of Christians enslaved by Muslims, as well as the formulation of new colonial projects accompanied the revival of the Carolingian abolition of traffic in Christian slaves.¹² The Spanish urge to promote Christian solidarity against the Arab invader led to oppositional modes of thought, in terms of 'insider/outsider' status:

¹² Feudal colonisation consisted in 'Christianising' conquered territory, by repopulating the latter both through settlement of free Christians as well as through forced assimilation of infidels. (Blackburn, 1999: 51-2)

advantages deriving from socio-religious community membership encouraged an increment in prejudices regarding difference. (1999: 44)

Spanish slave doctrine, though following Carolingian lines, was nevertheless moulded both by Isidore of Seville's ideas as well as Alfonso the Wise's codification known as the *Siete Partidas*. Drawn up in the thirteenth century, the *Partidas* did not forbid enslavement of Christians; instead, emphasis was placed on the amelioration of the slave condition, as well as on the necessity to protect the slaves' Christian faith.¹³ Prior to the Muslim occupation of Spain, Isidore of Seville had defended slave subordination on the grounds that slavery was a punishment for ubiquitous sin; the divine purpose of enslavement revealed itself through the physical flaws of certain monstrous races, whose genetic perversity corresponded to moral defects which could only be redeemed through servitude.¹⁴ Isidore's ideas thus consist in a *mélange* of both classical myths, drawn from authorities such as Herodotus, Pliny, Mela, and Solinus, as well as doctrine from the early Christian Church: by basing slavery on genetic defects, he distances himself from the Augustinian tradition of the early Christian Church, which claimed that due to original sin, all men were fit for slavery; however, by regarding slavery as a form of penitence, he concurs with the Church's view regarding the providential character of enslavement as a spiritual advantage in the path towards salvation. (1999: 36, 38, 70)

¹³ Although in theory the *Siete Partidas* allowed mistreated slaves to appeal to change masters, in practice the registration of a complaint required the mediation of either a powerful person or organisation, a requirement which severely limited the recourse to such rights. (Blackburn, 1999: 51, 147, 237)

¹⁴ Isidore believed that to the existence of abnormal individuals within nations there corresponded abnormal nations within the universality of mankind. The giants, pigmies, anthropophagi, cynocephali and cyclops were only a few of the many teratological examples from classical antiquity that haunted the medieval imagination. (Hodgen, 1964: 57)

Written at a time when Spain was defining itself through Christianity against Islam, the *Partidas* reawakened Isidore's Christian ideas regarding sin and redemption so as to emphasise the need for religious conformity during the Reconquest. (1999: 50-1)

Notwithstanding the attempts to restrain masters, it was still baldly stated in the *Partidas* that slavery was 'the basest and most wretched condition into which anyone could fall because man, who is the most free and noble of all God's creatures, becomes thereby in the power of another, who can do with him what he wishes as with any property, whether living or dead'. (1999: 51)

Thus, whereas the early Christian Church had considered slavery as a means through which Christian freedom could be realised - 'for the true Christian was a slave to Christ' - (1999: 36), Alfonso the Wise, following in the wake of Isidore of Seville, regarded the deprivation of dominium as punishment for lack of conformity, religious rather than physical, unlike his predecessor had believed.

IX. Slavery and Colour

In the *Siete Partidas*, vulnerability to enslavement was thus determined by cultural rather than racial difference. (Blackburn, 1999: 51) Extrapolating from Alfonso the Wise's ideas on slavery to general papal and legal medieval reactions to the non-European world, emphasis appears to have been placed on the cultural rather than biological inferiority of the barbarian: because Christianity was equated with civilisation, acculturating the infidel necessarily meant introducing him to the Church; the end of conversion would therefore justify the means - namely a deprivation of dominium - through which this spiritual and cultural well-being could be achieved. (Muldoon, 1979: 159-160) The completion of the Reconquest and the encounter with the

indigenous peoples of the Americas signal the introduction of an element of racial thinking in the Spanish emphasis on religious conformity from the late fifteenth century onwards: thus, despite having converted to Christianity, the *conversos*, either Jews or Muslims, suffered expulsion, were prevented from holding royal and clerical offices, and were barred from the New World; similarly, baptised Indians were frequently banned from the clerical profession. However, although Jews and Muslims were formally excluded from the Spanish context, Indians were included in the latter through the practices of enslavement or forced labour.

Tracing the rise of Spanish national identity, one can say that while Catholic solidarity was consolidated as a reaction against the Islamic threat, serving to unite the various Spanish kingdoms against a common enemy, its intensification throughout the *Reconquista* led to the stigmatisation of any group who did not adhere to the Catholic faith: Jews and heretics were thus placed alongside Muslims in the category of outsiders to Catholicism, and, by extension, marginal to Spanish national identity. The Spanish nation thus grew out of a strict identification with Catholicism, against an 'enemy' culture which despite its infidel status was regarded as socially developed. The crusading spirit of the *Reconquista* found fertile grounds in the Americas upon which to continue a proselytising mission destined to strengthen Christian power; however, the native peoples encountered in the New World constituted a class of infidels different from those of the Muslim world; the utter simplicity of the Indians' lives, which in Spanish eyes justified the conquest of their lands, left them vulnerable to civilising projects that aimed to raise the natives' code of conduct to a European standard. Thus, although the Spanish practice of enslavement was originally effected as a reaction against lack of religious conformity, as demonstrated in medieval Spain, where slavery served the purpose of combating the Islamic threat, in the Americas the 'temporary' loss of dominium of the Indians was an important component inherent in a more extensive civilising mission that surpassed conversion to Catholicism.

As the fifteenth century progressed, debates concerning the ethical consequences of enslavement intensified amongst theologians, philosophers and lawyers in the Spanish academy. Concerned with its reputation as well as with the economic repercussions ensuing from the decimation of great part of the American indigenous populations, the royal authorities made a superficial attempt at curbing slavery and controlling the reckless actions of the colonists in the New World. Thus, at a time when slavery was becoming increasingly contested, the substitution of Indian labour by that of Africans was especially appealing: not only had the Africans' right to dominium not been much problematised in the intellectual milieu, but due to the Spaniards not undertaking direct enslavement of Africans, they could always distance themselves from the moral consequences of the process. The Atlantic trade permitted the evasion of responsibilities, to the extent that Europeans usually bought African slaves from Portuguese merchants, who in turn had previously purchased them from chiefs on the African coast. (Blackburn, 1999: 54) While the Canarians had been initially accused of living like 'wildmen' in an animal-like condition, Africans were introduced into the New World as slaves for the opposite reason:

They were found living in societies organised in states, with their own laws, and participating in commerce. The captive purchased on the African coast was legitimately a slave, some argued, because he or she had been produced as such by the coastal slave trading or slave-raiding complex. (1999: 63)

The Portuguese had been trading in African slaves since the middle of the fifteenth century, selling them either in the Peninsula or the Atlantic islands. It is probable that around this time a few black slaves, acquired from Saracens, were already to be found in Castile and Aragon. The connection in Christian European minds between slavery and blackness was gradually consolidated during

the period 1450-1500, when tens of thousands of African slaves were imported into the Peninsula whilst white enslavement was declining. (1999: 72) The link between skin colour and slavery was further bolstered by biblical reference to the Noachid curse, which could be read as providing a genealogy of humanity, sanctioning the enslavement of particular lineages. (1999: 65-6) According to the story recounted in Genesis, after the great flood, Noah and his three sons - Ham, Shem and Japheth - left the ark and populated the earth. One day, Ham chanced upon his father lying drunk and naked, in his tent. Having informed Shem and Japheth of the patriarch's state, these two proceeded to cover Noah with a robe while averting their eyes from his nakedness. Upon awakening and learning what had happened, Noah cursed the descendants of one of Ham's son, Canaan:

"A curse upon the Canaanites," he swore. "May they be the lowest of slaves to the descendants of Shem and Japheth." Then he said, "God bless Shem, and may Canaan be his slave. God bless Japheth, And let him share the prosperity of Shem, and let Canaan be his slave." (Genesis, 9: 25-28)

In accordance with patriarchal logic, Noah is punishing an offence committed against his virility by condemning Ham's descendence to slavery. This passage thus contributed to propagate the idea amongst early Christians of a 'hereditary inferiority' that would justify enslavement of certain peoples. Moreover, this idea was emphasised by Leviticus, where a different mode of enslavement is prescribed for those inside and outside the community of Israel.

...you may purchase slaves from the foreign nations living around you, and you may purchase the children of the foreigners living among you, even though they have been born in your land. They will be permanent slaves for you to pass on to your children after you, but your brothers, the people of Israel, shall not be treated so. (Leviticus, 25: 44-46)

Having most slave systems since antiquity habitually targeted aliens, slavery was nevertheless not considered a hereditary condition: the descendants of slaves were thought to acquire 'insider' traits, thereby securing an improvement in their status. The combination of the Noachid malediction with the instructions of Leviticus, however, perpetuated slavery down through the generations. Furthermore, this biblical combination appeared to validate a form of ethnic enslavement, despite not pointing directly either to skin colour or 'Africa'.

The biblical genealogies indicate that the sons of Ham peopled the area we know as North Africa and the Horn, notably Egypt, Libya, the land of Cush - as Ethiopia was called by biblical writers - and parts of Arabia and Palestine. 'Cush' means black in Hebrew; 'Ham' is close to the word for hot. Many of the Canaanites subsequently expelled from Israel settled in North Africa at Carthage. (Blackburn, 1999: 67)

Although it is unclear whether or not all Ham's progeny are affected by the Noachid curse, the allusion to Canaan is definitely representative of metonymy, referring to all Canaanites if not to all Ham's descendants. In any case, the thesis that many of Ham's sons are evil can be supported by biblical examples of their attempts to exploit or hinder the children of Israel. (1999: 67)

Between the fourth and the eleventh centuries, a number of Judaic, Muslim and Christian scholars mainly from North Africa or the Middle East - where the incidence of African slavery was high -, were to propagate the idea that all Ham's sons shared in the Noachid malediction, and that black people were Ham's descendants. Talmudic speculations dating from the sixth century AD ascribed the 'blackness' of some of Ham's progeny to a curse prior to the biblical Noachid malediction, although not associating skin colour directly to slavery. According to Sanhedrin 108B of the

Babylonian Talmud, Ham and his issue were 'smitten in the skin' due to having breached Noah's order of sexual abstinence on the Ark. Both the Jerusalem Talmud and the Genesis Rabbah are more explicit concerning the repercussions of Ham's actions: while the first states that Ham becomes 'charcoal coloured', the second claims that Ham's seed darkens upon leaving the Ark. However, although punishment for sins clearly occurs as a blackening of the skin, there is yet no explicit link between 'blackness' and slavery. (1999: 67-8)

Despite the fact that the Noachid curse was not originally to be found in the Koran, this myth was subsequently adopted by various Muslim teachers and writers basing themselves on Talmudic and biblical sources. Due to the significant presence of black slaves in the Muslim world, it is no surprise that the Islamic version of Noah's malediction would come to emphasise, by the tenth century, a connection between Ham, blackness and enslavement. (1999: 69,79)

Because the Islamic faith restricted enslavement to infidels, conversion represented a form of evading the slave traffic to many African peoples. This strategy was to fail, however, for Arab raiders frequently took black Muslims as captives, regardless of religion. Thus, although in Muhammad's time unity of faith imposed itself over racial distinctions - enslavement being circumscribed to infidels -, as the slave trade between West Africa and the Arab world consolidated itself, blackness became a signifier of menial slavery regardless of the religion professed by the peoples in question. Thus, despite the pluralism inherent in the foundations of Islam, the African slave trade introduced a racial component in the Muslim practice of enslavement, inspiring itself upon the Noachid curse to validate the equivalence between blackness and servility, as well as the imposition of colour awareness over religious conformity. (1999: 69, 80)

Although medieval Christians were familiar with the Noachid curse, whereby blackness was attributed to Ham's lineage, they nevertheless tended to associate black Africans with positive and non-servile biblical images:

The Bible describes Moses' wife, Zipporah, as a Cushite or black African; when Moses' sister Miriam objected to the union, Yahweh punished her: 'Behold Miriam became leprous, white as snow' (Numbers 12: 10). The Queen of Sheba, ruler of a kingdom friendly to Israel, was held to be black as well as beautiful. The Christian belief that one of the three wise kings, or Magi, paying homage to the infant Jesus was a black African was a symbol of universalism. (1999: 69)

The fact that Christians were searching for allies against the Muslim threat, rather than validations of black enslavement, certainly influenced the positive universalist evaluations of blacks they chose to dwell on within the biblical tradition. (1999: 69) However, theology had often associated blackness with sin, and Origen, an early Christian father, adopted the Noachid curse but chose to mitigate it by contrasting the virtuous nature of many blacks with the sinful character - the 'inward blackness' - of many whites. (1999: 68) The correspondence between the colour black and sin still prevailed in medieval times, paradoxically operating alongside positive biblical images of blacks.

At any rate, in political terms, Latin Europeans regarded blacks as valuable strategic assets against the Islamic threat, due to their potential to convert to Christianity. The policy of Portugal and the Papacy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was to be heavily influenced by this idea: the Noachid curse was thus relegated to the side, for the sake of both establishing amicable trade links as well as ensuring the conversion of the inhabitants of the African kingdoms. Curiously, Portugal's active role in fostering the Atlantic slave traffic relied on friendly relations with the African

nobility, which in turn led to a minimisation of racial issues. (1999: 70, 72)

Portugal was especially aware of the importance of being on cordial terms with African rulers, because it was through slave-raiding expeditions by local suppliers that Portuguese merchants purchased captives. The people of West Africa were regarded as desirable slaves, not only because of their agricultural and metalworking skills, but also due to slavery being a deeply entrenched practice in this region for two reasons: first, because land was so plentiful, the social relations of West Africa were determined by securing labour to work the land rather than possessing land itself; second, the infrastructures of slave trade networks were already in place due to long established trans-Saharan routes between that region and the Arab world, allowing Europeans to rely on local slave-raiders for captives. Moreover, the high degree of political disintegration, internal warfare and lack of regional solidarity facilitated enslavement, increasing both the availability and vulnerability of captives to be purchased by Portuguese traders. (1999: 81-2, 102)

Throughout sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe, the link between slavery and Noah's curse was to become profoundly consolidated, partly due to greater diffusion of the Bible. The Noachid myth was confirmed even by clerics who denounced the cruel treatment of black slaves. Thus, despite believing that all human beings had immortal souls, the Spanish Jesuit Alonso de Sandoval, whose life was dedicated to rendering service to the African captives arriving in Cartagena, advocated the theory, in his treatise entitled *De instauranda Aethiopum salute* (1647), that blacks had inherited Noah's curse because their lineage derived from Ham and Canaan. Similarly, the Portuguese Jesuit António Vieira, whose sermons often took up the issue of the inhumane treatment of slaves in Brazil, considered that 'God's fire' had left the 'mark of slavery' on blacks, an allusion to the Noachid curse which was to single out the descendants of Ham and Canaan for a

special fate in 'imitation of Christ's patience', from martyrdom and oppression in this world to eternal salvation in the next. (Blackburn, 1999: 74, 154-5, 185, 210)

With the gradual demise of the power of Catholicism and the rise of Protestantism during the seventeenth century, the myth of the Noachid curse played an increasingly important role in justifying slavery to States which, due to the celebration of civil liberties, considered enslavement to be an abhorrent practice infringing upon individual freedom. Furthermore, the legend of the curse validated racialising practices in a context which firmly believed in a common origin of mankind deriving from Adam and Eve.¹⁵

The new slave regime on the plantations required intensive labour: the Noachid curse provided an ideal justification for a system that regarded slavery as an inherited condition, rather than the traditional views which focused on enslavement as an integral part of a civilising mission, thus affording a number of possibilities that facilitated manumission. The English author Samuel Purchas reflected the attitudes of his contemporaries in his rearticulation of the Noachid curse, allowing for a defence of enslavement as a hereditary practice that simultaneously permitted the conversion of heathens to Christianity: according to this version of the myth, combining both traditional and modern assumptions of slavery, 'Ham was the first Author, after the Flood, of irreligion', giving rise to an issue of pagans characterised by their renouncement of Noah's knowledge of God. Another version of the legend, advocated by both Spanish and English writers, such as

¹⁵ While the monogenic thesis could lend itself to the defence of civilising missions on the basis that humanity differed according to distinct stages of development and could be taught to reach a higher level, as demonstrated in the hispanic case, the rise of the Protestant plantation colonies appeared to anticipate polygenic theory, which regarded humanity as divided into a myriad of different racial species, each of which had been allocated a fixed place in a racialised hierarchy. (Young, 1996: 48)

Buenaventura de Salinas and William Strachey, extended the curse to the indigenous peoples of the Americas, considered to be descendants of Canaan alongside black Africans; this racialised view argued for the classification of the world's inhabitants within genealogical groups originating in the Bible. Nevertheless, allusions to the 'sons of Ham' were sometimes paradoxically employed to emphasise the humanity of African slaves - urging for an improvement in the treatment meted out to the latter - and to dispel ultra-racist ideas, that were to become widespread in the plantation colonies, reducing black slaves to beasts of burden. (1999: 73-5)

The specificity of the legend of the Noachid curse lies in its direct linkage between skin colour and an inherited slave status, regardless of being born Christian. In an epoch characterised by the 'free air doctrine', not only did the Noachid legend justify the employment of human beings, who were regarded neither as cannibals nor savages, as slaves, but it also served the purpose of determining, in plantation societies, the black population's relationship with the free.¹⁶ (1999: 75) While the plantation system initially thrived upon a mixed labour force comprising both blacks as well as free and unfree whites or non-African peoples, the ensuring labour shortage arising from a voracious demand for plantation products led to the purchase of increasing numbers of black slaves. The Noachid myth was particularly useful in justifying the reasons for an almost entirely black work force on the plantations. Despite the anti-slavery aspirations of early modern Europe, the context of the Americas was to batten on religious discourse specially selected to further the interests of a civil society standing to gain economically from an institutionalised racial hierarchy which allowed for bondage of the descendants of Africans even when born Christian. (1999: 76)

¹⁶ In the context of thirteenth century medieval Europe, freedom was thought to be man's natural condition; any form of enslavement depriving man from breathing 'free air' represented a degeneration of the human condition. (Blackburn, 1999: 60)

X. The rise of modern capitalism

Although the Iberian colonies were supplying the gold, silver and precious metals necessary to Europe's economic expansion, neither Spain nor Portugal were benefiting from capitalist mercantilism. (1997: 29) This was due to the existence of a feudalistic type society, living in a 'belated and contra-historical Middle Age', where the nobility's wealth contrasted with the Crown's bankruptcy. During the sixteenth century, public expenditure increased dramatically, causing trade deficits and high inflation, due not only to the consumer needs of the Empire, but also to the war that was being waged against Protestantism in Europe.

Gallopung unemployment, inflation, sterile latifundia, undeveloped industry, seignorial jurisdiction of the aristocracy outside the Crown's control, costly manoeuvres of the Inquisition, and lost wars against 'centres of heresy' eventually led to the ruin of the Hapsburg regime in 1700. Invaded by products from other European countries with growing economies, Spain was prevented from developing local industry. This process culminated in the mid-sixteenth century, with authorisation of textile imports and a ban on Spanish fabric exports except to the Americas. (1997: 26-7) The relentless Iberian drive to defend Catholicism and the power of the Papacy consisted in a struggle to preserve a medieval world order amidst changing circumstances; through the continuation of their 'crusading' activities during the Counter-Reformation, archaic social forces sought to protect themselves against incipient modern economies.

Spanish officials started to complain that the Spaniards corresponded to the Indians of Europe, for now others, who provided Spain with foodstuffs and merchandise, were economically benefiting from the difficult work of colonisation carried out by the Castilians. (Blackburn, 1999: 145) However, not

only were other European rivals profiting indirectly from the Iberian powers' toil in the Americas, but they were actually directly involved, through the enterprise of adventurers and privateers, in claiming territory in the New World, regardless of the terms inherent in the Treaty of Tordesillas, signed under papal auspices between Spain and Portugal in 1494.¹⁷ While the French emphasised their role as allies of the natives, seeking to found colonies on the basis of consent, the Dutch affirmed the natural right of all men to navigate with the objective of establishing trade relations. The English, in turn, believed that they had a God given right to the land they occupied, due to their making better use of it than either the natives or other colonial powers. (1999: 9)

Latin American gold and silver stimulated a European flow of capital that took off with the increment of the bourgeoisie. Products of the colonial economy, such as precious metals and sugar, catered to the necessities of the European market; the latter thus determined the economic structure of the Iberian colonies in the process of accumulating resources from the Americas. According to Galeano, this movement, based on plunder, illustrates the Marxian notion of primitive capital accumulation, a phase which marked a new epoch in world economic development subsequent to the Middle Ages.

Marx wrote in Chapter 3 of the first volume of *Capital*: "The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings

¹⁷On the basis of a line of demarcation extending from 'pole to pole' 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands, the Treaty of Tordesillas allocated spheres of colonisation in the world beyond Europe to Spain and Portugal. (Blackburn, 1999: 8, 63; Muldoon, 1994; 130)

are the chief momenta of primitive accumulation." (Galeano, 1997: 28)

While the primitive accumulation process of capital from the Americas laid the foundations for industrial progress in Europe, the bulk of capital that stayed in the New World financed the construction of monumental churches and palaces, the purchase of luxury items or any show of display and abundance associated with the baroque. (Blackburn, 1999: 21; Galeano, 1997: 31)

... While the baroque as spectacle retained a link to the world of colonial slavery, it exhibited a public entrepreneurship, the positive face of mercantilism, which contrasted with the private enterprise that was the driving force behind the New World's civil slavery. (1999: 21)

Thus, while Spanish imperial ideology relied heavily on state initiative and control, the English approach emphasised the role of private enterprise in the hands of individual colonists. This difference was to be crucial in the development of modern plantation slavery in the seventeenth century, distinguished by its thoroughly commercial and racialised character. (1999: 10)

XI. Plantation Slavery

Plantations originated due to the economic imperative of satisfying an insatiable European appetite for products from the New World. Although sugar plantations had existed, prior to the seventeenth century, in the Levant, the Atlantic islands, the Canaries, S. Tomé e Príncipe, and Brazil, all of which depended on both indentured and slave labour, the plantation regime that the French and English developed in the Caribbean and North America, under Dutch guidance, was to be distinguished by several novel components. No longer solely referring to sugar cultivation, the word plantation, by 1700, embraced estates producing any tropical cash crop with tied labour. Whereas the Brazilian *engenhos* had

separated the diverse facets of sugar production - cane cultivation, processing and transportation -, the Caribbean plantations consisted in an integrated unit. Moreover, while the Brazilian estate had a mixed labour force comprising Portuguese indentured servants, Indian day labourers and black slaves, being the latter in minority, the Caribbean plantations were almost entirely dependent on African slaves by the late seventeenth century. (Blackburn, 1999: 309, 332)

The Caribbean had already set the stage for plantation agriculture in the early days of Spanish conquest of the New World. Although by the mid-fifteenth century there were many *ingenios* throughout the Spanish Americas, their success was hindered by the threat of Indian rebellions and pirate raids on one hand, and the high charges of slaves, sugar-making equipment, and Spanish fleets on the other. Aware of the risks inherent in running an *ingenio*, the Spanish authorities sought to offer loans and tax exemptions to stimulate enterprise. However, the expensive sugar plantations were to be replaced, in the 1570's, by the much more lucrative silver trade.

The takeoff of the Brazilian sugar plantations, which occurred around the time the Spanish American *ingenios* were in decline, encouraged a gradual substitution of Indian slaves for African captives. When King Sebastião I restricted the enslavement of Indians, in 1570, to those engaging either in rebellion or cannibalism, the Jesuits, who owned mills to maintain their educational and proselytising activities, supported this official approach by purchasing African instead of native slaves. As early as 1516, the Dominican Las Casas had defended the enslavement of Africans in place of the Indians, in the Spanish Americas, a position which he would later regret having taken. (1999: 135-36) The crux of the matter lay in the necessity of the *senhores de engenho* to have a stable labour force, working during a nine-month harvest cycle and performing other tasks the rest of the time: African slaves proved much more suitable to the

requirements of the *engenho*, both in terms of endurance and knowledge of agricultural skills than Indian captives. (1999: 167-68)

The Spanish and Portuguese legal precept of formally limiting enslavement to Africans had thus created a precedent which the Dutch, English and French would radicalise. Although French and English planting originally operated along the lines of small estates with a mixed labour force, economic imperatives linked to a voracious European demand for agricultural products from the New World led planters and merchants to opt for large-scale production through the mobilisation of black slaves. A system based on racial exploitation was thus determined by the growing competitiveness of a market economy whereby planters sought to maximise profit by increasing both the intensity and the capacity of their plantations, so as to cater, in the swiftest way possible, to the requirements of a new culture of consumption. (1999: 351, 353) Planters' realisation of the economic benefits inherent in tied labour preceded the logic of racial enslavement and the formation of identities deriving from the latter that were to distinguish modern plantation slavery. (1999: 314)

Highly dependent on economic and social factors, the availability of indentured servants or *engagés* declined precisely around the time of French and English plantation growth. Civic liberties were held to be an inalienable right of national citizens both in France and England throughout the seventeenth century: forced labour was regarded not only as a violation of the freedom of 'every true Christian and loyal subject', but also as a form of depriving national landholders of necessary labour. Recruitment for indentured service would thus have to be voluntary, eventually leading to the workers' fortune and liberty. Due to the shortage of candidates, penal servitude was thought a likely source of labour; however, planters were cautious about employing servants from the criminal stratum, and authorities were reluctant to allow a concentration of political and religious opponents in the

plantations, due to their possible alliance with rival powers. (1999: 316-18)

While from the 1660's onwards the Caribbean suffered a decrease in voluntary indentures, the English North American colonies maintained a steady level of servant recruitment until the beginning of the eighteenth century. Because the plantations in the latter region consisted mainly in tobacco, they were particularly suited to indentured contracts due to the time horizon for cultivation being much shorter than in the sugar estates. While there was a mixed labour force on plantations, a certain amount of solidarity existed between both indentured white servants and slaves. Nevertheless, the conditions they were subject to differed greatly, for while the servant could appeal to rights and nurtured a prospect of liberty, turning to free whites within the larger community for added support, black slaves were regarded as little more than beasts of burden.

In the Caribbean, as the purchase of black slaves gradually replaced indentured labour, the link between skin colour and status became increasingly sedimented: both black and white became signifiers of slavery and freedom respectively. The most acute polarisation between free whites and black slaves was to occur in the English colonies, where almost every route to manumission was hampered. The situation in the North American colonies was slightly different, for here many colonists regarded the territory as destined to be occupied by themselves. Thus, while racial animosity was exploited by some wealthy colonists who wished to defend slavery, it also motivated large sectors of the populations to oppose slaveholding so as to prevent the entry of blacks into the colonies. Mobilisation of racial antipathy led to a strengthening of white solidarity, between large and small landholders, which enabled the slaveowner to guarantee the possession of his estate.

White privilege was thus defined against a growing fear of black people, leading whites to judge themselves, through the eyes of

blacks, as belonging to a racial élite. The discriminatory practices hitherto exercised against outsiders of the moral or social community in Europe were thus transferred to the black labourers in the plantation colonies, while the racial category of whiteness subsumed differences amongst European settlers by providing the latter with a reinforced social identity. (1999: 314, 324)

The new slave system, founded upon a racial ideology which responded well to the imperatives of catering to consumer needs in the swiftest way possible, owed its high degree of economic success partly to the non-interference of the metropolitan states in the activities of the planters and merchants. (1999: 310) Whereas the Spanish Empire based itself on centralised state initiative, whereby the metropolis sought to enrich royal coffers by coordinating production through mining and *encomienda* concessions, thus curtailing the colonists' power by replacing outright enslavement for tribute exactions, the English and French metropolitan states, neither of which had encouraged plantation development, allowed the planters and merchants to proceed in autonomous fashion as long as taxes could be imposed on estate produce. The customs and excise levied on cash crops thus permitted England and France to dispense with the Spanish necessity to collect revenue in the colony.

Plantation slavery was the result of novel capitalist relations inherent in an incipient consumer culture that was thriving in the metropolis; slavery in the Spanish case had, on the contrary, been regulated by an absolutist imperial state with the purpose of achieving an economic surplus, in what was an extensive, rather than intensive, non-capitalist regime of oppression. (1999: 310-11) Although the baroque empires of Spain and Portugal, with their characteristic complexity, produced an ethno-social hierarchy, they nevertheless sought to 'tame the wilful slaveowner rather than yield him all the power he craved'. (1999: 21) The fact that the condition of slavery had itself been problematised by Spanish theologians, philosophers and lawyers meant that, even if only for

political and economic reasons, there was a certain awareness of the ethical issues involved. The religious and cultural heritage of the Protestant and Anglo-Saxon plantation colonies was less permeable to cultural syncretism than that of their Iberian counterparts. (1999: 21, 237)

The fact that the Portuguese and the Dutch were directly involved in the slave trade confirmed the acceptability, to the English, of taking part in the latter; however, the intellectual discussions that revolved around the foundation of Iberian slave laws were disregarded in favour of the objective existence of the Iberian practice of slavery. (1999: 236) Although the legend of the Noachid curse provided justification for the inheritable enslavement of blacks, irrespective of religion or behaviour, the new system of plantation slavery, being secular and utilitarian, had to find expression in juridical codification rather than biblical injunction. (1999: 312, 324) The English tradition of common law thus began to adapt itself to the plantation system, by recognising slaves and their progeny as private property, in much the same manner as cattle or other domesticated animals.

Essentially regarded as beasts of burden, black slaves were often given names habitually reserved for animals, and were frequently listed in inventories side by side with animals. When the English cleric Morgan Godwyn encouraged slave conversion, the planters replied that blacks 'were beasts and had no more souls than beasts'. (1999: 325) Indian baptisms were also not urged, for the indigenous peoples' way of life was deemed to be inextricably heathen. (1999: 237)

The Puritans, who constituted an important force in the English colonial enterprise, sanctioned servitude on the basis of biblical teachings: the gospel's injunction to 'bring forth the fruits of the earth' corresponded to the economic impetus behind plantation labour, and the hard-working planter regarded himself as an instrument of divine will. (1999: 237, 312) In a Lockean view,

possessive individualism and the necessity to make oneself useful to England, ultimately to one's own advantage, justified the existence of plantation slavery. Because the planter brought previously empty land into agricultural use, he substantiated the English right to occupy this territory. Locke claimed that the man guided by reason had the right to use any living creature as a means to guarantee satisfaction. While rational man should repudiate subjection to royal power, he nevertheless could own slaves, as long as the latter had developed neither reason nor industry.

Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) laid the utilitarian foundations of the English colonial project, by defending that those who cultivated the soil were to have precedence over the actual inhabitants of that territory: slavery would thus be a perfectly valid means to obtain an optimisation of land resources. (1999: 58-9) Contrary to Locke, however, Thomas More had defended a different type of enslavement from that which was to develop in the plantation colonies, for he regarded slavery to be useful as a correctional instrument commanded by the state rather than the subject.

In the French case, an attempt was made to draw up slave laws which reconciled both religion and the institution of slavery in the plantation colonies: the result was the *Code Noir*, issued by Louis XIV in 1685, urging for both the baptism of slaves and the expulsion of Jews from the French empire. Although in practice slaves were regarded as pertaining to a realm beyond the law, within the sovereignty of the slaveholder, French absolutism nevertheless aimed to regulate and guide the institution at home. This situation reflected the existing dichotomy between a baroque, feudalistic, absolutist French state in Europe and the decentred nature of metropolitan power in the colonies, where civil society remained relatively autonomous and unwilling to accept state interference. (1999: 291, 300-01)

XII. Conclusion

Natural rights theory, which influenced intellectual thought from the late middle ages to the end of the seventeenth century, played an important role in validating slavery to Europeans in an epoch characterised by the flourishing of civil liberties. The 'free air doctrine', holding servitude to be opposed to man's natural condition - freedom -, thus ran counter to rights theory, which inspired itself on Thomas Aquinas's critique of Franciscan apostolic poverty. According to Aquinas, 'possessions and slavery were not the product of nature, but were made by human reason for the advantage of human life'; the Franciscan vow of poverty - that is, their evasion of property possession - thus contradicted the empirical fact of their own personal consumption. (Blackburn, 1999: 60, 61, 63) Jean Gerson, chancellor of the University of Paris, was to elaborate on Aquinas by arguing that a person had the right to give up his natural liberty and, in particular contexts, might be presumed to have acted accordingly. Because liberty was regarded as a property, it could be exchanged like any other possession.

Gersonian theory was to become highly influential in the course of the sixteenth century, with direct repercussions in justifying the Atlantic slave trade. European conscience was alleviated on the basis of rights theory, for slavery appeared to be permissible once Africans were found to be engaging in the practice themselves: because blacks purchased by Europeans on the African coast had already been traded as slaves, the commercial and judicial logic of African processes could lend itself to supporting a rights theory advocating a deprivation of dominium based on the consent of the individual from whom the right to property and self-government were being withheld. Luis de Molina, Francisco Suárez, Hugo Grotius, John Selden and Thomas Hobbes would all adhere to Gersonian theory in their endorsement of the institution of slavery on the grounds of the individual's right to forgo liberty rather than on racial or cultural stigmatisation.

In his *De Justicia et Iure* (1592), the Jesuit theologian Luis de Molina would introduce Gersonian theory into Spanish debates on the rights of infidels to dominium, by opposing Vitoria's stance on deprivation of dominium as solely justifiable on the basis of infidel hostility to the peaceful entry of missionaries who sought to implement the terms of a papal licence conferring on them responsibility for the conversion of native inhabitants. Adopting an anti-humanist approach, Molina argued that there was no reason to believe that black slavery was not voluntary:

'Man is dominus not only of his external goods, but also of his own honour and fame; he is also dominus of his own liberty, and in the context of the natural law can alienate it and enslave himself ... It follows ... that if a man who is not subject to that law sells himself unconditionally in some place where the relevant laws allow him, then that sale is valid.' (Molina in Blackburn, 1999: 179)

Although Molina opposed the inhumanity of the slave trade, his primary emphasis on free will lent itself to the defence of mercantile capitalism: as a free and autonomous being, man was responsible for his own decisions concerning material and spiritual welfare. Nevertheless, because human beings owed their lives to their parents and their faculties to society, they could be enslaved as a form of chastising an entire community, even if individually innocent. Thus, despite being dominus of his own liberty, man often alienates the latter in favour of his community. The Molinian doctrine of free will would later complement the ideological justification of plantation slavery: by arguing that beings lacking reason could suffer no injury, Molina invited future recourse to the notion of slaves as chattel, existing, like animals or any form of living property, merely for the masters' convenience. (1999: 179, 180)

Rights theory was introduced in Protestant Europe by Hugo Grotius's *De Iure Belli et Pacis* (1625), in which slavery was defended on the basis of two premises: first, in accordance with a Hobbesian approach, sovereigns and heads of family must hold absolute power so as to ensure peaceful relations in their community; second, the inalienable right of liberty presupposed that man might willingly subject himself to slavery. (1999: 193-4) Urging for the establishment of free commerce in a *mare liberum*, a sea open to all, Grotius's work lay the foundations of a new world order no longer based on the *mare clausum* of the Iberian colonial monopolies. (1999: 187, 191) Writing in favour of a commercial society, characterised by free travel and trade, Grotius reveals the links between rights theory and the birth of modern capitalist relations (Muldoon, 1994: 174): the notion that the individual has the right to voluntarily deprive himself of dominium - the emphasis on individual consent in detriment to the ethical repercussions of the act itself, or the idea of individual free will as subsuming the possibility of its very negation - would thus influence the new culture of consumerism that fostered the plantation system during the seventeenth century.

In this new world order, cooperation between states for clearly established economic ends replaced the Innocentian view of humanity as a metaphysical unity, over whom the Pope had spiritual responsibility. (1994: 164) Although the latter idea catered to the economic interests of Christian powers, it nevertheless had the merit of problematising the relationship between politics and morality, associated with Machiavelli's (1469-1527) *Prince*. While the anti-Machiavellian theme adopted by Juan de Solórzano Pereira urged for the establishment of a 'Christian reason of state', that is, the centralisation of a powerful state on the basis of Christian principles, the Machiavellians would have argued for a divorce between morality and politics, for the latter was deemed to rely on the breaching of principles. (1994: 166)

In the case of the development of slavery in the New World, the Machiavellian debate concerning the connection between morality and politics could manifest itself in the dichotomy between metropolitan centralisation on one hand, and the complete autonomy of civil society on the other: whereas the strong regulation by the Spanish state helped curb the outright predatory behaviour of the colonists on the indigenous population - namely through the legal codification of slave rights -, the high degree of metropolitan decentralisation and planter autonomy in the Caribbean and North America paved the way for a thoroughly racialised system of chattel slavery. If, in Weberian terms, the selection of a particular route to historical development, amongst a number of alternative paths, is determined by ideas, or, according to Gramsci, ideas can become a material force, then racial ideology can be regarded, in the context of a nascent capitalist market, as having influenced both the formation of plantation slavery as well as the social classifications deriving from the latter. (Blackburn, 1999: 357)

The invention of racial slavery in the New World reveals the extent to which modernity is complicit with violence, both ontologic and epistemic. The question that arises then concerns the viability of salvaging a project which, despite containing a voice of counter-domination, is nevertheless branded by a totalising impulse. This issue, however, betrays the idea of modernity as a linear, progressive, homogeneous narrative. Modern discourse can instead be viewed as a stage of apprenticeship in an ethics of responsibility, as a site of diremption in which contesting outlooks, traditional on one hand and modern on the other, attempt to negotiate confrontation with alterity. The 'telling of the suppressed tales' of this period may open a disjunctive space which, in the process of alerting us to the continuity between past and present, allows for the figuration of a future grounded on a 'becoming-ethical' rather than on a rejection of the modern. (Venn, 2000: 51, 110-11, 115, 235)

CHAPTER THREE

ON *WHITE MYTHOLOGIES*: THE ANTI-HUMANIST ARGUMENT

I. Introduction

Robert Young's *White Mythologies* argues for the rewriting of History from a post-structuralist perspective, where a non-coherent, ambivalent and polyvocal theory would challenge the prevalent Western model of historicist narrative. The latter is, according to Young, characterised by a rational and linear unity, with no room for dissonance. The urge to totalisation of Western historicism mirrors, on an intellectual level, the will to power of the West over its 'other' on a practical level. History as divulged by the dominant Western paradigm is reduced to one more attempt at appropriation of difference by a European colonial legacy that leaves nothing outside its vast 'economy of inclusion':

The appropriation of the other as a form of knowledge within a totalising system can thus be set alongside the history (if not the project) of European imperialism, and the constitution of the other as 'other' alongside racism and sexism. The reaction against this structure has produced forms of politics that do not fit into traditional political categories. (Young, 1995: 4)

Young traces Western totalisation back to Hegelian dialectics, which allegedly only permits knowledge of alterity through its subsumption within the same. East/West, black/white are diametrically opposed, for the West has revealed itself only able to think alterity in terms of a totalising discourse which seeks to articulate knowledge of the antagonistic and subordinate element within the dichotomy, so as to be able to master it. The magnitude of European thought, stemming from the Enlightenment, contaminated by Hegelian dialectics, ranges from liberal Humanism

to Marxism. The humanist outlook is, in Young's view, the major culprit in the violence of the European colonial legacy, for it 'necessarily produces the non-human in setting up its problematic boundaries'. (1995: 125) Marxism, as a humanism, attempts to subsume all struggles under a working class category that, to Young, no longer makes sense:

The straightforward oppositional structure of capital and class does not necessarily work any more: if we think in terms of Hegel's master/slave dialectic, then rather than the working class being the obvious universal subject-victim, many others are also oppressed: particularly women, black people, and all other so-called ethnic and minority groups. Any single individual may belong to several of these, but the forms of oppression, as of resistance or change, may not only overlap but may also differ or even conflict. (1995: 5)

Contemporary politics, says Young, operate on the micro level, with a hoard of minority groups battling for rights that sometimes conflict with each other. The task, therefore, is to think difference without absorption into the same. Only Post-Structuralism, argues Young, permits the latter, by producing a knowledge that respects difference through the singular or contingent event as opposed to universality.

History is the realm of violence and war; it constitutes another form by which the other is appropriated into the same. For the other to remain other it must not derive its meaning from History but must instead have a separate time which differs from historical time. (1995: 15)

Young proceeds to analyse various authors' attempts to consider History from the perspective of alterity, giving emphasis to the paradoxical conclusion that despite the immense difficulty inherent in escaping the grasp of totalisation, there are always fissures that resist closure. The resulting questions, stemming from this

argument, are twofold. Firstly, how can we think any form of alterity without subsumption under a universalising difference that risks eliminating that very 'otherness'? Secondly, how can we think alterity without the risk of fragmentation inherent in conflicting discourses of difference?

In the first half of this chapter, the overarching arguments of *White Mythologies* will be presented as an instance of a strong anti-humanist position. By looking at a number of issues that *White Mythologies* sidelines too quickly it will then be claimed that Young's militant anti-humanism does not adequately allow for complexity due to an incessant search for theoretical purity. Young's stance will be critiqued by exploring both Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha's attempt to engage with the notion of 'aporia' within a deconstructive framework.

i) Searching for a Way Out of Marxist Historicism

Sartre's Humanist Existentialism and Althusser's decentred modes of production provide two of the most important responses to the search for a way out of classical Marxist Historicism. According to Young, the Sartrean objective consisted in the totalisation of History without a Lukácsian totaliser, dispensing the dialectic as the basis for a structure of closure. Sartre points to individual agency, whereby man can change the course of events through his own free will, as a form of totalising without a totaliser. Due to man being the centre of History, the law of the dialectic of History ceases to be that of a metaphysical transcendence, operating from the individual level. The truth of humanity would thus arise from the subsumption of "the plurality of the meanings of individual histories" (1995: 32) into one History. Young paraphrases Sartre's pre-emption of his critics:

If History is a history of conflict, how could it be both one and internally diversified without the inner moving principle of the dialectic? How can History be a unity if it is also

conflictual, if each action is aimed at destroying the other and results in a double negation in which the original aims of each action have been destroyed by the other? If each action negates the aim of the other, where is the 'unity' totalised in the conflict? How does History constantly totalise itself? (1995: 33)

According to Sartre, although the products of conflict may differ from the original motivation of the participants, they nevertheless form the ground for future History. This is what is meant by the willingness to demonstrate that 'the negation of a negation can be an affirmation'. (1995: 34) Guarding himself against the possibility that the negation of a negation could produce a detotalisation, whereby human History would disintegrate into a multitude of specific histories, Sartre invents the singular universal, whereby the isolated event, the part, incarnates the whole. The Sartrean singular universal is reminiscent of the Hegelian essential section, that is, "a break in the present such that all the elements of the whole revealed by this section are in an immediate relationship with one another, a relationship that immediately expresses their internal essence" (1995: 55) in a continuous and homogeneous spatio-temporality.

On the contrary, an Althusserian cross-section in the present would reveal a "heterogeneous array of presences and absences", where different histories have their own specific temporalities, being each history articulated with other histories "according to the overall but decentred totality of the particular mode of production". (1995: 56) In Althusser, the unity of the whole is a product of overdetermination, with the coexistence of a number of separate and relatively autonomous levels connected to each other by the economic structure, the latter which never operates alone.

Whereas the Sartrean notion of totalisation is infinitely open to other totalisations, such that History effects the continuous totalisation of totalisations without a prospective closure,

Althusser's totalisation is "decentred and displaced in time" (1995: 58) due to the coexistence of different instances that do not have the same historical temporality. According to Young, both Sartre and Althusser thus fail to prove the existence of totalisation, the first due to a totalisation always in process, the second because of a non-totalisable structure.

Young questions how any History can simultaneously think partiality, discontinuity and teleology at the same time. This problematic pervades his analysis of both Western Historicism and the attempts to write back at the latter. Young accepts Hindess and Hirst's defence of teleology as inherent in any philosophy of History. However, whereas the latter contend that essentialism and teleology work together in making the past a coherent object within a historical continuum that is governed by the realisation of the Idea, Young would argue that History cannot be both essentialist and teleological, as revealed by Hegel, Marx and Sartre. For essentialism presupposes the existence of a Hegelian essential section, whereby the part incarnates the whole and the whole is present in each part. But if totalisation is an impossible aim, teleology becomes the only indispensable element in a philosophy of History.

Young counters Hindess and Hirst's claim that the Althusserian decentred totality is "still expressive and therefore essentialist", by affirming that "each element cannot express the whole because the whole is only accessible as a concept, which is precisely not expressed at all". (1995: 61) According to Young, Althusser revolutionised the concept of History, through the problematisation of temporality. By converting History into a radically different mode of time, where differential histories intersect with each other against the background of a particular mode of production, Althusser advocated a concept of temporality that is construed by the analyst, rather than given *a priori*.

The Foucauldian notion of genealogy presumably recuperates the Althusserian concept of temporality, whereby the analyst employs an x-ray technique to artificially isolate elements of the past as objective preconditions defined in terms of any full-blown system in the present:

Foucault's genealogy means that by asking a question, posing a problem, you set up a generality against which you constitute events and arrange them in a series. The construction of that generality does not pretend to be the only possible one - the same event could operate in all sorts of different ways in different series, temporalities, which would mean that, strictly speaking, it was no longer the same event, for it would have been dispersed in their different rarefactions. (1995: 81)

Young here broaches a theme that underlies his critique of Western historicism: the event, as excessive, as superseding, as incommensurable, to the concept, will never be able to be captured, tamed, understood in its entirety by the latter. Foucault's genealogy, as a self-conscious method of historical reconstruction, appeals particularly to Young due to its respect for the singularity of the event.

... the event as event is only constituted through its repetition in thought as a 'phantasm': 'it makes the event indefinite so that it repeats itself as a singular universal'. (1995: 82)

Due to the lack of absolute coincidence between the real event and its future conceptions, any effort to reconstitute the original will only be a "bad copy":

... because the bad copy by definition cannot claim to be copying anything but itself, it creates its 'original'

retroactively, so that the copy precedes the original in a ghostly originary repetition. (1995: 82)

The original as a primordial event ceases thus to exist, when subjected to any mechanism of representation:

This is not supposed to suggest that events cannot be said to occur straightforwardly in the real but rather that when set up in any series, narrative, or history they are constructed as such events retrospectively by the historian. (1995: 81)

What are the implications of the disruption of the “adequation between copy and model, appearance and essence, event and Idea”? (1995: 82) Idea and Truth are no longer compatible, due to the pulverisation of a plurality of truths constituted, in retrospect, by the analyst. History thus becomes an impossibility, with a constant tension between the ideological notion of History and the differential relations of the mode of production. The subject experiences History as a “purposive continuum” at the ideological level of historicist interpellation in what is a closed totality. The differential relations of the various histories that compose the decentred totality, on the other hand, are set against a background of negative totalisation, where “each history’s history is defined not through its identity with, or difference from, a general history but by being differentiated from every other history, on which it is necessarily also therefore dependent...”. (1995: 62) The gap between a hermetic totality and absolute differentiation of a plurality of histories can only be bridged, according to Althusser, by art, which Young interprets as “the telling of a story”, enacted in the mediating relation between the two poles, “the process of writing itself”. (1995: 62)

Accessible only as a text, History becomes a hermeneutic problem of meaning and interpretation. The Derridean critique of logocentrism explores History as a metaphysical concept, whereby the representation of absence takes the form of “presence and

meaning determined as truth". (1995: 64) The 'truth' inherent in teleological History would correspond to an eternal transcendental signified. Although Derrida aims to deconstruct the authority of the latter, he nonetheless comes up with another form of transcendence, that of the process of writing, or *différance*. The concept of *différance* is simultaneously constituted by that of difference (non-identity) and deferral: whilst the possibility of History hinges on the existence of difference, History is simultaneously prevented from ever being concluded, or totalised, by the delay inherent in difference.

It is only through difference, by which the same becomes other and produces a tissue of difference, that history could ever take place: for if full presence were possible, then there would be no difference, and therefore no time, space - or history. *Différance* means precisely that you can never get out of - and therefore have no need to get back to - history. (1995: 66)

History, in Derridean terms, becomes equivalent to transcendence over the totality, operating within a structure of supplementarity whereby the absence at the origin is supplemented by an overabundance, an excess, of the signifier.

Insofar as it sets up such a process of necessary and constant supplementation, we could say that the impossibility of totalisation produces a writing-effect whose process of perpetual deferral unremittingly provokes more writing. (1995: 66)

Rather than focusing on the threat of totalisation inherent in historicism, Derrida's deconstructive approach analyses the process by which historical texts tend to erase their own conditions of historicity, thereby producing closure. Any text, according to this view, has openings that must be covered for ideological reasons. It is the very existence of these textual interstices that

reveal History as totalisation to be an impossible target, whilst simultaneously inspiring the writing of differentiated histories of the 'departures from totality':

History cannot be done away with any more than metaphysics: but its conditions of impossibility are also necessarily its conditions of possibility. (1995: 66)

ii) The Return to Historicism

Young characterises Fredric Jameson's attempt to rehabilitate the Marxian dialectical tradition as "omnivorous", due to the latter's urge to subsume antithetical theories under the all-embracing gesture of a single History or narrative. The basic argument of *The Political Unconscious* is that the decentring of the subject and the transcending of the ethical toward the political and the collective can only be achieved by way of the dialectic:

Dialectical thinking can be characterised as historical reflexivity...as the study of an object (here the romance texts) which also involves the study of the concepts and categories (themselves historical) that we necessarily bring to the object. (Jameson, 1996: 109)

Only the dialectic would be capable of undermining the binary opposition that lies at the heart of Western thought, according to which positive and negative terms are equated with a distinction between good and evil. According to Young, the dialectic thus usurps the goal of post-structuralism, attempting simultaneously to go beyond it by presenting a theory of History that is lacking in post-structural analysis:

His problem is that, while on the one hand he acknowledges the force of the recent arguments that question the status of history, he nevertheless attempts to retain the traditional truth-claims of historical materialism. (Young, 1995: 94)

Young accuses Jameson of proceeding to “conflate the unconflatable”, namely the Marxist traditions of Althusser and Sartre. How can a decentred totality with differentiated histories connected by a common mode of production be brought together with a Sartrean totalisation, where a plurality of heterogeneous individual histories are enmeshed into a single narrative? The answer lies in the Jamesonian use of the dialectic, whereby radically opposite poles can be retotalised into a transcendental global History.

Young considers Jameson to be a true Hegelian, for “assimilation rather than differentiation has always been his intellectual mode”. (1995: 92) Thus, while Jameson subscribes to Althusser’s History as an absent cause, accessible only in its effects, he nevertheless reveals a stronger affiliation to the Sartrean concept of totalisation. However, whereas for Sartre History as excessive to any attempt at totalisation prevents the latter from occurring, Jameson succeeds in inverting the structure “so that it becomes the totalising gesture itself”. (1995: 98)

The grand gesture that leads to transcendence is accomplished by appealing to a “History that is beyond the concept - the Real, Necessity, ‘the primacy of History itself’”. (1995: 98) Young counters that *The Political Unconscious* simultaneously attempts to rewrite Marxism in terms of a hermeneutics, a form of literary interpretation that represents the base-superstructure relation as fundamentally allegorical, rather than a concrete History. How can a real, empirical History be posited in all immediacy, if History is at the same time granted the status of representation?

Rather than a concrete object to which knowledge can aspire, Jameson thus considers History to be accessible only through texts which, in turn, must be subjected to interpretation. However, although the recent critiques of representation of reality find echoes in the Jamesonian notion of History, he resorts to invoking

an exterior, supratextual and transcendental History as the Real or Absent cause beyond representation, which can be apprehended only through its effects.

Jameson can acknowledge the status of history as interpretation, as narrative, but still assert its ultimate transcendence beyond those as the 'real' itself. (1995: 101)

In the Preface to *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson claims that History must choose between an 'objective structure' and 'subjective interpretive categories'. (1995: 104) Jameson prefers to simultaneously adhere to and transcend the latter, due to the ability of Marxian hermeneutics to subsume all interpretive categories. However, Young considers Jameson to have subsequently contradicted himself, by following a third option where transcendence takes the form of a History as Real, 'beyond all historicisms and relativisms'. (1995: 107)

What at first, then, looked like an abandonment of traditional Marxist notions of History and Truth was in fact only a first move in bringing them back via the meta-claim of interpretive absolutism and history as transcendence. (1995: 103)

An instance of this 'interpretive absolutism' is revealed by Jameson's belief that Marxian hermeneutics are above the problems of representation that apply to other interpretive categories. He thus claims to stand outside both the 'realist' position that attempts to depict History as a 'thing-in-itself' without any form of interpretation, and the 'modernist' tendency to rewrite the past in terms of the present, namely "its own aesthetic and ... modernist conception of language". (1995: 106) By abstracting himself from the critiques on representation prevalent in his historical context, Young argues that Jameson cleared the way for the "meta-interpretive claims of Marxism's transcendence as 'the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation'". (1995: 107)

Jameson wards off accusations that Marxian hermeneutics are just another attempt at theoretical totalisation, by invoking the capability of History as Real, standing outside theory, to “effect a leverage” upon the latter. (1995: 109) If, however, the Real is shown to be a discursive construction, then the totalisation will not be subject to external control.

The subsumption is so complete that Jameson has lost the excess that enabled totalisation, for his own position of transcendence always depended on a supplementary point of enunciation outside. (1995: 109)

iii) Writing back at Historicism

The value of Edward Said's *Orientalism* resides, in Young's view, primarily in its exposure of the links between Eurocentrism and the problematics of colonialism. This work paved the way for the growing affirmation of a political criticism grounded in the world of which it is a part, thus enabling 'minorities' to root their work according to their particular standpoint and shy away from the dominant cultural discourse which allegedly carries inevitable traces of Western imperialism. It is precisely this Western will to power, in the form of Orientalist representation of a diametrically opposite 'other', that is analysed by Said as a successful attempt at totalisation. Young, however, counters that the totalisation of historicism in its Orientalist form is inherently ineffectual, due to two prevailing characteristics: first, although “resistant singularity” is made to conform to the totality, it nevertheless causes problems to the latter's closure; second, the Orientalist image of the other effects its own alienation from itself.

The Orient, as a fabricated set of images which determined the West's apprehension of the East and subsequently aided in the former's colonial enterprise, is, in Said's terms, an instrumental misrepresentation of Europe's other. By constructing knowledge about 'Oriental' cultures and presenting expertise in the field,

Orientalist discourse sought to eliminate the threat of 'resistant singularity' by accommodating the latter under its totalising wing. However, this same 'resistant singularity', embodied in a powerful civilisation laid bare by Orientalist discourse of its other, is always excessive to any attempt at a totalising will to knowledge, thus preventing the closure of that very totality. Young affirms that totalisation is, furthermore, held at bay due not so much to the misrepresentation of an East that is always excessive to any description, but rather to the West's alienation from itself through Orientalist fantasies. An 'internal dislocation' of the West is thus accomplished, whereby Europe projects itself onto the unknown.

If Orientalism involves a science of inclusion and incorporation of the East by the West, then that inclusion produces its own disruption: the creation of the Orient, if it does not really represent the East, signifies the West's own dislocation from itself, something inside that is presented, narrativised, as being outside. (1995: 139)

Young critiques Said primarily for not allowing a concept of dissension within his analysis of Orientalist discourse, accusing him of being incapable of escaping from a dualistic structure of thought, whereby Orientalists are identified as being "for" or "against", and the East/West binary opposition is merely regurgitated in the form of an inside/outside conflict. Young considers the notion of contradiction as fundamental in any 'attempt at the decolonisation of European thought':

For whereas for a Western historicism the problem centres on the resistant singularity necessary for the integration of the totality but problematic for its closure, the Orientalist image of the Other is both a triumph of that historicist rationality but, in its antithetical value, also effects its own alienation from itself. (1995: 139)

Due to Said's refusal to consider the fissures inherent in the attempt at cultural domination involved in the 'Occident/Orient' duality, he is unable to refrain from repeating the same "theoretical contradictions and conflicts" that assail the Orientalists. Young emphasises that Said's flaws stem from both the theoretical and conceptual levels. At the theoretical level, Said bases his argument against the Western representation of the Orient on humanist values which, Young points out, have themselves colluded in the History of Western imperialism.

To criticise humanism in this context therefore does not mean that you do not like human beings and have no ethics - the gist of certain attacks on 'anti-humanism' - but rather the reverse. It questions the use of the human as an explanatory category that purports to provide a rational understanding of 'man' - an assumed universal predicated on the exclusion and marginalisation of his Others, such as 'woman' or 'the native'. (1995: 122)

Young distinguishes between two types of Humanism, that of traditional European culture, stemming from the Enlightenment, and the 'New Humanism' of Fanon. Whereas the former is in itself already anti-humanist, due to its boundaries automatically producing the non-human, the latter allegedly consists in a reformulation of humanism as a 'non-conflictual concept' that ceases to be predicated on a sub-human other.

That anti-humanist Orientalism was the product of a humanist culture suggests a complexity that Said seems unwilling to address. If humanism is a conflictual concept, as Fanon argues, to what extent will Said's humanism itself remain marked by anti-humanism? (1995: 131)

At the conceptual level, Young considers Said's fundamental problem to be his belief in the capacity of the critic to work from an outside space, that of 'critical consciousness', 'between the

dominant culture and the totalising forms of critical systems'. (1995: 135) By positing a totalisation that the intellectual must oppose, Said is transforming the critic's particularity - which he endorses in the form of local, specific struggles - into another universal. Young thus accuses Said of merely regurgitating the dualistic structure 'Orientalism/Occidentalism' that the latter's work set out to oppose:

By assuming that any 'method' must be univocal and totalising, his own anti-method simply takes up the opposite pole of the antagonistic dialectic he has created. As we might expect, this means that he then inevitably acts out and repeats at a textual level the dualistic structures from which he is unable to free himself. (1995: 136)

Furthermore, Said bases his argument for an independent 'critical consciousness' on a common human experience that transcends contextual variations: the great failing of Orientalist scholars was precisely that in establishing a rigid opposition between Orient/Occident, a blind eye was turned to a shared experience that allegedly pervades both sides of the duality. However, according to Young, 'experience' itself is 'always experienced, analysed and given meaning through forms of knowledge' that are necessarily ideological. (1995: 132)

Young argues that the critic cannot choose to be positioned within or outside cultural or theoretical postulates, for any form of individualistic criticism is apt to service a political end. (1995: 136) Said's attempt to rehabilitate an individual agency posited against a dominating cultural totality falls, itself, into the trap of another monolithic and homogeneous totality.

This non-conflictual totality should be contrasted to the Derridean account which draws attention to the ways in which totalisations never succeed in producing a perfect structure of inclusions and exclusions, with the result that

the unassimilable elements determine (and disallow) any totality which seeks to constitute itself as a totality by excluding them. In other words, only by rejecting Derrida *tout court* can Said continue to entertain the very possibility of a closed structure, system or method. And only if it is closed does it require the intervention of the individual to open it. (1995: 137)

According to Young, *Orientalism* articulates a closed structure, which, due to its repetition of the very dualistic structure of thought involved in the 'Orient/Occident' antinomy, is unable to escape the terms of its own critique. Young questions how any form of knowledge, including *Orientalism* - can 'escape the terms of *Orientalism's* critique'. (1995: 132)

If *Orientalism* seeks to demonstrate the profound complicity between a set of representations fabricated by scholarly accounts to designate the Orient and the subsequent use of these very representations by institutions of power to justify the imperial enterprise, it does not offer alternatives for the production of knowledge that is independent from such links with power. By stipulating that the discursive field that constructs knowledge of the 'Orient' also created the latter as an object to start off with, Said argues that to provide an alternative to Orientalism would be to accept the very problematics that he wishes to deny. But how does Said intend to distance himself from the totalising forms of knowledge described in *Orientalism*? In effect, the absence of a method that enables Said to escape the terms of his own critique leads to Young's accusation of *Orientalism's* intrinsic repetition of the dualistic structure 'Orient/Occident' it intends to oppose.

Said's fundamental methodological problem lies, according to Young, in two contradictory postulates concerning the discursive conditions of knowledge on one hand and a political claim on the other: If Orientalist texts are considered to be capable of creating both knowledge and the very reality described, they are

simultaneously seen to have laid the basis for imperialist ambitions, as well as subsequently promoting the latter's successful realisation. Thus, while Said affirms that Orientalism is reducible to a mere representation unrelated to a genuine 'Orient', he nevertheless insists on its knowledge having been put to use by the colonial occupiers and administrators.

This means that at a certain moment Orientalism as representation did have to encounter the 'actual' conditions of what was there, and that it showed itself effective at a material level as a form of power and control. How then can Said argue that the 'Orient' is just a representation, if he also wants to claim that 'Orientalism' provided the necessary knowledge for actual colonial conquest? (1995: 129)

Said seeks to resolve the issue of how representation intertwines with the real by inventing two distinct Orientalisms that slowly outgrew existing tension and converged towards each other: the first, denominated latent Orientalism, belongs to classical scholarship which construed its essentialising object of knowledge; the second, manifest Orientalism, alludes to the topical descriptions of 'travellers, pilgrims, statesmen' relating to an actual 'Orient'. While the latent content of Orientalism remains immutable and unalterable, the manifest is open to transformation. In this manner, Said attempts to explain the apparent contradiction inherent in an Orientalism that both evolved and stayed the same, repeating itself throughout the ages.

However, Young declares that this strategy does not provide a solution to the original methodological problem concerning how a representation that has nothing to do with its real object can be put to use in the conquest of that object. Moreover, if the object 'Orient' does not exist in actuality, then how can Said claim that its representation by Orientalism is false? Although Said argues that all Orientalist texts misrepresent their object, which eschews any form of representation, he nevertheless praises, in a movement

that counters the Foucauldian tradition, the capacity of the individual genius to stand up against ideology and tradition, contributing to the production of a few ambivalent Orientalist works. According to Young, in these latter cases, misrepresentation comes to bear a remarkable similarity to “the intervention of the individual against the system” (1995: 138), a postulate that Said advocates for the intellectual’s ‘critical consciousness’. Totalisation thus reaches a dialectical full circle, whereby each side of the equation mirrors the closure of the other, and free agency remains entrapped within the dualistic structure of thought it sought to open.

iv) The Divorce from the Rationalist Project

Homi Bhabha’s psychoanalytic theories concerning colonial desire represent an attempt to detotalise a discourse polarised around a binary opposition between ‘power and powerlessness’. (1995: 142) In contrast to Said’s exterior critical consciousness, Bhabha argues that resistance lies within the very ambivalence of the colonial discursive structure, the latter consisting in an address to a multiplicity of conflictual subject-positions.

Bhabha analyses the conditions of this process of address in order to show the occurrence of a slippage which problematises both the claim for a single political-ideological intention of the coloniser, as well as the straightforwardly instrumentalist relation of power and knowledge which Said assumes. (1995: 142)

The profound ambivalence towards ‘otherness’ patent in colonial discourse is at once founded upon ‘desire and derision’, ‘fantasy and disavowal’. Bhabha’s category of the racial stereotype, or fetishism, exemplifies the coloniser’s attempt to fix the identity of the colonial subject, which is both produced as ‘other’ and yet ‘entirely knowable and visible’. (1995: 143) However, as the site of both surveillance and fantasy, the colonial subject defies fixity.

Colonial discourse does not merely represent the other, therefore, so much as simultaneously project and disavow its difference, a contradictory structure articulated according to fetishism's irreconcilable logic. Its mastery is always asserted, but is also always slipping, ceaselessly displaced, never complete. (1995: 143)

Bhabha argues for a four-term structure of colonial discourse (metaphor/metonymy, narcissism/aggressivity) where the subject is constituted by a repertoire of contradictory positions, thereby avoiding the fixity inherent in any one position. The ambivalence that ensues from any attempt to fix the colonial subject as an object of knowledge leads to a growing uncertainty in the power-relation. Insofar as the colonised subject is instructed to mimic the coloniser, he will resemble the latter, in a partial representation that is more menacing than reassuring. By subverting the identity of that which is being represented, the imitation leads to the reversal of the roles between coloniser and colonised, with the look of surveillance returning as the dislocated gaze of the colonial subject. (1995: 147)

Compared to ambivalence, which describes a process of identification and disavowal, mimicry implies an even greater loss of control for the coloniser, or inevitable processes of counter-domination produced by a miming of the very operation of domination, with the result that the identity of coloniser and colonised becomes curiously elided. (1995: 148)

The reversal of the relation of power between coloniser and colonised is produced by hybridisation, whereby other 'disavowed' knowledges challenge and intervene upon dominant discourse. The fact that a discursive transformation is actually brought about by hybridisation classifies the latter as a strategy of empowerment, capable of actively enabling native resistance. By advocating a

space for resistance, Young argues that Bhabha returns to the dilemma of agency in the form of a “native otherness...constituted in a space outside the boundaries of colonial discourse”, a claim that in part marks a retreat from the ambivalence that characterises the coloniser/colonised relation within colonial discourse. (1995: 149) Ambivalence now pervades the whole process of colonial experience, from the point of enunciation to the locus of address, where resistance may occur:

Bhabha finds himself obliged to make two contradictory statements: while there is always ambivalence at work within the discourse of colonial instruction, that ambivalence is at the same time the effect of its hybridisation in the colonial context. (1995: 150)

The ambivalence that prevails in Bhabha’s own rhetoric, shifting from fetishism to mimicry to hybridity, doubles, in Young’s terms, ‘his object’s positivities’. By undermining his own authority, Bhabha presumably attempts to write himself out of Western historicisation, thereby maintaining the ‘colonial supplementarity’ of address permanently open to interpretation.

Bhabha demonstrates how dissonant, non-syncretic theory can shift control away from the dominant Western paradigm of historicist narrative, temporality, and univocality - but also how any ‘new history’ must, necessarily, be almost unrecognisable as ‘history’. (1995: 156)

Bhabha’s methodological divorce from the politico-theoretical rationalist project is mirrored by Gayatri Spivak’s deconstructive politics, aimed at challenging the dominant structures of knowledge and power in the Western academy. Rather than seeking to provide counter-histories, which Spivak considers liable to falling into the trap of ‘reverse ethnocentrism’, she seeks to contest the implications of the whole system of which Western History and Western Historicism are part. These very implications

are closely linked with neo-colonial practices in both pedagogy and epistemology. Spivak thus invites the researcher to examine his complicity with the structures of power that perpetuate neo-colonial forms of knowledge. This constant examination of one's relationship to the context of knowledge production is effected by deconstruction, rather than Said's categories of experience and critical consciousness. Spivak's deconstructive methodology aims primarily to "highlight the operations of neocolonialism in unexpected places", such as Western Feminism and Nativist or Western Reverse Ethnocentrism. (1995: 174)

Young regards Spivak's project as consisting in an attempt to preserve the discontinuities between different disciplines which interrelate with each other.

... Spivak's work offers no positions as such that can be quickly summarised: in the most sustained deconstructive mode, she resists critical taxonomies, avoids assuming master discourses. To read her work is not so much to confront a system as to encounter a series of events. (1995: 157)

Both Western Feminism and Reverse Ethnocentrism exemplify two forms of master discourses that Spivak seeks to deconstruct, by displacing the categories of universal womanhood and 'Third World' respectively. Her critique of totalising narratives is based on the concept of a subaltern history of supplementarity, where the subaltern embodies the limit of History, the moment of the latter's supplementary excess that resists containment within a totalising discourse. Because the subaltern, in the form of 'Third World' woman or colonised subject as signifier, escapes being pinned down to a single signified, it will refuse Western essentialist attempts to retrieve the 'truth' of a subaltern consciousness, which would serve as a self-consolidating other against which and through which the West defines itself.

In any attempt to turn the other into a self, the anti-imperialist perspective has to come to terms with the fact that the very project of imperialism was to do the very same thing, refracting 'what might have been the absolutely Other into a domesticated Other that consolidates the imperialist self'. (1995: 165)

After the 'epistemic violence' of the colonial project, the search for an authentic subaltern voice is doomed to permanent failure, for the subject has only been constituted as such through the positions that have been permitted.

..., those who evoke the 'nativist' position through a nostalgia for a lost or repressed culture idealise the possibility of that lost origin being recoverable in all its former plenitude without allowing for the fact that the figure of the lost origin, the 'other' that the coloniser has repressed, has itself been constructed in terms of the coloniser's own self-image. (1995: 168)

Therefore, rather than point to the socio-historical specificities that distinguish 'Third World' contexts in the hope of retrieving the long-lost voice of the subaltern in the form of historical records, the critic should attempt to articulate the structure and allocation of a multiplicity of subject-positions, often contradictory, that may impose themselves upon individual subjects. The focus of Western Feminism on subject-constitution in terms of individuality and identity thus must give way to the heterogeneous production and constitution of a diversity of subject-positions that characterise the excessive supplementarity of the subaltern.

Despite Spivak's attempt to accomplish a decolonisation of Western epistemology through the detotalising perspective of deconstruction, Young accuses her of being unable to escape from the Marxian transcendental gesture of closure. This is primarily due to her endorsement of 'strategic essentialism', whereby the

category of universals is deemed to be acceptable in certain situations. Young interprets 'strategic essentialism' as a rearticulation of Marxist collectivities such as class and the economic which Spivak considers to be determining in ideological formations. Pitted against the universals of economic determinism, the anti-individualism and heterogeneity advocated earlier risk being subsumed by the Marxian master-code. This leads Young to conclude that Spivak's Marxism operates as an "overall syncretic frame" in much the same manner as Fredric Jameson's megalomaniac totalising History.

II. White Mythologies: A Critique

Young accuses both Sartrean Humanist Existentialism and the Althusserian decentred modes of production, two crucial responses to the search for a way out of Marxist historicism, of having been unable to prove the existence of totalisation. He therefore endorses the post-structuralist argument according to which the event is incommensurable to the concept, resulting in a History excessive to a single signified. However, Young simultaneously critiques Derrida's inability to escape totalisation: By attempting to undermine teleological History as an eternal transcendental signified, Derrida seeks refuge in another form of transcendence, that of the process of writing, or *différance*. It would therefore seem that if, on the one hand, the critic comes up against a permanent inability to produce closure in the search for totalisation, on the other a process of transcendence informs any detotalising approach.

Jameson and Said thus fall prey to the tautological temptation of an all-encompassing narrative of closure, which risks subsuming the very points of leverage both advocate for controlling hegemonic discourse (in Jameson's case, the History as Real; in Said's, individual agency pitted against totalising Orientalist discourse). According to Young, the fissures inherent in the Jamesonian and Saidean arguments derive from the recognition of

contradiction but refusal to accept the latter without rearticulating it under the auspices of a master-code. Spivak's detotalising project is, too, doomed to failure, due to individuality and heterogeneity being subsumed within the economic deterministic framework of 'strategic essentialism'.

Only Homi Bhabha, whose discourse refuses to be pinned down to any theoretical mode, escapes Young's scathing criticism. Young affirms that Bhabha's strategy doubles his 'object's positivities', thus mirroring the ambivalence inherent in colonial discourse. His argument here brings to mind the epistemological/ontological confusion inherent in the objection that 'élite' methodology is not applicable to subaltern studies. Referring to this category mistake, Spivak claims:

The confusion is held in an unacknowledged analogy: just as the subaltern is not élite (ontology), so must the historian not know through élite method (epistemology). (Spivak, 1987: 253)

In Bhabha's case, just as the relationship between coloniser and colonised is ambivalent (ontology), so must the critic know through an ambivalent method that mirrors the positivities inherent in colonial discourse (epistemology).

This argument, the logic of which Young considers to be related to Said's notion of 'possessive exclusivism', whereby only elements belonging to a particular 'minority' group are considered to be capable of legitimately speaking for the latter, assumes that the political is ontologically and epistemologically rooted in experience. But if Young is so vehemently opposed to the experiential category advocated, for instance, by Said's 'critical consciousness', how can he rearticulate this very concept in his defence of Bhabha?

Furthermore, the form of experiential politics presented in Young's version of Bhabha is that of a rhetorical aesthetics, insensitive to the consideration of 'new conceptions of selfhood or individuation' (Gilroy, 1996: 56) reclaimed from the standpoint of groups that have hitherto felt marginalised by the dominant linearity of the Enlightenment project. An ethics of freedom, which would complement modernity's ethics of law, is thus translated, in Young's perspective of Bhabha's work, into an aesthetics of freedom, where the signifier incessantly teases the signified away from a single, unified meaning. Although the latter concept may draw attention to the proliferation of a plurality of subject-position formations in the contemporary world, it nevertheless does not offer a constructive way of critiquing modernity's Enlightenment project from the point of view of alterity.

With the exception of Bhabha, Young considers it almost impossible to think alterity without revealing the tendency to appropriate the 'other' into a totalising theory. He critiques the Hegelian dialectic for having structured Western thought in terms of binary oppositions, thus having permitted that we construct knowledge of the 'other' through appropriation within the same. However, Young simultaneously recognises the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of spurning the dialectic, due to the latter already including its negation. Only post-structuralism, according to Young, has had a degree of success in breaking away from the Hegelian dialectic, if not simply due to keeping "the game with Hegel in play". (Young, 1995: 6)

But does not the Hegelian dialectical movement transcend the logic of subordination and domination? Consisting in an essentially relational allegory, the Hegelian master/slave encounter can be read as indicating that the condition for human emancipation relies essentially on those who have been enslaved. Applied to the colonial context, a dialectic of dependence and recognition reveals the complexity of the intertwining of histories between parts that are usually depicted as belonging to strict binary oppositions

categorised in terms of oppressor/oppressed. The implications, however, are not that both sides of the relationship are equally responsible for the resulting situation - due to the prevalent distorted inter-subjectivity -, but rather that there is an existing complicity between the two, which sheds light on the double consciousness that often characterises the marginal element of the binary opposition such that the latter finds itself both inside and outside the dominant culture. (Gilroy, 1996: 185-6) If Young reveals himself a staunch defender of Homi Bhabha, one cannot but wonder why he does not interpret the ambivalence patent in the latter's depiction of the coloniser/colonised relationship in terms of a dialectic of dependence and recognition.

Young's position that History reveals the will to power of Europe over the rest of the world, does not consider the possibility of the Gramscian notion of consent as underlying the cultural success of Imperialism. Thus, although he critiques Western thought for being structured according to the Hegelian dichotomy, he nevertheless reproduces this very binary opposition in setting up a West whose totalising discourse is all pervasive against an 'other' that has little room for resistance. Paradoxically, then, Young represents a position that is synonymous with the totalisation that he opposes on the ground of there always being a remnant that resists closure:

Every time a literary critic claims a universal ethical, moral, or emotional instance in a piece of English literature, he or she colludes in the violence of the colonial legacy in which the European value or truth is defined as the universal one. (Said, 1994: 124)

Contrary to Young's stance, Edward Said argues that consent is crucial in comprehending the essentially cultural manifestations of representation as a political instance. From this perspective, cultural leadership, or hegemony of certain cultural forms over others, works not through domination but consent by persuasive means. The logic inherent in this argument is that of a dialectic of

dependence and recognition where both sides participate as active agents, although on unequal levels, in the prevalent state of affairs.

i) Post-Colonial Agency: Reinscribing Difference

Said's *Culture and Imperialism* develops the notion of a quintessential hybridity inherent in every cultural form, due to the global network produced by Imperialist History that has led to an intertwining of experiences common to "men and women, whites and non-whites". To combat the detotalising effect of a myriad of 'minority' groups in the contemporary World, each of which is interested in its own identity politics, Said defends a universalist approach that seeks to set particular histories against the backdrop of a dominant narrative of Imperialist History. The mutual implication of difference with a commonality of experience thus proves to Said that no identity can be thought in isolation from its historical context. The notion of hybridity espoused by Said conforms to the temporal linearity and spatial uniformity of the One, where the 'many' are subsumed within a homogeneous 'global network' in the present. The prevalent view here is that of Western Modernity's definition of time and space, permeating particular histories that might dissonate from the 'grand narrative' of imperialist experience.

Bhabha offers an escape route from the omnipotence of Western temporal and spatial homogeneity by introducing the concept of 'time lag', as that aporetic moment in which a historic symbol, crystallised in time and space, is resuscitated into a sign through the act of enunciation in the present: individual agency lies within the sign's potential for performativity, for being uttered in a novel way that incessantly eludes textual, or symbolic, fixity. After the iterative, repetitive moment of enunciation the sign returns to itself without coinciding with itself as symbol. There is a permanent gap, a fissure between sign and symbol, event and enunciation. The present is disjunctive because it consists in a 'projective past', a

slowing down, or lagging, that breathes the life inherent in the sign of the present into 'dead' symbols of the past.

The time-lag of postcolonial modernity moves *forward*, erasing that compliant past tethered to the myth of progress, ordered in the binarisms of its cultural logic: past/present, inside/outside. This *forward* is neither teleological nor is it an endless slippage. It is the function of the *lag* to slow down the linear, progressive time of modernity to reveal its 'gesture', its *tempi*, 'the pauses and stresses of the whole performance'. (Bhabha, 1995: 253)

Thus, although Bhabha's concept of time-lag evades Said's historicist linearity, it nevertheless cannot be reduced to a Derridean infinite 'slippage' of the signified by the signifier as Young attempts to portray. Instead, the time-lag is a concept that engages with aporia, seeking to go beyond binary boundaries, 'whether these be between past and present, inside and outside, subject and object, signifier and signified'. (Bhabha, 1995: 251) Aporia, for Bhabha, refers to the ambivalence inherent in the cultural history of modern nations where archaic and hierarchical traditions coexist with the homogeneous synchronicity of modernity.

Such a privileging of ambivalence in the social imaginaries of nationness, and its forms of collective affiliation, would enable us to understand the coeval, often *incommensurable* tension between the influence of traditional 'ethnicist' identifications that coexist with contemporary secular, modernising aspirations. The enunciative 'present' of modernity, that I am proposing, would provide a political space to articulate and negotiate such culturally hybrid social identities. (Bhabha, 1995: 250)

Bhabha thus distances himself from a Saidean notion of hybridity that seeks to 'contemporise cultural difference' by subsuming

particular histories under the commonality of the imperialist experience. The intertwining of divergent identity politics would consist in an attempt to articulate pluralism, or the 'diversity of the many', under the homogeneous temporal and spatial framework of a non-problematised Western modernity.

The process I have described as the sign of the present - *within modernity* - erases and interrogates those ethnocentric forms of cultural modernity that 'contemporise' cultural difference: it opposes both cultural pluralism with its spurious egalitarianism - different cultures in the same time ... - or cultural relativism - different cultural temporalities in the same 'universal' space ... (Bhabha, 1995: 245)

Because cultural difference corresponds to the 'not-one, the minus in the origin and repetition of cultural signs in a doubling that will not be sublated into a similitude', it cannot be reduced either to a harmonious, non-aporetic Whole, nor to the infinite signification of difference inherent in heterogeneous notions such as 'multiplicities of subject positions', 'specificities', 'localities', or 'territories'. (Bhabha, 1995: 245) Cultural difference consists in a moment of aporia, of difficulty, of permanent irresolution, in which the acknowledgement of coexistence between opposites leads to an overcoming of binaries. If this is the case, however, then Bhabha's argument adheres to the Hegelian tradition, according to which the suture, or gap, or middle between two poles gives rise to a rended novelty. Young's contention that only post-structuralist thought allows for contradiction, for the 'excess' that constantly evades closure, paradoxically refuses to engage in aporia. The aporetic moment in theory is that in which ruptures are kept alive between binaries that coexist with but cannot coincide with each other. By setting up post-structuralism against the Hegelian dialectic to see which of the two is 'purer' Young is reducing the two theories to non-aporetic wholes which do not contain contradictions within each other. Perhaps this is because if Young were to recognise the

aporetic moment within post-structuralism he would realise that the latter can be read as stemming from the Hegelian tradition.

I am persuaded that it is the catachrestic postcolonial agency of 'seizing the value-coding' - as Gayatri Spivak has argued - that opens up an interruptive time-lag in the 'progressive' myth of modernity, and enables the diasporic and the postcolonial to be represented. (Bhabha, 1995: 240)

Spivak aims to demonstrate the heterogeneous coding systems inherent in Western epistemology by tracing the 'foreclosed', or repressed, figure of the native informant in the works of three philosophers - Kant, Hegel and Marx - who represent the core of the modern Continental tradition. The value-coding is revealed through a deconstructive 'new politics of reading' which seeks to reverse and displace, in short to re-inscribe, existing narrative values. The latter thus consist in *pharmakoi*, 'poison that is medicinal when knowingly administered': catachresis, or the displacement and reinscription of signs in a novel context, allows for the representation of post-colonial agency. Because the latter is fundamentally catachrestic, difference lies at its core. Marxism, as a system essentially preoccupied in 'accounting for difference', may thus provide an orientation for postcolonial agency.

Capitalism is ... the *pharmakon* of Marxism. It produces the possibility of the operation of the dialectic that will produce socialism, but left to its own resources it is also that which blocks that operation. (Spivak, 1999: 83)

The catachrestic logic inherent in the postcolonial is thus anticipated within Marxism, which aims to abolish difference subsequently to engaging with it. Spivak's interest lies in the aporetic moment in which difference is accounted for. Her recourse to 'strategic essentialism', that is, to the strategic use of essentialisms such as Marxism, may be read as an attempt to reveal the coexistence of two poles - the coloniser and the

colonised, the repressed and the unrepressed, colonialism and nationalism - which although discontinuous appear as disjunctively linked through a deconstructive reading.

If one assumes an "own-ness" ... of cultural ground ... everything gained through this classed access to the culture of imperialism was an estrangement ... This estrangement and foreclosure are now being re-played as varieties of "fundamentalism," a return of the repressed. The current mood, in the radical fringe of humanistic Northern pedagogy, of uncritical enthusiasm for that Third World, makes a demand upon the inhabitant of that Third World to speak up as an authentic ethnic fully representative of his or her tradition. (Spivak, 1999: 60)

Spivak considers any value-affirmation to legitimise its opposite by reversal: as such, the contemporary celebration of hybridity authorises purity, or nativism, in the form of an authentic ethnic voice that can recuperate its place in history. Spivak resorts to the figuration of the native informant in order to escape from the claims and counter-claims inherent in the dualistic structure of the Hegelian chronotopography. By invoking the native informant, Spivak attempts to 'undo' the subordination of lived timing into Time as Law.

Are we still condemned to circle around "Idea, Logos, and Form," or can the (ex)orbitant at least be invoked? (1999: 67)

For Spivak, the Hegelian graph of Time serves to manipulate history as timing with the purpose of catering to socio-cultural interests. Due to its perpetual movement towards the Absolute, Marx argued that the Hegelian system consisted in 'the effort of sublating' rather than in 'the accomplished sublation' itself. The effort of sublation corresponds to Being, or ontological Time, as being devoured by the present-in-time, or historical timing. The

graphic representation of Time as Law containing lived time allows for the 'fitting in' of all of reality on a diagram, that is, the explanation of how reality comes into being. (Spivak, 1999: 43, 55, 60)

One common way of grasping life and ground-level history as events happening to and around many lives is by fleshing out "time" as sequential process. Let us call this "timing". This feeling for life and history is often disqualified, in a dominant interest, in the name of the real laws of motion of "time," or rather, "Time." It is my contention that Time often emerges as an implicit Graph only miscaught by those immersed in the process of timing. (Spivak, 1999: 38)

Through the figure of the native informant, Spivak lays bare her own vested interest in adopting a deconstructive reading of Western philosophy so as to manifest lived timing in detriment to the Time that caters to dominant interest. Lived time reveals itself in the deconstruction of oppositions between binaries. By drawing attention to the structural complicities between texts of distinct cultural provenance¹⁸, Spivak distances herself from the easy temptation within postcolonial studies of polarisation between camps such as 'the West' and 'the Rest'. Camp thinking would, in Spivak's words, consist in 'a legitimation-by-reversal of the colonial attitude itself'. (1999: 39)

The deconstructive approach thus converts Spivak's reading into a 'mistake', in as much as any reading is always mistaken due to its inability to coincide with the written symbol or with the author's intent.

¹⁸ Spivak is specifically alluding to Hegel's *Philosophy of History* and to the Vedic *Srimadbhagavadgita*, both of which allegedly subordinate the lived timing of history to the graph of Time as Law so as to serve dominant socio-cultural interests.

'...although I am deeply interested in the usual deconstructive focus (not always shared by Derrida) on the "moments"... of "stalling" ... at beginning and end ("différance" and "aporia" are only two names for these moments), I am more interested in the generating of a shaky middle by way of an irreducible "mistake"... (Spivak, 1999: 48, fn)

It is this mistake, or catachrestic recourse to a word out of context - the figuration of the native informant - that allows Spivak to grasp the 'broken middle' between poles, the complicities that disrupt rigidified binaries and maintain contradiction alive in place of 'camp mentality'.

Post-colonial agency, as translated by Bhabha and Spivak, fundamentally consists in a critical practice inscribed 'inside/outside' modern discourse. Through 'rememoration', or the refiguration of existing narrative values, post-colonial practice attempts to resist Western humanism's epistemic and ontologic totalising impetus. However, both Bhabha and Spivak reveal an awareness of the tensions inherent in the ambivalences and fractures of modernity, stemming from the cohabitation of universalism and humanism on one hand, and oppressive and exploitative practices on the other. By setting up a clear dichotomy between modernity and postmodernity, whereby humanism is explicitly associated with rationality, Young demonstrates insensitivity to the fissures of modern discourse, while perpetuating logocentrism's totalising logic. Despite the undeniable complicity between Western humanism and violence, Young's critique does not allow for the 'refiguration' of the 'who' of action and the issue of agency. (Venn, 2000: 50, 86, 110, 164)

CHAPTER FOUR

FANONIAN HUMANISM: A DIALECTIC OF IRRESOLUTION

I. Introduction

At the core of Frantz Fanon's work lie three fundamental dichotomies: first, an existentialist current emphasises the subjective autonomy of man while a sociogenic approach to psychopathology seeks to explain man as a product of his environment; second, a desire to affirm particularity in the form of black essentialism, or *négritude*, is countered by the will to embrace universal man; third, the opposition to a supposed universality of psychic structures is resisted by the insurgence against the particularity of ethnic psychology. These aporias, or difficulties, inherent in Fanon's thought reflect the tension he attempted to negotiate throughout his own life between his status as a black man living in a world defined by whites and his concurrent espousal of universalist values stemming from a Western tradition. The polarities that define Fanon's works make the latter permeable to hugely disparate readings ranging from the psychoanalytic to the 'Third Worldist'. According to David Macey, the problems inherent in many commentaries on Fanon reside in their refusal to consider the historical and social facts that constitute the background to his narratives.

Fanon 'lived, fought and died Algerian', but he was also a product of French culture and French colonialism. He was also born a native son of Martinique. (2000: 30)

As Edward Said argues in 'Travelling Theory', abstracting theories from the cultural context in which they are produced can lead to the loss of their original force and 'rebelliousness'. (1999: 197) Rehistoricising Fanon thus implies the contextualisation of his thought within the social, political and philosophical conceptual

framework of the time and place in which he was writing. Understanding Fanon means both privileging his psychiatric practice in detriment to psychoanalysis, as well as paying greater heed to Kojève, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty than to Derrida or Lacan. However, the attempt to articulate the middle term, the rupture inherent in Fanon's dichotomies may lead to the conclusion that just as he cannot be reduced to the labels 'psychoanalyst' or 'marxist', neither is he purely a psychiatrist, phenomenologist nor existentialist. Working 'in between camps', Fanon's writings consists in bricolage, responding to concrete circumstances. Acknowledging that his anticipations have not been borne out by History is a challenge that ensues from the recontextualisation of Fanon's work. (Macey, 2000: 29) Despite their eclecticism, his dichotomies cohere in that they are fuelled by the emotion of anger.

The Third Worldist Fanon was an apocalyptic creature; the post-colonial Fanon worries about identity politics, and often about his own sexual identity, but he is no longer angry. And yet, if there is a truly Fanonian emotion, it is anger. His anger was a response to his experience of a black man in a world defined as white, but not to the 'fact' of his blackness. It was a response to the condition and situation of those he called the wretched of the earth. (Macey, 2000: 28)

The post-colonial Fanon is ambivalent, articulating a Lacanian fissured self where the coloniser is inseparable from the shadow of its 'tethered other'. By placing emphasis on the psychic dimension of Desire (recognition and disavowal), Bhabha's post-modern reading of Fanon displaces identity away from a unitary conception of man. Where the Western tradition sought to think alterity by subsuming it within the same, Bhabha infuses sameness with difference, drawing attention to the other that exists within the self. The possibility for political demand and human agency, divorced from both a grand, unified narrative of history and from a

single, unitary self, arises from within the ambivalent interdependence of coloniser and colonised.

The colonial subject is always 'overdetermined from without', Fanon writes. It is through image and fantasy - those orders that figure transgressively on the borders of history and the unconscious - that Fanon most profoundly evokes the colonial condition. (Bhabha, 1986: xiii)

According to Bhabha, Fanon's colonial subject is historicised as it engages with the discourses of history, literature, science, myth. The colonial subject is a point of intersection where these various texts converge to produce a fragmented self, a subversive slippage of identity into a plurality of differences. If the colonial subject is no longer unitary but fragmented, it no longer makes sense to consider the implications of political oppression in light of a violation of human 'essence'. Bhabha argues that Fanon is therefore not preoccupied with universalist questions such as 'How does colonialism deny the Rights of Man?' or 'Who is the alienated colonial Man?'. Rather, by allegedly privileging the psychic dimension, Fanon would be describing the problem of colonial cultural alienation in the psychoanalytic language of demand and Desire.

Ato Sekyi-Otu writes back at Bhabha's psychoanalytic understanding of Fanon, arguing that the latter's clinical practice is essentially anti-psychologistic:

... Fanon ultimately gives psychoanalytic language no more and no less than an analogical or metaphoric function, as distinct from a foundational or etiological one, in accounting for the condition of the colonised and their dreams... (1996: 8)

Sekyi-Otu argues that post-modern readings of Fanon deprive one of the 'weapons with which to confront some of the urgent

questions of the postindependence world: questions of class, ethnicity, and gender of democracy and human rights, against assertions of cultural particularity and difference'. (1996: 3) Opposing the post-modern 'evisceration' of Fanon's texts, Sekyi-Otu counters that only a Fanonian normative vision can help rethink what has gone wrong in the post-colonial age.

Fanon, however, does not present a normative vision of any kind: the value of his texts resides primordially in their lack of hermeticism deriving from unresolved aporias. The profoundly dialectical movement inherent in Fanon's narratives, operating within dichotomies, confers a tragic sense to his ultimate objective of attaining a totality in the form of an future, emancipated society: the mismatch between Fanon's aim of laying the groundwork for a non-conflictuous, universalist whole and his inability to escape from a permanent dialectic can ironically be read as a homage to the Western humanist tradition. Back and forth, from thesis to antithesis, Fanon's new humanism is in fact not too 'new'; however, it remains valuable for revealing the aporias, the difficulties inherent in a humanism distinguished by permanent irresolution.

II. Master and Slave: From Hegel to Kojève

Although, as Macey argues, any contextualisation of Fanon would profit from examining the latter's influence by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty rather than Lacan and Derrida, the underlying conceptual framework that provides the basis for an existentialist, phenomenological or even psychoanalytic reading of Fanon consists in Alexandre Kojève's interpretation of Hegel's master-slave encounter. Hegel had originally sought to explain the constitution of self-consciousness as a movement dependent on the recognition by another self-consciousness through the master-slave allegory. For mutual recognition to occur, two self-consciousnesses, opposed to each other, desiring recognition on the part of the other, transcend themselves and temporarily reside

in their opposite only to return to their point of origin, having attained a consciousness that is in-itself-for-itself. This process of duplication whereby consciousness transcends itself in a movement towards the other and regresses by coinciding with itself is mirrored by the other self-consciousness.

Each is for the other the middle term, through which each mediates itself with itself and unites with itself; and each is for itself, and for the other, an immediate being on its own account, which at the same time is such only through this mediation. They *recognise* themselves as *mutually recognising* one another. (Hegel, 1977: 112)

Pure being-for-self, or self-certainty thus can only derive from certainty of the other. However, in the beginning, self-consciousness exists only for itself as a unified 'I' that excludes alterity from itself. Immersed in being, or Life, self confronts self in raw immediacy for the movement of abstraction, which infinitely negates the negation by incorporating the other into the self - allowing for the evisceration of immediate being and its replacement by the 'purely negative being of self-identical consciousness' - has not yet been accomplished.

Each is indeed certain of its own self, but not of the other, and therefore its own self-certainty still has no truth. (Hegel, 1977: 113)

The desire to achieve the full abstraction of self-consciousness will lead the latter to negate its objective being, or mode of existence. Insofar as the Notion of recognition entails a reciprocity, whereby each side mirrors the other's movements, the attempt to attain pure being-for-self entails a 'twofold action' whereby each side attempts to annihilate the other. This will to kill the other, however, implies putting at risk one's own life. Because the objective being of each consciousness has transcended itself

by residing in its opposite, 'self-externality' must now be eliminated for identity to coincide with itself once more.

And it is only through staking one's life that freedom is won; only thus is it proved that for self-consciousness, its essential being is not (just) being, not the *immediate* form in which it appears, not its submergence in the expanse of life, but rather that there is nothing present in it which could not be regarded as a vanishing moment, that is only pure *being-for-self*. (Hegel, 1977: 114)

Although an individual who has not placed his life at stake may be recognised as a person, he nevertheless has not achieved true self-certainty as an independent self-consciousness. However, the death of either one, or both, of the participants in the struggle would completely do away with the possibility of self-certainty, that is, with any potential fulfilment of the demand for recognition.

... with this there vanishes from their interplay the essential moment of splitting into extremes with opposite characteristics; and the middle term collapses into a lifeless unity which is split into lifeless, merely immediate, unopposed extremes; and the two do not reciprocally give and receive one another back from each other consciously, but leave each other free only indifferently, like things. (Hegel, 1977: 114)

Death would consist in an 'abstract negation', rather than a negation of a negation that results in self-identity. Life is thus a pre-condition for the dialectical movement inherent in self-consciousness to occur, a process superseding in a manner that allows for the preservation of each anterior phase, and thus withstanding its own supersession. The unified 'I' that existed in the beginning is thus dissolved through the dialectical movement inherent in the life process, resulting in the constitution of two kinds of self-consciousness: on one hand, a being-for-self, on the

other, an immediate consciousness that is for, or dependent on, another. In other words, because the struggle between the two self-consciousnesses cannot result in death, the survival of the two hinges on a relationship of dominance and subordination in which one is master and the other slave. Thus, while the constitution of self-consciousness reveals itself as unilateral and unequal, with one side being recognised and the other merely recognising, the two consciousnesses are nevertheless the same.

Both moments are essential. Since to begin with they are unequal and opposed, and their reflection into a unity has not yet been achieved, they exist as two opposed shapes of consciousness; one is the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself, the other is the dependent consciousness whose essential nature is simply to live or to be for another. The former is lord, the other is bondsman. (Hegel, 1977: 115)

Thus, while the consciousness represented by the bondsman is that of pure immediacy, the lord consists in a consciousness that is mediated in two ways: mediating with itself through an 'other' (the bondsman), the master simultaneously relates to the slave through the object of the slave's work, that is, the thing which keeps the slave in bondage to the lord. Although the lord has power over the thing, the latter is independent from the bondsman: while the lord negates or annihilates the thing through his own personal enjoyment of it, the slave's survival depends on the existence of the thing upon which he works.

The (lord's) essential nature is to exist only for himself; he is the sheer negative power for whom the thing is nothing. Thus he is the pure, essential action in this relationship, while the action of the bondsman is impure and unessential. (Hegel, 1977: 116)

Although the outcome of this logic would appear to be unequal, with the lord being recognised while the bondsman merely recognises, in reality the lord is unable to achieve pure being-for-self, or self-certainty, for the object through which the lord mediates himself is not an independent consciousness. The lord's truth thus becomes 'the unessential consciousness and its unessential action'. (Hegel, 1977: 117)

But just as lordship showed that its essential nature is the reverse of what it wants to be, 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. (Hegel, 1977: 117)

Because servitude has the master as object, pure being-for-self is implicit in its consciousness. Unaware of its implicit independent consciousness, servitude nevertheless has experienced pure negativity through the fear of death, the terror of the master, which destabilises everything solid.

... this pure universal movement, the absolute melting-away of everything stable, is the simple, essential nature of self-consciousness, absolute negativity, *pure being-for-self*, which consequently is *implicit* in this consciousness. (Hegel, 1977: 117)

This instability is, moreover, a result of the bondsman's service, allowing him to distance himself from natural existence through work and to consequently become aware of his pure being-for-self. While the lord's desire for the thing is a pure negating activity whereby he assimilates it through enjoyment, the slave's work, which gives form and shape to the thing, is 'Desire held in check, fleetingness staved off'. (Hegel, 1977: 118)

The *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. (Hegel, 1977: 118)

The independence of the thing thus comes to represent the independence of the bondsman. However, work has both a positive and negative significance: on one hand, it symbolises the means through which slave consciousness becomes aware of being-for-self; on the other, it represents fear, for, confronted with an alien shape which he must work upon, the slave relives his original fearful reaction to radical alterity when first confronted with the lord. The bondsman's self-certainty thus only becomes an objective truth through the mastery of materiality.

The shape does not become something other than himself through being made external to him; for it is precisely this shape that is his pure being-for-self, which in this externality is seen by him to be the truth. Through this rediscovery of himself by himself, the bondsman realises that it is precisely in his work wherein he seemed to have only an alienated existence that he acquires a mind of his own. (Hegel, 1977: 119)

Kojève's interpretation of Hegel's master-slave allegory in light of Marxist theory places emphasis on Desire as an impetus to action, on the historical becoming of man as the realisation of his full potential, and on the liberatory character of work as that which leads to the inversion of roles between lord and bondsman. Because man desires, he acts to satisfy Desire by negating, transforming and assimilating the desired object. However, this negating activity is not necessarily destructive, for it leads man to replace the objective reality of that which is desired for his own subjective reality. The original emptiness of the unsatisfied 'I' thus assumes a positive content through negation of the desired 'non-I', thus mirroring the positivity of the negated object.

... If, then, the Desire is directed toward a "natural" non-I, the I, too, will be "natural." The I created by the active satisfaction of such a Desire will have the same nature as the things toward which that Desire is directed ... (Kojève, 1980: 4)

For self-consciousness to occur, Desire must thus be directed towards a 'non-natural object', that is, an object which exceeds natural existence. Because Desire consists of nothingness, or emptiness, moulding itself to that which is desired, it differs from any given reality essentially present to itself. Thus, if only Desire goes beyond given existence, the constitution of self-consciousness relies on a Desire that is directed towards another Desire.

... Desire directed toward another Desire, taken as Desire, will create, by the negating and assimilating action that satisfies it, an I essentially different from the animal "I." This I, which "feeds" on Desires, will itself be Desire in its very being, created in and by the satisfaction of its Desire. And since Desire is realised as action negating the given, the very being of this I will be action. (Kojève, 1980: 5)

Whereas the animal 'I' consists in absolute identity, or 'equality to itself', the human 'I', or self-consciousness, consists in a 'negating-negativity' stretching over time. Self-consciousness is thus a historical becoming, a permanent striving to realise in the future 'what it is not' in the present.

Thus, this I will be its own product: it will be (in the future) what it has become by negation (in the present) of what it was (in the past), this negation being accomplished with a view to what it will become. In its very being this I is intentional becoming ... conscious and voluntary progress; it is the act of transcending the given that is given to it and

that it itself is. This I is a (human) individual, free (with respect to the given real) and historical (in relation to itself). (Kojève, 1980: 5)

The condition that humanity must transcend natural existence in order to fully realise itself implies that man must conquer his animal Desire. Because all Desire consists in a desire for value, human Desire must therefore win over the supreme animal value corresponding to self-preservation. It is only by risking his life to satisfy his own human Desire, that is, Desire for another's Desire, that man affirms his humanity and distances himself from animality. Self-consciousness thus derives from a fight for 'pure prestige' in which at least two Desires for recognition battle against each other.

... to desire the Desire of another is in the final analysis to desire that the value that I am or that I "represent" be the value desired by the other: I want him to "recognise" my value as his value ... In other words, all human, anthropogenetic Desire - the Desire that generates Self-Consciousness, the human reality - is, finally, a function of the desire for "recognition." (Kojève, 1980: 7)

Recognition by the other thus entails a struggle to the death between rivals, seeking to satisfy their Desire for the other's Desire. However, the loss of life of either participant prevents the survivor from being recognised as self-consciousness. The realisation of human reality thus depends on the survival of both adversaries, a condition which implies the acceptance of an inherent inequality between the two.

... in his nascent state, man is never simply man. He is always ... either Master or Slave. If the human reality can come into being only as a social reality, society is human - at least in its origin - only on the basis of its implying an element of Mastery and an element of Slavery, of

"autonomous" existences and "dependent" existences. And that is why to speak of the origin of Self-Consciousness is necessarily to speak of "the autonomy and dependence of Self-Consciousness, of Mastery and Slavery." (Kojève, 1980: 8-9)

Because man is historical becoming, existing in space as time, human reality as universal history is embodied in the history of the master-slave encounter: 'the historical "dialectic" is the "dialectic" of Master and Slave.' However, if the dichotomy between thesis and antithesis is to result in synthesis, the final outcome of the interaction between lord and bondsman must correspond to the 'dialectical overcoming' of the latter.

"To overcome dialectically" means to overcome while preserving what is overcome ... The dialectically overcome-entity is annulled in its contingent ... aspect of natural, given ... entity, but it is preserved in its essential ... aspect; thus mediated by negation, it is sublimated or raised up to a more "comprehensive" and comprehensible mode of being than that of its immediate reality of ... static given, which is not the result of creative action (i.e., of action that negates the given). (Kojève, 1980: 15)

According to Kojève, there are three major moments of 'dialectical overcoming' in Hegel's allegory. First, the master must dialectically overcome the bondsman by preserving the latter's life but negating his autonomy. Second, the slave must dialectically supersede the thing by transforming it through work. Third, the bondsman must dialectically overcome the condition of enslavement so as to be recognised by the master.

The complete, absolutely free man, definitely and completely satisfied by what he is ... will be the Slave who has "overcome" his Slavery. If idle Mastery is an impasse, laborious Slavery, in contrast, is the source of all human,

social, historical progress. History is the history of the working Slave. (Kojève, 1980: 20)

Because the lord has reached the zenith of his potential in terms of mastery, his condition is fixed and cannot progress any further: either he preserves the place he has won through risking his life, or dies. The slave, on the contrary, is not bound to his condition of enslavement. Due to the terror experienced when first confronted with the master, he realises that the potential for human existence far exceeds the given stability of any fixed condition, be it that of the lord or that of the bondsman.

... in his very being, he is change, transcendence, transformation, "education"; he is historical becoming at his origin, in his essence, in his very existence. On the one hand, he does not bind himself to what he is; he wants to transcend himself by negation of his given state. On the other hand, he has a positive ideal to attain; the ideal of autonomy, of Being-for-itself, of which he finds the incarnation, at the very origin of his Slavery, in the Master. (Kojève, 1980: 22)

It is because the bondsman lives in servitude that he wishes to become free: the condition of slavery therefore paradoxically consists in a predisposition to progress. Work is the means through which the slave frees himself from natural existence whereby he is bound to the master. By transforming given reality through formative activity, the slave transforms himself. In this process, he transcends both his own condition of servitude as well as that of the master's, the latter who, not working, remains bound to the given as it is.

In the raw, natural, given World, the Slave is slave of the Master, In the technical world transformed by his work, he rules - or, at least, will one day rule - as absolute Master. (Kojève, 1980: 23)

For Kojève, the creation of a real and objective product through work permits man to surpass natural existence and to become aware of his 'subjective human reality'. Formative activity thus allows the slave to become 'supernatural being', "'incarnated" Spirit', 'historical "World"' or "'objectivised" History'. (Kojève, 1980: 25) The historical becoming of man is brought about by the master: had the bondsman not been enslaved, he would never have aspired to freedom.

Man achieves his true autonomy ... only after passing through Slavery, after surmounting fear of death by work performed in the service of another (who, for him, is the incarnation of that fear). Work that frees man is hence necessarily, in the beginning, the forced work of a Slave who serves an all-powerful Master, the holder of all real power. (Kojève, 1980: 27)

Work is revolutionary in that it permits the slave to negate the given world in its totality, a world in which he finds himself bound to his master. The bondsman is now free to dialectically overcome his master by engaging in the liberating struggle for recognition that he had originally refused for fear of death. Thus, in the long term, work concretises the slave's rather than the master's will, allowing the 'last to be first'.

... it is indeed the originally dependent, serving, and slavish Consciousness that in the end realises and reveals the ideal of autonomous Self-Consciousness and is thus its "truth". (Kojève, 1980: 30)

Although Fanon clearly bases himself on Kojève's interpretation of the Hegelian master-slave allegory to explain a lack of black self-certainty, he nevertheless does not allude to this author in any of his texts. Fanon argues that it is due to the reciprocal nature of the Hegelian dialectic that the movement of recognition occurs in

two directions. If one of the paths is closed, the 'other' remains imprisoned within himself and is therefore deprived of full self-consciousness, a being-for-itself-in-itself. Desire indicates that one pursues something greater than life, that one is not locked into 'thingness', but rather that one aspires to a world of reciprocal recognitions. The realisation that self-consciousness is more than mere existence, more than just a life process can only, however, derive from the conflict through which life is placed at risk. Although one need not risk life to be recognised as a person, the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness has not yet been achieved. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon takes a passage directly from Kojève without citing the latter.

Man is human only to the extent to which he tries to impose his existence on another man in order to be recognised by him. As long as he has not been effectively recognised by the other, that other will remain the theme of his actions. 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 his life is condensed. (Fanon, 1986: 216-17)¹⁹

Historically, the black slave has been denied recognition by the white master. He was set free by his master, not having to engage in conflict for the purpose of recognition. Thus, according to Fanon, the man of colour was never really able to achieve true self-consciousness in-itself-for-itself, due to these values having been imposed on him from outside. For recognition of true self-consciousness to occur, the black man must affirm his humanity through conflict and through the risk that conflict implies.

¹⁹ This passage in Kojève reads as follows: In the beginning, as long as he is not yet actually recognised by the other, it is the other that is the end of his action; it is on this other, it is on recognition by this other, that his human value and reality depend; it is in this other that the meaning of his life is condensed... (1980: 13)

When it does happen that the Negro looks fiercely at the white man, the white man tell him: "Brother, there is no difference between us." And yet the Negro knows that there is a difference. He wants it. He wants the white man to turn on him and shout: "damn nigger". Then he would have that unique chance - to "show them...". (Fanon, 1980: 221)

Fanon here refers to the traditional humanist stance which, under the guise of defending equality for all human beings, emphasises the disparity between 'civilised' and 'savage', masking discriminatory practices carried out against those who refuse to assimilate to western ways. Were the white man to reveal his contempt for the black man, the latter would have opportunity to engage in conflict and thereby achieve true self-consciousness, that is, the transformation of the subjective certainty of life existence into an objective truth.

The former slave, who can find in his memory no trace of the struggle for liberty or of that anguish of liberty of which Kierkegaard speaks, sits unmoved before the young white man singing and dancing on the tightrope of existence. (Fanon, 1986: 221)

Fanon argues that the black person does not understand freedom because he has not fought for it. Having enlisted as a French soldier in World War II, Fanon draws on his personal experience to argue that the Liberty and Justice that the black man has fought for are 'values secreted by his masters'. He argues that the white master of colonial society differs from Hegel's master, for while the latter's aim was to obtain recognition from the slave, the former only wants work from the black man. The black slave also varies from Hegel's slave to the extent that formative activity does not constitute the source of his will to freedom. Whereas for Kojève the path towards historical becoming resided in the slave's mastery of Nature through work, in Fanon the 'Negro wants to be like the master', turning towards the latter and distancing himself from the

object worked upon (1986: 221n): thus, while work is revolutionary for Kojève's slave, it is violence that will allow Fanon's slave to negate the given world.

Fanon's adaptation of the master-slave encounter constitutes a crucial moment in his work, for the Hegelian framework of this 'dialectic' contains the major premises of his theoretical eclecticism. Indeed, the Fanonian exploration of existentialism, phenomenology, sociogenic psychopathology and 'third-worldist' violence fundamentally derive from the problematics of recognition inherent in the master-slave encounter. The black person affirms his humanity by desiring the Desire of the white man, that is, the former strives for recognition by the latter: the black person will only be recognised as an independent self-consciousness by placing his life at risk in a struggle to the death against the white man; because 'all Desire is a desire for value' (Kojève, 1980: 6), at the end of the struggle he will be able to substitute himself for the value desired by the Desire of the white man. Reciprocity will thus ensue from a trajectory that corresponds to the historical becoming of the black man.

III. 'Lived Experience' as Being-in-the-World

Although Fanon is often interpreted as positing an essence, or fact, of blackness, he attempts to escape any ontological definition of blackness by focusing on the situational experience of the black man. There is no fact of blackness that corresponds to a universal condition of the man of colour; instead, there are contextual specificities that call for different forms of action in order to obtain recognition. Fanon alludes to the fundamentally different situations lived by the 'French Negro' and the 'American Negro': while he considers the black American to be on the way to the full affirmation of independent self-consciousness, due to having had to battle for rights which have not been freely given, the 'French Negro' has not had to risk his life in conflict, for freedom was imposed on him from outside. (1986: 221)

The world is, in (Fanon's) view, experienced in particular ways by the 'black man', but that experience is defined in situational terms and not by some transhistorical 'fact'. (Macey, 2000: 26)

Rather than present a universal and static black ontology, Fanon resorts to a phenomenological theory of experience to explain the 'lived experience' (*l'expérience vécue*) of the black man. 'Lived experience' or *Erlebnis*, in the technical terminology of Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, refers not to just any experience, but to one that is profoundly felt and "lived through". (Macey, 2000: 164) Merleau-Ponty describes *Erlebnisse* as 'acts of consciousness' through which a subject, immersed in an always already existing world, can mould the latter according to a project. Because the subject cannot be separated from the object, from the world of which it is a part, it cannot appropriate the latter 'objectively'.

To be a consciousness or rather *to be an experience* is to hold inner communication with the world, the body and other people, to be with them instead of being beside them. (Merleau-Ponty, 2000: 96)

For Fanon, the 'lived experience' or 'being in the world' of the black man is determined by his conflict-ridden relationship to whiteness. The 'negro' is a slave to an essence, a stereotype which must be contested by daily actions that disprove the latter. The first reaction of the black man is to combat these archetypes, which fix him to an appearance 'for which he is not responsible', by seeking to demonstrate his assimilation of European ways. Having grown in a world permeated by Western values, the colonised black will judge himself through white eyes. He will become conscious of his body as if it belonged to a third-person. Fanon describes this 'corporeal malediction' in the following way:

A slow composition of my self as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world - such seems to be the schema. It does not impose itself on me; it is, rather, a definitive structuring of the self and of the world - definitive because it creates a real dialectic between my body and the world. (1986: 111)

This corporeal schema is determined by a historico-racial schema, consisting in the myriad of myths and anecdotes which have given rise to white stereotypes of blackness. "'Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened!'" (Fanon, 1986: 112) In this episode recounted by Fanon, the child is frightened of corporeal blackness, due to the historico-racial schema that has traditionally connoted blackness with evil and danger. It is in this sense that race can be understood as a sliding signifier:

It is not the status of racist discourse as 'scientific' but the fact that its elements function *discursively* which enables it to have 'real effects'. They can only carry meaning because they signify, through a process of displacement, further along the chain of equivalencies - *metonymically* ... their arrangement within a discursive chain enables physiological signs to function as signifiers, to stand for and be 'read' further up the chain; socially, psychically, cognitively, politically, culturally, civilisationally... (Hall, 1996: 23-4)

Fanon says that he is no longer aware of his body in the third person, but as a triple person. It is no longer the 'negro' that is judging himself through white eyes, but rather a whole new person that is created through the stories that convey the white archetype of blackness. The man of colour is therefore determined from the outside and is left with no space for resistance from which to contest white definitions of blackness:

Ontology - once it is finally admitted as leaving existence by the wayside - does not permit us to understand the being of

the black man. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man. (Fanon, 1986: 110)

Denied recognition by the 'other', Fanon is tempted into affirming his blackness:

I resolved, since it was impossible for me to get away from an inborn complex, to assert myself as a BLACK MAN. Since the other hesitated to recognise me, there remained only one solution: to make myself known. (1986: 115)

Fanon had striven for invisibility. This, however, was denied him for blackness was all too visible. He was unable to escape being fixed by a white gaze, anxious to lay bare and make comprehensible through stereotyping a difference that confounded the white hierarchical structuring of the World. Although Fanon tends towards a humanist universalism, he nevertheless draws a distinction between the situations lived, in a white world, by Jews and blacks. For Fanon, Jewishness is not outwardly visible, for there is no distinctive feature that characterises a Jew as such. Jewishness is thus overdetermined from within, in the sense that Jews are slaves to the idea that others have of their actions. The black man, on the other hand, is wholly overdetermined from without, due to his appearance.

Colour and race are not essences, but the product of an existence and a situation. (Macey, 2000: 165)

IV. Négritude: Transcending the Particular

The feeling of inferiority of the colonised is the 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.* (Fanon 1986: 93)

In *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Sartre had argued that because it is the anti-Semite who creates the Jew, by forcing the latter either to flee from himself or assert his Jewishness, the issue of a Jewish authenticity was inherently false. Similarly, for Fanon, the dilemma of 'negro' authenticity is a racist invention, for the historico-racial schema that prevails in the white world is fundamentally responsible for creating the 'negro'.

Thus, although Fanon was tempted into affirming blackness as a positive value in reaction against the historico-racial schema which portrayed the latter as fundamentally negative, he nevertheless prefers to settle for an assertion of universal manhood, due to the realisation that black essentialism is simply perpetuating the racist logic which caused 'blackness' to be defined against 'whiteness' in the first place. *Black Skin, White Masks* represents Fanon's personal battle between the particular and the universal, that is, between the wish to desperately hold onto the belief in Negro values, and the attempt to establish a universal self, 'the world of the You', where each man is fundamentally responsible for the other's destiny.

Négritude, the intellectual movement composed of black intellectuals who tried to give voice to universal 'negro' values, had originally been warmly greeted by Fanon. This attempt 'to prove the existence of a black civilisation to the white world at all costs' was, Fanon felt, fully justified in writing back against white stereotypes of blackness as having no culture, no civilisation and no historical traditions. (1986: 34)

...

My blackness is neither a tower nor a cathedral
It thrusts into the red flesh of the sun
It thrusts into the burning flesh of the sky

It hollows through the dense dismay of its own
pillar of patience. (Césaire in Fanon, 1986: 124)

This excerpt of the poem by Aimé Césaire can be read as an example of what Henry Louis Gates' calls a 'signifying trope', repeating and reversing white stereotypes of blackness to write back at whiteness.²⁰ In the above extract, Césaire plays on white stereotypes of the physicality of the 'negro', of the latter's proximity to Nature, to affirm the essence of blackness.

Yes, we are - we Negroes - backward, simple, free in our
behaviour. That is because for us the body is not something
opposed to what you call the mind. We are in the world. And
long live the couple, Man and Earth! (Fanon, 1986: 127)

Fanon here identifies the 'negro' with being in the world, with the supersession of the mind-body dichotomy, and with the overcoming of the binarism between man and nature. It is in the world and through the world that the black man achieves recognition. However, he soon discovers that 'negro' coexistence with the world is regarded by whites as merely a provisional stage on the scale of development, through which the latter have already passed.

... I wanted to be typically Negro - it was no longer possible.
I wanted to be white - that was a joke. And, when I tried, on
the level of ideas and intellectual activity, to reclaim my
négritude, it was snatched away from me. Proof was
presented that my effort was only a term in the dialectic.
(Fanon, 1986: 132)

Sartre's affirmation that négritude is only a phase in the Marxian
dialectical progression culminating in a society without races has

²⁰ "Signifyin(g) is a uniquely black rhetorical concept, entirely textual or linguistic, by which a second statement or figure repeats, or tropes, or reverses the first...the very concept of Signifyin(g) can exist only in the realm of the intertextual relation." (Gates, 1989: 49)

profound repercussions on Fanon. Because the goal inherent in this dialectics entails the destruction of *négritude*, Fanon must now redefine his conceptual framework:

The dialectic that brings necessity into the foundation of my freedom drives me out of myself. It shatters my unreflected position. Still in terms of consciousness, black consciousness is immanent in its own eyes. I am not a potentiality of something, I am wholly what I am. I do not have to look for the universal. (Fanon, 1986: 135)

Wishing to lose himself in the 'night of the absolute' to attain self-consciousness, Fanon now discovers that the black consciousness originally thought to correspond to completeness, to that which pre-exists, had in fact been imbued with meaning by the 'negro'. Sartre had brought Fanon to the realisation that "Negro experience is not a whole, for there is not merely *one* Negro, there are Negroes". (Fanon, 1986: 136)

However, because the relationship between white and black has traditionally been that of dominance on one side and subservience on the other, Fanon's 'lived experience' reveals the man of colour as suffering differently from the white man. The only way to liberate the man of colour from himself is thus to define him as an 'absolute intensity of beginning', an existential becoming rather than an ontological being. (Fanon, 1986: 138)

V) Existentialism as Historical Becoming

When the Negro makes contact with the white world, a certain sensitising action takes place. If his psychic structure is weak, one observes a collapse of the ego. The black man stops behaving as an *actional* person. The goal of his

behaviour will be The Other (in the guise of the white man), for The Other alone can give him worth. (Fanon, 1986: 154)

The dialectic established between the black man and the world, defined by whiteness, that he inhabits makes of him a being-for-others who is not recognised as an independent self-consciousness. Refraining from judging himself from the point of view of whiteness, he must take action to change social structures based on a historico-racial schema that create and perpetuate the notion of black inferiority. Universal humanity would then replace the will to affirm blackness, a term which mirrors whiteness in a racist dialectic.

... To educate man to be *actional*, preserving in all his relations his respect for the basic values that constitute a human world, is the prime task of him who, having taken thought, prepares to act. (Fanon, 1986: 222)

The black man must take action through conflict so as to gain recognition of his consciousness in-itself-for-itself in the 'here and now'. Négritude represents a desire to remain locked in the past, within the coloniser's logic of superiority. Liberation from colour binarisms can only come about through a constant reworking of past and present, refusing to see either as definitive.

I am a man, and what I have to recapture is the whole past of the world ...

In no way should I derive my basic purpose from the past of the peoples of colour.

In no way should I dedicate myself to the revival of an unjustly unrecognised Negro civilisation ... I do not want to exalt the past at the expense of my present and of my future. (Fanon, 1986: 226)

Fanon attempts to recapture the past, responsible for the cultural crystallisation of the 'negro'. Once the reality of blackness is

grasped as a historical becoming, the historico-racial schema that has created white stereotypes of blackness begins to fall apart. By focusing on the possibility of man recreating himself, Fanon introduces invention into existence. The black man can choose to recreate himself against the stereotypes of the past, for he is not a prisoner of History. Absolute existence demands that neither revenge nor reparations be sought for the past.

The body of history does not determine a single one of my actions.

I am my own foundation.

And it is by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate the cycle of my freedom.
(Fanon, 1986: 231)

Fanon follows in the wake of Sartrean humanist existentialism by arguing that because existence precedes essence, there cannot be a black essentialist 'nature', nor a determinism of any kind.²¹ Sartrean existentialism is born of the premise that because 'man is condemned to be free', that is, because there are no determinisms, everything is permitted.

We are left alone, without excuse. That is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet is nevertheless at liberty, and from the moment that he is thrown into this world he is responsible for everything that he does. (Sartre, 1973: 34)

²¹ Curiously, Lewis Gordon reads Fanon's existential phenomenology as an assertion of blackness through which blacks can reclaim history. There is a contradiction in his argument: because identity is not fixed and immobile, the potential for human agency can overturn ontological definitions of blackness; however, because there is a universal black experience, blacks can be active agents of history. (Gordon, 1995)

However, not only is he responsible for himself but for 'man' in general. Because there are no narratives of necessity, man must assume responsibility for the future of humanity by committing himself to action thereby choosing the project that he will be.

Man is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realises himself, he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is. (Sartre, 1973: 41)

At the root of Sartrean existentialism lies a dichotomy between subject and object: whereas for Merleau-Ponty the subject is inseparable from the world in which he is immersed, for Sartre the Cartesian *cogito* is the absolute truth of consciousness. Whereas materialist doctrines posit the subject as the result of 'pre-determined reactions', Sartrean humanism draws a distinction between animality and humanity due to the latter's immediate 'sense of self'.

Thus the man who discovers himself directly in the *cogito* also discovers all the others, and discovers them as the condition of his own existence. He recognises that he cannot be anything ... unless others recognise him as such. I cannot obtain any truth whatsoever about myself, except through the mediation of another. (Sartre; 1973: 45)

Because knowledge of self derives from others, the discovery of oneself reveals the other as a rival freedom which is either 'for or against me'. It is therefore in this inter-subjective world that man must assume responsibility both for what he has chosen to be as well as for what others are. Subjectivity is thus inherently universal.

Fanon's new humanism is an effort to achieve freedom through disalienation, which, in turn, is achieved by the attempt to recapture and scrutinise the self. Once the realisation sets in that

"the Negro is not. Any more than the white man"(Fanon, 1986: 231), a possibility of authentic communication between men becomes viable.

I find myself suddenly in the world and I recognise that I have one right alone: That of demanding human behaviour from the other.

One duty alone: That of not renouncing my freedom through my choices. (Fanon, 1986: 229)

VI. The Apprehension of Facticity

For Sartre, the anguish of existentialism derives precisely from the realisation that any action is the concretisation of only one amongst a plurality of possibilities, and the reason why one particular path is taken, in detriment to another, lies in choice. (1973: 32) The refusal to accept man's situation as one of free choice and the espousal of deterministic outlooks ultimately lead to bad faith or self-deception, implying a concomitant negation of responsibility for oneself and others.

The self-deception is evidently a falsehood, because it is a dissimulation of man's complete liberty of commitment. (Sartre, 1973: 51)

Man becomes inauthentic through bad faith. Authenticity is brought about by apprehending the facticity of freedom, that is, 'my place, my body, my past, my position in so far as it is already determined by the indications of Others, finally my fundamental relation to the Other'. (Sartre, 2000: 489) In short, facticity refers to the situational categories that define my being-in-myself through my being-for-others.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon analyses what he considers to be two psychopathological accounts of inauthenticity, the first arising from Mayotte Capécia's autobiography *Je Suis*

Martiniquaise, and the second taken from Abdoulaye Sadjí's *Nini*. Mayotte Capécia wishes to 'bleach' her blackness by choosing a white lover. Nini, a 'mulatto' from Saint-Louis, considers it an insult to be courted by a Negro.

I shall attempt to grasp the living reactions of the woman of colour to the European. First of all, there are two such women; the Negress and the mulatto. The first has only one possibility and one concern; to turn white. The second wants not only to turn white but also to avoid slipping back. (Fanon, 1986: 55)

These cases reveal, according to Fanon, a profoundly Manichean conception of the World, whereby white and black are rigidly compartmentalised and irreconcilable. The 'negress' and the 'mulatto' attempt to attain full assimilation in the white world to overcompensate for an inferiority complex. (Fanon, 1986: 60)

In the chapter entitled "The Man of Colour and the White Woman", Fanon analyses the case of Jean Veneuse, the main character of René Maran's *Un Homme Pareil aux Autres*. Jean Veneuse is an Antillean black who, due to having lived in Bordeaux since childhood, is culturally European. Having interiorised the values of the white World, he sees his blackness through white eyes. This gives rise to a neurotic dilemma, whereby because he is black, he cannot be fully European. However, although he is black, he does not understand his own race.

Fanon considers that, contrary to Capécia and Nini, Veneuse problematises the traditional gendered relations between black and white.²² This is due to the latter's realisation that the black man

²² Stuart Hall considers that Fanon does not engage in a dialogue with gender, in the same way that he does with colonial psychiatry, existentialism, and Négritude. Hall regards Fanon's passages on gendered relations as a "blind spot". Bell hooks, however, sees Fanon's "calculated refusal" to consider the specificity of either the homosexual

has traditionally wished for a white lover as a means to achieve acceptance by the white World, as well as his fear that by having a white lover, he will be spurning the women of his own race.

According to Fanon, the 'negro' has traditionally been fixated at the genital level by the white gaze. He has also been regarded as a phobogenic object by the white World. Blackness arouses fear and disgust, both of which are intimately linked to white stereotypes of the 'negro' as synonymous with the biological. Only by restructuring the World, by promoting a new environment will the myths that inform the Manichean division between white and black be overthrown.

Fanon critiqued the *négritude* movement for operating within the binary logic of white racism. However, he too falls within this trap by reducing negrophobia to fear of sexual contact with the black man. For if the historico-racial schema of white culture has fixated blacks at the biological level, then Fanon, by presenting the negrophobic man and woman as experiencing both desire and disavowal of sexual contact with the 'negro', is simply operating within the terms of white racism. He is affirming that the man of colour arouses emotions which do not surpass the biological.

Although the resentment of facticity, of the objective conditions that construe a situation, can lead to the inauthenticity of a Capécia or a Nini, both of whom 'accidentalise' their blackness, the affirmation of an essentialist 'fact of blackness' also consists in an inauthentic mode of being. By positing a universal black soul, the native intellectuals adhering to the *négritude* movement are deceiving themselves about the possibility of achieving a harmonious African unity. According to Fanon, the native intellectual affirms African culture in continental and diasporic terms in an attempt to write back at the colonial power's systematic devaluation of precolonial history, only succeeding in

or the black female in their demand for reciprocal recognition as, in itself, a dialogue with gender. (Hall et al, 1996: 40)

perpetuating manichaeistic forms of thought. The defence of black culture from the point of view of the whole continent mirrors the white coloniser's contempt and denial of the existence of African culture.

Colonialism did not dream of wasting its time in denying the existence of one national culture after another. Therefore the reply of the colonised peoples will be straight away continental is its breadth ... The concept of Negro-ism, for example, was the emotional if not the logical antithesis of that insult which the white man flung at humanity. (Fanon, 1990: 171)

The native intellectual turns to nativism in search for secure anchorage, but suffers disillusionment when he realises that his own culture is unable to compete with the 'prestige' of the coloniser's 'civilisation'. He tries to compensate for an inferiority complex by creating cultural forms which will articulate the customs and traditions of his own people, in what Fanon describes as a 'banal search for exoticism'. (1990: 177-8)

Finding your fellow countrymen sometimes means in this phase to will to be a nigger, not a nigger like all other niggers but a real nigger, a Negro cur, just the sort of nigger that the white man wants you to be. (Fanon, 1990: 177-8)

By attempting to attain authenticity in the form of a pure black culture, Negroism denies historical specificities which reveal each culture to be first and foremost national.

The Negroes of Chicago only resemble the Nigerians or the Tanganyikans in so far as they were all defined in relation to the whites. But once the first comparisons had been made and subjective feelings were assuaged, the American Negroes realised that the objective problems were fundamentally heterogeneous. (Fanon, 1990: 173-4)

The authenticity of the colonised thus does not derive from an essentialist blackness, but rather from an apprehension of facticity, that is, of the situational factors defined in inter-subjectivity. This leads to the realisation of heterogeneity within a shared experience of colonial oppression, where there is nevertheless a commonality of destiny between nations with a similar past.

There is no common destiny to be shared between the national cultures of Senegal and Guinea; but there is a common destiny between the Senegalese and Guinean nations which are both dominated by the same French colonialism. (Fanon, 1990: 188)

Because the truths of a nation are first and foremost its realities, the native intellectual must turn his back on the past and realise that there is no such thing as a genuine national culture, untouched by foreign influence. A people's culture is always being renewed and is thus diametrically opposed to custom or tradition, both of which are inimical to action and reality.

Culture has never the translucidity of custom; it abhors all simplification. In its essence it is opposed to custom, for custom is always the deterioration of culture. The desire to attach oneself to tradition or bring abandoned traditions to life again does not only mean going against the current of history but also opposing one's own people. (Fanon, 1990: 180)

In apocalyptic tones, Fanon argues that the past's value resides primarily as an impetus to action, for a national culture can only appear within the national liberation struggle. To will national freedom is simultaneously to will the freedom of all other subjugated nations on the African continent as a pre-condition to the existence of national cultures.

VII. Sociogenic psychopathology

Although Sartre resists the notion of an essentialist human nature, he nevertheless refers to a 'human universality of *condition*', that is, 'all the *limitations* which a priori define man's fundamental situation in the universe'. (1973: 46) Despite the contextual variations that man is subject to, the imperatives of being-in-the-world, of labour and death, remain constant in space and time.

These limitations are neither subjective nor objective, or rather there is both a subjective and an objective aspect to them. Objective, because we meet with them everywhere and they are everywhere recognisable: and subjective because they are *lived* and are nothing if man does not live them - if ... he does not freely determine himself and his existence in relation to them. (Sartre, 1973: 46)

Human purpose, however diverse and individual it may be, reveals itself as universal, for every purpose consists in an attempt either to transcend, or to negate and accommodate itself to limitations. For Fanon, the psychopathology of the black person derives essentially from social alienation, that is, from the limitations that define his situation in a world that is racially structured. A sociogeny that seeks to explain black alienation as a socio-political phenomenon rather than in terms of individual history is the methodology that informs Fanon's psychiatric practice, both during his training at Saint-Alban in France and later at Blida-Joinville in Algeria. Although Fanon alludes to psychoanalysis with some frequency in his work, he nevertheless, as David Macey argues, had not studied its clinical application and his knowledge of the former was generalist in nature.

Psychoanalysis does allow him to describe the transference of white fantasies on to the black man - but even here there is some uncertainty; strictly speaking, this is projection or

the externalisation of aspects of an inner psychical reality, and not transference. (2000; 187)

Furthermore, where psychoanalysis pays heed to fantasy, Fanon alludes to trauma brought about by social alienation: on the one hand, mental illness derives from the attempt of the colonised subject to alienate himself from the limitations which condition his 'lived experience' in a white world; on the other, psychosomatic disorders result from the body's attempt to accommodate itself, that is, to achieve a homeostasis, within the traumatic colonial situation.

Greatly influenced by François Tosquelles's innovative methods at Saint-Alban, Fanon favoured psychiatric treatments that allied drug, shock, and occupational therapies. Emphasis was placed on the necessity to overcome patients' social alienation by involving them in the collective life of the hospital, that is, 'in an environment that functioned as a whole or a Gestalt'. (Macey, 2000: 201) The aim of institutional psychotherapy was to approach a sociogenic approach towards mental illness, whereby the latter could never be studied in separation from its social context.

The underlying thesis was that psychotherapy dealt with individuals who were *aliénés*, meaning 'alienated' in both the clinical and the social sense. Their flight into psychosis or schizophrenia had led them to break the social contract, to become outsiders who were excluded from social life. Although the causes of their alienation were biopathological, and therefore to be treated as such, the club's existence was founded upon a gamble: the possibility of transfusing a social life into its patient-members, of reintegrating them into some form of symbolic exchange. (Macey, 2000: 150-1)

The institutional psychotherapy associated with Tosquelles provides a link with Lacan, for placing emphasis on symbolic exchange in the attempt to bring about social disalienation. In fact,

Tosquelles had been influenced by Lacan's thesis on paranoia (1932), and due to Lacan's reluctance to having the latter reprinted, homemade copies of this work circulated amongst the staff of the Saint-Alban hospital. It is therefore through the Saint-Alban community that Fanon first becomes acquainted with Lacan's ideas, that is, with what he describes as a possible Lacanian 'science of the personality'.

The coherent development of the psychotic's delusions are consistent with both the lived history of the subject, and its conscious and unconscious manifestations, and it is determined by the psychic tensions specific to social relations. (Macey, 2000: 142)

Fanon's notion of 'lived experience', or *Erlebnis*, is thus substantiated through Lacanian theory. However, that Fanon was not a psychoanalyst emerges from his treatment of a nineteen-year-old woman at Saint-Ylié, suffering from various nervous problems since the age of ten. One of her recurrent hallucinations consisted in the expansion and contraction of concentric circles to the rhythm of a 'negro tom-tom', surrounded by half-naked blacks performing a frightening dance. This vision instils fear of parental loss in the patient. Having examined the young woman, Fanon concludes that her fear of blacks is connected to a youthful memory of her father who habitually listened to radio broadcasts of African music. As she heard the music, she would see terrifying images of dancing negroes; these visions would gradually be replaced by circles, which acted as a defence mechanism against the hallucinations. The circles appeared, in a subsequent phase, without the original determinant (the negroes), and this would be sufficient to provoke facial tics. Analysing this case from the point of view of the psychology of negrophobia, Fanon argues that her illness is the result of a fear of blacks.

(Fanon) is clearly more interested in the effects of the 'myth of the negro' than in how a neurosis originates in the

individual unconscious of the patient, and does not trace it back to unconscious sexual fantasies ... it is surely of more significance that he devotes so little of his discussion to the figure of the patient's father - not something that any Freudian psychoanalyst would overlook. (Macey, 2000: 137)

Fanon's aim is to liberate the man of colour from himself by drawing attention to the historico-racial construction of blackness. For Fanon, European culture has sought to define itself against the 'negro' archetype symbolising evil, barbarism, savagery:

European civilisation is characterised by the presence, at the heart of what Jung calls the collective unconscious, of an archetype: an expression of the bad instincts, of the darkness inherent in every ego, of the uncivilised savage, the Negro who slumbers in every white man. (1986: 187)

Because the collective unconscious is cultural and therefore acquired, the colonial 'negro' who has assimilated European behaviour will identify with a European collective unconscious which presupposes the inferiority of black to white.

An Antillean is made white by the collective unconscious, by a large part of his individual unconscious, and by the virtual totality of his mechanism of individuation. The colour of his skin, of which there is no mention in Jung, is black. (Fanon, 1986: 193)

By absorbing the values of whiteness, the black man enslaves himself to the historico-racial schema that underlies the colonial collective unconscious. The 'negro' thus lives in a neurotic situation because he sees his blackness through Western eyes. He is bound up within the following dialectic: either he wants to be white, escaping into anonymity and invisibility, or he decides to affirm his blackness, the visibility of his colour. In order to escape this double bind, the man of colour must reject the two terms of the

dialectic and 'through one human being, (to) reach out for the universal'. (Fanon, 1986: 197)

The Negro is not. Any more than the white man. (Fanon, 1986: 231)

But the fact that 'wherever he goes, the Negro remains a Negro' (Fanon, 1986: 173), determines that distinct 'negro' socio-historical specificities are somehow united in the 'lived experience' of blackness. Fanon argues that the psychoanalytic models used to study the psychology of the white man cannot, therefore, be applied to the 'negro': because the racial drama is played out on the black man's conscious plane, he does not have an unconscious. The 'affective amnesia' witnessed in neurosis is thus absent from the 'negro'. (Fanon, 1986: 150) By claiming that only three per cent of French West Indians could possibly suffer from Oedipal neurosis, Fanon rejects one of the fundamental tenets of psychoanalysis which holds that neurosis arises not from a real trauma, but from Oedipal incestuous fantasies.

In his attempt not to lose sight of the real, Fanon may well be misrecognising an aspect of psychoanalysis, but he is also insisting that psychoanalysis itself may be projecting European cultural values. (Macey, 2000: 194)

Neurosis in the Negro is a result of the environment, of social circumstance, of the internalised collective unconscious, rather than caused by an individual traumatism. Adapting the loose concept of Freudian trauma to the black collective unconscious, Fanon argues that the white master has replaced the repressed African spirit in black consciousness. The repressed thought in the black collective unconscious, the trauma, is replaced in consciousness by its surrogate, a white authority symbol. In the man of colour, the traumatism lies in his constantly being called upon to live like a white man. Fanon cites the case of the Antillean, who thinks of himself as white due to his European

education. Only in Europe will he discover, in shock, that he too is a 'negro', synonymous to him with the negative values that western culture has ascribed to blackness. Thus, if he wishes for social mobility, the Antillean must reject his family, equated with blackness and barbarism, in favour of the positive, assimilative values of European society.

Fanon characterises Antillean society as neurotic, due to its emphasis on comparison. The Antillean is forever comparing himself with his fellow compatriot, against the pattern of the white man. He does not compare himself with the white man. It is his fellow compatriot, the 'other', who corroborates him in his search for self-validation. This mechanism lies not in the individual *per se*, but arises rather from the neurotic social structure prevalent in the Antilles. Whereas Adler's psychology of the individual would interpret the Antillean neurosis as a superiority complex on the part of a person who has been regarded as historically inferior and now desires to overcompensate in relation to whiteness, Fanon posits a psychology of the social, where the environment is responsible for a fundamental delusion. (1986: 213-16)

An individualistic psychological approach towards the colonised easily falls into the trap of encouraging the latter to accept the sub-human status that colonialism has meted out to its subjects: an individual acts in a certain manner because his 'soul' is tainted, or because his constitution is programmed to do so. According to Octave Mannoni's psychology of colonisation, the colonised suffer from a dependency complex on one hand, and an ingrained inferiority complex on the other. Thus, while colonised peoples such as the Malagasy, manifest an unconscious need for colonisation, patent in the transference of feelings of filial dependency by the colonised on the coloniser, they simultaneously reveal an inferiority complex deriving from the connotation of skin colour with negativity in a colonial context. According to Fanon, the 'Malagasy inferiority complex' cannot in reality be ingrained in

the Malagasy constitution but rather must be the outcome of specific socio-historical circumstances:

What M. Mannoni has forgotten is that the Malagasy alone no longer exists; he has forgotten that the Malagasy exists *with the European*. (1986: 96-7)

Moreover, Mannoni believed in the existence of a universal psychic structure shared by both coloniser and colonised, whereby the latter represented the unconscious of the European: 'The Negro is the white man's fear of himself'. (Macey, 2000: 192) Fanon, on the contrary, does not posit a universal psychic structure, arguing that it is the situational encounter with whiteness that leads to the black man's neurosis.

As a psychiatrist, Fanon hopes to make his patients aware of the social structures that have both created the man of colour, and inspired in him the desire to be white:

...the black man should no longer be confronted by the dilemma, *turn white or disappear*; but he should be able to take cognisance of a possibility of existence... my objective, once his motivations have been brought into consciousness, will be to put him in a position to *choose* action (or passivity) with respect to the real source of the conflict - that is, toward the social structures. (1986: 100)

By emphasising that diagnosis and treatment of the mentally ill ought to take account of the 'lived experience' induced by colonialism, Fanon sought to reform the system of colonial psychiatry, the foundations of which were symptomatic of the inhumanity verified in everyday colonial practices that shaped the thought processes of both coloniser and colonised.

... Who are they, in truth, those creatures, who hide, who are hidden by social truth beneath the attributes of *bicot, bounioule, arabe, raton, sidi, mon z'ami?* (Fanon, 1988: 4)

In his clinical practice in colonial Algeria, Fanon observes the same effects he had previously witnessed in Lyons: the Algerian patient is labelled 'a simulator, a liar, a malingerer, a sluggard, a thief', for physicians cannot justify a pain felt which bears no outward signs of manifestation. The 'North African syndrome', which consists not in localised pain but rather in a general 'malaise' distributed over the whole body, is more often than not denied by doctors as having any real foundation. (Fanon, 1988: 7)

The North African takes his place in this asymptomatic syndrome and is automatically put down as undisciplined (cf. medical discipline), inconsequential (with reference to the law according to which every symptom implies a lesion), and insincere (he says he is suffering when we know there are no *reasons* for suffering). (Fanon, 1988: 9-10)

Denying the specificity of the colonial situation, physicians assess their native patients according to a European medical framework. According to Fanon, a sound medical examination would instead require a 'situational diagnosis', taking into account the patient's '*relations with his associates, his occupations and his preoccupations, his sexuality, his sense of security or of insecurity, the dangers that threaten him; and we may add also his evolution, the story of his life*'. (1988: 10) The conditions in which the North African lives, be it at home or in the metropolis, depriving him of affectivity, social activity and participation in the community, necessarily make of him a sick man.

In Algeria there is not simply the domination but the decision to the letter not to occupy anything more than the sum total of the land. The Algerians, the veiled women, the palm-trees and the camels make up the landscape, the *natural*

background to the human presence of the French. (Fanon, 1990: 201)

Because colonialism is a negation of the native's humanity, he is constantly confronted with an existential question concerning his own identity. This may give rise to a mental pathology which is the direct consequence of colonial oppression. Obsessional personality disorders are, for example, a result of "‘psychological action’ used in the service of colonialism in Algeria". Thought may proceed by 'antithetic couplings', where 'everything that is affirmed can, at the same instant, be denied with the same force'. This symptomology obeys a manichaeistic frame of reference, where antithetical thoughts mirror each other inversely, cancelling each other out, leaving the patient unable to defend any given position. However, disorders can simultaneously be a symptom and a cure, for in the case of psycho-somatic disturbances, the organism attempts to confront the conflict directly by adapting itself to the situation. (Fanon, 1990: 200-1, 233-4)

Fanon depicts colonialism as 'a coherent system which leaves nothing intact', following a logic of sadism in its most developed stages. Thus, the depersonalisation of the individual reflects itself in the collective sphere, on the realm of social structures: the colonised people 'only finds cohesion in the presence of the colonising nation'. Colonial forms of thought influence not only the European minority but also the Algerians, who envisage themselves through the negative stereotypes that the coloniser has of the colonised. (Fanon, 1990: 217, 237, 250)

One such stereotype is intimately linked to the ethnic psychology of the Algiers School which provided the doctrinal foundations for psychiatric practice both in Blida-Joinville, where Fanon worked, as well as in other hospitals of the colony. (Macey, 2000: 226) The Algiers School sought to deterministically prove the criminal nature of the Algerian, by resorting to sociological, functional and anatomical explanations. As such, melancholia in the Algerian was

regarded as taking hetero-destructive tendencies, rather than the normal auto-destructive forms: if melancholia is defined as a disease of the 'moral conscience', the Algerian develops pseudo-melancholia due to the 'precariousness of his conscience and the feebleness of his moral sense', that is, his irrationality. (Fanon, 1990: 241-2)

Because the diencephalon, one of the most primitive parts of the brain, is considered to regulate the essentially vegetative and instinctive life of the native, the latter's superior and cortical activities are deemed to be only slightly developed. The native is regarded as being adapted to a life different from that of the European, due to embodying primitivism as 'a social condition which has reached the limit of its evolution'. The arrangement of the nervous system, its biological organisation, transcribes criminal impulses into the nature of the North African's behaviour: the criminal impulse is thus a reaction which is written into the nature of the things (the native Algerians) themselves. (Fanon, 1990: 243, 245)

According to Fanon, criminality is a discourse constructed by colonialism. The regression in Algerian criminality during the liberation struggle shows that the native has managed to break with the hold of colonial ideas over the way he envisages himself. By channelling aggressivity towards the colonial power, the native refuses the judgement that the French judicial, administrative and medical systems have imposed on him. (1990: 247)

Although the colonised seek to reject the action of the coloniser, a profound interdependence between colonised and coloniser has nevertheless been established in economic, technical and administrative terms. Caught between tradition on one hand and Western modernity on the other, the Algerian embodies a battleground of conflicting forces, reflecting the manichaeistic structure of colonialism, with its 'opposition of exclusive worlds, a contradictory interaction of different techniques, a vehement

confrontation of values'. (Fanon, 1970: 112) Faced with a violent imposition of the values of the dominant group upon his way of life, the native will react defensively, in a clandestine manner. Thus, while the native patient will introduce a rupture into the 'unifying circles of Western therapy' (Fanon, 1970: 112) either by practising the latter alongside traditional healing, or by freely adapting medical prescriptions to his own convenience, the Algerian woman will infuse the *haik*, considered to be a symbol of patriarchy by Europeans, with a nationalist meaning. Likewise, the shift from french Radio-Alger to the independentist 'Voice of Free Algeria' will correspond to the shift from a hysteric's auditory hallucinations of hostile *djinns* (spirits) to that of the disalienation of the revolutionary subject through anti-colonial struggle. (Gibson, 1999: 426)

VIII. The Project of Violence

Fanon regards decolonisation as the result of the redemptive force of violence, by way of which natives embody the historical process and recreate themselves as free beings. However, nowhere does he defend violence for violence's sake: as Macey argues, Fanon's violence is not urban vandalism (2000: 474); rather, it is an instrumental violence that seeks to respond to the violence of the colonial situation in general and to that of the Algerian case in particular.

In Algeria, violence was not just the midwife of history. Violence was Algeria's father and mother. (Macey, 2000: 477)

It is through a turning of scales in the manichaeistic colonial relation between colonised and coloniser, through the absolute replacement of the latter by the former, that the native assumes his humanity, refusing the condition of animality that has been imposed upon him.

We only become what we are by the radical and deep-seated refusal of that which others have made of us. (Sartre, 1990: 15)

Sartre advocated the 'third-worldist' cause, arguing that as the native recreates himself through violence, the exclusive, minority-based European club realises that the old World order, founded on traditional humanist values, is disintegrating. Europe is shipwrecked, 'springing leaks everywhere' and whereas in the past history has been made by Europe, now it is the 'Third World' that is making Europe history by way of a 'new humanism' which reveals the hypocrisy of the old.

... there is nothing more consistent than a racist humanism since the European has only been able to become a man through creating slaves and monsters. (Sartre, 1990: 22)

Decolonisation is presented by Fanon as a virtual replacement of the coloniser by the colonised, of the first by the last. This manichaeistic frame inversely mirrors that which prevailed prior to independence as revealed by the geographical positioning of the settler and native zones:

The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic, they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous. (Fanon, 1990: 30)

There can be no conciliation, no co-existence of settlers and colonised, for the manichaeistic logic is governed by an economy of violence, where violence must be fought back with violence: if the native was relegated to sub-human status through violence, then it is only by resorting to the means of violence that he may regain access to humanity.

The settler's work is to make even dreams of liberty impossible for the native. The native's work is to imagine all possible methods for destroying the settler. On the logical plane, the Manichaeism of the settler produces a Manichaeism of the native. To the theory of the 'absolute evil of the native' the theory of the 'absolute evil of the settler' replies. (Fanon, 1990: 73)

The project of violence that Fanon adheres to in *The Wretched of the Earth* is supplied, according to Macey, by Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. For Sartre, a project is inherently both negative and positive: while its negativity stems from its negation and destruction of the prevalent state of affairs, its positivity resides in its orientation towards the future, that is, towards that which has not yet been realised. Human action is fundamentally a project that 'traverses the world' and leads to transformation on the basis of certain conditions.

The counter-violence of the colonised is a form of praxis, or purposeful human action determined by a project, that responds to and negates the primal and endemic violence of colonisation. At the same time, it negates the colonised created by colonisation and allows a 'new man' to emerge. (Macey, 2000: 478)

Violence is thus a praxis through which the colonial manichaeism that reduces the colonised to the sub-human is negated: it consists in a cleansing force which restores human dignity. By joining each individual in a great chain of violence, action transcends the particular towards the collective in the form of mobilised armed struggle.

... The practice of violence binds (the colonised) together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain, a part of the great organism of violence which

has surged upwards in reaction to the settler's violence in the beginning. (Fanon, 1990: 73)

Fanon's description of the struggle for national independence draws on the Sartrean concepts of the group-in-fusion and seriality. Despite the members of a serial sharing a common project, the latter can only be realised by a few: conflicting interests thus arise between each member of the serial who regards the other as a potential rival. Colonised Algeria corresponds to a serial, in which atomisation results from a 'divide and rule politics' that disintegrates an organised but feudalistic structure. (Macey, 2000: 484)

The function of the violence of the colonised is to negate and transcend the seriality created by the violence of colonisation. In doing so, it creates a group-in-fusion with a common project and praxis. (Macey, 2000: 485)

The 'call to arms' turns a series of atomised beings into a group, a fraternity, which is held together by a terror both inwardly and outwardly oriented, preventing the possibility of dissidence. There is almost a messianic tone in Fanon's espousal of a violence which would redeem the strayed who, by practising violent actions against the settlers, are once more integrated into the group. Because the colonised man finds freedom in and through violence, the latter becomes both a means and an end to awareness of self. It is a unifying force that embraces all under the aegis of the nation, thus opposing regionalist and tribal dissensions. Violence as a practice of action is the key to freedom of the masses in both a national and social sense: national due to colonial liberation and independence; social due to the overturning of colonial manichaeism and the realisation that within native society there are elements, namely the bourgeoisie, that seek to exploit the war effort so as to hang on to their material privileges. This apperception goes hand in hand with the consideration that native society is no longer a single, universalist, undivided mass, for

there are natives who choose not to participate in national construction.

Se désagréger is the term Sartre uses to describe the group-in-fusion's seemingly inevitable lapse back into seriality. The fundamental ambiguity of *Les Damnés de la terre* is that, whilst Fanon constantly prophesies the victory of the people, the theoretical model he adopts necessarily implies that the group unity on which that victory is based cannot be sustained. (Macey, 2000: 487)

IX. 'Third-Worldist' Marxism

Although Fanon has been interpreted as Marxist, his eclecticism impedes him from being labelled as such. Having agreed with Sartre that *négritude* was only a phase in the dialectical process culminating in proletarian revolution, he nevertheless is much more inclined to focus on the 'lived experience' of the colonised in a world defined by whiteness. A new humanism, resulting from the turning of scales in the manichaeistic world of colonialism, corresponds to a 'third-worldist' project geared towards the future, whereby colonial man is eradicated and reinvented through action.

Fanon at first believes in the possibility of establishing a community of interests between the working classes of sovereign countries and the colonised of the African continent. For example, by refusing to provide the French army with human resources, the French proletariat could hinder the 'colonial reconquest' of Algeria. National independence would then lead to the humanisation of both the subjugated native and the colonial oppressor, for it is only when the colonised ceases to exist that the coloniser is free to access the realm of humanity. (Fanon, 1988: 144) However, any alleged commonality of interests between the working classes of the metropolis and the colonised reveals itself as non-existent: it is the French nation as a whole, regardless of class, that is involved in the domination of the Algerian people. Whereas non-

colonised nations reveal a sharp antagonism between working class and bourgeois capitalism, the colonial situation is distinguished by 'the undifferentiated character that foreign domination presents'. (1988: 81) Race is therefore the base, never a superstructural element, of a colonial society (1988: 36): the 'lived experience' of the colonised imposes itself over and above the class relations inherent in a colonial situation.

The specificity of colonialism underlies Fanon's free adaptations of marxian theory. First, the middle class in underdeveloped countries does not indulge in the creation of wealth, but rather seeks to appropriate the ex-colonisers' privileges. Thus, the bourgeois stage inherent in traditional marxism is not verified in the colonial context. The traditional role allocated by Marx to the proletariat is also disputed by Fanon, who argues that within a colonial society the latter constitute a privileged sector provoking the hostility of the peasant masses. Fanon maintains that it is indeed the peasantry, as well as elements of the lumpenproletariat, who are the key to revolutionary struggle in the Third World. According to Macey, such claims are refuted by Marxists, who vehemently disagree with Fanon's assertion that the proletariat is the most favoured class in a colonial regime. (2000: 480)

If there is a common element to Fanon's eclectic use of phenomenology, existentialism, social psychology, and marxism it is perhaps his emphasis on the reality of the colonial situation, that is, on the 'lived experience' of the colonised in a world that has been defined by the coloniser. Indeed, as Macey notes (2000: 192), Fanon's emphasis on the real leads him to claim that the colonial master, unlike Hegel's lord, does not want recognition, but work, from his slave. While Hegel's slave masters nature by work, creating a subjective reality through which he finds his own worth, Fanon's slave, wanting to be like the master, mediates with himself through violence. It is through an act of will that he creates both himself and his nation, the latter which therefore has no strictly ethnic connotations. This act of will, of active choice that assumes

responsibility for itself and others, appears, however, to fall behind its objectives in a permanent 'mismatch between aim and achievement'. (Rose, 1997: 125)

The dichotomies inherent in Fanon's thought are generated by the failure to produce a totalisation he desired and yet perhaps knew - due to his very eclecticism - impossible to attain. From existentialist individual responsibility to sociogenic psychiatry, from the desire for affirmation of particularity in the form of *négritude* to the assertion of universal man, from insurgence against universal psychic structures to the opposition against particularist ethnic psychology, Fanon went back and forth between his unresolved theses and antitheses, in a permanent dialectical process, revealing the aporias, the difficulties, inherent in any negotiation of the tension within the humanist tradition.

CHAPTER FIVE

PLURALITY IN ARENDT: ON HUMANISM AS A SPACE OF FREEDOM

I. Introduction

Hannah Arendt's works reveal a thematically coherent preoccupation with the human condition, the latter consisting in the fact that 'new' human beings are constantly being born into an 'old' world, a world that existed before and will continue to subsist after their temporal life cycle. The fact of natality, of birth as a new beginning, reflects itself in the human capacity for action, whereby a new linear sequence is commenced, the outcome of which remains unforeseeable and unpredictable, within the cyclical organic processes that ceaselessly repeat themselves throughout the ages. Human beings alone among the species are considered to be unique individuals due to their capacity for action, for bringing novelty into a world that precedes them in the short life span of past, present and future. Whereas all other life forms are destined to repetitively fulfil their biological cycle, only human beings, due to the potentiality for beginning brought about by action, can break with the predictability of the cyclical life process and the eternity of the world's time continuum.

For Arendt, the human condition distinguishes itself by the capacity to begin inherent in freedom. However, the inability to predict or control the outcome of an action reveals the burden of responsibility as appearing alongside freedom. Fear of the contingency inherent in freedom - that what is might as well not have been - has led human beings to constantly seek fatalistic explanations for the outcomes of action in processes that show that what is could not have been otherwise. According to Arendt, this tendency marks the birth of Modernity, termed the 'age of suspicion' by Nietzsche precisely because the Cartesian doubt,

with its emphasis on the unreliability of sense perception and on the necessity of submitting all evidence coming from the senses to scientific proof, became the symbolically inspiring philosophical moment of an epoch of uncertainty that sought refuge in progress, both scientific and historical. Narratives that stressed the primacy of necessity over freedom, explaining the outcome of events as not being able to occur otherwise, became prolific.

...*Progress became the project of Mankind*, acting behind the backs of real men - a personified force that we find somewhat later in Adam Smith's "invisible hand," in Kant's "ruse of nature," Hegel's "cunning of Reason," and Marx's "dialectical materialism." (1978: 153)

According to Arendt, such narratives are symptomatic of the most common 'metaphysical fallacy' in the Western tradition which posits a separation between the world of thought and that of sense experience, or action.²³ By privileging necessity over freedom, that is, thought over action, modern thinkers have followed in the tradition of the platonic *vita contemplativa* exercised in isolation and recoilment from the world, in detriment to the *vita activa*, thus producing theories that do not reflect the world as it is. Because the human condition is characterised by the fact of plurality, by the fact that we fit into a world of appearances by showing and

²³ Arendt was influenced by Heidegger's antipathy to the metaphysical tradition, the roots of which derive from the Platonic ideal of a 'true world' placed above a 'shadow world' of appearance. For Heidegger, the metaphysical fallacy consists in interpreting beings without considering the truth of Being. Because it does not think the difference between beings and Being, metaphysics reduces human essence to *animalitas*, even when the latter is posited as 'subject, person, or spirit'. While technical interpretation of thought in the service of poesis (fabrication) abandons Being, pure thought brings the human being back to the 'ecstatic inherence in the truth of Being', thus allowing the former to disclose 'ecstatic essence' or ek-sistence, as a clearing, or 'standing out' of Being. (Heidegger, 1998; Villa, 1996: 81)

displaying ourselves, that is, by seeking recognition from others, humans are foremost political beings who live in community and who act together. The political realm should serve the purpose of 'providing men with a space of appearances where they could act, with a kind of theatre where freedom could appear'.²⁴ (1961: 154) The fact that the responsibility inherent in freedom is linked to both the unpredictability of the outcome of our actions as well as their irreversibility leads Arendt to defend that freedom, the capacity to begin, pertains to the political, or public, realm, that of laws.

To abolish the fences of laws between men - as tyranny does - means to take away man's liberties and destroy freedom as a living political reality; for the space between men as it is hedged in by laws, is the living space of freedom. (1979: 466)

Laws are essential in order to prevent the unpredictability of the result of our actions as well as their irreversibility from destroying the very capacity for freedom, for beginning, that is inherent in the human condition.

It is due to Arendt's attempt to engage in the problematics of the human condition, and to her subsequent election of the political realm as offering the only possible solution to the issues of

²⁴ Heidegger can be read as dismantling the subject/object relation, for the human being is ek-sistent into the disclosedness of Being, into the openness within which stands out the relation between subject and object. (Heidegger, 1998, 266) Arendt's theory of performativity, in turn, aims to overcome the distinction between 'actor and act, agent and "effect"', so as to restore value to appearance and action. The Platonic instrumentalisation of praxis (action) as poiesis (fabrication), which reduces action to a means for attaining ends - allowing the agent to envisage the product he aims to create before acting - is thus countered by a performative model of action hostile to the category of means and ends. (Villa, 1996: 81, 83)

freedom, plurality and difference, that she may be helpful in elucidating the lacunae inherent in Fanonian humanism. Whereas Fanon's attempt to articulate a 'new humanism' unfolds itself within a Hegelian tradition and thus reveals itself as indeed not too 'new', Arendt seeks to explore the possibility for a humanism in a context no longer subject to the Roman trinity of religion, tradition and authority, by blending Aristotelian *praxis* with Kantian reflective judgement.²⁵ By tracing the etymological roots of words back to their origins in Greek or Roman antiquity, she tries to show how their meaning has been adulterated, ceasing to bear any relation whatsoever to the original context of production. Due to her admiration for the Greek *polis* as a model to be followed, Arendt attempts to recuperate the original significance of certain terms which originated in an epoch when everything within the political realm 'was decided through words and persuasion and not through force and violence'. (1989: 27) However, by relying on the old to articulate the new, she does not intend to repeat history as it was. Instead, she would, in the manner of the founders of the American Republic who turned to the Roman political experience as a guide to establishing their own *novus ordo seclorum* - a new order for the ages -, like to found politics anew.

The legendary hiatus between a no-more and not-yet clearly indicated that freedom would not be the automatic result of liberation, that the end of the old is not necessarily the beginning of the new, that the notion of an all-powerful time continuum is an illusion. (1978: 204)

Lying between the colonial no-more and the not-yet of absolute freedom, the end of the imperialist age has not, in Arendt's view,

²⁵ Whereas Critical Theorists would focus on Arendt's distinction between acting and making, deriving from the Aristotelian concepts of *praxis* and *poiesis*, communitarian critiques of liberalism would emphasise Arendt's vision of community as a shared world of appearance, a common space of shared purpose rooted in a Kantian *sensus communis*. (Villa, 1996: 7-8)

necessarily led to the beginning of the new order. The notion of a time continuum has proved a fallacy, for time moves by ruptures, by gaps between the absences of what has ceased to be and what is yet to come. The realm of history is what is revealed in the space of appearance, in its errancy and haphazardness, obeying no force of destiny operating behind men's backs. Where Arendt opposes Hegelianism for favouring necessity over freedom - and thus falling prey to a violence that instrumentalises everything it comes across as a means to achieve a particular end -, she counters Existentialism for defending an inner freedom of man in detriment to the socio-political context in which he lives. What is constant in her work is the urge to constantly connect the faculties of the mind with the living reality of the world. This operation is mostly brought about by the faculty of judgement, which links the freedom inherent in the will and the search for meaning inherent in thought to the world which is common to all human beings.

II. On Time as Rupture: A Gap between Absences

To illustrate the concept of time as a gap between a no-more and a not-yet, Arendt recounts one of Kafka's parables as follows: man stands in the Now of the present, in the gap between past and future, simultaneously fighting both with a sword in each hand, trying to resist, on one side, the impetus of the no-more that spurs him forward, and on the other side, the force of the not-yet that drags him into history. According to Kafka's version, both past and future have infinite origins that stretch all the way back to an infinite beginning, but encounter a terminal ending in the clash in the present.

...the time continuum, everlasting change, is broken up into the tenses past, present, future, whereby past and future are antagonistic to each other as the no-longer and the not-yet only because of the presence of man, who himself has an 'origin,' his birth, and an end, his death, and therefore

stands at any given moment between them; this in-between is called the present. (1978: 203)

More than victory over either side, man's ultimate wish would be to step outside the fight between past and future, and act as arbiter between the two forces. Arendt argues that by presupposing that man wishes to transcend the fighting-line and act as arbiter from above, Kafka is advocating that man withdraw from the world of sense experience. This parable thus becomes representative of the thinking ego's time concept, to the extent to which the faculty of thought withdraws from the world into isolation, carrying on a reflexive dialogue with itself.

... what is missing in Kafka's description of a thought-event is a spatial dimension where thinking could exert itself without being forced to jump out of human time altogether. (1961: 11)

Whereas in Kafka's parable, the antagonistic forces clash head-on against each other in the present, Arendt argues that the very insertion of man in the Now, in the gap between past and future, must necessarily provoke a deflection between these forces, thus causing them, rather than clashing head-on, to meet at an angle. This angle should give rise to a diagonal force, having as its origin the confrontation between opposing forces of past and future but bearing an infinite ending, due to being the result of the action of forces whose origin stretches into infinity.

This diagonal force, whose origin is known, whose direction is determined by past and future, but which exerts its force toward an undetermined end as though it could reach out into infinity, seems to me a perfect metaphor for the activity of thought. (1978: 209)

According to Arendt, gaps in time apply only to the realm of mental phenomena and not to that of historical or biographical time, for

man is ageless only insofar as he exercises the activity of thought. The gap in time is a rupture between past and future, a space of non-time, where man is free to abstract himself from his own spatial and temporal conditioning and reflect, in remembrance and anticipation, on whatever can be rescued from the destruction operated by the passage of historical and biographical time.

This small non-time-space in the very heart of time, unlike the world and the culture into which we are born, can only be indicated, but cannot be inherited and handed down from the past; each new generation, indeed every new human being as he inserts himself between an infinite past and an infinite future, must discover and ploddingly pave it anew. (1961: 13)

The indications of the non-time-space which Arendt alludes to are given by fragments which survive from the past. Thought must delve into these residues, which, as manifestations of world essences, subsist in the present under new forms. Arendt's interest in the Greco-Roman etymological roots of political and philosophical terms derives from her conviction that these provide clues to the past.

Any period to which its own past has become as questionable as it has to us must eventually come up against the phenomenon of language, for in it the past is contained ineradicably, thwarting all attempts to get rid of it once and for all. The Greek *polis* will continue to exist at the bottom of our political existence - that is, at the bottom of the sea - for as long as we use the word "politics." (1995: 204)

Language is essential for the thought process to be activated.²⁶ Because there is a gap, a gulf, between the invisibility of the realm

²⁶ For Heidegger, language is the home, the dwelling, of ecstatic essence, or Being. To stand in the clearing of Being is to think, for 'in thinking Being comes to language'. Thought discloses Being as that

of thought and the world of appearances, the latter which is transmitted to us by our senses, any insight into the invisible sphere of the human mind can only be conveyed through analogy with sense experience, that is, with the world human beings know and share in common. It is through metaphor that man transforms the invisible into an appearance, 'turning the mind back to the sensory world in order to illuminate the mind's non-sensory experiences for which there are no words in any language'. (1978: 106)

The irreversibility of the metaphor, which sheds light on the invisible by drawing on sense experience but which cannot explain sense experience by appealing to the invisible, demonstrates, according to Arendt, the primacy of the world of appearances in relation to that of thought, the latter which, because performed in isolation from the world, is 'always out of order'. (1978: 109) The danger in the metaphor, however, lies in the fact that because it relies solely on sense experience - which, being essentially cognitive, serves as a means towards an end - to convey the recesses of the human mind, it is at a loss to describe the activity of thought itself, that is, when 'something invisible within us deals with the invisibles of the world'.

This ineffability to which Arendt refers is akin to Walter Benjamin's notion of a language of truth, similar to Mallarmé's "*immortelle parole*", which consists in a world essence, a "tensionless and even silent depository of the ultimate secrets which all thought is concerned with"...whose existence we assume unthinkingly as soon as we translate from one language into another'. (1995: 204-5) Because Benjamin is committed to an understanding of language as a manifestation of a world essence rather than as a realisation of a communicative function, Arendt considers him fundamentally to be a poetic thinker. To think poetically is to inhabit the non-time-space within temporal linearity, the gap between past and

which Being has disclosed to thought through language. (1998: 239, 247)

future, so as to be able to distance oneself from the no-more and the not-yet and to reflect on their meaning by exercising the faculty of judgement on the realm of human affairs.²⁷ (1978: 209)

And this thinking, fed by the present, works with the "thought fragments" it can wrest from the past and gather about itself. Like a pearl diver who descends to the bottom of the sea, not to excavate the bottom and bring it to light but to pry loose the rich and the strange, the pearls and the coral in the depths and to carry them to the surface, this thinking delves into the depths of the past - but not in order to resuscitate it the way it was and to contribute to the renewal of extinct ages. (1995: 205-6)

III. The Primacy of the Future: Willing as Freedom

Benjamin's notion of linguistic fragments as consisting in remnants of a world essence brings to mind Arendt's interpretation of Heidegger's ontological difference, that is, 'the distinction between the Being of Being and the isness of beings, or entities' (1978: 175), where Being would be the essence and beings the linguistic residues indicative of that which is no-more. Arendt considers Heidegger's essay on Anaximander, written after his involvement in the national-socialist movement, to inaugurate a new phase in his thought, one in which he repented for the errors of history, disavowing a law of necessity that operates behind men's backs in the realm of human affairs. To be in the present is to be caught in-

²⁷ Heidegger considers the thinker and the poet to be the 'guardians' of language, the home of Being. Both 'accomplish the manifestation of Being insofar as they bring this manifestation to language and preserve it in language through their saying'. To poetise is therefore to allow thinking to be claimed by Being. Because the destiny of thought is to disclose Being, its history is patent in the saying of thinkers, the latter who 'always say the Same' to the extent that they articulate being as advent, as that which arrives. (1998: 239, 275)

between the passage of two absences, that of arrival and departure from the world of appearances. Subjects, or beings, hidden during the periods of absence from the world of appearance, are unconcealed during their temporal life-span, a period during which they come to be and pass away into their original state of concealment.

... undoubtedly there is such a thing as becoming; everything we know has become, has emerged from some previous darkness into the light of day ... when, in passing-away, becoming ceases, it changes again into that Being from whose sheltering, concealing darkness it originally emerged. (1978: 191)

As it reveals itself in beings, Being withdraws from their very brightness, seeking to remain concealed from the world of appearance. Because the history of Being is characterised by the oblivion of Being, by its permanent withdrawal from the realm where beings display themselves, the latter are free to roam in errancy within the space of unconcealment, thus providing the grounds for history to unfold.

In that scheme, there is no place for a "History of Being"... enacted behind the backs of acting men; Being, sheltered in its concealment, has no history, and "every epoch of world history is an epoch of errancy." However, the very fact that the time continuum in the historical realm is broken up into different eras indicates that the casting adrift of entities also occurs in epochs, and in Heidegger's scheme there seems to exist a privileged moment, the transitional moment from one epoch to the next, from destiny to destiny, when Being qua Truth breaks into the continuum of error... (1978: 192)

These transitional periods are, according to Arendt, those in which an attempt at founding a *novus ordo seclorum* - a new order for the ages - is made, whereby men find themselves with the

responsibility of initiating a new course of action which, once commenced, has unpredictable and irreversible results. Because the end of the old, does not automatically lead to the beginning of the new, men should come to terms with the consequences inherent in the freedom to found a new beginning by searching for guidelines from the past so as to recreate the experience of foundation anew.

With the modern demise of the Roman trinity of tradition, authority and religion, the gap between past and future originally pertaining to the faculty of thought extended itself to all spheres of life. It has become 'a fact of political relevance' by consisting in 'a tangible reality and a perplexity for all'. (1961: 14) In Heidegger's gap between absences, human existence (*Dasein*)²⁸, lingering in the world of appearance - the realm of errancy in which history unfolds -, can join itself to Being, to the absent, through the activity of thought. Here, the absent has no history in the world of appearance. Furthermore, to think and to act are distinct activities in that by thought, one is joining oneself to that which is absent, whereas by acting, one is participating in the realm of errancy, the space in which history unfolds, characterised by the going astray that is the primary trait of human history.²⁹ (1978: 194)

²⁸ Although Arendt translates *Dasein* as human existence, Heidegger distinguishes existence from ek-sistence: where the metaphysical concepts of *existentia* and *essentia* correspond to actuality and possibility - a distinction which has dominated the Western tradition -, ek-sistence defies metaphysical determinations, referring to a 'Being there', a 'thownness' in the truth of Being, which implies a 'care for Being': 'As ek-sisting, the human being sustains Da-sein in that he takes the *Da*, the clearing of being, into "care".' (1998: 248-9, 250 260)

²⁹ In 'Letter on "Humanism"', Heidegger considers thought to consist in the 'simplest' and yet the 'highest' form of action due to positing the relation of beings to Being. Thought as *l'engagement de l'Être* thus distances itself from technical thought, a poiesis aiming at 'doing and making' rather than a praxis targeting action. (1998: 239-40)

Action derives from the faculty of the will, for it is only because we will that we can accomplish an act. The activity of willing always projects itself into the future, anticipating its own end, when what it wills will have been done. Whereas thought is an end in itself, having a circular motion whereby it recoils back into itself, in isolation from the outside world, the will, which is never 'done for its own sake' nor 'finds its fulfilment in the act itself', cannot take distance from the world of appearances. (1978: 37) The harmonious dialogue which occurs between me and myself - the two in one - which provides the basis for the activity of thought is transformed in the faculty of willing into a permanent conflict 'between will and counter-will, between command and resistance'. (1978: 179)

... the will's project presupposes an I-can that is by no means guaranteed. The will's worrying disquiet can be stilled only by the I-can-and-I-do, that is, by a cessation of its own activity and release of the mind from its dominance. (1978: 37)

The radicality of the will stems from Nietzsche's discovery that we cannot will backwards. Once an action is accomplished, its consequences, which are *a priori* indeterminable, are irreversible. Arendt argues that in Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, the will is understood as a power that wills domination and control as its ultimate goal. Willing reveals a terror of the void, of emptiness, for nothingness means the very extinction of the will in not-willing. Rather than not will, the activity of willing would thus prefer to will nothingness, where the latter means to will the destruction of the past as well as of everything that is.

From Nietzsche's discovery that the Will cannot "will backwards," there follow not only frustration and resentment, but also the positive, active will to annihilate what was. And since everything that is real has "become," that is,

incorporates a past, this destructiveness ultimately relates to everything that is. (1978: 178)

According to Arendt, Heidegger contrasts the purposiveness inherent in the will, leading ultimately to destruction, to thought as the letting-be that 'obeys the call of Being', seeking to join itself to the absent. (1978: 178) By advocating a will-not-to-will, Heidegger attempts to place primacy on the letting be of the thinking ego, a realm beyond the Will, in opposition to the category of causality inherent in the willing ego. He agrees with Nietzsche that the will's experience in causing effects - that is, free will - is an illusion of consciousness inherent in human nature.

If we can no longer ascribe "the value of an action...to the *intention*, the purpose for the sake of which one has acted or lived...", "... the conclusion seems inevitable that "Nothing has any meaning" ... (1978: 167-8)

The elimination of cause and effect abolish the temporal linearity of past, present and future, the past being the cause of the present, the present being the tense in which we build projects and goals for the future, and the future being the result of both past and present. (1978: 171) Eternal Recurrence, the will's affirmation of the world of appearance as the world it would will were it allowed to live again, is the only redemption from the omnipotence of the past in its transformation of the will's projects, always in the process of becoming, into regrets and resentments over what-will-have-been. This cyclical time concept, which is diametrically opposed to the will's temporal linearity projecting itself into a future which it attempts to master, consists in 'the thought that everything that passes returns', thus making 'Being swing within itself'. (1978: 171) The 'ubermensch' is the man who has been able to do away with beliefs in causes and effects, goals and intentions, as well as to overcome the 'all-devouring past' by recreating 'all "it was" into a "thus I willed it"'. Through constant reaffirmation of the present man must, in other words, transcend a nihilism which

"judges of the world as it is that it ought *not* to be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist...". (1978: 169) Eternal Recurrence is thus a repudiation of the Will, of the latter's inability to 'will backwards' - that is, its impotence in relation to the past -, which prevents it from being able to undo an action whose outcome may be totally unexpected, in no way related to the will's original project.

... the Will's impotence persuades men to prefer looking backward, remembering and thinking, because, to the backward glance, everything that is *appears* to be necessary. The repudiation of willing liberates man from a responsibility that would be unbearable if nothing that was done could be undone. (1978: 168)

The contingency of the Will - the realisation that what is might as well not have been - is frightening to the extent to which we understand the full implications of the responsibility inherent in any act which, once started, escapes our control. Once the gap between past and future became apparent in the world of appearances due to Modernity's break with tradition, fatalistic narratives of necessity, claiming that what is or will be was meant to be, attempted to assuage the fear of the haphazard, a role which had formerly been attributed to Divine Providence. The iron law of scientific progress, the emblem of an age that had been inaugurated by the Cartesian doubt emphasising the necessity of submitting all sense evidence to scientific proof, was soon to be transposed to the realm of human affairs. The contingency inherent in human affairs would, from now on, be subject to explanations based on necessity.

It is interesting to note, however, that whereas the emphasis placed on progress was clearly based on the future tense of the willing ego, there was nevertheless a concomitant search for meaning, on behalf of the thinking ego, in the haphazardness of events that occurred in the past. Hegel's articulation of a

philosophy of History consists in precisely this attempt at conciliating the willing and the thinking egos, by combining the restlessness of a temporal movement that is onward driven with the backward glance of the historian who is able to detect a law of necessity that has determined the significance of events in the past. In Hegel, the mind produces time due to the willing activity, which simultaneously projects itself into the future and anticipates its past, by foreseeing a 'second future when the immediate I-shall-be will have become an I-shall-have-been'. (1978: 43) The future thus subsumes both present and past: by constantly assimilating the Now into the future, the present is negated by the Will which attempts to realise its projects in the absent not-yet; by anticipating the loss of its future, a time when it will be no more, the Will 'opens itself to the "tranquillity of the past" and thereby to inspection, reflection, and the backward glance of the thinking ego in its search for meaning'. According to this schema, the permanent impetus of the Will's thrusting itself into the future is only stalled by the anticipation of death, by the confrontation with its own end. This is the moment when the thinking ego takes the Will's projects as objects of reflection, transforming that which belonged to the future into the Now of thought's own enduring present.

Hegel's attempt to conciliate the Will's rectilinear future tense with the thinking ego's enduring present that circles back into itself is patent in the dialectical movement. The latter ensures infinite progress, by moving from thesis to antithesis, resulting in a synthesis, which immediately establishes itself as a new thesis. (1978: 49) This movement, which conciliates the linearity of the willing ego with the circularity of the thinking ego by forming a spiral, corresponds, in Arendt's view, to the 'non-experienced movement of the World Spirit'.

This World Spirit embodied in Mankind, as distinguished from individual men and particular nations, pursues a rectilinear movement inherent in the succession of the generations.

Each new generation forms a "new stage of existence, a new world" and thus has "to begin all over again," but "*it commences at a higher level*" because, being human and endowed with mind, namely Recollection, it has "conserved (the earlier) experience." (1978: 48)

The problem is that by positing a World Spirit, Hegel has distanced himself from the living experience of both the thinking and willing egos, creating a hypothesis which bears no relation to reality. Arendt regards this attempt to conciliate the Will's future tense with the thinking ego's enduring present as doomed to failure. Whereas the Will 'demands that time shall never be terminated so long as men exist on earth', Hegelian philosophy requires not merely the suspension of time during the activity of thought, but 'an arrest in real time'.

In other words, Hegel's philosophy could claim objective truth only on condition that history were factually at an end, that mankind had no more future, that nothing could still occur that would bring anything new. (1978: 47)

The power of negation inherent in the Will, conceived as the driving force of History, progresses infinitely forward by considering every goal as a means to establishing further goals. Because the Will "admits ends only as means to outwit itself", it can result either in infinite progress or in permanent annihilation depending on the starting point of the dialectical movement, Being or Not-Being. Arendt argues that Hegel took Being for granted as the beginning of the process, in its journey toward Not-Being and Becoming. If Hegel were to commence the process with Not-Being rather than Being, no Becoming would ever be possible. As such, Hegelian dialectics do not allow for the existence of 'sheer nothingness, that is, a negation that does not negate something specific and particular'.

All we can think is "a Nothing from which Something is to proceed; so that Being is already contained in the Beginning." (1978: 51)

Because narratives of necessity depict Being as already contained in the Beginning, men are unaccustomed to exercising the freedom inherent in action, a capacity which derives from the willing ego. This freedom cannot be separated from the responsibility inherent in the fact of contingency, that is, the realisation that there are no laws which can determine the effect of any particular action, and that what is could also not have been. Because the Will is, in Kant's words, our "faculty for beginning spontaneously a series in time", (1978: 110) Being cannot be contained in the Beginning, for this would deny the individuality of man, who is himself an absolute beginning (Augustine), not in time but in causality. Due to the fact that men are born into a world of appearances which precedes them in time and which continues to exist when they pass away, their willing faculty can have, in this context, only a relative first beginning; nevertheless, the freedom of spontaneity inherent in the willing faculty is absolute in the sense that each action will provoke a series of unpredictable and irreversible effects, over which, however appealing narratives of necessity may appear to be, no one has control.

IV. On Inner Freedom in Fanon and Arendt: The Self-Production of Man

According to Fanon, the liberation of the man of colour will only be accomplished when he defines himself as an 'absolute intensity of beginning', an existential becoming rather than an ontological being. In Arendt's Augustinian view, 'every man, created in the singular, is a new beginning by virtue of his birth'. (1978: 109)

Man's individuality demonstrates itself in the faculty of the Will, an organ which is directed towards the future and which spurs us to act. Arendt would regard Existentialism as rooted in the Hegelian time concept of the Will, which, by placing primacy on the future, cancels out the present: because man "says *no* to his Now", he 'creates his own future'. (1978: 41) In this context, Fanon's definition of man as an existential becoming rather than an ontological being is profoundly Hegelian.

If one turns back to Heidegger's distinction between the activities of thought and action, the former which indulges in joining itself with absent Being, and the latter - derived from the Will - occurring in the realm of errancy, the world of appearances in which actions performed by beings cause history to unfold, then it is clear that beings are in the constant process of becoming within their temporal existence. According to this schema, black consciousness as absolute is akin to the essence of Being, to which thought can join itself but which action is doomed to escape due to operating in a world of appearances. Black consciousness here would be ontological, pertaining to the realm of Being, were it not for the visibility of blackness, which can only occur in an existential world of appearance, always in the process of becoming.

Arendt, as we saw, accused the Hegelian dialectical movement of positing a Beginning that already embodies Being, and of therefore being unable to think an absolute beginning, that which precedes every act of foundation. Fanon wishes, on one hand, to affirm the absolute beginning of man - that is, the sheer nothingness that should accompany such a beginning -, and, on the other, to assert the existential becoming of man in his incessant march toward the future. Arendt might find this problematic, if not only because the sheer nothingness inherent in an absolute beginning - which the dialectical movement does not allow for - results in the permanent annihilation of the whole process. It would thus be difficult to simultaneously affirm man as an absolute beginning as well as an existential becoming.

Fanon argues that the man of colour can only achieve liberation by refusing to see either past or present as definitive. At the same time that he wishes to progress into a better world, Fanon casts, in true Hegelian fashion, a backward glance: the 'negro' can choose to recreate himself against the stereotypes of the past. By focusing on the possibility of man recreating himself, Fanon introduces invention into existence.

Because both an absolute beginning, the "faculty for beginning spontaneously a series in time" (1978: 110), and an existential becoming belong to the willing ego and, as such, project themselves into the future, the willing faculty is predominant in Fanon. This Will, as in Nietzsche, presupposes a kind of power, for here the I-will anticipates an I-can.

Says Fanon: '*... man is a yes ... Yes to life ...*' (1986: 222). If one compares this quote to Arendt's description of the Nietzschean Will as 'an unqualified Yes to Life' (1978: 163), the similarities between the Fanonian and the Nietzschean wills are obvious. However, whereas Nietzsche fought against the nihilism which "judges of the world as it is that it ought *not* to be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist ..." (1978: 169), emphasising the importance of affirming the world we live in as the world we will, Fanon wants to take action to change social structures based on a historico-racial schema that create and perpetuate the notion of black inferiority. While Nietzsche found solace in an eternally recurring Becoming as the solution to the aimlessness of a world where, due to lack of intentions, everything has ceased to have meaning, Fanon believes in 'basic values that constitute a human world', the latter which should be defended by those who prepare to act.

Fanon wished to attain consciousness of self by losing himself in the 'night of the absolute'. However, Sartre's affirmation that *négritude* was but a stage in the Marxian dialectical progression,

culminating in a society without races, destroyed Fanon's hope of finding the absolute in black consciousness. The final goal inherent in the Hegelian dialectical movement entails the destruction of *négritude*.

Profoundly dialectical, Fanonian humanism consists in a permanent movement arising from the thesis of universal man and its antithesis of nativism or *négritude* - or from the thesis of the coloniser's inhumanity provoking the antithesis of the colonised subject's violence -, resulting in the liberation of both colonised and coloniser in the form of the new man.

The crux of Arendt's critique of Fanon might target the latter's recourse to a narrative of necessity which destroys the freedom of spontaneity inherent in action, considering that the freedom of the will which gives rise to existentialist thought coincides with an inner freedom - whereby an 'I will' is identified with an 'I can'. What in Hegel is identified as time produced by the willing faculty of the mind in its constant drive toward the future - without the realisation 'that he himself once was not and that one day he will be no more,' man would be unable to comprehend the meaning of existence -, existentialist thought came to identify with the self-production of man's mind. (1978: 42-3) The Self thus coincides with the Will, ceasing to be when there is no future left.

... the idea of man creating himself is strictly in the tradition of Hegelian and Marxian thinking; it is the very basis of all leftist humanism. But according to Hegel man "produces" himself through thought, whereas for Marx, who turned Hegel's "idealism" upside down, it was labour, the human form of metabolism with nature, that fulfilled this function. And though one may argue that all notions of man creating himself have in common a rebellion against the very factuality of the human condition - nothing is more obvious than that man, whether as member of the species or as an

individual, does *not* owe his existence to himself ... (1970: 13)

The predominant mood of the Will is restlessness and intransigence, because although the Will may identify itself with an 'I can' on an inner level, this 'I can' is by no means guaranteed in the world of appearance, in which the outcome of our actions is never predictable. This is why, according to Arendt, the 'soul' reacts to the future in fear and hope, carrying on a conflicting dialogue with itself, which can only be overcome by the extraordinary force of an inner voice of command. The very power of the affirmation of the Will lies, perhaps, in the knowledge of its own impotence, in relation to the past - the fact that it cannot Will backwards - and in relation to the outcome of concrete actions in the realm of human affairs. The strength of the inner voice of command derives from the attempt to overcome resistance, both in the external World, as well as in inner man. For unlike what occurs in the activity of thinking, the two-in-one of the Will are involved in a constant struggle against each other: the formation of every Will creates its counter-Will; every command creates its own resistance.

This Paulinian discovery, which came hand-in-hand with the definition of Christian ethics, is concerned with the law: before a law was established, there was no knowledge of sin; hence it is the command of the law that originates sin. At the basis of this problematic lies the Apostle Paul's realisation of the impotence of the Will: "... For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate" (1978: 65). The 'I Will,' in Fanon identified with the 'I Can', is in Paul an 'I Cannot'. The point is that the rift is not settled in favour of law or of sin, but rather, that it can only be healed by grace in Paul, and by love in Augustine. Both these concepts bring about a 'lastingness, a perdurance of which the mind otherwise seems incapable' in its ceaseless fluctuations. (1978: 103) For Duns Scotus, the Will's redemption comes from action itself, which

interrupts the struggle in which the Will addresses itself. The price of this redemption is freedom, however.

I am ... entirely free, and I pay for this freedom by the curious fact that the Will always wills and nills at the same time; the mental activity in its case does not exclude its opposite. (1978: 102)

Because we cannot act having regard simultaneously for that which we will and that which we nill, only by starting to act do we cease to will and redeem the conflict inherent in our Will. This action is different from Heidegger's will-not-to-will for, in this perspective, the latter would consist merely in another volition.

On the basis of this short exposition of the Will, it may be concluded that political freedom is the price Fanon pays for his commitment to necessity. By acting he redeems the conflict inherent in the Will, but subsequently tries to control the outcome of his actions by seeking refuge in a narrative of necessity. This curtails the possibility of a genuinely new beginning patent in the very fact of natality or in every act of foundation. Fanon's emphasis on the primacy of necessity follows the Western philosophical tradition which equates freedom with the free will of 'inner man'. However true it may be that the inner self is free, Arendt argues that such discussions are politically irrelevant.

V. Freedom and Non-Sovereignty: A Reconciliation

Arendt considers that the Western emphasis on deriving freedom from the will is dangerous because it can contribute to the accentuation of the divorce between the realm of thought and that of sense experience. She argues that when confronted with hostile environments, people have the tendency to seek refuge within themselves by appealing to an inner freedom which bears no link

to the world of appearances. This exploration of inner man is often used as a pretext to avoid confronting situations which threaten the potential for freedom in the real world.

The experiences of inner freedom are derivative in that they always presuppose a retreat from the world, where freedom was denied, into an inwardness to which no other has access. The inward space where the self is sheltered against the world must not be mistaken for the heart or the mind, both of which exist and function only in interrelationship with the world. (1961: 146-47)

For Arendt, freedom is first and foremost a political phenomenon. Because man consists in a new beginning, he always embodies the potential for freedom insofar as he is capable of action. However, man is free to the extent that he exercises action. Freedom only becomes a political reality when action is concretised, 'when action has created its own worldly space where it can come out of hiding ... and make its appearance'. (1961: 169)

Arendt argues that freedom is often regarded as a nonpolitical phenomenon due to its source being present even when action has lost the capacity to interrupt the automatism of political processes. Freedom, in such contexts, is no longer understood as a virtuosity, that is, as an accomplishment realised in the performance itself, but rather as a gift with which all human beings are endowed but which can only be fully realised when action creates a space of appearance enabling freedom to come out of its concealment. Because political freedom can only exist where the 'I will' coincides with the 'I can', an agent is no longer free when he cannot do, due to either exterior or interior circumstances. (1961: 161)

Arendt believes that action is free insofar as it is able to transcend both motives and predictable goals. This concept of free action differs from that of free will, where freedom of choice - *liberum*

arbitrium - concerns having to opt between two objects, on the basis of motive and the specificity of a predictable goal. Thus, by exercising the faculty of judgement, the intellect must first recognise the validity of a particular objective to be realised in the future, subsequently turning to the will to command the initiation of a course of action which will allow for the fulfilment of that goal. The recognition of the objective does not concern freedom, but rather the capacity to exercise right or wrong judgement. Although action needs both the intellect and the will to realise a particular objective, it exceeds both in that its source comes from principles, the latter which inspire action from without and become actualised in the performing act itself.

Such principles are honour or glory, love of equality ... but also fear or distrust or hatred. Freedom or its opposite appears in the world whenever such principles are actualised; the appearance of freedom, like the manifestation of principles, coincides with the performing act. (1961: 153)

This coincidence between freedom and the performing act was acknowledged, according to Arendt, by ancient Greek political thought, which defined freedom solely in terms of liberty of movement. Those who were free to move within the *polis* and within the frontiers of the city-states were property or slave owners who were liberated from the necessities of life and could dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to the caring for a common public space, in the company of other men of the same condition, by exercising the faculties of speech and action.

... only ancient political communities were founded for the express purpose of serving the free - those who were neither slaves, subject to coercion by others, not labourers, driven and urged on by the necessities of life. If, then, we understand the political in the sense of the *polis*, its end or *raison d'être* would be to establish and keep in existence a space where freedom as virtuosity can appear. (1961: 154-5)

Because the Greek platonic tradition wished to abstain from politics - the *vita activa* - so as to dedicate itself to what was considered to be the 'highest and freest' way of life - the *vita contemplativa* -, the philosophers of antiquity did not articulate any concept of freedom, due to the latter's connotation of a tangible political reality inherent in human affairs. Freedom thus first surfaced in the Western philosophical tradition when the experience of religious conversion transposed a freedom that had had its origin in the realm of human affairs to that of the inner man, or the Will. This notion of free will attempted to articulate the idea that it was possible for man to be a slave and yet to be free.

The identification of free will and sovereignty is, for Arendt, one of the most pernicious legacies of the Western philosophical tradition, because it can lead to either of the following conclusions: on one hand, it may legitimate the disavowal of human freedom, due to the realisation that men are never free as long as they cannot control the outcome of their actions; on the other hand, it can validate the affirmation of one's freedom - as an individual or as a group - at the price of sovereignty of all others. Whereas the first conclusion can be used to justify situations in which political freedom is threatened - such as the restriction of freedom in authoritarian regimes, the abolition of political freedom in tyrannies and dictatorships, and the total elimination of spontaneity in totalitarian regimes -, the second can excuse the use of non-political means, that is violence, against individuals or groups that are regarded as a menace to the establishment of one's sovereignty as an end.

Where men wish to be sovereign, as individuals or as organised groups, they must submit to the oppression of the will, be this the individual will with which I force myself, or the "general will" of an organised group. If men wish to be free, it is precisely sovereignty they must renounce. (1961: 165)

Arendt recognises, however, that it is extremely difficult to think freedom as coexistent with non-sovereignty within the conceptual framework of the Western philosophical tradition. The fact that man is free to act but cannot control the outcome of his actions demonstrates the absurdity of human existence. Although this dilemma was greatly elaborated on by existentialist thinkers, Arendt claims that the latter merely gave a 'rebellious' slant to traditional concepts. By placing emphasis on sovereignty as self-sufficiency or self-domination, these attempts share in common the denial of a plurality that characterises the human condition. This urge to overcome plurality results either in the self being asserted through domination of others, or in the denial of the existence of alterity by ignoring the real world in favour of an imaginary realm of inner man.

Arendt argues that although the reality of the world of appearances destroys the illusion that identifies freedom with sovereignty, the capacity for action - which allows for the faculties of forgiving and making promises - carries within itself the potentialities enabling it to transcend the restrictions of non-sovereignty. While the predicament of irreversibility inherent in action - the fact that once a deed has been accomplished it cannot be undone, however much the agent may have been unaware of the consequences of his act before the latter was consummated - can only be redeemed by the faculty of forgiving, the predicament of unpredictability inherent in the outcome of action is assuaged by the faculty of making and keeping promises. (1989: 237) Without the faculty to forgive, human beings would be forever tied to the consequences of a single deed, from which they would never recover. The faculty of making promises, on the other hand, enables the confirmation of identity to take place between 'the one who promises and the one who fulfils' in the presence of others, that is, within the space of plurality which characterises the world of appearances.

Arendt argues that plurality is a necessary condition for forgiveness due to the latter consisting in an action where '*what* was done is forgiven for the sake of *who* did it'. (1989: 241) Because identity in Arendt is always dependent on confirmation by others, and is thus a condition of plurality, one can never forgive oneself. The fact that the tangible reality of *who* a person is is only revealed by word or deed makes us incapable of perceiving ourselves with the distinctness that we appear to others in the world of appearances.

Because automatism is inherent in all processes, historical processes are no less destructive than the biological ones that guide our life-span from birth to death. For Arendt, human affairs would bear the mark of the inexorable laws of automatic necessity that are characteristic of the natural sciences if it were not for the human capacity to undo, within certain limits, what has been done.

Forgiving and making promises are, for Arendt, the only moral precepts which are not imposed on action from the outside, arising rather from the very condition of plurality, of sharing the world with others through word and deed. These capacities thus work as a 'control mechanism' operating from within action, that is, the faculty enabling the initiation of new and unending processes. Action, with its constant challenge to the automatism inherent in laws of necessity, is akin to a miracle-working faculty in that it embodies the 'infinite improbability' which characterises the coming into the world of every new beginning. For Arendt, the infinitely improbable constitutes earthly reality, both natural and historical. However, because men cause political processes to occur through action, history is perhaps more open to the infinitely improbable - to the unforeseeable and the unpredictable - than natural processes.

The decisive difference between the "infinite improbabilities" on which the reality of our earthly life rests and the miraculous character inherent in those events which

establish historical reality is that, in the realm of human affairs, we know the author of the "miracles," It is men who perform them - men who because they have received the twofold gift of freedom and action can establish a reality of their own. (1961: 171)

VI. Political Freedom: Public Happiness or Civil Rights?

Freedom alone is the reason why men live together in a political organisation and, as such, differs intrinsically from other phenomena of the public realm, namely justice, equality, or power. The latter are, indeed, possible only insofar as freedom exists, demonstrating the extent to which political life and action would be meaningless in a world without freedom. Freedom, however, only becomes the direct goal of political action in times of crisis or of revolution, when an old order has collapsed and an attempt at founding a new beginning is experienced.

... only where change occurs in the sense of a new beginning, where violence is used to constitute an altogether different form of government, to bring about the formation of a new body politic, where the liberation from oppression aims at least at the constitution of freedom can we speak of revolution. (1990: 35)

Revolution, the urge to establish a new order, thus far transcends the reclamation of civil rights, the latter which consist in rights pertaining to the private realm - the sphere of necessity - such as life, property, and liberty. Arendt argues that had revolution aimed primarily at the establishment of civil rights, it would not have articulated freedom - participation in the public realm - as an objective, but would have contented itself merely with the successful liberation from governments 'which had over-stepped their powers and infringed upon old and well-established rights'. (1990: 32)

The fact is that although liberation and freedom may not coincide, the acts and deeds which liberation requires of the men who involve themselves in the process often throw them inadvertently into the public realm, where they begin 'to constitute that space of appearances where freedom can unfold its charms and become a visible, tangible reality'. Revolution thus aims for the foundation of freedom, that is, the formation of a republic which guarantees the space where freedom can appear. The emphasis on public happiness, as active participation in the public realm, in detriment to the habitually recognised citizens' rights to private well-being, has, according to Arendt, been historically distorted in the course of Revolutions: those who wish to attain liberation from the realm of Necessity rush to assist those who are attempting to found a new space for freedom, with the unfortunate result that all efforts are placed on liberation rather than on the framing of a constitution.

And yet, was not Robespierre's profound unwillingness to put an end to the revolution also due to his conviction that "constitutional government is chiefly concerned with civil liberty, revolutionary government with public liberty?" Must he not have feared that the end of revolutionary power and the beginning of constitutional government would spell the end of "public liberty?" (1990: 133)

Prior to both the American and French Revolutions, the end of government had been thought of in terms of public happiness and civil liberties. However, the course of the Revolutions brought to the fore a conflict between the public realm on one hand, and private interests on the other.

For the American Revolution, it was a question of whether the new government was to constitute a realm of its own for the 'public happiness' of its citizens, or whether it had been devised solely to serve and ensure their pursuit of private happiness more effectively than had the old regime. For the

French Revolution, it was a question of whether the end of revolutionary government lay in the establishment of a 'constitutional government' which would terminate the reign of public freedom through a guarantee of civil liberties and rights, or whether, for the sake of "public freedom," the Revolution should be declared in permanence. (1990: 133-34)

The question that Robespierre had posed was to haunt all subsequent attempts at founding new world orders: if the end of the Revolution would lead to the abolition of public happiness - or freedom - in name of the consolidation of civil liberties, then was it worth terminating revolutionary government? Although Robespierre defined the objective of Revolution as the establishment of public freedom, he simultaneously considered that constitutional government ought to protect citizens against the abuses of public power. According to Arendt, this is where the trouble begins.

... power is still public and in the hands of government, but the individual has become powerless and must be protected against it. Freedom, on the other hand, has shifted places; it resides no longer in the public realm but in the private life of the citizens and so must be defended against the public and its power. Freedom and power have parted company, and the fateful equating of power with violence, of the political with government, and of government with a necessary evil has begun. (1990: 137)

From this perspective, the citizen's political liberty is regarded as a potential freedom from politics. Political liberty here consists in security, a quality which should be provided for by the power of government, permitting 'an undisturbed development of the life process of society as a whole'. (1961: 150) According to Arendt, this rift between civil liberties and public freedom has survived down to our days, having even been accentuated during the periods of totalitarian rule of the twentieth century. Arendt,

however, also accuses liberalism of having contributed to abolishing the concept of liberty from the public realm, by defending that politics should primarily concern itself with fulfilling the necessities inherent in the private well-being of citizens.

Now, where life is at stake all action is by definition under the sway of necessity, and the proper realm to take care of life's necessities is the gigantic and still increasing sphere of social and economic life whose administration has overshadowed the political realm ever since the beginning of the modern age. (1961: 155)

The public realm, the world of appearances in which we live, transcends any possible concern for life, due to the very fact that it precedes and outlasts our coming into being. The private realm, on the contrary, is solely dedicated to ensuring the security of the life process at the hands of family and household.³⁰

VII. Safeguarding Freedom: Political Equality and Social Discrimination

In the ancient Greek city-states, political freedom - or participation in the public realm - was solely enjoyed by those citizens who had liberty of movement, and as such could move with ease from the private domain to the public realm, or between city-states. These citizens were property or slave owners who were liberated from the necessities of life, being the latter fulfilled in the private realm. Although equality of condition was a prerequisite for participation

³⁰ According to Seyla Benhabib, feminist theory has drawn attention to the distinction between private and public realms as complicitous with discourses of domination which legitimate womens' oppression in the private realm. Benhabib proposes a Habermasian 'discourse model of legitimacy', based on a communicative ethics aiming at the renegotiation of the boundaries between private and public as an alternative to Arendt's agonistic model. (1997: 82, 110-11)

in the *polis*, the men who participated in the public realm were regarded as equal insofar as they formed a body of peers in which there was no-rule, that is, no division between rulers and ruled. This idea of no-rule was expressed in the term isonomy.

Isonomy guaranteed equality, but not because all men were born or created equal, but, on the contrary, because men were by nature not equal, and needed an artificial institution, the *polis*, which ... would make them equal ... (1990: 30-1)

In ancient Greece, equality thus existed only in the public realm, where men lived together as citizens and not as private individuals.³¹ The important point about isonomy is that it assumes that where there is rule, the ruler is not free. By exercising rule over others, he has set himself apart from his peers in the company of whom he would have been free. He has thus proceeded to annihilate the political space in which both he and others could partake of freedom.

The reason for this insistence on the interconnection of freedom and equality in Greek political thought was that freedom was understood as being manifest in certain ... human activities, and that these activities could appear and be real only when others saw them, judged them, remembered them. (1990: 31)

³¹ Seyla Benhabib notes that Arendt's idealisation of the agonistic political space of the polis minimises the fact that the latter was only possible due to the exclusion of 'women, slaves, labourers, non-citizen residents, and ... non-Greeks', all of whom were confined to the private realm, catering through their labour to the life necessities that permitted 'leisure for politics'. Arendt's hostility to the intrusion of the social into the public realm in the modern age can be read as a 'critique of political universalism', whereby political participation is considered impossible when the public realm is reduced to administrative and economic functions. (1997: 82, 91)

This idea of equality inherent in Greek political thought sponsored by Arendt differs greatly from our contemporary notion of equality, according to which all men are created equal and only become unequal due to the influence of social or political institutions. Arendt claims that equality is one of the most uncertain conditions of humankind. She is an apologist of the boundaries of the nation-state, arguing that the latter protect the individual in his distinctiveness as a political being appearing within the framework of the law: all citizens are therefore safeguarded in their equality as members of a particular nation-state, independently of class, ethnicity, or gender. Whereas the realm of the social is for Arendt composed of the differences inherent in the human condition, the political is, on the one hand, where these differences can be defended as equal to each other in value under the eyes of the law, and, on the other, where the individual can distinguish himself in the will to actively participate in a body politic, where he seeks recognition by the Other through excellence.³²

Arendt states that whenever groups are prevented from action and from attaining achievement, they tend to become inward looking. Great part of her work is devoted to describing the dangers entailed by the refusal to participate in a body politic. One example would concern the Jewish experience in Germany. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt states that European Jews became powerful in the seventeenth century, due to their links to European aristocracy who depended on the former as money-lenders. Rather than identifying themselves with a particular

³² Because excellence is attained 'performatively' in the public realm, Habermas reads Arendt as presenting a communicative theory of political action in the form of a renewal of Aristotelian praxis, based on consensual and dialogic rationality, in detriment to instrumental action, corresponding to poiesis, whose technical rationality threatens the political sphere in the modern age. Villa argues that Arendt would regard a communicative politics with a consensual objective as instrumental, for action then no longer consists in an end in itself. (1996: 5, 6, 42)

people in terms of nationality, Jews considered themselves to be above the national, drawing security from their closeness to the State, the nobility.

With the development of the modern nation-state in the eighteenth century, the bourgeoisie embarked on imperial expansionism thus paving the way for capitalistic enterprise to progress. The State, which had monopoly over the instruments of violence necessary to realise the imperialist project, became increasingly powerful, and ceased to rely on inter-European Jews. The sedimentation of the nation-state came alongside the protection of the rights of the citizen who found himself within the geographical boundaries of the nation-state, independently of nationality. Equality on the political realm among all groups belonging to a nation-state thus became a juridical reality. However, because Jews continued to be identified with the State by the masses in general - due to their historical links to the European aristocracy -, they were never accepted as equals in the social realm, despite being equal, on a juridical level, to any other national citizen.

This leads Arendt to conclude that the power of Jews in Europe diminished inversely to their juridical recognition as equals. Critical of any discriminatory movement, Arendt nevertheless insinuates that discrimination was not a one-way process, blaming the isolation to which Jews voted themselves in Germany, for example, where rather than actively participate in the German body politic they continued to regard themselves as a diasporic, inter-European community.

Arendt would use similar arguments concerning the failed attempt at school desegregation in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957. At the time, the situation evolved into a conflict between the US Federal Government and the Arkansas State Government, with President Eisenhower ordering black children to be escorted by troops to school. In an article called 'Reflections on Little Rock', Arendt spoke out against the decision to integrate schools in the South.

What the desegregation policy meant, according to Arendt, was that adults were being deresponsibilised from attempting to resolve their problems in the political realm, placing instead the burden on children, who would be forced to confront hostility within the social realm, i.e. from white school children and teachers. Arendt opposed the pressure to integrate where the welcome was non-existent. Considered controversial today, her position can be read as drawing a parallel between the situation in Arkansas and that lived by Jews in Germany before World War II. Her intention may have been to ward off a similarly explosive situation, where, on one hand, the Jews' status as a separate body paved the way for their being targeted as an 'objective enemy' by the National Socialist movement, and, on the other, the growing 'equality of condition' of Jews with other groups led to increasing social discrimination.

Arendt regards the attempt of the US Federal Government to impose an education desegregation policy on the State Governments as a breach of the principle of the division of power inherent in the federalist structure, of the private rights of parents over their children to bring them up as they saw fit, and of the social right to free association. Her major preoccupation is to safeguard freedom within the public realm, in a context where the Federal Government was resorting to means of violence to enforce an education policy that, for Arendt, had more to do with the social right of free association than with the political rights deriving from citizenship.

Arendt contends that the then prevailing inter-marriage laws of 29 of the 49 states represented a much more serious offence and violation of the Constitution than segregation of schools. For these inter-marriage laws aimed directly at the private realm, the domain which is ruled neither by equality nor discrimination, but rather by the right to choose those with whom we wish to spend our lives. Unlike the social realm, which is guided by the likeness of characteristics shared in common by a group, our choice of

relationships in the private realm 'strikes, inexplicably and unerringly, at one person in his uniqueness, his unlikeness to all other people we know'. (1959: 53)

The rules of uniqueness and exclusiveness are, and always will be, in conflict with the standards of society precisely because social discrimination violates the principle, and lacks validity for the conduct, of private life ... The scandal begins only when ... challenge to society and prevailing customs, to which every citizen has a right, is interpreted as a criminal offence ... Social standards are not legal standards and if legislature follows social prejudice, society has become tyrannical. (1959: 53)

Because the right to 'home and marriage' is an elementary civil right pertaining to the sphere of 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness', the government has no right to enforce laws in this area. Arendt opposes government intervention against discriminatory practices inherent in the social realm, where the identifiability of groups depends on their differentiation from other groups. However, the government does have the duty of preventing the legal enforcement of socially discriminatory practices.

Just as the government has to ensure that social discrimination never curtails political equality, it must also safeguard the rights of every person to do as he pleases within the four walls of his own home. The moment social discrimination is legally enforced, it becomes persecution ... The moment social discrimination is legally abolished, the freedom of society is violated ... The government can legitimately take no steps against social discrimination because government can act only in the name of equality - a principle which does not obtain in the social sphere. (1959: 53)

For Arendt, the ideal solution to ward off situations similar to those which occurred in Nazi Germany would be, on the one hand, to recognise that there is no such thing as equality in the social realm, and on the other, to have the law recognise, in the political realm, all citizens as equal in their differences.

VIII. Universal Human Rights Vs. 'Rights of an Englishman'

Arendt believed that equality is one of the most uncertain conditions of humankind; the only certainty inherent in human plurality are the differences that exist among people. She is highly critical of a notion of equality that often reduces the human to mere humanity.

If a Negro in a white community is considered a Negro and nothing else, he loses along with this right to equality that freedom of action which is specifically human; all his deeds are now explained as 'necessary' consequences of some 'Negro' qualities; he has become some specimen of an animal species, called man. Much the same thing happens to those who have lost all distinctive political qualities and have become human beings and nothing else. (1979: 302)

In totalitarian regimes, she states, individuality, any trace that distinguishes a man from another, is not tolerated. 'As long as all men have not been made equally superfluous...the ideal of totalitarian domination has not been achieved'. (1979: 457) According to Arendt, it is only within the body politic of citizenship that the human being can be protected as a legal persona, that is, as a 'right-and-duty-bearing person' whose identity is created and confirmed within the framework of the law.

The distinction between a private individual in Rome and a Roman citizen was that the latter had a *persona*, a legal personality ... Without his *persona*, there would be an individual without rights and duties, perhaps a 'natural man' -

that is, a human being or *homo* in the original meaning of the word, indicating someone outside the range of the law and the body politic of the citizens, as for instance a slave - but certainly a politically irrelevant being. (1990: 107)

Arendt claims that where there is no conception of the legal *persona*, created and protected by the body politic, any attempt at equalisation of differences can be catastrophic, such as that which occurred subsequently to the French Revolution.

... the men of the Revolution were no longer concerned ... with equality in the sense that everybody should be equally entitled to his legal personality ... They believed that they had ... liberated the natural man in all men, and given him the Rights of Man to which each was entitled, not by virtue of the body politic to which he belonged but by virtue of being born ... the Reign of Terror ... equalised because it left all inhabitants equally without the protecting mask of a legal personality. (1990: 109)

Whereas the American Bill of Rights based itself on a division of power so as to control governmental omnipotence - thereby presupposing the rights to freedom and citizenship -, the French Rights of Man equated politics with nature, defining the primary rights inherent in man's nature, that is, his right to the necessities of life. Rather than being understood as prepolitical civil rights, pertaining to a private realm in which no public authority could interfere, they were to serve as the 'foundation-stone' and ultimate end of the new body politic.

Arendt opposes a universalist notion of the rights of man, insisting that history has taught us that once a people loses the right to citizenship there is no universal law of the rights of man capable of protecting it from being targeted as an enemy, due to visible differentiation.

The great danger arising from the existence of people forced to live outside the common world is that they are thrown back, in the midst of civilisation, on their natural givenness, on their mere differentiation...The paradox involved in the loss of human rights is that such loss coincides with the instant when a person becomes a human being in general - without a profession, without a citizenship, without an opinion, without a deed by which to identify and specify himself - and different in general, representing nothing but his own absolutely unique individuality which, deprived of expression within and action upon a common world, loses all significance. (1979: 302)

Arendt emphasises the importance of Edmund Burke's 'rights of an Englishman', that is, his reliance on an '"entailed inheritance" of rights which one transmits to one's children like life itself' and which 'spring "from within the nation"', rather than from the French Revolution's Declaration of the Rights of Man.

The pragmatic soundness of Burke's concept seems to be beyond doubt in the light of our manifold experiences. Not only did loss of national rights in all instances entail the loss of human rights; the restoration of human rights, as the recent example of the State of Israel proves, has been achieved so far only through the restoration or the establishment of national rights. (1979: 299)

Although Arendt is suspicious of universalisms and defends national boundaries as a domain in which the citizen can be protected, she nevertheless supports, in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, the post-1945 juridical concept of 'crimes against humanity', stating that a sharp distinction must be drawn between expulsion and genocide, the former being an 'offence against fellow-nations, whereas the latter is an attack upon human diversity as such, that is, upon a characteristic of the "human status" without which the very words "mankind" or "humanity" would be devoid of meaning'.

(1994: 269) For Arendt, genocide distinguishes itself from any other crime by the enormity of a deed that violates an 'altogether different order' and 'different community'. (1994: 272)

Thus, although Arendt praises the trial of Eichmann for providing an opportunity where 'Jews were able to sit in judgement on crimes committed against their own people' and exercise their full 'rights of Englishmen' thereby avoiding falling back on a universalist language of the rights of man complicit with Nazi atrocities (1994: 271), she nevertheless defends the need for an international criminal court to judge events the monstrosity of which 'is "minimised" before a tribunal that represents one nation only'. (1994: 270)

IX. Equality in Arendt and Fanon: A Comparison

Fanonian humanism predicated itself on universalism, intending to restore the unity of mankind, that is, a unity that has been torn apart by inhuman practices, such as colonialism. Thus, whereas Arendt opposes a universalist language of human rights which posits an equality of condition inherent in 'natural man', given at birth rather than constituted in the political realm, Fanon would adopt the messianic universalism of the French revolutionaries who defended the *malheureux*, the victims of misery and exploitation. Fanon's moving cry against all forms of oppression is rooted in the Romantic emotion of compassion, articulated by Rousseau, which gives rise to the sentiment of pity, predominant in the Christian tradition. The very concept of *le peuple*, which arose from the French Revolution, conveys the outrage of the "heart" against the hypocrisy and corruption of a society that ignored the poor's basic rights to life inherent in the realm of necessity.

Where the breakdown of traditional authority set the poor of the earth on the march, where they left the obscurity of their misfortunes and streamed upon the market-place, their *furor* seemed as irresistible as the motion of the stars, a torrent

rushing forward with elemental force and engulfing a whole world. (Arendt, 1990: 113)

This 'necessity in motion' is, for Arendt, the hallmark of the modern age. Although men have realised, since antiquity, that freedom requires liberation from life's necessity, only modernity witnessed their pitting themselves against necessity. The result was that the necessity, that which should concern the private realm, occupied the public realm, the domain in which men should be free as citizens within the framework of the law.

Universal mankind was perhaps first articulated as a political concept in Rousseau's *Social Contract*, where the general will corresponds to the interest of the people or the nation as a whole, in contrast to the particular interests of each citizen. Thus, just as, in foreign affairs, the unity of a nation-state relies on the existence of a common national enemy, the unifying principle within the nation itself, in terms of domestic politics, was the common enemy that appeared in the form of the private interests of all citizens. Robespierre was to elect the passion of compassion for the *malheureux* as the nation's general will, that is, as the single force that could unite the distinct classes of society into one nation. This capacity for compassion in the presence of the suffering of others - as opposed to the faculty of reasoning which interferes with compassion - had been the basis upon which Rousseau defended the innate virtue of natural man. (1990: 81)

Fanon's focus on the primacy of the interests of the nation over those of the individual as well as the compassion felt for the sufferings of the *damnés de la terre* are reminiscent of Rousseau's deliberations. Arendt, however, argues that compassion is politically irrelevant, for it eliminates the worldly space between men in which the public realm is to be found.

As a rule, it is not compassion which sets out to change worldly conditions in order to ease human suffering, but if it

does, it will shun the drawn-out wearisome processes of persuasion, negotiation, and compromise, which are the processes of law and politics, and lend its voice to the suffering itself, which must claim for swift and direct action, that is, for action with the means of violence. (1990: 87)

To the emotion of compassion corresponds the sentiment of pity, which is translated into action through the principle of solidarity. Compassion can only comprehend the particular, the suffering of one person in detriment to the general. However, because sentiments are boundless, pity can 'reach out to the multitude', no longer directed at specific suffering nor at particular persons.

Since the days of the French Revolution, it has been the boundlessness of their sentiments that made revolutionaries so curiously insensitive to reality in general and to the reality of persons in particular, whom they felt no compunctions in sacrificing to their "principles," or to the course of history, or to the cause of revolution as such. (1990: 90)

The sentiment of pity that inspired the French revolutionaries led them to congregate all the oppressed into one mass, the *toujours malheureux. Le peuple* as a mass drowned the infinite diversity inherent in plurality, and aimed for a unanimity of public opinion akin to a form of tyranny which destroyed the foundations of freedom.

... no formation of opinion is ever possible where all opinions have become the same ... public opinion, by virtue of its unanimity, provokes a unanimous opposition and thus kills true opinions everywhere. (1990: 226)

Democracy as the rule of the many is opposed to isonomy as the condition prevailing among a body of peers in which there is no division between rulers and the ruled. Because the American Revolution identified the people with the plurality of voices and

interests inherent in the human condition, the foundation of freedom consisted in a public realm in which there was an exchange - rather than an unanimity - of opinions between equals.

The direction of the American Revolution remained committed to the foundation of freedom and the establishment of lasting institutions, and to those who acted in this direction nothing was permitted that would have been outside the range of civil law. The direction of the French Revolution was deflected almost from its beginning from this course of foundation through the immediacy of suffering; it was determined by the exigencies of liberation not from tyranny but from necessity ... (1990: 92)

Arendt would have regarded the course of revolutionary struggle defended by Fanon to liberate European colonies and to found a new order as closer in spirit to the French than the American Revolution. Springing from the sentiments of the heart, the inspiration of Fanon's struggle lies in pity for the suffering of humankind, in the desire to liberate human beings from the realm of Necessity, and in the amalgamation of men into a single mass, who from the *damnés* become the *puissance de la terre*. As in the French Revolution, private class interests must be subjugated to the general will of the nation, whose unifying force after the defeat of the foreign occupier must combat the private interests of individuals or particular groups, such as the native bourgeoisie - who seeks to take over the position of the colonial bourgeoisie - or the native intellectual - who may refuse to assume responsibility for the totality of the nation rather than merely for national culture.

Fanon's defence of the unity of humankind is predicated on the equality of condition inherent in human beings by birth. It is because all men are equal that, in his view, all men have the right to freedom. For Arendt, on the contrary, it is freedom that makes equality possible: the space of freedom between men is actualised by their action as a body of peers in the public realm in which

there is no division between rulers and ruled. Equality therefore is an artificial construct, deriving from a political organisation that is possible insofar as men are free to act. Fanon's view of freedom echoes Rousseau's aphorism, according to which "man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains". Defending that man should not relinquish freedom through his choices, Fanon believes that the realm of inner freedom, shared by all men in common, can be transposed into the outer world by action. Thus, man can choose to be free. By positing free choice, the ability to choose between objects on the basis of motive and the specificity of goal, Fanon relies on the Will as the source of freedom. His arguments thus operate within the framework of the Western philosophical tradition that assumes the equation between sovereignty and freedom. Fanon incurs the risk of believing that the affirmation of the colonial subject's freedom - as an individual or a group - must occur at all price, that is, at the expense of others. However, once the decolonisation process is completed, both colonised and coloniser are free to access the realm of humanity. According to the narrative of Necessity that guides Fanon's course of action, the stage is set for the progression towards the final stage of revolution and the restoration of the unity of man.

Fanon's concept of equality is a product of the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, which presupposes a human essence that pervades natural man. However, he simultaneously wishes to draw attention to the visibility of blackness, to that which gives rise to a historico-racial schema that underlies the lived experience of blackness. The equality of condition presupposed by Fanon contradicts his emphasis on the visibility of blackness. In fact, throughout Fanon's work, one witnesses a 'double-bind' between a desire to emphasise the universality of the human condition and the desire to affirm blackness. In the end, he settles for reaching out to the universal, to one human being, subsuming the visibility of blackness within a narrative of Necessity that will lead to the unity of man.

By positing equality as one of the most uncertain conditions of humankind, Arendt introduces the visibility of the body into discourse. Because we live in a world of appearances, our identities are constructed by the way we appear in the public realm. It is on the basis of how we are seen, heard, and judged by others that our identity is confirmed.

The disclosure of "who" in contradistinction to "what" somebody is - his qualities, gifts, talents, and shortcomings, which he may display or hide - is implicit in everything somebody says and does ... it is more than likely that the "who," which appears so clearly and unmistakably to others, remain hidden from the person himself ... (1989: 179-80)

Because the basic tenet of the American Bill of Rights is the principle of equality, that is, of equalising that which by nature and origin is distinct, Arendt voices concern, in *Reflections on Little Rock*, that the contradictions inherent in equality may threaten the 'American way of life'. She argues that one cannot ignore the lessons of history that have taught us that 'the more equal people have become, and the more equality permeates the whole texture of society, the more will differences be resented, the more conspicuous will those become who are visibly and by nature unlike the others'. (1959: 48)

Just as social discrimination against Jews erupted full-blast after 1808, when the Prussian government issued emancipation decrees giving full civic rights to Jews, Arendt fears that the enforcement of 'social, economic, and educational equality' of African Americans might accentuate the race problem in the US.

... the Negroes' visibility is unalterable and permanent. This is not a trivial matter. In the public realm, where nothing

counts that cannot make itself seen and heard, visibility and audibility are of prime importance. (1959: 47)³³

Arendt argues that whether we like it or not, social discrimination will always exist. The Government has no right to abolish social discrimination, for any attempt to do so will infringe upon the right of free association. However, it has the absolute duty of ensuring that social discrimination is not legally enforced, preventing the latter from entering the public realm in which political equality protects all citizens.³⁴

Arendt firmly believes that only citizenship can protect the rights of human beings. Once an individual is reduced to mere humanity, to 'natural givenness', he loses contact with a common world in which we appear to others through word and deed. Slavery thus strikes Arendt as a lesser evil than the loss of citizenship: although the tragedy of the slave condition resides in the incapacity to make oneself heard by others in the public realm, the slave nevertheless belongs to a human community, having a place in society, whereas a group that has lost citizenship, that is, its community, has nothing to fall back upon except its own naked humanity. (1979: 297)

³³ According to Vikki Bell, in 'Reflections on Little Rock' Arendt argues for an ideal of 'disembodied participation' in the public realm, where life issues such as bodily distinctions are not contemplated. This gives rise to a dichotomy between a space of appearances - or public realm - where one appears through word and deed on one hand, and the visibility of bodily distinctions on the other. Thus, while action is linked to 'appearance' of the personality through 'debate and deliberation', bodily visibility is relegated to non-action. (1999: 69-71, 75)

³⁴ Bell insists that Arendt's distinction between public and social realms reveals a utopian vision of an 'ideal political world', for forms of free association often influence discriminatory political practices. (1999: 76)

X. Nation and Race: Territory or Tribe?

According to Arendt, the State, as supreme legal institution, has a structure that derives from the tradition of monarchy and enlightened despotism, aiming primordially at the protection of the rights of all its inhabitants. Consciousness of nationality is a much more recent phenomenon, colliding with the function of the State.

In the name of the will of the people the state was forced to recognise only "nationals" as citizens, to grant full civil and political rights only to those who belonged to the national community by right of origin and fact of birth. This meant that the state was partly transformed from an instrument of the law into an instrument of the nation. (1979: 230)

Arendt traces the development of nationalism back to the demise of absolute monarchy and the subsequent development of class interests. Whereas under absolutism, the monarch was supposed to serve the interests of the nation as a whole, the abolition of the king led to the disintegration of these common interests into a myriad of private class interests and into a constant struggle for control of the State.

The only remaining bond between the citizens of a nation-state without a monarch to symbolise their essential community, seemed to be national, that is, common origin. So that in a century when every class and section in the population was dominated by class or group interest, the interest of the nation as a whole was supposedly guaranteed in a common origin, which sentimentally expressed itself in nationalism. (1979: 230)

The State became heavily centralised, monopolising means of violence so as to prevent centrifugal tendencies inherent in a class society from tearing the nation apart. Nationalism thus became the factor which brought together a centralised State and an atomised

society, serving the function that absolutism once had in connecting the members of a nation-state.

The modern nation-state was born when the French Revolution joined its demands for national sovereignty to the Declaration of the Rights of Man. According to Arendt, this combination demonstrates precisely the conflict between State and nation that accompanied the birth of the nation-state.

The same essential rights were at once claimed as the inalienable heritage of all human beings *and* as the specific heritage of specific nations, the same nation was at once declared to be subject to laws, which supposedly would flow from the Rights of Man, *and* sovereign, that is, bound by no universal law and acknowledging nothing superior to itself. (1979: 230)

The result of these contradictions was that, in practice, human rights were to be applied merely as national rights, and that the very mechanism of the State, whose legal function was to 'protect and guarantee man his rights as man, as citizen, and as national', became the symbol of a national essence, or a "national soul", the existence of which was regarded as above the law.

For Arendt, 'nationalism is essentially the expression of this perversion of the state into an instrument of the nation and the identification of the citizen with the member of the nation'. However, nationalism in this form did not yet present a threat, on the one hand because it was limited within defined boundaries, due to the identification of nationals with their territory, and on the other, because the very institution of the State provided a legal framework which controlled it. The true danger lay in the 'tribal nationalism' that prevailed amongst the rootless peoples of Austria-Hungary and of Czarist Russia, both of whom had no specific territory of their own and who felt at 'home' wherever there were other members of their community. (1979: 232)

Pan-movements, such as Pan-Germanism or Pan-Slavism, claimed the divine origin of their own people and thus distanced themselves from the Judaeo-Christian concept of the divine origin of man, which had served as the metaphysical basis for defending the political equality of human purpose on earth. This principle of equality was perverted by nineteenth century positivism, in its belief that men are equal in nature, and made unequal due to social and political institutions. The concept of mankind as a family of nations was, in turn, distorted by nationalism, which classified nations according to a hierarchical structure where social and historical differences were transposed into innate differences in man. By electing themselves as the chosen people - the people of divine origin -, the pan-movements advocated a racist theory which denied the common purpose of establishing humanity, the sharing of responsibility for a common world, and which shrouded their socio-historical reality in a 'pseudomystical cloud of divine eternity and finality'.

Politically, it is not important whether God or nature is thought to be the origin of a people; in both cases, no matter how exalted the claim for one's own people, peoples are transformed into animal species so that a Russian appears as different from a German as a wolf is from a fox. (1979: 234-5)

The common origin of mankind, presupposed by the political and moral standards of nation-states that boasted a strong Judaeo-Christian tradition, was put to test with the "Scramble for Africa". As a justification for its deeds, imperialism resorted to racism, to the idea that there were superior and inferior races within the scale of Darwinian evolution. However, Arendt argues that had there not been a tradition of race-thinking prior to the imperialist experience, European nations might have had difficulty in camouflaging the inhumanity of a new doctrine incompatible with the ideal of a natural equality inherent in mankind.

Racism became the ideological instrument of imperialistic politics, assimilating race opinions that prevailed in the nineteenth century, the roots of which extended to the eighteenth century. Arendt claims that race-thinking was born as an opposing force to the establishment of the nation-state, and that it is a serious error to equate nationalism with racism. (1979: 161) Arendt traces the birth of racialism back to the French aristocracy's effort to establish itself not as a representative of its own people but rather as a separate ruling caste, sharing more in common with other foreign aristocrats than with French nationals.

Count Gobineau's 'discovery' of a secret law that guided the rise and fall of civilisations consisted in an attempt to convert race opinion, concerning the superiority of the aristocrats in relation to French nationals, into a 'scientific' doctrine. According to Gobineau, the fall of the aristocracy - which led to the fall of France, of Western civilisation, and of the whole of mankind - had two immediate contradictory consequences: that of the formation of a new natural aristocracy, as well as the degeneration of the human race due to miscegenation. Arendt claims that this contradiction was resolved when the 'new race-aristocracy' decided to accelerate the "inevitable" process of the decay of mankind, a process that was doomed to follow the irresistible violence inherent in the law of necessity.

XI. Violence as a Means Towards an End

Arendt opposes violence on the grounds that the latter consists in force - and not power -, which instrumentalises everything it comes across as a means to achieve a particular end: the final objective excuses all actions on the grounds of necessity.³⁵ For Arendt, the

³⁵ The inseparability of violence from instrumentalisation in Arendt mirrors her hostility to an instrumentalist view of politics, where the latter serves as a means to attain a particular end, be it 'power, truth,

concept of necessity is detrimental to thought. One can see necessity working in the logic of the theoretical foundations of both Nazi Germany as well as Stalinist Bolshevism. Arendt defends that thought and ideology are antagonistic to each other, for ideology is always based on an axiomatic premise which gives rise to a train of thought, through deductive reasoning, that refuses any idea that might oppose its original premise. The racist ideology of Nazi Germany, for instance, based itself on the axiomatic premise of Social Darwinism according to which there were inferior and superior races; the necessity of evolution would determine the survival of the superior races in detriment to that of the inferior. The National Socialist Party attempted to take necessity into its own hands, speeding up a process that would, in light of Social Darwinism, occur anyway. Stalinist Bolshevism, on the other hand, was predicated on the axiomatic premise of class struggle, according to which the dying bourgeois classes would be eliminated by the process of historical necessity, leading to victory of the proletariat. Stalin, like the National Socialist Party, attempted to take the process of historical necessity into his own hands, purging any class deemed to be bourgeois in any particular moment. To truly think, according to Arendt, means to dispense with logical reasoning that helps make sense of the chaos and unpredictability of everyday life, and to realise that the only certainty one can have is that of common-sense, a perception that we share with others regarding the reality of a common world in which we live.

For Arendt, remembrance is the key to the thought experience by way of which we conjure up in our minds images of sense-objects that are physically absent. The faculty of memory, however, only makes the absent present by 'de-sensing' these objects in the imagination, converting them into images.

or ... justice'. According to Villa, Arendt regards action, or praxis, as autonomous within the public realm: political action is self-contained in that it is undertaken for its own sake, consisting in an end in itself. (1996: 21, 43)

This operation precedes all thought processes, cognitive thought as well as thought about meaning, and only sheer logical reasoning - where the mind in strict consistency with its own laws produces a deductive chain from a given premise - has definitely cut all strings to living experience ... (1978: 87)

Critiquing the metaphysical fallacy inherent in the Western tradition that draws a clear separation between the worlds of thought and that of sense-experience, Arendt emphasises their inter-relationship by focusing on the commonality of the world in which we live and on plurality as one of the basic existential conditions of human life on earth.

The whole history of philosophy ... is shot through with an intramural warfare between man's common sense, this sixth sense that fits our five senses into a common world, and man's faculty of thought and need of reason, which determine him to remove himself for considerable periods from it. (1978: 81)

Man embodies plurality even in his relationship with himself, for the mental activity of thought is in itself a reflexive, albeit harmonious, dialogue, 'the actualisation of the original duality or the split between me and myself which is inherent in all consciousness' (1978: 75). The split subject can regain a sense of unity only through contact with others, in the activities of speech and action. Thus, we are foremost political beings because our identities are confirmed in the presence of others, that is, in a world of appearances which relies on 'words and persuasion' rather than 'force and violence' to preserve the space of freedom between men. Whenever the law of a community is violated, criminal proceedings - such as those carried out against Nazi criminals - ought to occur to repair the body politic and to restore public order. (1994: 261)

For just as a murderer is prosecuted because he has violated the law of the community, and not because he has deprived the Smith family of its husband, father, and breadwinner, so these modern, state-employed mass murderers must be prosecuted because they violated the order of mankind, and not because they killed millions of people. (1994: 272)

XII. Nation, Race, and Violence: Arendt and Fanon

While Arendt is critical of a nationalism that transforms the State into an instrument of the nation, and the citizen into an ethnic member of a nation, Fanon advocates a nationalism that places the nation above all else on his political and social agenda. In fact, there is little mention in Fanon's works of either the State or the nation-state, leading one to believe that his discourse on the nation subsumes the latter. The contradiction that Arendt points out as having appeared with the emergence of the nation-state, namely the combination of the Rights of Man with the desire for a sovereignty bound by no universal law is again patent in Fanon. For while he is eager to affirm an equality inherent in the universal condition of man, he simultaneously wishes to emphasise that the universal can only be constructed on the basis of the particular. (Fanon, 1990: 199)

Fanon's emphasis on the 'moving consciousness of the people' as a single mass responsible for the 'nation in the making', in an onward march towards the future, brings to mind Arendt's depiction of the pan-movements' mystical focus on 'a time to come', as well as their reduction of private class interests - represented by political parties - to a single mass interest. However, while pan-movements have traditionally forsaken national emancipation in favour of a territorial expansionism that would permit to establish a 'folk community', Fanon's emphasis is clearly national. Furthermore, he believes in universal man, rather than in the pan-movements' divine origin of a particular people. According to

Arendt, movements have traditionally led to the disintegration of the nation-state, in their urge to place themselves above classes, above parties, representing the nation as a whole. For the truth is that these movements wish 'to promote one particular interest until it had devoured all others, and to make one particular group the master of the state machine'. (1979: 257)

The nation-state which, according to Arendt, should protect all inhabitants within its territory, regardless of nationality, has been overpowered, in Fanon, by a nationalism which defends the primacy of the nation and of national consciousness. Although Fanon defends the decentralisation of politics, by making the 'totality of the nation a reality to each citizen', (Fanon, 1990: 161) the collective destiny of the nation is obviously at the hands of a hugely centralised system that holds the means of violence with which to prevent centrifugal tendencies inherent in class or ethnicity from tearing the nation apart. Fanon's national consciousness thus served as a cement that connected the members of a nation-state. However, when the period of euphoria was over and the cement no longer operational, there was no longer any incentive, other than the forces of violence, to maintain the nation's integrity.

Because the colonised man finds freedom in and through violence, the latter becomes both a means and an end to awareness of self. Arendt opposes violence precisely on the grounds that it instrumentalises whatever comes its way as a means to achieve a particular goal. The final end, in Fanon's case recognition of the black man by the white, would justify all actions on the basis of necessity. In Fanon, violence consists in a unifying force that embraces all under the aegis of the nation, thus opposing regionalist and tribal dissensions. Here, Arendt would argue that violence is a destructive, and not a unifying force. Despite acknowledging that collective violence can provide the illusion of a new foundation, Arendt claims that this sentiment of fraternity is destined to be shortlived, due to its reliance on conditions of

danger. It is only in the proximity of death, that the group is unified in vitality. Here, the loss of one's own life is compensated by the possible immortality of the group.

It is as though life itself, the immortal life of the species, nourished, as it were, by the sempiternal dying of its individual members, is "surging upward," is actualised in the practice of violence. (1970: 68)

Because power springs up whenever men come together for the purpose of action, violence, based on force, is antagonistic to the processes of persuasion, negotiation, and promising which preserve the space of freedom between men. This space of freedom is assured as a living political reality by the existence of laws, which keep intact the power that arises in the course of action, thus contributing to the foundation of a stable world order.

Arendt would consider that violence and the nation are opposed to each other. The nation, for Arendt, serves the purpose of protecting its citizens, and should, as nation-state, defend everyone who finds themselves within its boundaries, regardless of nationality. It is only within the public realm that citizens can be protected in their differences under a legislative framework. Lastly, violence in Arendt corresponds to force and not power. Whereas power is based on the very condition of human plurality, occurring whenever men act together, force implies the destruction of plurality by one or a few men who have the monopoly over the means of violence. (1989: 202) For Arendt, violence is inevitable in activities of fabrication, where man acts on nature in his attempt to build an artifice. However, in activities such as speech and action, which are destined to be heard, seen and judged by human beings inhabiting a world of appearance, violence is destructive of the plurality and diversity inherent in the human condition. (1961: 111)³⁶

³⁶ According to Joan Cocks, the central issue concerning Arendt's discussion on violence is whether she is right or wrong in claiming that

Arendt considers racism to be an ideological weapon of imperialism that consists in violence. For Fanon, racism is inherent in any nation that boasts an imperialist tradition: racism is thus the base, never a superstructural element, of a colonial society. Both Arendt and Fanon defend a non-ethnic nationalism: where Arendt considers racism to be opposed to nationalism, for cutting 'across all national boundaries' and disavowing the national principles of equality and solidarity, Fanon posits participation in national construction as the basis for national citizenship, independent of ethnic provenance.

Having settled for the affirmation of universal man subsequently to his *négritude* phase, Fanon nevertheless stresses the importance of the development of national consciousness, for it is on the basis of the particular that the universal is built. Thus, in Arendt's view, he would have asserted the priority of nation over race.

At the same time, however, he identifies French racism, which permeates the nation as a whole and thus reveals the non-existence of an alleged commonality of interests between the working classes in the metropolis and the colonies, with an exacerbated French nationalism that has defined itself through the Algerian war. Fanon argues that the French left opposes colonialism for nationalist reasons, on the grounds that its inhumanity sullies the 'French soul'. (Fanon, 1988: 83) For Arendt, this romantic ideal of a "national soul" situated above or beyond

'violence is antipolitical and yet part of the political, not biological realm'. In *On Violence*, Arendt had argued that violence derived from rage, sparked by injustice, rather than instinct. Cocks claims that Arendt's position is fuelled by an antipathy to the body in the public realm, rather than by an opposition to the 'political infliction of bodily pain'. Arendt's antagonism to violence thus arises from its speechlessness and unreason, that is, from its physicality, all of which do not fit in a public realm that gives primacy to the verbal. (1995: 226, 229)

the law, is precisely the outcome of wanting to combine both sovereignty and the Declaration of the Rights of Man within the nation-state, thus leading to the loss of power of the State, whose duty it was to protect and enforce the protection of man's rights as 'man, citizen, and nation'. By appealing to national consciousness in the ex-colonies, Fanon wishes to distance himself from the concept of a "national soul", an authenticity that reveals itself through a return to nativism, for he sees the nation as being recreated in its onward march. However, he nevertheless attempts to combine sovereignty and universal rights. Arendt would claim that the consequences would be twofold: on one hand, human rights would only be enforceable as national rights; on the other, the State would lose its legal power to protect all its inhabitants rather than its nationals, and thus become increasingly identified with a symbol of the nation. Thus, although Fanon attempts to distance himself from a "national soul", his politics in fact bring him dangerously close to the very authenticity he opposes.

Fanon argues that because natives make up 'the landscape, the *natural* background to the human presence' (Fanon, 1990: 201) of the coloniser, the colonised subject's humanity is reduced, in Arendtian terminology, to natural man. When describing the confrontation between European colonialists and African tribes, Arendt draws an affinity between the surrounding natural environment and the natives:

... races ... were found ... in regions where nature was particularly hostile. What made them different from other human beings was not at all the colour of their skin but the fact that they behaved like a part of nature ... They were ... "natural" human beings who lacked the specifically human character, the specifically human reality, so that when European men massacred them they somehow were not aware that they had committed murder. (1979: 192)

Falling back on a 'natural' identity, innate qualities that are inherent in human beings, is for Arendt extremely dangerous, for history has shown that whenever one resorts to no more than a universalist language of rights inherent in natural man, a catastrophe may ensue. This is because when dealing with natural man, 'civilised' man is sometimes not aware he is committing murder. Only the public realm, the domain of law inherent in the nation-state, can protect the identity of man as citizen living within specific national boundaries.

Although in varying degrees, both Arendt and Fanon place greater emphasis on social and historical, rather than psychic, factors in determining identity. Whereas for Fanon 'man is human to the extent to which he tries to impose his existence on another' in order to obtain recognition, Arendt claims that identity is confirmed through our appearance in the presence of others. She argues that because man's inner motivations will always remain hidden from himself, as well as from others, any attempt to bring them out into the open will only result in hypocrisy. (1990: 98) There can be no authentic appearance of an inside self underneath a so-called deceptive surface, for the inner realm is, according to Arendt, constituted of a flux of incessantly passing sensations which are not lasting nor identifiable in any form perceptible by intuition. (1978: 39) Fanon, for his part, does not believe that psychoanalytic models used to study the psychology of the white man can be applied to the 'negro'. Neurosis in the colonised is the result of environmental circumstances, that is, of the specificity of the colonial situation, rather than of individual traumatism. Arendt, who is hostile to the 'pseudoscience' of psychology for reducing the immense variety of human conduct to specific models (1978: 35), would also place emphasis on social circumstance, rather than individual psychology, as productive of certain aspects of human behaviour.

Both Arendt and Fanon agree that racism contributes to the creation of a stereotype. In an effort to escape that stereotype, the

marginalised element of society will often seek recognition by excelling in a particular field. Thus, Fanon blames the environment for the fundamental delusion that leads the Antillean to believe that, because he belongs to an inferior race, he must overcompensate in relation to the white man. Arendt, in turn, traces the effort of educated German Jews to become 'exception Jews' back to eighteenth century humanism, which sought to prove that all men are human. Enlightened Berlin found the "new specimens of humanity" in its age-old oppressed neighbours, the Jews, and elected them as the living example that they too were capable of becoming 'intensely human individuals' through education and mastery of the arts. Thus, the social status of Westernised, educated Jews was based on their being exceptions to a mass of backward, impoverished Jews. However, when Prussia passed emancipation decrees in 1808, subsequently to her defeat by Napoleon, giving Jews full civic rights, anti-semitism became rampant in the social realm. From then on, because all Jews were emancipated, Prussian Jews of wealth and privilege had lost the native background of poverty and backwardness against which they had stood out. (1979: 61)

In short, before 1808 there had existed 'exception Jews' who represented universal humanity; after 1808, the Jew with outstanding characteristics was an exception to his race. Having ceased to be civil outcasts, the Jews became social pariahs, and sought to compensate for the condition of their race by seeking parvenu status, that is, by social climbing and reneging their background.³⁷ In their effort to escape stereotypes through social recognition, assimilated Jews found that another stereotype, the quality of Jewishness, was to haunt them in times to come. (1979: 66)

³⁷ Bell argues that terms such as pariah and parvenu reveal Arendt's ideal of authenticity. While Arendt insinuates that desegregation was being sought for by parvenu black Americans, she simultaneously denies the possibility that black Americans appear in the public realm without being reduced to their 'group identity'. (1999: 76)

XIII. The Relativism of Plurality: Judgement as Humanism

Thoughtlessness is, for Arendt, the root of evil, for when men cease to think, to reflect on the world in which they live, they lose the capacity to judge right from wrong. Arendt is not interested in problematising the social construction of ethical modes of action. Instead, she clearly presumes the existence of right and wrong forms of human conduct, which have consequences on our surroundings. Neither does she aim to understand the potentiality of good and evil inherent in human beings, for only our actions, not our inner intentions which lurk in darkness of 'heart and mind', are visible to the eye. It is insofar that actions occur in a world of appearance and have immediate repercussions on the latter that they are of political relevance. The function of the law is to keep alive the space of freedom between men, within which they are capable of beginning, of giving rise to a new sequence of events by acting.

Arendt claims that, with the modern demise of the Roman trinity of religion, authority, and tradition, the 'platonic' theological belief in eternal damnation for wrongdoing on earth ceased to have compelling force on human action. God, as the absolute standard against which theology measured all sins, was a political device in that he ordered the enforcement of his law, even in cases which escaped human justice, such as those which were not brought to light, or those for which there was no adequate punishment. Without God and with the loss of the belief in future states, there were no longer any absolute standards to regulate human conduct.

... the fact is that the most significant consequence of the secularisation of the modern age may well be the elimination from public life, along with religion, of the only political element in traditional religion, the fear of hell. We who had to witness how, during the Hitler and Stalin era, an entirely new and unprecedented criminality, almost unchallenged in

the respective countries, was to invade the realm of politics should be the last to underestimate its "persuasive" influence upon the functioning of conscience. (1961: 133)

Arendt's concern is twofold: on one hand she questions how it is possible to distinguish right from wrong with the loss of an absolute; on the other, she denounces Kant's belief in the absolute, in the duty of the categorical imperative which transcends humanity and orders man to always act in such a way that he would will to be a universal law, for its inhumanity. The realm of human affairs, she argues, is composed of the relativism that arises from the confrontation of different opinions between people.

... truth can exist only where it is humanised by discourse ... such speech is virtually impossible in solitude; it belongs to an area in which there are many voices and where the announcement of what each "deems truth" both links and separates men, establishing in fact those distances between men which together comprise the world. Every truth outside this area ... is inhuman in the literal sense of the word ... because it might have the result that all men would suddenly unite in a single opinion ... (1995: 30-1)

Arendt wishes to find a solution to the following problem: how can relativism be conciliated with ethical human conduct? This question is inspired by the Jewish experience in Nazi Germany, where, because evil was embodied in the law, behaving in an ethically correct manner implied challenging the law. Arendt is critical of the common equation of the law with the voice of conscience. This parallelism arises due to the jurisprudence of most nation-states presupposing that the law symbolises goodness, and as such, the lawfulness inherent in the voice of conscience of each citizen cannot oppose it. Arendt cites the example of the 'soldier, who, acting in a normal legal framework, refuses to carry out orders that run counter to his ordinary

experience of lawfulness and hence can be recognised by him as criminal'. (1994: 148) For this disobedience to be lawful, the orders disobeyed must have been "manifestly unlawful", that is, a "black flag" signifying "Prohibited" must appear when such orders are given. In the Nazi regime, however, the situation was inverted:

... in a criminal regime this "black flag" with its "warning sign" flies as "manifestly" above what normally is a lawful order - for instance, not to kill innocent people just because they happen to be Jews - as it flies above a criminal order under normal circumstances. (1994: 148)

Arendt claims that because the voice of conscience in Nazi Germany was equated with the force of the law laid down by Hitler, evil became the norm, and thus lost the characteristic which makes it recognisable, that is, the 'quality of temptation'. This predominance of evil as a normalcy of conduct is described by Arendt as the surprising 'banality of evil'.

The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal. From the viewpoint of our legal institutions and of our moral standards of judgement, this normality was much more terrifying than all the atrocities put together, for it implied ... that this new type of criminal, who is in actual fact *hostis generis humani*, commits his crimes under circumstances that make it well-nigh impossible for him to know or to feel that he is doing wrong. (1994: 276)

Eichmann personified normalcy. His only outstanding characteristics were professional ambition, as well as a will to obey the law. In any 'non-criminal' regime, these traits would hardly be considered evil. In 'normal' circumstances, Eichmann would probably have led a 'normal' life. However, in a context in which good and evil were inverted, and where evil became law, his

will to obey led him to commit evil acts. Should he therefore be held responsible for the evil inherent in a system in which he played only a part? Moreover, the 'intent to do wrong', on the basis of which modern jurisprudence convicts a wrongdoer, is conspicuously absent from his actions. Eichmann merely tried to obey the law and to put into practice the orders of his superiors. He firmly believed that he had lived his life according to Kantian moral principles, having distorted the categorical imperative - act in such a way that you would will to be a universal law - to read - 'Act as if the principle of your actions were the same as that of the legislator or of the law of the land'. (1994: 136) Arendt claims that this 'household use of Kant' demands that the citizen go beyond the law, identifying himself with the legislator. Thus, the primacy of the law was affirmed, and there could be no exceptions from the absolute.

Arendt argues that Eichmann should have been convicted on the basis of his obedience and support for a politics that violated the order of the community of mankind, rather than on the grounds of the sufferings of the Jewish people at the hands of the Nazis. Because the crime against Jews was a crime against the plurality and diversity inherent in the order of humankind, Eichmann could rightly have been judged in an international criminal court of justice, representing all mankind. (1994: 269-70)

The main success of the Eichmann trial, according to Arendt, was that, unlike the Nuremberg trial, it brought to the forefront the Nazi extermination of Jews, refusing to allow the latter to be overshadowed by the category of war crimes.

It was the great advantage of a trial centred on the crime against the Jewish people that not only did the difference between war crimes, such as shooting of partisans and killing hostages, and "inhuman acts," such as "expulsion and annihilation" of native populations to permit colonisation by an invader, emerge with sufficient clarity to become part of a

future international penal code, but also that the difference between "inhuman acts" (which were undertaken for some known, though criminal, purpose, such as expansion through colonisation) and the "crime against humanity," whose intent and purpose were unprecedented, was clarified. (1994: 275)

Faced with the unprecedented genocide of a people for non-utilitarian reasons in times of peace, the Nuremberg Charter of 1945 had introduced the rather ambiguous category of crimes against humanity. According to the Charter, this new crime consisted in "inhuman acts", as if 'the Nazis had been lacking in human kindness'. (1994: 275) The Eichmann trial was therefore important in coming to a closer definition of the difference between genocide and annihilation of populations. For whereas the annihilation of peoples was not an original occurrence, basing itself on the utilitarian purpose of territorial expansionism and colonisation, the genocide of Jews was not explicable according to utilitarian intents. Arendt argues for the replacement of the term genocide for that of administrative massacres; while the former is not unprecedented in that whole peoples have been exterminated since antiquity, the latter implies the 'automated economy' of efficiency that manages the systematic elimination of a given group. However, Arendt emphasises that the decisive criterion in distinguishing a crime against humanity from any other is the violation of the order inherent in the plurality of human status. As such, the fact that Jews, Gypsies, and Poles were exterminated amounted to more than a crime against the Jewish, Gypsy, or Polish peoples, consisting rather in a crime against the international order on the basis of which the whole of mankind is composed. (1994: 275-6)

According to Arendt, both the Nuremberg as well as the Eichmann trials have drawn attention to the faculty of judgement as one of the crucial moral issues of our time.

What we have demanded in these trials, where the defendants had committed "legal" crimes, is that human beings be capable of telling right from wrong even when all they have to guide them is their own judgement, which, moreover, happens to be completely at odds with what they must regard as the unanimous opinion of all those around them. (1994: 295)

Judgement concerns the capacity to distinguish between what would be, in 'normal' circumstances, adhered to as a rule, and, in an extraordinary context, an exception to that rule. For Arendt, it is this capacity for discernment, rather than a voice of conscience, that leads man to distinguish between right and wrong. Judgement is therefore the most precious of faculties, for it connects us to the world in which we live. Both thoughtlessness as well as 'remoteness from reality' were at the root of Eichmann's evil conduct. 'He *merely ... never realised what he was doing*', (1994: 287) and wished to act according to the absolute standard of the law.³⁸

While the categorical imperative is guided by absolutes, that is, by the necessity for rational thought to agree with itself - for example the thief would enter in contradiction with himself by willing that theft be a universal law, due to the latter depriving him of his property -, judgement is guided by relativism rather than the imperative of absolutes. This relativism implies Kant's "enlarged mentality", 'the ability to see things not only from one's point of

³⁸ Bell notes that Arendt sought to understand Heidegger's support for National Socialism in light of his philosophy. Heidegger's status as thinker had collided with his attempt to enter the public world, causing him once again to retreat into a seclusion appropriate for thinking Being, whereby he restored his faculty for judgement. Contrary to Eichmann, he thus acknowledged his error. (1999: 82)

view but in the perspective of all those who happen to be present'.
(1961: 220-1)³⁹

The power of judgement rests on a potential agreement with others, and the thinking process which is active in judging something is not, like the thought process of pure reasoning, a dialogue between me and myself, but finds itself always and primarily, even if I am quite alone in making up my mind, in an anticipated communication with others with whom I know I must finally come to some agreement. (1961: 220)

Thus, the individual who judges must transcend any privately held subjective opinions which are irrelevant to the public realm, in favour of the plurality of perspectives with which he is confronted in the world of appearance.

Hence, judgement is endowed with a certain specific validity but is never universally valid. Its claims to validity can never extend further than the others in whose place the judging person has put himself for his considerations. (1961: 221)

The faculty of judgement is a political ability, for it links us to the common world which we share with others, a world of plurality which assumes inter-human relativity. Judgement, in contrast to speculative thought, is rooted in a common sense, which adjusts the subjective perceptions of our private five senses to the reality of an objective world that we inhabit with others.⁴⁰

³⁹ According to Seyla Benhabib, Arendt's recourse to the 'enlarged mentality' inherent in Kant's aesthetic theory derives from her antipathy to the role of judgement in his practical philosophy, where, as determinant, it subsumes the particular under the universal. In Kantian aesthetics, judgement is reflective for the universal has to be found for a given particular. (1997: 132)

⁴⁰ For Kant, the *sensus communis* corresponds to a 'public sense' deriving from reflective judgement. Benhabib argues that Arendt adopts Kant's aesthetic model to ascertain intersubjective validity in the public

Aesthetic judgements, which are based on the most private of the five senses - that of taste -, are similar to political judgements in that they both presume consent by persuasion and discussion, rather than by the coercion of logic or truth. Judgement, either aesthetic or political, is not overwhelmed by truth, but seeks to establish limits to an immoderate worship of any absolute, be it truth, beauty or goodness. Through judgement, the absolute is humanised by the introduction of the personal factor of taste.

... for the true humanist neither the verities of the scientist nor the truth of the philosopher nor the beauty of the artist can be absolutes; the humanist, because he is not a specialist, exerts a faculty of judgement and taste which is beyond the coercion which each speciality imposes upon us. (1961: 225)

Humanism, as a consequence of an "enlarged mentality" according to which the individual exercises the faculty of judgement by thinking in the place of others, can be read as an outlook which is antagonistic to the inhumanity inherent in the categorical imperative. Moreover, as a political outlook which is beyond coercion by absolutes, it presupposes that the public realm be the space of freedom between men.

XIV. New Humanism: Between Ideology and Natality

realm. She thus manages to escape from Kant's distaste for the *vita activa*, patent in his two-world metaphysics, the noumenal and the phenomenal, whereby, paradoxically, the law of the morally good, which escapes sensuous intuition, must be applied to actions pertaining to the world of sense. Benhabib considers that Arendt thus divorces politics from morality, a move that is erroneous to the extent that any political system incarnates principles of justice. (1997: 130-1, 133, 139)

Fanonian humanism differs from Arendt's version of humanism, for the former presumes absolutes whereas the latter seeks to distance itself from the categorical imperative. While Fanon believes in universal man as an absolute, Arendt argues for an "enlarged mentality" based on relativism. Fanon's humanism is geared towards the future, the temporal sense of the will, foreseeing the realisation of the universal equality of man in the last stage of the Marxian dialectic. The freedom inherent in thought and in the public realm that Arendt anxiously defends is thus, in Fanon, threatened by his adoption of a narrative of Necessity which dictates the outcome of the future. Just as Arendt opposes the view according to which the Nazis were the 'innocent executors of some mysteriously foreordained destiny' (1994: 19), she might counter Fanon's attempts to incorporate the liberation of ex-colonies into Marxian dialectics. To believe in narratives according to which we must blaze the trail of destiny is, for Arendt, a form of escaping the responsibility inherent in our actions. The thinking activity inherent in judgement is open to experience, unlike the deductive logic of ideological thought, which aims to explain the world on the basis of an axiomatic premise that cannot be contradicted. Ideological thought is violent, due to its instrumentalisation of means towards an end.

From Arendt's perspective, Fanonian humanism can be read as ideological. Because Fanon places emphasis on the black man obtaining recognition through conflict, Arendt might oppose new humanism on the grounds that the end justifies whatever means available, acting as an axiomatic premise that induces a train of logical coherence independent of ethical consequences. When Fanon affirms the universality of man, thus subsuming blackness within the discourse of the oppressed, he continues to sponsor conflict as a means of liberation of both oppressed and oppressor in the name of universality. He thus continues to justify a utilitarian approach which defends the instrumentalisation of means to achieve a particular end.

Fanon's humanism is profoundly dialectical, consisting in a permanent movement between thesis and antithesis. Arendt considers dialectical thought to be ideological, in that the first thesis serves as a premise which will give rise to one 'identical, consistent movement' conducive to the annihilation of factual contradictions. (1979: 469) By relying on a logical process to guide thought, man is, according to Arendt, surrendering his inner freedom to tyranny.

Freedom as an inner capacity of man is identical with the capacity to begin, just as freedom as a political reality is identical with a space of movement between men. Over the beginning, no logic, no cogent deduction can have any power, because its chain presupposes, in the form of a premise, the beginning. (1979: 473)⁴¹

The question is whether Fanonian humanism consists in a beginning, in a space of freedom which no logical reasoning can assimilate due to the former's premise being a constant beginning. A reading of Fanon's attempt to negotiate the tension within the humanist tradition through Arendt's vision of natality might serve to emphasise the ruptures inherent in his dichotomies, thus revealing

⁴¹ Gillian Rose argues that although in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* Arendt attributes the decline of the modern nation-state to its incapacity to accept the agon between state and civil society, she herself in her later work fails to 'abide' with diremption and thus perpetuates the 'equivocation of the ethical' in place of its suspension as well as the elimination of the 'anxiety of beginning'. Contradictions between state and society, between universality and sovereignty are thus substituted by a totalising opposition between public and private on one hand and the birth of the new on the other, thus masking the 'historical "equivocalities" of emancipation', namely the historical emancipation of persons from the collective interest. In Arendt, the public realm becomes an Augustinian City of God while the City of Man is relegated to the social. By seeking refuge in Greek political thought against aporetic difference, Arendt allegedly founds a sociality of saints. (1992: 216, 240. 228-9, 235)

his inability to attain the absolute, caught in a permanent 'mismatch between aim and achievement'. (Rose, 1997: 125)

Fanonian humanism would then draw closer to Roman relativism, with its avoidance of absolutes on the grounds that the latter are detrimental to human freedom. Fanon believed that the realisation of the universal equality of condition inherent in mankind would enable freedom to ensue for all. Arendt would have urged him to elect freedom above all else, because only political freedom, as preserved by laws in the public realm, can protect the diversity and plurality inherent in the human condition.

CHAPTER SIX

LEVINAS AND THE OTHER: HUMANISM AS AN EXCLUDED MIDDLE

I. Introduction

Humanism has to be denounced only because it is not sufficiently human. (1999:128)⁴²

Levinas's attempt to establish a philosophy of peace based on a metaphysical transcendence that would lie beyond the realm of ontology, or being, can be read as an attempt to transcend both the anti-humanist and traditional humanist outlooks regarding subjectivity. While sympathetic to the anti-humanist proposal to deconstruct humanism's transcendental apperception of subjectivity whereby self-consciousness is present to itself in a united "I think", Levinas simultaneously accuses anti-humanism of still operating within the ontological realm by reducing man to a reflection of the truth of being. Nevertheless, anti-humanism remains valuable 'over and beyond the reasons it gives itself', that is, beyond its own critiques of humanism, namely due to negating the importance of individual freedom for the signification of being. (1998a: 131)

Its inspired intuition is to have abandoned the idea of person, goal and origin of itself, in which the ego is still a

⁴² For Heidegger, 'humanism is opposed because it does not set the *humanitas* of the human being high enough' (1998: 251). Both Levinas and Heidegger argue for a reconceptualisation of the human: where Heidegger seeks to resist a metaphysical humanism that by reducing man to a being amongst beings refuses to think the difference between Being and being, Levinas presents a humanism that transcends the realm of ontology in which traditional metaphysics has moved.

thing because it is still a being. Strictly speaking, the Other is the end; I am a hostage, a responsibility and a substitution supporting the world in the passivity of assignation, even in an accusing persecution, which is undeclinable. (1999: 127-8)

A humanism that transcends ontology is thus, for Levinas, a signifyingness that precedes all signification, a pre-origin anterior to any origin or commencement, the latter which unfold within the realm of being, ruled by a historically linear temporality where the past is always re-presented from the point of view of the present. In the sphere of the 'otherwise than being', there is an inordinateness in terms of temporality, an anarchy more ancient than any past occurring within the ontological realm. Because this anarchy exceeds representation, it cannot be grasped; however, it leaves a trace of this primordial affectation by the Other undergone in the subjectivity of the self, of the 'I is an Other' in the very face offered in exposure to me.

Beyond the ontological category of being and essence, the unified ego is broken apart by the realisation of the idea of Infinity in a finite me. This very idea of infinity (the cogitatum) transcends the thought that would think it (the cogitatio), thus leading to the overflow of the finite by the infinite, the latter which cannot be contained, which cannot be grasped but only perceived in its trace. This trace is patent in the desire for infinity, a desire that cannot be satiated unlike that of need, which takes place within the ontological domain, but rather a desire increasing in the measure that I approach the Other while simultaneously providing an impetus for my turning away from myself towards exteriority.

The Infinite transcends itself in the finite, it *passes* the finite, in that it directs the neighbour to me without exposing itself to me. (1998a: 171)

Humanity is thus the proximity between myself and my neighbour, a relationship that is always based on separation, for my debt to the Other increases the more I approach him. It is to the extent that subjectivity consists in this infinity in the self, in the I that is an other, that the subject substitutes himself for and is a hostage to his neighbour. Being hostage means to obey a command that precedes my own free will, a command of responsibility for the Other's freedom, as well as a command to respond for the Other's guilt. Identity, the ontological subjectivity of inwardness that posits a personal history occurring within a temporal linearity always represented from the viewpoint of the present, thus gives way, in the field of beyond being, to the figure of 'no identity' - not a non-identity defined in terms of a negation of identity, but an identity that is an Other, and is thus transcended in its sameness towards exteriority. This transcendence of the same by way of the Other is ethics, the 'excluded middle', in between ontological being and non-being, that is, on the hither side of binary oppositions that form a whole. (1999: 86)

Preoccupied with defining a philosophy of alterity, or exteriority, where same and Other would preserve their absoluteness while engaging in relationship - that is, would not be absorbed into a totality -, Levinas considers that ethics, or a non-theological religiosity, precedes any politics. For while politics pertains to the ontological realm due to its emphasis on closure, assimilating the Other into the same through universal law, the ethical dimension - that of infinity - permits one to transcend the tyranny of totality, going beyond polarities that are defined in relation to one another. Levinas thus offers a different reading of alterity from that of Hannah Arendt's, whose emphasis on the primacy of the political realm in solving problems relating to freedom, plurality and difference in the 'world of appearance' would here be contested as operating within the ontological domain, and thus, unable to escape the binary oppositional logic inherent in being, where, on one hand, identity is always defined against an Other, and where,

on the other, both terms would be absorbed into a totality, synonymous, from Levinas's perspective, with violence.

Arendt's vision of humanism as an 'enlarged mentality' where the faculty of judgement is practised by thinking in the place of others - a faculty which she considers to underpin both aesthetics and politics, both of which presuppose consent on the basis of persuasion and discussion rather than coercion of logic or truth - would be regarded by Levinas as an ethics: as such, he would argue that in the attempt to think in the place of others, one is replacing oneself for the Other; this movement, ethical by nature, would prove that politics is built upon ethics. Furthermore, Arendt's claim that the relativism inherent in political judgement guards itself against the immoderate worship of any absolute, the latter which relies on coercion, would be disputed by Levinas's preoccupation in preserving the absoluteness of terms that engage in relationship, or the sociality of the face-to-face. The latter is possible only because the terms involved do not participate in totality, are not fused with one another, but rather preserve their integrity in separation. It is only because one is produced as a separate being in subjectivity that one can transcend oneself in a relationship of exteriority.⁴³

Both Arendt and Levinas can be read as agreeing that the human condition consists in the transcendence of oneself: where for Arendt the human condition would be defined as that of the capacity for action - thus creating a new series in time, irreversible and unpredictable in consequences -, Levinas regards any attempt to define the ego as coinciding with itself as doomed to failure due to identity's constant confrontation with alterity. However, whereas Arendt would choose to 'tame' this transcendence through the

⁴³ Derrida argues that a pure alterity, absolute in itself, is unattainable because the Other is always defined in relation to the same, a fact which is patent in language. Accordingly, Greek thought has protected itself against destruction precisely due to its recognition that alterity circulates at the origin of meaning. (1990: 151)

grounding of a space of freedom preserved by laws in the political realm, Levinas sees this transcendence of the self as a fundamentally positive ethical movement geared towards exteriority, one which should provide the basis for any politics or theory realised in the domain of ontology.⁴⁴

II. Western Philosophy and Being

By arguing for metaphysical transcendence, Levinas is defending the idea of Good beyond being, that is of a concept of Good that transcends the axiology of good and evil patent in ontological thought. Subjectivity, as the 'theatre' of transcendence, would be synonymous with goodness or the one-for-the-Other.

This idea guarantees the philosophical dignity of an undertaking in which signifyingness of meaning is separated from the manifestation or the presence of being. (1998a: 171)

Western Philosophy has been guided by the search for knowledge, revealed in clarity and light, a space within which being unfolds, manifesting itself to the gaze of the beholder. Here, the coinciding of historical time with the present assimilates alterity into the same, re-presenting the Other as if it were present in identity. The ontological realm, characterised by immanence, defines terms in negation to each other, thus presupposing their fusion into a whole, rather than allowing them to signify in themselves, transcendently.

⁴⁴ Levinas considers Zionism to be an original political idea based on an ethical justification, aiming at the foundation of a monotheistic State which would incorporate the universalistic values inherent in the Western tradition, and yet transcend them, in the realisation of a 'surfeit of responsibility towards humanity'. The fact that Judaism can go beyond universalism preserves it from the dangers of totalitarianism. (1998b: 286-87)

(Western Philosophy) discovered intelligibility in terms in conjunction, posited by relation with one another, signifying one another; for Western philosophy being, thematised in its presence, is illuminated in this way. (1998a: 171)

The relation between contraries, uniting into a whole, derives, according to Levinas, from the Parmenidean Eleatic notion of Being, that is, the idea of Being as One, a totality, emanating into essence by a descent or a fall. The Philosophy of Unity that has characterised the West, from Parmenides to Hegel (1996: 102), would thus endeavour to unite, fuse, that which has allegedly been made separate due to a fall from the totality; the 'fallen' Other is thus incorporated into the same. Traditional metaphysics is inspired by the attempt to heal the gap between totality and its ruptured parts. This desire to assimilate the Other into the Whole reveals a need based on lack, that is, the urgency of an incomplete being to regain full possession of itself. Thus, the 'fallen' Other is not in reality separate from the totality, for it is only defined against the Whole from whence it came.

As a stage the separated being traverses on the way of its return to its metaphysical source, a moment of a history that will be concluded by union, metaphysics would be an Odyssey, and its disquietude nostalgia. (1996: 102)

The movement of Odyssey - 'where the adventure pursued in the world is but the accident of a return' (1996: 176-7) -, characterises Western metaphysics, in its incessant search for the imperturbability of a sojourn in the home, in the totality. Hegelian thought, with its emphasis both on the logic of contradiction - where to A (thesis) corresponds a non-A (antithesis) - and on the logic of dialectics, according to which both A and non-A are conciliated with each other within the totality of a system (synthesis) (1996: 150), is a classical paradigm of Parmenidean monism. The conjunction of opposite terms united in a system

provides the ontological site where consciousness is to unfold, giving rise to the transcendental subject that is 'origin, initiative, freedom, present'. (1999: 78)

To move oneself or have self-consciousness is in effect to refer oneself to oneself, to be an origin. (1999: 78)

This 'consciousness-subject' as origin, or arche, assimilates that which it encounters into the same, into itself. Its tense is the present, synchronising time into thematised reminiscences by this very act of re-presenting the past in the light of the present. Thematised experience, the identical, the 'said', creates the notion of a linear temporal sequence, a progression or biography, by referring its 'other' in time to itself. Consciousness is thus a 'diastasis' - a rift - of identity where rather than encountering a true Other, the same finds itself modified.

This modification by which the same comes unstuck or parts with itself, undoes itself into this and that, no longer covers over itself and thus is disclosed..., becomes a phenomenon - is the *esse* of every being. Being's essence designates nothing that could be a nameable content, a thing, event or action; it names this mobility of the immobile, this multiplication of the identical, this diastasis of the punctual, this lapse. (1999: 30)

The movement of sameness unto its modified self, dictated by an impersonal reason which reduces its being to a role in history, consists in placing consciousness outside 'me' and in my thus evading responsibility. (1996: 252) Subjectivity is thus reduced to a remnant of essence, to that which is only a term assembled in the unity of the system, and which plays its historical role in the disclosure or manifestation of being to itself, culminating in truth, exposition, and knowledge, that is, in the elimination of opacity.

The reduction of subjectivity to consciousness dominates philosophical thought, which since Hegel has been trying to overcome the duality of being and thought, by identifying, under different figures, substance and subject. (1996: 103)

This substantiality of the subject is based on the unity of apperception of the *I think*. The ego is posited as a for-itself, whereby the identity of the I consists in the reversion of essence back into itself.

Time, essence, essence as time, would be the absolute itself in the return to self. The multiplicity of unique subjects, entities immediately, empirically, encountered, would proceed from this universal self-consciousness of the Mind... They would be forgettable moments of which what counts is only their identities due to their positions in the system, which are reabsorbed into the whole of the system. (1999: 103-4)

The elimination of the meaning inherent in the distinction between subject and being is also patent in Heideggerian thought. Drawing attention to the difference between beings as entities, or existents, and Being as expression of the verb to be, Heidegger places man, or singularity, under a 'neuter' term that clarifies and orders thought. (1998a: 51) In this manner, he attempts to 'destroy the history of ontology', which since Socrates is allegedly guilty of forgetting Being, that is, of forgetting the priority of Being over existents. Whereas traditional ontology sought to comprehend the Being of existents so as to know an existent (1996: 45), Heideggerian ontology would not defend that Being expresses the inwardness of subjectivity but rather that 'man tells Being'(1998a: 144).

For Heidegger the very process of Being, Being's *essence*, is the unfolding of a certain meaning, a certain light, a certain peace that borrow nothing from a subject, express nothing

that would be inside a soul. The process of Being, or Being's essence, is from the first manifestation, that is, expansion into a site, a world, hospitality. But the manifestation thus requires man, for it entrusts itself to man as a secret and as a task. Confidant, but also sayer, herald, messenger of Being, man expresses no inward forum. (1998a: 144)

Heidegger's attempt to destroy traditional ontology corresponds to the attempt to destroy the primacy of One, which does not allow for a transcendent Being. Becoming is thus replaced for Being, and its temporality is a projection towards the future.

Existing is freed from the unity of the existent. To substitute Becoming for Being is above all to envisage being outside of the *existent*. (1996: 275)

Dasein, the Heideggerian 'being there' defined by the care and doing characteristic of being-in-the-world which reflects anxiety due to the consciousness of finitude, that is, of being-towards-death, consists in an attempt to express an existing that escapes the primacy of unity. However, the possibility of being annihilated that constitutes *Dasein*, its mortality, retains, according to Levinas, the structure of the same, that is, the coinciding of identity with itself.

This nothingness is a death, is my death, my possibility (of impossibility), my power. (1998a: 51)

In the novelty that arises from the possible, the ego recaptures, masters itself. The possible thus becomes synonymous with 'power and domination', with the subject writing a 'history which is one' and harbouring projects that correspond to a destiny. Heideggerian ontology, which places Being over the existent, thus mirrors classical Hegelian idealism, unable to evade the logic of unity. (1996: 216, 275)

Kantian idealism, that of the transcendental subject founded on the unity, the synthetic ability of the 'I think', provides the basis of ontological philosophy, where the same determines the Other without being determined by the Other (1996: 125). By presupposing that the reality of phenomena lies in perception rather than in the reality of the things themselves, Kant emphasises that the modality through which pure reason knows phenomena is that of representation. Because one can only know that which presents itself to experience, the latter constitutes the limits of theoretical reason, capturing phenomena rather than the reality of the thing-in-itself. Sensible intuition of objects is conditioned by space and time, both of which consist in *a priori*, or anterior, forms of representation, taking place within experience, and making possible this very intuition. Representation of entities, or objects, is thus conditioned by these *a priori* conditions of intuition, implying a subjectivity inherent in the perception of entities.

It is remarkable that the entity qua entity, *essence*, is not first realised in itself, and then occasionally show itself afterward. Essence carries on as presence, exhibition, phenomenality or appearing, and as such requires a subject in the form of consciousness, and invests it as devoted to representation. (1999: 179)

The objectivity of essence thus consists in requiring the subject's perception of its presence. Space as a transparent void, as clarity, as light, as that which provides the distance between subject and object within which disclosure occurs, is necessary for essence to appear, to arise in phenomenality. Although Kant introduces a distinction between thought and knowledge, that is, between reason and understanding - thereby discovering meanings which do not refer to being -, his transcendental idealism nevertheless measures thought against the being it lacks: thought is a void, an empty space stripped of the things in themselves it aims at. (1998a: 175) This lack, which originates from the notion of the

sensible as 'an apparition without there being anything that appears' (1996: 136), will lead Kant to declare the failure of pure reason - due to the impossibility of obtaining objective knowledge outside the limits of experience - in comparison with practical, or moral, reason, to the extent that in the exercise of his autonomy man can distance himself from sensible or empirical factors in an attempt to identify himself with the supreme ideal of God. Because the ideas of practical reason - Soul, World and God - do not correspond to sensible or experiential categories, they do not further the search for knowledge, that is of speculative or theoretical reason, but rather contribute to understanding or thinking the totality of reality, leading to the realisation that man only experiences himself, finds the thing-in-itself as a moral being.⁴⁵ Thus, although Kant draws a separation between thought and knowledge, paving the way for the realisation that there are meanings independent of being, he ultimately reestablishes the relationship with ontology, both in pure reason, where thought is measured against the being that it lacks, and in practical reason, where the existence of God, the supreme being, is prioritised over the freedom of man.

Unlike Berkeley's idealism, which argued for the coincidence between thought and existent within lived experience, Kantian idealism is rooted in the non-coincidence between subject and object, where the latter's intelligibility proceeds from the 'openness' of Being, the space of transparency within which disclosure occurs.

An existent is comprehended in the measure that thought transcends it, measuring it against the horizon whereupon it is profiled. (1996: 44)

⁴⁵ Practical reason, in the form of the good will that derives from a freedom situated above being, seems at first to escape the unity of the One; however, the ideas or postulates of pure reason are once again integrated into ontology by rejoining being in the existence of God. (1998a: 176)

Husserlian phenomenology would develop the idea of horizon, whereby 'an existent arises upon a ground that extends beyond it'.⁴⁶ (1996: 45) Guided by light, Husserl's method of 'radical experience' posits consciousness as surrounded by a sphere of potentialities - horizons in the margin of the central phenomenon -, waiting to become actualised by the possibility of being perceived and illuminated by thought. (1987: 54; 1998b: 14)

We may let our sight wander around these horizons, illuminating certain aspects of them and letting others fall into darkness. *The property of the world of things of being 'in itself' means nothing else than this possibility of going back to the same thing and reidentifying it.* (1998b: 14)

The possibility of reidentifying an object derives from the fact that the intentionality of consciousness - consciousness being always consciousness of something - is incapable of grasping the totality of an object. The act of representation is thus inadequate to the existent, the object of representation.

The aspects which we see at any given moment always indicate further aspects, and so on. (1998b: 15)

Transcendent perception is dubitable due to existence being dependent on the degree of completion of a sequence of phenomena, which may conflict with or negate one another. Existence thus refers not to the existence of material things in themselves, but once again, to the existence of consciousness. (1998b: 15, 18-9)

⁴⁶ Derrida considers the Husserlian concept of horizon to be similar to that of infinity, as 'overflowing wellspring' of every object, which cannot be actualised either in the object itself, nor in the intuition of the object. (1990: 118)

The specific mode of existence of consciousness - its absoluteness and its independence from reflection - consists in its existing for itself, prior to being taken in any way as an object by reflection. Consciousness exists in such a way that it is constantly present to itself. (1998b: 21)

This does not mean that only consciousness exists and that the external world does not - the standpoint of Berkeleian idealism -, but rather that both exist according to different modalities. For Husserlian phenomenology, consciousness cannot be reduced to subjective phenomena that do not reveal anything about being; instead, it is argued that only consciousness can reveal the meaning of being in the world, by disclosing the mode in which things appear to it. Because every intentionality - every consciousness of... - is founded on representation, the subject is linked up with its object.

This specific existence lets us surmise that we are not in the presence here of a subject opposed to an object, of a being which is antithetical to objects and, for that reason, is precisely on the same level as them. For Husserl, consciousness is a primary domain which alone renders possible and comprehensible an 'object' and a 'subject', terms that are already derivative. (1998b: 25)

External reality is thus assimilated by the same, by the thought that thinks it, and any given from the temporal past gains meaning in light of the present instant.

To represent is not only to render present 'anew'; it is to reduce to the present an actual perception which flows on ... The value of the transcendental method and its share of eternal truth lies in the universal possibility of reducing the represented to its meaning, the existent to the noema, the

most astonishing possibility of reducing to a noema the very being of the existent. (1996: 127)⁴⁷

Thus while the transcendental method involved in representation presupposes the rationality of a unified I think, a cogito arising from consciousness where the subject loses its opposition to its object, Levinas, who aims to introduce exteriority into this model, will attempt to recuperate the Cartesian cogito, where sensible intuition is to be doubted. In Descartes, the channels through which the subject gains knowledge of being in the World are to be mistrusted (1998b: 22); therefore, rather than presenting a theory of being, he introduces a theory of knowledge. Husserl, on the contrary, does not separate knowledge of an object - or its mode of appearing - from its being, thus subsuming subject and object within consciousness (1998b: 23). In a first movement, Descartes posits the only attainable certitude as that of the cogito: I exist to the extent that I am a thinking being. Thus human rationality can be considered to precede the existence of the body, or the existence of God. However, in a second movement, Descartes admits conditions for this certitude:

This certitude is due to the clarity and distinctness of the *cogito*, but certitude itself is sought because of the presence of infinity in this finite thought, which without this presence would be ignorant of its own finitude... (1996: 210)

Because I am aware of lack, of the imperfections inherent in my sensible intuition, I must have, according to Descartes, the idea of a more perfect being in me. Thus, my consciousness of God, of the infinite must be anterior to that of the finite me. (1996: 211) Whereas in Descartes the finite is determined by its relation with the infinite, in the moderns, finitude proceeds from the subject's mortality. Infinity leads the Cartesian subject to apprehend itself from a viewpoint of absolute exteriority, a total alterity that cannot be reduced to the same, that is, to interiority. Because the idea of

⁴⁷ Noema corresponds to 'thought meaning' in Husserlian terminology.

God (cogitatum) cannot be contained by the thought that thinks it (cogitatio), it breaks down the cogito, a unified consciousness 'indubitable of itself by itself'. (1996: 210)

This perhaps overturns, in advance, the universal validity and primordial character of intentionality. We will say that the idea of God breaks up the thought which is an investment, a synopsis and a synthesis, and can only enclose in a presence, re-present, reduce to presence or let be. (1998a: 160)

Levinas resorts to the Cartesian tradition to attempt to transcend the ontological category of being, in which traditional metaphysics has moved. Whereas ontology has been subordinated to the primacy of the One, of Unity - presupposing the reintegration of fallen 'parts' into the wholeness of Being -, Levinas aims to establish a transcendental metaphysics that would truly be metaphysical by transcending essence, that is, by operating in a sphere that would be otherwise than being. Transcendental metaphysics would envisage the welcoming of the Other by the same, the critique of egoist spontaneity, thus breaking with the determination of the Other by the same prevalent in ontology. (1996: 43).

Totality and the embrace of being, or ontology, do not contain the final secret of being. Religion, where relationship subsists between the same and the Other despite the impossibility of the Whole - the idea of Infinity - is the ultimate structure. (1996: 80)

For Levinas, religion is not the theological contemplation of God, which still operates within the ontological realm of knowledge, vision, transparency and disclosure - where the ultimate question is whether or not God exists -, but rather consists in the ethical relationship with the Other. Religion as metaphysics, substantiated in ethics, concerns the relationship between human beings:

There can be no "knowledge" of God separated from the relationship with men. The Other is the very locus of metaphysical truth, and is indispensable for my relation with God. He does not play the role of a mediator. The Other is not the incarnation of God, but precisely by his face, in which he is disincarnate, is the manifestation of the height in which God is revealed. (1996: 78-9)

The question, therefore, is not 'to be or not to be' (1999: 3), but to move beyond essence, beyond being, by awakening to responsibility for the Other. Desire for infinity, for absolute alterity, cannot be satiated like ontological desire, based on need. On the contrary, it is fed by a constant hunger that increases the more I approach the Other. Because the idea of infinity in me overflows thought, I will never be able to grasp it in its entirety as the theological God in the ontological realm. Rather, it is only through the face of the Other that my sensibility, anterior to being, will be touched in passivity by signification. The infinite, which is never present, is only accessible in its trace:

It signifies with a signifyingness from the first older than its exhibition, not exhausting itself in exhibiting itself, not drawing its meaning from its manifestation, and thus breaking with the coinciding of being with appearance in which, for Western philosophy, meaning or rationality lie, breaking with synopsis. (1998a: 161)

Because alterity cannot be contained within any comprehension of Being, but will transcend it infinitely, it is the relationship with the Other that commands ontology. Ethics, the exercise through which the same is called into question by the Other, precedes ontology, or being, thus constituting a 'first philosophy'.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ For Derrida, it does not make sense to speak of the subordination of ontology to the ethical relation. This is because Being could never precede being, as it is nothing outside the existent. Therefore, an ethics

I cannot disentangle myself from society with the Other, even when I consider the Being of the existent he is. Already the comprehension of Being is said to the existent, who again arises behind the theme in which he is presented. This "saying to the Other" - this relationship with the Other as interlocutor, this relation with an *existent* - precedes all ontology; it is the ultimate relation in Being. Ontology presupposes metaphysics. (1996: 48)

The history of Western philosophy has been, for Levinas, a destruction of transcendence. Due to the emphasis on the return to Being, to the One, any ontological attempt to think transcendence becomes an immanence. (1998a: 154, 158) The unity of philosophical discourse has, according to Levinas, to be unsaid, to be reduced to the primordial saying, the one-for-the-Other, that precedes the crystallised said.

An alternating rhythm of the said and the unsaid, and the unsaid being unsaid in its turn, will have to be substituted for the unity of discourse. There is here a break-up of the omnipotence of the logos, that of system and simultaneity. (1998a: 173)⁴⁹

Scepticism is that which places an interval between saying and the said, preventing that the saying be exhausted in the said. The unity of philosophical discourse camouflages discontinuities,

which presupposes the absoluteness of separate existents engaged in an asymmetrical relationship must necessarily open with the thought of Being, without which the essence of the existents could not exist. (1990: 134)

⁴⁹ Derrida takes up Levinas's critique of logocentrism. However, he claims that language is unable to escape violence, without which it would be reduced to silence. Because metaphysics consists in economy, violence combats violence, and light struggles against light. As such, speech must resort to speech to combat its own violence. (1990: 117)

interruptions and ruptures, which remain like knots in the 'immanence of the said', traces of a past that never became present. (1999: 168, 170)

The permanent return of scepticism does not so much signify the possible break-up of structures as the fact that they are not the ultimate framework of meaning, that for their accord repression can already be necessary. It reminds us of the, in a very broad sense, political character of all logical rationalism, the alliance of logic with politics. (1999: 171)

Western philosophy, where the saying is crystallised in the said, is therefore eminently of a political nature, in comparison with the transcendental metaphysics, enacted in ethics, which Levinas is attempting to introduce. While ontology would be the realm of violence, of war⁵⁰, Levinas aims to establish a philosophy of peace, not by writing back against the violence of ontology - an act which would still presuppose the comprehension within a totality composed of binary opposites -, but precisely by moving beyond being:

The true problem for us Westerners is not so much to refuse violence as to question ourselves about a struggle against violence which, without blanching in non-resistance to evil, could avoid the institution of violence out of this very struggle ... (1999: 177)

⁵⁰ For Levinas, war already presupposes discourse, the primordial signification inherent in the asymmetrical face-to-face relation. It is the distance between separate terms engaging in a relationship not uniting into a totality that allows for both war and peace: the latter are predicated on a pluralism of wills which must remain absolute in themselves. 'Totality absorbs the multiplicity of beings, which peace implies. Only beings capable of war can rise to peace.' (1996: 222)

III. "*There is*": The Inability to Escape Consciousness

Within the realm of ontology, being and non-being compose a totality: to affirm non-being would correspond to a being otherwise, rather than nothingness. The void, a total absence, is impossible to attain, for non-being still operates as the negative term within the Whole comprehended by Being.

Being and not-being illuminate one another, and unfold a speculative dialectic which is a determination of being. Or else the negativity which attempts to repel being is immediately submerged by being. The void that hollows out is immediately filled with the mute and anonymous rustling of the *there is*. (1999: 3)

Every negation thus leads to an assimilation into the same, a reentry into the totality, characterised, in Western philosophy, by an anxiety over finitude and a care for existence. Western spirituality, dominated by the possibility of the subject's death, seeks to escape mortality by two alternatives, both of which take place within essence: on one hand, refuge is found in resignation to and sublimation of the laws of immanence; on the other, an emphasis is placed on ecstasy, on living the instant to the full in intoxicating inebriation so as to create the illusion of an extension of time. (1999: 176)

Contrary to the prevalent mode of Western spirituality, Levinas argues that rather than consisting in a being-toward-death, the *there is*, the impossibility to escape Being, is distinguished by the realisation of the impossibility of death. To describe the *there is*, Levinas urges one to imagine total destruction. What then remains is not a nothingness, nor yet a something, but simply 'the impersonal "field of forces" of existing' (1987: 46), the anonymity of Being and the impossibility of ceasing to exist, without beginning or end in time.

The fact of existing imposes itself when there is no longer anything. And it is anonymous: there is neither anyone nor anything that takes this existence upon itself. It is impersonal like 'it is raining' or 'it is hot.' Existing returns no matter with what negation one dismisses it. *There is*, as the irremissibility of pure existing. (1987: 47)

Levinas refers to insomnia or insanity as situations in which the *there is* reveals itself in acuity. Here, consciousness cannot withdraw from the vigilance to which it is held, becoming an object of itself. Unable to seek refuge in the private domain of unconsciousness, or sleep, consciousness must confront the unbearable irremissibility of Being. The self risks losing its identity in the midst of an all-pervasive *there is*, the possibility that existence exert total mastery over the existent.

A rupture in the anonymity of Being refers to a situation where the same masters the Other in its entirety by a process characterised by the departure from self and the return to self. It is due to this movement of hypostasis, constitutive of identity or subjectification, that 'consciousness is the power to sleep', the 'power to leave the situation of impersonal vigilance' (1987: 51), only to confront it once again when fully awake.

The present is the event of hypostasis. The present leaves itself - better still, it is the departure from self. It is a rip in the infinite beginningless and endless fabric of existing. The present rips apart and joins together again; it begins; it is beginning itself. It has a past, but in the form of remembrance. It has a history, but it is not history. (1987: 52)

The event of the present, where the existent masters existence by the capacity to begin, thus ruptures the impersonal infinity of Being, only to join up with it once again. In introducing the present as the mastery of the existent over existing, but at the same time

seeking in the present the passage from existing to the existent, Levinas is going beyond phenomenology, founded on experience, on thematic exhibition, on the gathering of presence unto itself, on the reduction of meaning to a 'said' that manifests itself. (1987: 54; 1998a: 158)

Our presentation of notions proceeds neither by their logical decomposition, nor by their dialectical description. It remains faithful to intentional analysis, insofar as it signifies the locating of notions in the horizon of their appearing, a horizon unrecognised, forgotten or displaced in the exhibition of an object ... The said in which everything is thematised, in which everything shows itself in a theme, has to be reduced to its signification as saying. (1999: 183)

Because the present as event where the existent takes up existence is marked by both departure from and return to self, identity is forever enchained to itself. This impossibility of escaping oneself leads paradoxically to the curtailing of freedom inherent in the subject's capacity to begin: the fact that the existent is responsible for himself means that in truth the existent is no longer free. For Levinas, the unity of the existent with existence is tragic to the extent that identity is captive to itself, to materiality. He thus aims to shatter the 'enchainment to matter', the unity between existent and existence, the event of the present, by being in time. (1987: 55, 57)

To shatter the enchainment of matter is to shatter the finality of hypostasis. It is to be in time. (1987: 57)

Time will suggest another relationship between existent and existence, surpassing the monist hypostasis of the present, where consciousness ceaselessly reverts back unto itself. To being in time corresponds a relationship with the Other, allowing for the transcendence of identity in its welcoming of alterity and paving the way for a pluralist model of existence. (1987: 54)

IV. Time as Diachrony

According to Levinas, Western thought has based itself on the coincidence between being and appearance; the ego is posited as coinciding with itself in self-identity, and its inwardness is comprehended by a totality without secrets. However, the very failure of rational projects of humanity, based on the belief in the coincidence of identity with itself, reveal identity to be a non-identity, not coinciding with itself, forever oriented towards exteriority:

That an action could be obstructed by the technology destined to render it efficacious and easy, that a science, born to embrace the world, delivers it over to disintegration, that a politics and an administration guided by the humanist ideal maintain the exploitation of man by man and war - these are singular inversions of rationalist projects, disqualifying human causality, and thus transcendental subjectivity understood as spontaneity and act also. Everything comes to pass as though the ego, the identity par excellence from which every identifiable identity would derive, were wanting with regard to itself, did not succeed in coinciding with itself. (1998a: 142)

For Levinas, the non-identity of the subjective derives precisely from being in time, the latter which signifies a relationship with the future. No longer akin to anticipation, the future does not derive from a temporal sequence of linearity, spanning past and present; rather, it consists in the unknowable, the ungraspable, a mystery 'foreign to all light' (1987: 71), an absence that is transcendent. The future is thus radical alterity, that which cannot be made present, only accessible in its trace.

The otherwise than being cannot be situated outside of time, within which being and nothingness, life and death take place, as if it

belonged to an eternal order. It must, however, signify a difference from the binary opposites being and nothingness.

Time is essence and monstration of essence. In the temporalisation of time the light comes about by the instant falling out of phase with itself - which is the temporal flow, the differing of the identical. (1999: 9)

Within temporalisation, founded on 'retention, memory and history', divergencies are camouflaged due to reinscription into a unified discourse of re-presentation. This synchronisation into the present cannot, however, embrace the entirety of the past: that which resists totalisation, containment into the Whole, is an infinite diachrony, 'a past more ancient than every representable origin, a pre-original and anarchical passed' (1999: 9).

...there must be signalled a lapse of time that does not return, a diachrony refractory to all synchronisation, a transcending diachrony. (1999: 9)

If time is to reveal this ambiguity between essence and beyond being - the 'amphibology' between said and saying -, then its temporalisation should be conceived as diachrony rather than synchrony.

Essence fills the said, or the epos, of the saying, but the saying, in its power of equivocation, that is, in the enigma whose secret it keeps, escapes the epos of essence that includes it and signifies beyond in a signification that hesitates between this beyond and the return to the epos of essence. (1999: 9-10)

This space of equivocation, or ambiguity, corresponds to that of transcendence, or infinity, the excluded middle that hovers beyond

essence and non-essence, beyond ontology, where subjectivity is accomplished as an unravelling of identity towards the Other.⁵¹

In what concrete case is the singular relationship with a past produced, which does not reduce this past to the immanence in which it is signalled and leaves it be past, not returning as a present nor a representation, leaves it be past without reference to some present it would have 'modified', leaves it be a past, then, which can not have been an origin, a pre-original past, anarchical past? (1999: 10)

In other words, in which situations does the time of the said, or essence, allow diachrony to be revealed, the anarchical saying to be heard? For Levinas, circumstances which involve the encounter of the same with radical alterity, with the future, with that which cannot be made present, are those in which subject constitution as a non-identity, as fundamentally geared towards exteriority, can be perceived. Death, suffering, sexuality, and, most importantly, the encounter with the face of the Other, constitute paradigms of radical alterity, moments of transcendence in which the inwardness of a traditional ontological subject is destroyed.

⁵¹ Gillian Rose argues that Levinas's excluded middle becomes a holy middle, whereby the agon of representation is refused: any attempt to grasp the forever elusive Other is equated with the violence of the said, of the law. By 'elevating' ethics to 'the heavenly state', divine law and positive law are divorced from each other; the equivocation between law - *halacha* - and ethics is thus ignored in favour of the transition of the non-ethical - the ontological - to the ethical, in a move corresponding to an ecclesiology, a violent love that must respond to a violent State, to the 'twin terrors' of the *il y a* and the *ille*, the third party. The diremptions that Levinas seeks to mend by transcending Being are therefore perpetuated. According to Rose, 'there can be no love where there is demonstrably so little faith', for faith, learnt through failure, is neither prey to the threat of the *il y a* nor to the permanent presence of the 'beloved'. (1992: 255, 260, 264, 296)

V. Levinas and Arendt: On Metaphysics, Time and Dialectics

Levinas and Arendt are both critical of Western metaphysics. However, whereas Levinas critiques the closure of a metaphysical discourse that is immanent, operating within the ontological realm and based on the ideal of a return to eternal Being, Arendt accuses metaphysics of positing a separation between mind and body, which gave rise to the dichotomy between *vita contemplativa* - the life devoted to thought - and *vita activa* - life dedicated to action in a 'world of appearance'. Arendt considers that this duality, responsible for the illusion that one must go beyond appearances to attain the 'essence' of something, consists in one of the greatest fallacies of Western thought, inspiring the birth of modernity with the Cartesian mistrust of that which is given to the senses. (1978: 153)

For Arendt, appearances are of primordial importance, there being no essence that they might camouflage. In a world of appearances, one must 'appear' in the public realm through collective action, so as to ensure a space in which freedom may manifest itself. (1961: 154) From a Heideggerian perspective, Arendt would argue that by acting in a world of appearances one participates in the realm of errancy in which history discloses itself; however, through thought, human existence can unite itself with peaceful and eternal Being, that which is concealed, or absent, from the world in which beings, or existents, display themselves. (1978: 194)

In his attempt to go beyond ontological discourse, Levinas is highly critical of any amalgamation of being and appearance, a movement which he considers to consist in self-coincidence and thus, to be tautological, violent, assimilating the Other into the same. A transcendental metaphysics is aimed precisely at going beyond being, or essence, at rupturing a transcendental subject that reverts back unto itself, at dismantling the notion of the One or Unity that had hitherto presided over Western metaphysics,

devoted to healing a wound which separated a 'fallen' being from its home, that is, from totality. Unlike Arendt, Levinas considers that appearances are not to be trusted. In fact, they are compared to an 'evil genius' (1996: 90): relying on phenomenology, Levinas claims that appearances consist in a reality that is not a reality, for consciousness of the world is always consciousness through a particular world; that is, the intentionality of consciousness - the fact that consciousness is always consciousness of something - determines that which I see, the perception that the subject has of an object, there being a myriad of other perspectives or potential re-presentations that remain in the horizon of that very object. Thus, appearances are not to be taken literally; akin to a threatening *there is*, a world of indecipherability or of complete silence, the veil that shrouds appearances can only be cast aside by speech. Arendt, on the contrary would consider speech as part of the theatricality of appearance in the public realm.

Levinas espouses the Cartesian methodical doubt, whereby a distance is drawn between being and appearance: sensible intuition is to be doubted. The awareness that my senses are not to be trusted derives from the idea of infinity, or perfection, or God in me, a finite being. Infinity will overflow or transcend the thought that thinks it, breaking the illusion of the existence of transcendental consciousness, for now the subject perceives itself from the outside. Thus, where Arendt accuses Descartes of giving rise to the universal suspicion that characterises modernity, and which would inspire determinism, or narratives of necessity, Levinas reads the Cartesian doubt as paving the way for the overthrow of the transcendental, unified subject of ontology, where the ego ceaselessly coincides with itself. In fact, Levinas might critique Arendt for aiming precisely at this self-coincidence in her defence of Heidegger's vision of an existent who can link himself to absent Being by the faculty of thought. According to Levinas, man would be then simply reflecting Being, consisting in a medium for the latter's disclosure.

For Arendt, when man joins himself with Being by exercising the activity of thought, he is in a space of non-time, an enduring present, a rupture or gap between past and future, where he can abstract himself from his own context and reflect - remembering or anticipating - on the remnants rescued from the ravage of time. (1961: 13; 1978: 203) Levinas would consider this 'backward glance of the historian' to be a re-presentation, that is, an attempt by identity to assimilate its Other - time - into itself, thus giving rise to a temporal sequence of progression. In fact, this rectilinear temporality, driven forward by the impetus of the will, would be akin to the Hegelian dialectical movement, which absorbs what it encounters into itself. Time, for Levinas, consists in that which ruptures the hypostasis of identity, whereby the ego reverts back unto itself in the present: upon confrontation with a transcendental Other, the future, identity can no longer master existence for it knows that it will ultimately die. Thus, time which is defined as postponement of death allows identity to be for-the-Other rather than a Heideggerian being-towards-death; it reveals the absurdity inherent in the care for the self, that is, the attempt to seek self-coincidence when one is ultimately confronted with the absolute Other. Time, for Levinas, is the Other, in the sense that it allows me to transcend myself towards exteriority.

The Hegelian dialectic, according to Arendt, conjugates both the future tense of the will, in its linear drive forward, and the enduring present of thought, based on circular motions inherent in the exercise of remembrance. Because every objective is considered as a means to achieving further objectives, the will can either result in infinite progress or total annihilation, depending on the commencing term of the dialectical movement - Being or Not-Being. Arendt argues that Hegel took Being for granted as a starting point of his process towards Becoming. If he were to have commenced with Not-Being instead, then Becoming would be an impossibility. Arendt's criticism of Hegel is that his dialectics do not allow for nothingness, that is, a negation that does not negate a concrete something. (1978: 51) According to Levinas, however,

because non-being functions as a negative term within the wholeness of Being, it cannot consist in pure nothingness, or absence. In fact, not-being is the *there is*, the impossibility of withdrawing from eternal Being. Thus, from this perspective, even if the Hegelian dialectic were to have taken not-being as a starting point, it would have nevertheless resulted in the same process of the unfolding of Being, that is, of a Becoming based on the absorption of successive negations into a new totality. The *there is*, corresponding to the impossibility of evading oneself, that is, the enchainment of identity to itself, can only be ruptured by 'being in time', where time is not a present that assimilates that which it comes across into identity, but rather a relationship with the Other, allowing for transcendence of identity in its confrontation with alterity.

VI. Encounters with Radical Alterity: Duality in Existence

It is impossible to describe in experiential terms, that is, in terms of light or visibility, the limits of pain and suffering. The structure of pain transcends the movement whereby the ego reverts back to itself, the coincidence of identity with itself that characterises thematised experience. Suffering is directly exposed to the irremissibility of being, that is, it is unable to withdraw from the *there is*, to retreat into a state of unconsciousness, or nothingness. In physical pain, the Other is present, touches me, grasps my will. (1996: 238) Yet suffering simultaneously heeds a call towards death, the proximity of the threat of nothingness, 'as if despite the entire absence of a dimension of withdrawal that constitutes suffering, it still had some free space for an event'. (1987: 69) Suffering is therefore characterised by ambiguity, caught in between the witnessing of oneself as a thing, and at the same time at a distance from this reification.

Suffering ... is already the present of the pain acting on the for itself of the will, but, as consciousness, the pain is

always yet to come. In suffering the free being ceases to be free, but, while non-free, is yet free. (1996: 238)

By maintaining a distance from the present, consciousness, deprived of freedom, becomes patience, 'the passivity of undergoing, and yet mastery itself'. (1996: 238)

The being that does violence to me and has a hold on me is not yet upon me; it continues to threaten from the future, is not yet upon me, is only conscious. But in this extreme consciousness, where the will reaches mastery in a new sense, where death no longer touches it, extreme passivity becomes extreme mastery. (1996: 239)

In Heidegger, being towards death corresponds to Dasein's possibility of authentic existence, the supreme event of lucidity or virility upon which hinge all other possibilities. Death thus becomes an 'event of freedom' and the basis of activity, enabling the 'very feat of grasping a possibility'. (1987: 70) Levinas, on the contrary, regards suffering as the limit of the possible, where the subject remains enchained to itself but simultaneously finds itself on the edge of an event beyond physical pain.

The now is the fact that I am master, master of the possible, master of grasping the possible. Death is never now. When death is here, I am no longer here, not just because I am nothingness, but because I am unable to grasp. My mastery, my virility, my heroism as a subject can be neither virility nor heroism in relation to death. (1987: 72)

Death brings the realisation that the subject's ability to 'be able' is finite; the subject no longer exerts mastery over himself in the present, for he exists according to a modality whereby an unassumable event can befall him, regardless of the will's projects. Death, the unknown, the absolute Other, disturbs identity at peace with itself:

Death is the impossibility of having a project. This approach of death indicates that we are in relation with something that is absolutely Other, something bearing alterity not as a provisional determination we can assimilate through enjoyment, but as something whose very existence is made of alterity. My solitude is thus not confirmed by death but broken by it. (1987: 74)

The time of the will is the future: however, in its projection upstream, it is suddenly confronted and 'overturned' by the threat of an absolute alterity, an otherness which I cannot assimilate into myself unlike the objects of need, but which strikes me as a mystery, alienating my will in its exteriority.

In the being for death of fear I am not faced with nothingness, but faced with what is *against me*, as though murder, rather than being one of the occasions of dying, were inseparable from the essence of death ... (1996: 234)

Death proceeds unto me as though it were a foreign will. Its urgency, which consists in unforeseeability, makes reference to an interpersonal order, where the I gives in, is subjugated by the unknowable.

Mortality is the concrete and primary phenomenon. It forbids the positing of a for itself that would not be already delivered over to the Other and consequently be a *thing*. The for itself, essentially mortal, does not only represent things to itself, but is subject to them. (1996: 235)

Subjection to alterity comes as both menace and postponement. The hypostasis of the I in the time of the present, whereby the ego coincides with itself, is shattered by the approach of an instant that is forever future for the one who awaits death. The moment of

death is eternally 'out of reach', due to my inability to apprehend the moment in which death strikes me.

... it approaches without being able to be assumed, such that the time that separates me from my death dwindles and dwindles without end, involves a sort of last interval which my consciousness cannot traverse, and where a leap will somehow be produced from death to me... (1996: 235)

Thus if death is urgency, pressing forward, it simultaneously allows for time. Temporality consists precisely in this being-for-death, while retaining time, that is, being against death. (1996: 235) It is because I die that the instants of my life that extend from birth to death can be remembered or anticipated (1996: 234); the possibility of impossibility is the reason why temporality, reaching from past to future, makes sense. Life consists in the postponement of the violence of alterity, the violence of death, which tears identity away from illusions of being at rest with itself. Levinas thus argues that ultimately death is the cause for meaning in life, due to its reference to a structure of exteriority the signifyingness of which it does not eliminate.

Murder, at the origin of death, reveals a cruel world, but one to the scale of human relations. The will, already betrayal and alienation of itself but postponing this betrayal, on the way to death but a death ever future, exposed to death but not *immediately*, has time to be for the Other, and thus to recover meaning despite death. (1996: 236)

Eros, 'strong as death'⁵² (1987: 76), is another encounter with radical alterity that cannot be described in terms of light. Like death, it exemplifies a relationship with alterity as mystery, as the impossibility of grasping the Other and containing it within the

⁵² Levinas draws on Franz Rosenzweig's statement that 'love is as strong as death', inspired, in turn, by the biblical Song of Songs. (1985: 156)

same. Eros is the contact with the future, where the future is the Other. The present of the future occurs as anticipation or projection, but the absolute future, as exteriority, is that which surprises us, striking us unexpectedly, evading representation. Revealing an interpersonal structure at the root of signification, the future tears the subject away from the time of the present, from personal duration. (1987: 77)

Levinas argues that love is characterised by ambiguity, situating itself at the limit of immanence and transcendence. The fact that the Other appears as an object of need while retaining his 'separateness' characterises a relationship that is simultaneously constituted by enjoyment in the time of the present and a movement of transcendence that goes beyond the beloved, toward the *not yet* of a future that can never become present. The caress, that which is composed of sensibility but at the same time transcends the senses, is an example of the originality of erotic ambiguity.

The caress consists in seizing upon nothing, in soliciting what ceaselessly escapes its form toward a future never future enough, in soliciting what slips away as though it *were not yet*. It *searches*, it forages. It is not an intentionality of disclosure but of search: a movement unto the invisible. (1996: 257-8)

The subject loses its position, its identity, by its encounter with an absolute future, where the ego no longer coincides with itself. This disturbance of the I by the Other, this transformation from a state of peaceful slumber into one of restlessness, corresponds to being moved by the 'beloved', to 'a pity that is complacent, a pleasure, a suffering transformed into happiness - voluptuousness'. (1996: 259)

Whereas the relationship with the Other is generally understood as fusion, Levinas draws attention to the 'pathos of voluptuousness' which lies in a duality of beings whose proximity maintains

distance (1987: 94), preserving rather than neutralising alterity. Being moved, or compassion, derives precisely from this alterity, whereby my voluptuousness delights in the Other's voluptuousness.

... the relation between me and the Other commences in the *inequality* of terms, transcendent to one another, where alterity does not determine the Other in a formal sense, as where the alterity of B with respect to A results simply from the identity of B, distinct from the identity of A. Here the alterity of the Other does not result from its identity, but constitutes it: the Other is the Other. (1996: 251)

The Other bears alterity as its essence. Because the Other is only accessible as mystery, any contact with the former occurs as a profanation of modesty, a violation of boundaries. Eros hovers between presence and the not yet: it feeds on the simultaneity of exposure and clandestinity, that is, on profanation. (1996: 257)

Voluptuousness profanes; it does not see. *An intentionality without vision*, discovery does not shed light: what it discovers does not present itself as *signification* and illuminates no horizon. (1996: 260)

The Other thus retains mystery in voluptuousness, in profanation. It remains clandestine, hidden, while uncovered, modest in immodesty, in a '*no man's land* between being and not-yet-being' (1996: 259). For Levinas, femininity is the metaphor of alterity that ideally expresses carnal tenderness, a combination of, on one hand, ultramateriality, the weight of non-signifyingness, and, on the other hand, evanescent frailty, no longer an existent (1996: 257-8). The feminine thus abides in a situation 'simultaneously uncovered by Eros and refusing Eros' (1996: 259).⁵³

⁵³ Luce Irigaray critiques Levinas's metaphor of femininity for suggesting a 'she' who does not manifest her own will to love. By occupying the site of the nonwill, the feminine is absorbed by the ethical will of the masculine. Caught between God and son, she is annihilated as other.

The feminine presents a face that goes beyond the face. The face of the beloved does not *express* the secret that Eros profanes; it ceases to express, or, if one prefers, it expresses only this refusal to express, this end of discourse and of decency, this abrupt interruption of the order of presences. (1996: 260)

The signifyingness of the face, the primordial signification prior to any ontology, is revealed in the erotic relationship, for the non-signifyingness of erotic nudity only makes sense due to the 'frankness' of a face that precedes it.

...disrespect presupposes the face. Elements and things remain outside of respect and disrespect. It is necessary that the face have been apperceived for nudity to be able to acquire the non-signifyingness of the lustful. (1996: 262)

Renouncing meaning, eros is exhibition; the face gives way to animality, to the 'irresponsibility of play'. Eros goes beyond the face, marking a not yet, a 'less than nothing', where nothing is the negation of something, and thus still operates as a term within the totality of Being; by being less than Being, it is beyond Being, a less that is infinitely more because it cannot be embraced by ontological categories. Forever future and ungraspable, the object of voluptuousness is not posited as another existent, or a freedom identical to and struggling with the ego; instead, it is a freedom desired not in the transparency of the Other's face, but rather in a future that remains hidden although uncovered. I do not wish to possess the Other, for possession is reminiscent of fusion, where the alterity between lovers is neutralised. Rather than aiming at the Other, voluptuousness thus aims at the Other's voluptuousness: 'it is voluptuousness of voluptuousness, love of the love of the Other.'

Voluptuousness thus remains, for Irigaray, a relation which assimilates the Other into the same, for after his *jouissance* the male lover is free to continue his 'ethical journey' by relying on the son. (1986: 241, 247)

(1996: 266) However, 'If to love is to love the love the Beloved bears me, to love is also to love oneself in love, and thus to return to oneself'. (1996: 266)

This return of the ego unto itself is interrupted, however, by the event of fecundity, the 'relationship of the ego with a myself who is nonetheless a stranger to me'. (1987: 91) It is through fecundity, and through the horizon of the future introduced by eros, that the enchainment of identity to itself is loosened, leading to the accomplishment of time between human beings, where the present in which the existent masters existence advances upon the future which is the Other.

I transcend myself, my personal duration, through the event of fecundity. Thus, although in eros the same and the Other are not united, by the act of trans-substantiation the same becomes an Other through the child. Paternity defies formal logic for it embraces both self-identification and difference within identification. (1996: 267)

Whereas projections into the future derive from a solitary will that illuminates and comprehends, transforming external objects into personal ideas - the very definition of power for Levinas -, the child, produced in voluptuousness, cannot be reduced to my power. This is because the possibility of the future of a child hinges on my encounter with the Other.

This relationship resembles that which was described for the idea of infinity; I cannot account for it by myself, as I do account for the luminous world by myself. (1996: 267)

Fecundity is characterised by a duality, both in terms of its origin in the erotic relationship as well as in the split identity it produces in the form of the child, who, as absolute future, evades the parents' possibilities, introducing a discontinuity between same and Other, and yet remains part of the parents' journey in time. It

is through the child that the parents will establish a relationship with infinite time.

In fecundity the I transcends the world of light - not to dissolve into the anonymity of the *there is*, but in order to go further than the light, to go *elsewhere*. To stand in the light, to see - to grasp before grasping - is not yet 'to be infinitely'; it is to return to oneself older, that is, encumbered with oneself. To be infinitely means to be produced in the mode of an I that is always at the origin, but that meets with no trammels to the renewal of its substance, not even from its very identity. Youth as a philosophical concept is defined thus. (1996: 268)

The dissolution of the hypostasis of the I as the time of the present striving towards the future in fecundity does not find a term in the Other. Rather, there is a repetition of this process in the Other, such that 'transcendence transcends toward him who transcends' (1996: 269). Fecundity thus accomplishes a desire that is not based on lack or need, but which is fed on the impossibility of satisfaction, going beyond the possible by transcending itself in the infinite production of desire.

The ultimate structure of duality inherent in Being that eros and fecundity lay bare indicate that the former is engendered as multiple, as fissured into same and other. To be corresponds to being in society and in time. Although beginning with Plato, influenced by the Eleatic notion of Being, the social ideal has been one of fusion, where the subject in relationship with alterity is part of a totality - a collective representation gathered around a common term -, in Levinas being in society corresponds to a face-to-face without a common term, based on a proximity that maintains distance, in time. Time no longer constitutes a 'fallen' mode of Being, anticipating a recuperation within a non-temporal, eternal totality; rather, it is the very event of being, accomplished and making sense only through my relationship with alterity. The

unity of the Eleatic notion of Being, dominant in Western philosophy, thus gives way in Levinas to the notion of duality, patent in each subject's existing through the situations of sexuality, fecundity, suffering and death. (1987: 92-94)

We thus leave the philosophy of Parmenidean being. Philosophy itself constitutes a moment of this temporal accomplishment, a discourse always addressed to another. What we are now exposing is addressed to those who shall wish to read it. (1996: 269)

VII. The Face of the Other

The face is that which signifies by itself, requiring no relation to another term in order to acquire signification. Levinas uses the face as a metaphor for the Other, who by presenting himself to me transcends any idea I could have had of him. The Other, the Cartesian cogitatio, cannot be contained within the idea of the Other - the cogitatum - in me. The face therefore cannot be reduced to a plastic form, a combination of characteristics forming an image. It is forever inadequate to any idea one can have of it.

The face of the Other at each moment destroys and overflows the plastic image it leaves me, the idea existing to my own measure and to the measure of its *ideatum* - the adequate idea. (1996: 51)

Because it cannot be thematised under my gaze, that is, reduced to a set of qualities, such as colour of hair, eyes, shape of features, the face can only be approached by welcoming its expression. The distinction between form and content is thus eliminated, for the totality of its content - expression - is spread out in its form. The face is therefore vulnerable in its capacity for expression, in the nakedness with which it presents itself to my gaze; it is this very vulnerability that leads Levinas to choose the face as a metaphor for the infinite Other.

This gaze that supplicates and demands, that can supplicate only because it demands, deprived of everything because entitled to everything, and which one recognises in giving ... - this gaze is precisely the epiphany of the face as a face ... To recognise the Other is to give. But it is to give to the master, to the lord, to him whom one approaches as "You" in a dimension of height. (1996: 75)

The relationship with alterity is not reciprocal but asymmetrical, where the ego responds, in passivity, to the call of the Other from a dimension of height, in an encounter that is face-to-face. The Other, taking the form of whatever I myself am not - 'the weak, the poor, the widow, and the orphan' (1987: 83) - is transcendental, for the subject cannot assume the event of alterity, is overwhelmed by the fact that it is ungraspable. The more I attempt to approach the Other, the wider the gap between myself and the Other. I am permanently in debt to the Other, and it is in this sense that the 'Other is deprived of everything, because entitled to everything'.⁵⁴

In the eyes of the Other is issued the command "Thou shalt not kill", an interdiction that is predicated on the very possibility of this impossibility. Murder, laying claim to a total negation of the Other, is the attempt to exercise power over that which transcends power: the Other can be killed but not assimilated. Unlike labour or

⁵⁴ Couze Venn argues for a non-prescriptive ethics of time, in which time, as time of the Other and time of historicity, is the 'primary value', the incalculability of which derives from its association with indebtedness. Responsibility for alterity implies condemnation of the 'instituted theft of the time of the other', that is, the delegitimation of time as property, as an ideal guiding standards of justice in contextually specific situations without resorting to transcendentalisms. To welcome the Other, that which cannot be made present, corresponds to the giving of the gift of time, an economy of desire which seeks to transcend 'the gap between myself and the Other' by establishing community or friendship. (2000: 230-2, 235)

representation which negate an object by appropriation and comprehension, murder aims not at domination but at annihilation, that is, at the renunciation of comprehension of the Other by the same. (1996: 198) However, because the face partakes of the sensible whilst infinitely exceeding its form, it will on one hand be susceptible to the violence of murder, but on the other hand, will infinitely resist obliteration by the unforeseeability of its own reaction, the very transcendence of expression inherent in the struggle that the face threatens against this possibility of impossibility.

Infinity presents itself as a face in the ethical resistance that paralyzes my powers and from the depths of defenceless eyes rises firm and absolute in its nudity and destitution. The comprehension of this destitution and this hunger establishes the very proximity of the Other. But thus the epiphany of infinity is expression and discourse. (1996: 199-200)

VIII. The Atheism of the I

For Levinas, expression and discourse do not serve the purpose of revealing information concerning the inward domain of the human spirit. Rather, they are the mode through which beings present or manifest themselves, attending their own manifestation and appealing to the Other in the process.

To manifest oneself in attending one's own manifestation is to invoke the interlocutor and expose oneself to his response and questioning. (1996: 200)

To speak to the Other is to transcend the strictly phenomenal form of representation, that is, the 'plastic in manifestation'. By manifesting oneself as a face, one moves beyond representation - the sphere of ontology -, into the face-to-face, where one presents oneself to the Other in one's 'nudity', 'destitution and hunger', without resorting to any image for mediation. Judgement is

pronounced upon me to the extent that I must submit myself to the Other's questioning; due to my constantly being called to justify my own freedom before the Other, truth is produced in apology - my defence under judgement - before the Other. Judgement thus gives rise to an infinite responsibility of the will, unique and irreplaceable in its apology, vis à vis the Other.

To utter 'I,' to affirm the irreducible singularity in which the apology is pursued, means to possess a privileged place with regard to responsibilities for which no one can replace me and from which no one can release me. To be unable to shirk: this is the I. (1996: 245)

The Other shames me in my arbitrary freedom, which is apologetic in that it appeals from itself to judgement by the Other. However, for the I to manifest itself while attending its manifestation, it must have first been produced as separate, in the hypostasis of the present, through the subjectivities of need and will. The movement of the ego reverting back unto itself is that of the egoism inherent in enjoyment, from which the will arises. The subject loses himself within the element - that which he lives from - in enjoyment; however, due to the future of the element as insecurity and indeterminacy, the subject falls back upon his own time - the present -, through possession and labour, separating himself from the uncertainty of the elemental.

Enjoyment does not refer to an infinity beyond what nourishes it, but to the virtual vanishing of what presents itself, to the instability of happiness. (1996: 141)

Need and happiness are closely tied, for I enjoy that which I live from, absorbing the non-me into the same through nourishment. The happiness derived from the elements I nourish myself from is always a 'first happiness', an absolute beginning, a creation *ex nihilo*, since it breaks with the continuity of an anonymous Being, a totality for all eternity, where commencement and end have no

meaning. Enjoyment thus corresponds to the existent's aspiration to a transcendence beyond eternal Being. As a condition for activity, happiness is independent from Being, for it does not consist in 'my bearing in being', but rather in my 'exceeding of being'. (1996: 113)

Enjoyment is made of the memory of its thirst; it is a quenching. It is the act that remembers its 'potency'. (1996: 113)

Enjoyment, the movement of egoism, consists in the accomplishment of the 'ipseity' of the I, that is the coinciding of the ego with itself in the fulfilment of its needs. This satiation of need - happiness - is realised in the fact that the ego gains its own identity by dwelling in the 'other' - the elemental -, rather than by opposition to it. (1996: 115) Thus, it is through enjoyment that the I achieves 'atheist separation' from the totality of Being, whereby it is at home with itself and ready to embark on the apology which is a constant justification of itself with regard to the Other.

In order that a pluralism in itself be realised there must be produced in depth the movement from me to the Other... Pluralism implies a radical alterity of the Other, whom I do not simply *conceive* by relation to myself, but *confront* out of my egoism. (1996: 121)

The atheist separation of an I who dwells in the 'other' reveals the body to be 'a separated existence that affirms its independence in the happy dependence of need'. (1996: 164-5) However, because the source of the elements upon which the independent I is dependent to satisfy its needs forever escapes my possession - implying a permanent care for a future which might not bring me the elemental from which I live -, the ego will attempt to guard itself against the insecurity of the 'morrow' through labour, and as such master the World.

In order that this future arise in its signification as a postponement and a *delay* in which *labour*, by mastering the uncertainty of the future and its insecurity and by establishing *possession*, delineates separation in the form of economic independence, the separated being must be able to recollect itself and have representations. *Recollection* and *representation* are produced concretely as *habitation in a dwelling* or a Home. (1996: 150)

My dwelling will condition representation, for 'consciousness of a world is already consciousness *through* that world' (1996: 153). Thus, although representation absorbs that which it comes across into itself, it nevertheless presupposes an *a priori* dwelling, the possibility of recollection in the intimacy of the home. It is therefore through separation, through the possibility of recollection in itself that the I crystallises; labour and possession are part and parcel of identity's effectuation of separation.

The movement by which a being builds its home, opens and ensures interiority to itself, is constituted in a movement by which the separated being recollects itself. With the dwelling the latent birth of the world is produced. (1996: 157)

Labour will discover the world by transforming elements into things. The independence of the element - its being - is thus suspended by labour's possession, an immanent movement that reverts back to the subject and which therefore presupposes a dwelling.

A fathomless depth divined by enjoyment in the element yields to labour, which masters the future and stills the anonymous rustling of the *there is*, the uncontrollable stirring of the elemental, disquieting even within enjoyment itself. (1996: 160)

Possession protects against the uncertainty of the future, in which elements change over time. The outcome of labour is characterised by durability and permanence, corresponding to substances that dominate time rather than elements, uncontrollable in their source.

The indetermination of the element, its future, becomes consciousness, the possibility of making use of time. Labour characterises not a freedom that has detached itself from being, but a will: a being that is threatened, but has time at its disposal to ward off the threat. (1996: 166)

Through the will, one protects oneself against danger, and ultimately against death; to will is to postpone corporeal finitude. However, the exercise of the will runs up against unforeseeability, resulting in outcomes that were not part of my project.

The worker does not hold in his hands all the threads of his own action. He is exteriorised by acts that are already in a sense abortive. If his works deliver signs, they have to be deciphered without his assistance. If he participates in this deciphering, he speaks. Thus the product of labour is not an inalienable possession, and it can be usurped by the Other. (1996: 176)

The worker is not expressed in his activity, but rather is simply signified by a sign in a system of signs; absent from his manifestation, reduced to a phenomenon, the author of works will be subject to interpretation on the basis of his labour.

The symbolism of life and labour symbolises in that very particular sense Freud discovered in all our conscious manifestations and in our dreams, and which is the essence of every sign, its primordial definition: it reveals only in concealing. (1996: 176)

History presents man on the basis of his works, rather than as a face. To attend his own manifestation, the existent would have to be able to speak, to address an apology, a justification of his actions, to the Other. Through historiography, the subjective will, already dead, is assimilated into the designs of a foreign will. (1996: 228)⁵⁵

The verdict of history is pronounced by the survivor who no longer speaks to the being he judges, and to whom the will appears and offers itself as a result and as a work. Thus the will seeks judgement in order to be confirmed against death, whereas judgement taken as the judgement of history kills the will qua will. (1996: 241)

The will is always absent from the judgement of history, equivalent to universal and impersonal laws that reduce the subjective to the third person, to 'objective signification'. Thus, although the universal as proclaimed by institutions serves the purpose of protecting the will against death, unforeseeability and its own 'perfidy', this very universality results in an inhuman order characterised by the tyranny of the totality which submerges individual singularity into itself. For Levinas, this totality corresponds to the political realm, in contrast to the religious domain which allegedly privileges the singularity of the individual by allowing the latter to reveal himself through speech.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Derrida critiques Levinas for presupposing that History is a finite totality, rather than a movement of transcendence which enables the appearance of this very totality. The philosopher cannot escape History because, according to Derrida, History is the history of the departures from totality. Neither a finite totality nor a perfect infinity, History consists in the difference between the two. (1990: 117)

⁵⁶ Howard Caygill draws attention to the mutual implication of the ethical and the political in Levinas's *Esprit* articles, which reveal the link between his critique of ontology and the National-Socialist political, the Cold War political, as well as the 'prophetic political' of Israel. Having first sought to set a universal monotheistic philosophy of freedom

... speech in the first person, direct discourse ... consists precisely in *incessantly* supplying a datum to be added to what, being object of universal wisdom, admits of no further adjunction ... It presents the will at its trial; it is produced as its defence. (1996: 242)

By submitting itself to judgement by the Other whilst attending its own manifestation, that is, in apology, the will no longer is submerged by the totality of a universalist discourse. The apology ruptures the totality by introducing into the latter the present of a subjectivity which will confront the visible evidence of history.

The invisible is the offence that inevitably results from the judgement of visible history, even if history unfolds rationally. The virile judgement of history ... is cruel. The universal norms of this judgement silence the unicity in which the apology is contained and from which it draws its arguments. (1996: 243)

Because the judgement of history is always a judgement on the visible, it transforms every apology into a visible argument so that the latter can have a place within the totality.⁵⁷ As such, an

against the universalism of Nazi racism, Levinas subsequently argues for a political that transcends the universal: the universal struggle against socialism and capitalism is reduced to 'hollow rhetoric' by the unleashing of inhuman forces that escape human control. This ushers in the end of the human political and the introduction of the prophetic moment of ethical responsibility for the Other. However, the tension between the ontological and religious dimensions of the political surface in the difficult negotiation between the State of Israel as an event in 'universal history' and the mission of Israel in 'sacred history'. (2000: 8-11, 13-14)

⁵⁷ According to Scott Lash, Levinas relegates history to the realm of the *il y a*, whereas temporality, consisting fundamentally in the time of the Other, opens up with illeity, beyond Being, resulting in an eschatology that culminates with redemption. History is thus rejected for the ancient,

'invisible offence' is committed against singularity, against that which inspires apology; the face of the Other, the unencompassable and uncontainable nudity of the Other's gaze - where I can read the offence suffered due to his status as 'stranger, widow, and orphan' -, shame me in their judgement of my freedom. (1996: 244) The Other accuses me, giving rise to an infinite responsibility inherent in the will to respond to this accusation. I am persecuted by the Other to the extent that I must substitute myself for him, transcending myself in the process, moving beyond being, answering to the call of responsibility which summons me, in my singularity, to 'goodness': subjectivity is thus accomplished in the movement towards the good, which transcends ontology, in the realisation that I am the Other.

The I, which we have seen arise in enjoyment as a separated being having apart, in itself, the centre around which its existence gravitates, is confirmed in its singularity by purging itself of this gravitation ... interminably ... This is termed goodness. Perhaps the possibility of a point of the universe where such an overflow of responsibility is produced ultimately defines the I. (1996: 244-5)

IX. On Freedom and Justice

Levinas argues that the concept of free will, whereby identity moulds itself by controlling 'all the strings that operate its being' (1996: 226) is illusory due to the ultimate exposure to alterity: if on one hand, the will's labours consist in a postponement of death, on the other, they are, subsequent to death, reappropriated by a foreign will and integrated into a totality from which subjectivity is eliminated. Thus any care that the ego might have concerning

pre-traditional time of the Other; however, to what extent is Levinas's eschatological time pre-modern? 'Are we ... not back in the abstract ungrounded ethics ... that have made Marxism and liberalism so out of touch with the turn of the twenty-first century?' (1996: 270-1)

being-in-the-World is rendered tragicomical due to the inability to escape the condition of mortality, try as one might to postpone it.

In opposition to the tradition of Western thought which regards the limitation of the spontaneity of freedom to be an ultimate tragedy - giving rise to a notion of justice within political theory that bases itself on the ideal of an absolute exercise of spontaneity, where my freedom ought to be reconciled with others' freedom -, Levinas posits the notion of finite freedom. Because the I does not participate in a totality, but rather is accomplished in subjectivity as a separation that constantly reverts back unto itself, any relation established with the Other cannot be comprehended by the same: the same and the Other are separate beings who confront each other in the face-to-face relation. The atheism of the I is thus a prerequisite both for the Other to reveal himself in his transcendence through speech, as well as for my justification of my freedom to him. This reveals that the face-to-face encounter between separate beings requires that the existents be simultaneously independent from and in relation with each other. (1996: 223)

... the atheism of the I marks the break with participation and consequently the possibility of seeking a justification for oneself, that is, a dependence upon an exteriority without this dependence absorbing the dependent being, held in invisible meshes. This dependence, consequently, *at the same time* maintains independence; such is the face to face relation. (1996: 88)

By contrast, in the ontological tradition of Western philosophy, every relation between same and Other corresponds either to the imperialism of the same, where identity determines its other, or to the impersonal manifestation of a universal order, where identity sees itself as part of a Whole and eliminates the opposition between I and non-I. (1996: 44, 87)

It was to escape the arbitrariness of freedom, its disappearance into the Neuter, that we have approached the I as atheist and created - free, but capable of tracing back beneath its condition - before the Other, who does not deliver himself in the 'thematization' or 'conceptualisation' of the Other. (1996: 88)

Knowledge is ontological freedom, exercised in light, proceeding to neutralise alterity by grasping the latter as a theme or object of experience, thereby reducing it to the same. However, because knowledge is based on justification, one must constantly interrogate that which is given as an accomplished and irrevocable fact. (1996: 82-3)

Thus, knowing which is open to critique, to putting itself in question, cannot be reduced to 'objective cognition', representation and evidence (1996: 85), all of which are inherent in freedom. Rather, knowing surpasses ontology giving way to metaphysics, beyond essence, geared towards exteriority. Metaphysical desire puts freedom into question by welcoming the Other. (1996: 42, 85)

... critique does not reduce the Other to the same as does ontology, but calls into question the exercise of the same. A calling into question of the same ... is brought about by the Other. We name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ethics. (1996: 43)

In the eyes of the Other I can read a judgement pertaining to my actions; shamed by the arbitrariness of my freedom, I become conscious of my own injustice. Thus, morality commences once one understands the violence inherent in freedom.

This flawless identity freed from all participation, independent in the I, can nonetheless lose its tranquillity if the Other, rather than countering it by upsurging on the same

plane as it, speaks to it, that is shows himself in expression, in the face, and comes from on high. Freedom then is inhibited, not as countered by a resistance, but as arbitrary, guilty, and timid; but in its guilt it rises to responsibility. (1996: 203-4)

An inhibited and finite freedom is primordially non-violence, or peace, for it seeks to preserve the plurality of a separated same and Other. Where freedom was defined as having the time to postpone one's mortality, that is, the menace of violence (1996: 237), finite freedom dreads its own power to murder more than it does death.

The 'You shall not commit murder' which delineates the face in which the Other is produced submits my freedom to judgement. (1996: 303)

The ethical impossibility of annihilating the Other, derives from the latter's condition of transcendence; I cannot have power over him who reveals himself in speech. (1996: 84) Because the Other is infinite and cannot be encompassed by the same, his freedom cannot be posited as a freedom equal to but Other than my own: the coexistence of a multiplicity of freedoms would integrate a totality where the affirmation of one freedom would forcibly lead to the negation of other freedoms. (1987: 92, 171)

The Other is not transcendent because he would be free as I am; on the contrary his freedom is a superiority that comes from his very transcendence. (1996: 87)

Due to an arbitrariness that requires justification before the Other, my freedom cannot be self-justified. (1996: 303) The shame felt when I am confronted by the Other in my freedom proves that the latter is already founded on truth - where truth is understood to be a 'respect for being', for *what is* (1996: 302).

Reason and freedom seem to us to be founded on prior structures of being whose first articulations are delineated by the metaphysical movement, or respect, or justice - identical to truth. The terms of the conception making truth rest on freedom must be inverted. (1996: 303)

Where truth pertains to a moral order, freedom is of a political nature, taking place within social and political institutions that ensure its survival through the establishment of laws. Exposed to contingency, namely violence and death, freedom is protected from its own 'perfidy' by the law.

Freedom is engraved on the stone of the tables on which laws are inscribed - it exists by virtue of this incrustation of an institutional existence. Freedom depends on a written text, destructible to be sure, but durable, on which freedom is conserved for man outside of man. (1996: 241)

However, as we have seen, Levinas critiques rational institutions for subjugating the subjective will to the tyrannical imperatives of objective signification inherent in universal law. Due to this integration of the particular into the impersonal order of the totality, man will only be able to affirm his singularity through the religious, that is, the ethical, in a metaphysical movement geared towards exteriority. (1996: 242) The latter is patent in the apology, whereby I am in the obligation to respond to the Other's judgement, justifying the arbitrariness of my freedom before him. (1996: 244)

To be judged thus does not consist in hearing a verdict set forth impersonally and implacably out of universal principles. Such a voice would interrupt the direct discourse of the being subject to judgement, would silence the apology, whereas the adjudication in which the defence makes itself heard should confirm in truth the singularity of the will it judges. (1996: 244)

Judgement gives rise to an infinite responsibility of the will, due to my inability to ignore a duty to respond to the Other. Rather than absorbing the singularity of the subjective within the totality of the universal, justice summons me to go beyond itself, beyond the boundary of the law. My responsibility thus transcends institutional justice, by the exercise of inward and subjective morality that 'tells truth' in apology.

Concretely to be an I presenting itself at a trial - which requires all the resources of subjectivity - means for it to be able to see, beyond the universal judgements of history, that offence of the offended which is inevitably produced in the very judgement issued from universal principles. What is above all invisible is the offence universal history inflicts on particulars. To be I and not only an incarnation of a reason is precisely to be capable of seeing the offence of the offended, or the face. (1996: 247)

The notion of human rights - as *a priori* natural rights that are inherent in every human person regardless both of actions that might have been taken to merit these rights as well as of physical, mental, or social differences inherent in human beings -, has, according to Levinas, been framed as the right to free will, that is, as independence from an absolute. (1999b: 145-6) However, the rights of man already presupposes an absolute, a totality, by attempting to reconcile a multiplicity of freedoms that are potentially hostile towards each other.

The war of each against all, based on the Rights of Man! Unless we attribute to the essence of free will a propensity for the rational, and, thus, a respect for the universal, thanks to which the imperative and the normative of the intelligible would impose themselves on the free will of each, consenting to limit itself in such a way as not to limit others. (1999b: 147-8)

Kant attempted to reconcile a multiplicity of wills bent on limiting each other by introducing the notion of 'good will', or practical reason', where the will is attentive to reason. The will, in its attempt to treat the Other always as an end and never as a means, adheres to the categorical imperative, that stipulates that one should always act in such a way that one would will to be a universal law. However, asks Levinas, does not the fact that the will obeys a maxim of action mean that it is not free? Furthermore, the objective of practical reason to attend to the right of the Other puts at risk the very right to freedom of free will. (1999b: 148-9)

Unless a pre-eminent excellence were granted to the Other *out of goodness*: unless *good will were will*, not just out of respect for the universality of a maxim of action, but out of the feeling of goodness. (1999b: 149)

The I is submitted to judgement by the Other, thus transcending the laws of universal justice because it is good. Goodness consists in giving priority to the Other over oneself; therefore, it enables the I to go beyond death, that which definitely alienates my powers, by not being for death. (1996: 247) In short, goodness signifies 'the human rupture with a pre-human ontology' where being was enclosed within itself. (1999b: 149)

That the Rights of Man are originally the rights of the other man, and that they express, beyond the burgeoning of identities in their own identity and their instinct for free perseverance, the *for-the-Other* of the social, of the for-the-stranger - such appears to me to be the meaning of their novelty. (1999b: 149)

The I substitutes itself for the Other, becoming a hostage. In this responsibility for a neighbour arises the subjectivity and uniqueness of the subject geared towards exteriority, for the infinitely Other is in me, or I am the Other. (1999: 123)

Substitution frees the subject from ipseity, that is, from enchainment to itself; it is irreplaceable in the election - the traumatic assignation - to be for the Other.⁵⁸

This finite freedom is not primary, is not initial; but it lies in an infinite responsibility where the Other is not Other because he strikes up against and limits my freedom, but where he can accuse me to the point of persecution, because the Other, absolutely other, is another one. That is why finite freedom is not simply an infinite freedom operating in a limited field. The will which it animates wills in a passivity it does not assume. And the proximity of the neighbour in its trauma does not only strike up against me, but exalts and elevates me, and, in the literal sense of the term, inspires me. (1999: 124)⁵⁹

X. Levinas and Arendt: On Freedom, Violence and the Good

⁵⁸ Simon Critchley reads Levinas against the latter's alleged psychoanalytic resistances and denials: containing within itself a disposition towards alterity, the subject is effected by the trauma of persecution, doomed to never coincide with itself, to a self-relation consisting in lack. A 'sentient subject and not a conscious ego', the ethical subject aims to compulsively repeat the origin of the trauma, passively reliving 'a lost time that can never be', a subjection to the other that is 'open to death'. 'It is only because the subject is unconsciously constituted through the trauma of contact with the real that we might have the audacity to speak of goodness, transcendence, compassion ...' (1999: 185, 188, 190, 194-5)

⁵⁹ The metaphors of inspiration, breathing, or lung are used by Levinas to describe the movement whereby the ego is undone, transcending itself towards the Other in the assignation to respond (1999: 141); these metaphors contrast with those of light and visibility patent in the Western ontological tradition.

Perhaps due to having experienced National Socialism, Levinas and Arendt are highly critical of traditional Western philosophical conceptions of individual freedom, albeit from different perspectives. While Levinas would critique Arendt for presenting a political theory of freedom where each freedom has to be defended, within the realm of the law, from the potential limitation exercised by other freedoms - thus presupposing an ideal totality into which a multiplicity of 'fallen' freedoms would be able to reintegrate -, Arendt might contest Levinas on the grounds that he is working within a Western tradition of thought that equates freedom with sovereignty, or free will. According to Arendt, the concept of free will is dangerous because it bears no links to the world in which we live, that is, the world of appearance. (1961: 146-7, 165) Thus, she resorts to upholding the primacy of a legal framework within the political realm, to assure a space in which freedom can appear. For Levinas, institutional law is tyrannical in that it absorbs the subjective will, human particularity, into the realm of objective signification or impersonal order, preventing the singularity of the apology - in which one justifies one's own arbitrary freedom to the Other - from occurring. Although he recognises that the survival of freedom is dependent on social and political institutions, Levinas would insist that freedom preserved by the law - that which would correspond to the ontological domain - already presupposes the ethical realm manifested in an infinite responsibility of the will seeking to justify its own freedom before the Other in apology.

For Levinas, the very fact that the will is always exposed to the Other, be it through death, the apology, or the reappropriation of labour by a foreign will, means that one can only aspire to a finite freedom. Arendt however, sees the spontaneity of freedom as absolute in terms of causality, for as long as man can act he is capable of constituting a new beginning, a Kantian 'new series in time', patent in the very fact of natality as well as in every act of foundation. (1978: 109-10; 1979: 473) It is, however, this very capacity for action that can lead to the danger inherent in the

human condition, for each action can unleash unpredictable and irreversible effects over which, try as we might to resort to narratives of necessity, no one has control.

Levinas considers the human condition to consist primarily in the ethical relation where each term preserves its absoluteness, that is, the spontaneity of freedom, while engaging in a relationship that cannot unite into a totality. Creation *ex nihilo*, the absolute beginning of each term in the relationship, is thus conjugated with the capacity of freedom to put itself in question by the confrontation with the Other.

The unity of spontaneous freedom, working on straight ahead, and critique, where freedom is capable of being called in question and thus preceding itself, is what is termed a creature. The marvel of creation does not only consist in being a creation *ex nihilo*, but in that it results in a being capable of receiving a revelation, learning that it is created, and putting itself in question. The miracle of creation lies in creating a moral being. And this implies precisely atheism, but at the same time, beyond atheism, shame for the arbitrariness of the freedom that constitutes it. (1996: 89)

Creation *ex nihilo*, the atheism of the I, posits a being exterior to any totality or system, maintaining an independence which makes its freedom possible in the 'confrontation' with the transcendental Other. (1996: 104-5) The distance between identity and alterity derives from the fact of creation, where the heterogeneity of beings created from nothingness is affirmed in contrast to the traditional ontological perspective which upheld a prior community of all beings in eternity. (1996: 293) Because a common foundation is lacking in creation, there is an anarchical multiplicity, 'a free play of wills' oblivious to narratives of necessity. However, this 'free play', enjoyed in separation, is arrested by the confrontation with the face, in judgement, the latter which appeals to an infinite

responsibility of the will, giving rise to the fact of fraternity. (1996: 294, 214) Not based on resemblance or on the unity of a genus, fraternity requires that same and Other be separate so that identity can welcome an unencompassable alterity. Equality is thus produced in fraternity, in the welcoming of the face, where the Other commands identity and appeals to my responsibility. (1996: 214)

Levinas's notion of equality can be read as sharing points in common with Arendt's notion of equality in the political realm - individuals as national citizens being equal in their differences within the framework of the law -, although once again he might accuse Arendt of attempting to integrate, within a political totality, a myriad of differences, thus running the risk of subsuming the subjectivity inherent in these differences under the impersonal tyrannical order of the political. Both authors are suspicious of a notion of equality that presupposes the unity of humankind as one: Levinas considers equality to be founded on non-coincidence, or distance, between same and Other - one unicity presupposing other unicities facing me; Arendt claims that equality - as a natural right promoted by the French Revolution according to which all men were born equal but due to social conditions were made unequal - is the most uncertain of conditions to be found in the world in which we live. (1979: 302) Because we inhabit a world of appearance, Arendt claims that it is important to take into account the inequalities deriving from differences in appearance, such as the visibility of race. (1959: 47) It is precisely this emphasis on the world of appearance in Arendt that would antagonise Levinas, for in the latter, the face is a metaphor for expression, content spread out in its form, rather than a plastic image reduced to visual attributes. To thematise an image would be equivalent to attempting to grasp the Other, containing it within the same, assimilating what I see to a prior representation, or idea, in me. The face is thus made adequate to my idea of it. This, for Levinas, is violence.

Arendt argues that the only solution for problems deriving from inequalities is for the State to recognise that in the social realm individuals are unequal in their differences, and have a right to remain so. In the public realm, however, all citizens are equal in their difference by law, enjoying the right to engage in public happiness, or participation in a body politic. (1959: 53) Levinas's argument that equality is based on separation between terms rather than their integration within the unity of a genus could thus uphold or condemn Arendt's view on equality on two grounds. On one hand, if Levinas claims that politics should be built on ethics, then one can consider Arendt's defence of the law as grounded on an ethics that seeks to preserve difference in the social realm, without infringing upon individual liberties; on the other hand, as stated previously, he could critique this emphasis on the political as an attempt to subjugate the singularity of individuality under the impersonal order of a totality, which, under the guise of conciliating a plurality of differences, nevertheless prevents the apology of the personal from taking place.

According to Arendt, narratives of necessity claiming that what is could not have been otherwise are violent, for they instrumentalise whatever it is they come across as a means towards an end. (1978: 87) Levinas would agree with Arendt that logic, based on the principle of non-contradiction where A excludes any non-A, consists in an attempt to assimilate the Other into the same, and is thus synonymous with violence. However, where Arendt defends thought for its openness to experience, Levinas considers thematised experience to belong to the ontological domain, where identity, in the time of the present, assimilates, through representation, that which is 'invisible' into the visibility of the 'now', thus giving rise to linear narratives of temporality. Thematic experience synchronises the past, obscure diachrony, into the light, clarity, transparency of the present. In this way, identity absorbs its Other - time - into itself. As such, would not experience consist in a violence which, in the manner of logical deduction, instrumentalises that which it comes across in reminiscence as a

means towards an end, the latter being a narrative told from the viewpoint of the present?

Levinas and Arendt are wary of the absolutism inherent in the Kantian categorical imperative, which for both consists in a violence that threatens individual freedom. While Levinas wishes to preserve the absoluteness of terms engaging in a non-reciprocal relationship, he wishes to rupture a unified totality, an absolute that would absorb same and Other into itself. Arendt, on the other hand, considers that absolutism - the necessity of rational thought to agree with itself - prevents the activity of judgement from being exercised, that is, arrests the exercise of seeing things from a point of view other than one's own. This Kantian 'enlarged mentality' is inspired by relativism, rather than the imperative of absolutes. (1961: 220-1) Levinas, however, would consider that it is precisely the ethical movement of replacing oneself for the Other that requires the existence of separate terms, independent and absolute in themselves, engaging in an asymmetrical relationship rather than participating in a Whole. Absolutism for Arendt is synonymous with totality, Unity, One or Being for Levinas.

Clearly adhering to the notion of right and wrong forms of human conduct, Arendt posits thoughtlessness as being the most common cause for evil, for when men cease to reflect on the world of appearance, they lose capacity to judge the repercussions of their actions. (1961: 133; 1994: 287, 295) Levinas would accuse Arendt of operating within dichotomies which characterise ontological thought, where to good corresponds evil, both of which can be reabsorbed into a totality. For Levinas, the Good is that which transcends any totality composed of good and evil, lying beyond being. To be Good is to be for the Other, for it permits me to transcend myself, rupturing the hypostasis of the present whereby identity ceaselessly reverts back to itself. Goodness, or transcendence of self, characterises the duality inherent in the structure of the human condition, where the subject is self-

sufficient and yet geared towards exteriority. Ultimately, for Levinas, it is because identity transcends itself that life has meaning; thus, Goodness permits this being for the Other which is already a being in time.

However, is transcendence of self necessarily Good? Levinas could be critiqued for equating transcendence of self with Goodness. Could not evil be transcendent too, could it also not lie beyond being? Why does Levinas equate infinity with the Good, being that the concept of the Good already, according to Western ontology, presupposes evil?

Evil as anxiety, evil as excess, as that which breaks with the norm, synthesis and totality is also a transcendence. Its intentionality seeks out the subject, aims at him in persecution. (1998a: 179-81) And yet this very malignancy that obsesses identity awakens the ego to the Good behind evil.

A first saying, a first question, first lamentation or first prayer. In any case, it is an 'intentionality' of transcendence: someone is seeking me out. A God that does evil, but God as a you. And, through the evil in me, my awakening to myself. (1998a: 181)

Thus, the ego is torn away from self-coincidence in this act of questioning the Other on the evil that befalls itself. Identity is wrenched away from being-in-the-World and geared towards exteriority, transcending itself in the process.

The first metaphysical question is no longer Leibniz's question 'why is there something rather than nothing?' but 'why is there evil rather than good?' It is the de-neutralisation of being, or the beyond being. The ontological difference is preceded by the difference between good and evil. (1998a: 182)

The difference between Good and evil, the ethical difference par excellence, is the origin of meaning; the ego is awakened to the Good through evil. Thus, ethics precedes ontology, transcending the world and guiding it. Preceding all other differences that are to be found in the realm of ontology, Good and evil are the original transcendence the signification of which is patent in the face.

Goodness does not spring from universal principles inherent in a collectivity or the State, but rather from the separate I, a singularity which alone can respond to the accusation of the face. (1996: 305) It is the very movement of separation whereby identity is accomplished and free to engage in relationship with another independent term that is threatened by the categorical imperative. For by presupposing that the individual ought to obey a maxim of action, moral law is actually subjugating the subjective will to a totality, depriving, in this process, the singularity of the exercise of freedom. Arendt also critiques the categorical imperative for grounding itself on a logic obedient to the principle of non-contradiction, and of thus corresponding to a form of coercion. (1961: 220-1; 1979: 469)

Both Levinas and Arendt attempt to rupture narratives of necessity, based on the premises of deductive logic, that try to reduce man to a puppet in a play masterminded by a force over which no one has control. Instead, they draw attention to the idea of subjective responsibility⁶⁰: while Arendt elects the political as the sphere of responsibility in safeguarding the plurality inherent in the world of appearance, Levinas chooses the ethical as the realm in which the subject's infinite responsibility for his neighbour allows him to respond to judgement by the Other.

⁶⁰ According to Josh Cohen, while Arendt adheres to a voluntaristic ethics, the Levinasian notion of responsibility is non-voluntaristic, consisting in an assumption that has occurred before I assume it. Responsibility in Levinas thus cannot be reduced to a faculty for action that is intentionally assumed by the will.

When I maintain an ethical relation I refuse to recognise the role I would play in a drama of which I would not be the author or whose outcome another would know before me ... This ... does not exclude obedience. But obedience precisely is to be distinguished from an involuntary participation in mysterious designs in which one figures or which one prefigures. Everything that cannot be reduced to an interhuman relation represents not the superior form but the forever primitive form of religion. (1996: 79)

While the concept of human rights is critiqued by Arendt for presupposing a universalism inherent in natural man which is completely divorced from the world of appearance and, as such, fails miserably in any attempt to defend a people who has lost the right to citizenship (1979: 297, 299, 302), Levinas is an apologist for the rights of man, due to their expressing the for-the-Other, the transcendence of self, or Goodness which characterises the human condition.

XI. Communication as Welcome

Justice is born because I can speak. By granting the possibility of expression, the non-reciprocal face-to-face relation allows one to manifest oneself - 'while attending one's own manifestation' - in singularity. Language is inherent in the face-to-face, where the two terms, same and Other, preserve their independence in relationship. Because both terms are separate, or atheist, they reveal themselves to each other through language, which serves the purpose of thematising a world that is 'mine', enabling me to offer it to the Other. (1996: 173)

The 'generalisation' or 'universalisation' accomplished by language establishes a common world that can be spoken to the Other, constituting primordially an ethical event. Thus, by naming objects and inserting them into a world that is common to the Other, language permits beings to exist for an Other, thus transcending

the purely phenomenal condition of interiority. The Levinasian view of language is opposed to that of Husserl's - and Heidegger's -, for whom language reflected thought, consisting in a window to reason.⁶¹ For Levinas, reason is founded on signification, that is, the face-to-face relation where the Other, in his transcendence, strikes me in his destitution, putting into question the spontaneity of my freedom, that is, giving rise to conscience. In communication, I welcome the Other - who reveals himself by teaching, by offering me a surplus, an excess relative to that which I contain - from the exterior.⁶² (1996: 204-5)

Teaching gives rise to signification, deriving from a surplus inherent in the face of the Other which overflows the same, who desires the former and welcomes his offering of signs.⁶³ (1996: 97) The signifier - he who delivers signs - attends his own manifestation, that is, never distances himself from the sign given. Because the latter never signifies the signified as a complete presence, speech consists in a ceaseless commitment to decipher and clarify any misunderstanding that may arise.

To have meaning is to be situated relative to an absolute, that is, to come from that alterity that is not absorbed in its being perceived. Such an alterity is possible only as a

⁶¹ For Heidegger, language reflects thought to the extent that thinking, as a deed that 'surpasses all *praxis*', brings its saying of Being to language, the abode of existence. (1998: 274)

⁶² Here Levinas is making a comparison between teaching as an ethical relation deriving from exteriority, which brings the student more than he contains, and the Socratic method of maieutics, based on eliciting pre-existent ideas latent in the mind of the student. (1996: 51)

⁶³ Judaism, for Levinas, is a religion that bases itself more on teaching, the constant interpretation and discussion of Talmudic texts, than on received dogma; subjective opinions on the Jewish Revelation must, however, always refer back to the tradition of commentaries proffered in the past. In this way, Judaism guards itself against 'direct inspiration from the text', sudden disclosure of the signifier in the sign. (1998b: 196)

miraculous abundance, an inexhaustible surplus of attention arising in the ever recommenced effort of language to clarify its own manifestation. To have meaning is to teach or to be taught, to speak or to be able to be stated. (1996: 97)

Because language consists in a proposition that delivers the world between two terms that do not form a totality, it is the origin of all signification. The world as said, as that which is thematised and proposed, is, however, founded on a saying, on a primordial signification, on the face-to-face relation.

Language is not one modality of symbolism; every symbolism refers already to language. (1996: 98)

However, because the signifier is presented in the sign but is not signified by the latter⁶⁴, for the sign to be comprehended as sign it will have had to be previously accepted as such by a community of signifiers. Thus, the signifier precedes every sign, revealing himself as a face. By speaking, that is, by attending to my own manifestation in expression, I become an incessant source of reinterpretation: I am present to my words by ceaselessly recapturing the temporal instants that flow on. In this sense, saying, or signification, constantly puts into question the crystallised said that pertains to the ontological realm. (1996: 69, 182)

It is as though the presence of him who speaks inverted the inevitable movement that bears the spoken word to the past state of the written word ... The unique actuality of speech

⁶⁴ If the signifier were signified in the sign, then Levinas would be regurgitating the Western theological tradition which attempts to grasp the presence of God by deciphering signs. For Levinas, the signifier does not disclose himself in the sign; rather, he attends his own manifestation in the sign, revealing himself in his infinity. Revelation, in opposition to disclosure, indicates that the signifier is always transcendent in the face-to-face relation.

tears it from the situation in which it appears ... It brings what the written word is already deprived of: mastery. (1996: 69)

The said, that which is thematised and proposed, is already founded on teaching, on the presentation of ideas deriving from the master, the interlocutor, who masters the 'anarchy of facts'. (1996: 69-70) Thus it is due to signification that the sign function appears as such. Because the face founds the primordial signification, language cannot be subordinate to reason, but rather is reason itself. The essence of language consists not in the act of disclosure which constructs a thought by resorting to language, but in the revelation of meaning.

Meaning is the face of the Other, and all recourse to words takes place already within the primordial face to face of language. Every recourse to words presupposes the comprehension of the primary signification, but this comprehension, before being interpreted as a 'consciousness of,' is society and obligation. (1996: 206-7)

The 'ethical exigency' of the Other as manifested in sociality puts into question the freedom of transcendental consciousness. The same is torn away from its centre of gravitation, and flung towards the Other. As such, the German idealist depiction of reason as a coherent internal order of being - where consciousness would sacrifice its singularity, retreating either into a 'noumenal sphere', a moral realm of the spirit, thus exercising its role as transcendental subject in the I think, or be subsumed by the universality of the State - is overturned. (1996: 208)

If ... reason lives in language, if the first rationality gleams forth in the opposition of the face to face, if the first intelligible, the first signification, is the infinity of the intelligence that presents itself ... in the face, if reason is defined by signification rather than signification being

defined by the impersonal structures of reason, if society precedes the apparition of these impersonal structures, if universality reigns as the presence of humanity in the eyes that look at me, if ... this look appeals to my responsibility and consecrates my freedom as responsibility and gift of self - then the pluralism of society could not disappear in the elevation to reason, but would be its condition. (1996: 208)

A reason that is founded on the face-to-face would no longer be impersonal, establishing a subject that is capable of association (1996: 100), that is, of society, maintaining its independence while engaged in a relation with the Other through language. Separation, ipseity, is thus necessary for infinity to be accomplished in the act of 'facing', a confrontation where the Other faces me from a dimension of height, striking me in his transcendence, rather than a 'side by side'.

The conjuncture of the same and the Other, in which even their verbal proximity is maintained, is the *direct and full face* welcome of the Other by me. This conjuncture is irreducible to totality; the 'face to face' position is not a modification of the 'along side of....' Even when I shall have linked the Other to myself with the conjunction 'and' the Other continues to face me, to reveal himself in his face. *Religion* subtends this formal totality. (1996: 80-1)

Thus, the face-to-face relation is not based on reciprocity, on mutual recognition of the two terms. In this it differs from Martin Buber's exposition of the I-Thou relationship, where the self only exists to the extent that it addresses the Other: the I, in Buber, is thus relation *par excellence*, reuniting itself with the totality of being through its communion with the Other. Because being is realised in the meeting between I and Thou, that is, in an interval between the two terms, both terms are allegedly preserved in their integrity: the Thou is not reduced to the anonymity of an It, escaping assimilation into the same. (1998b: 64, 66) Levinas

critiques Buber's concept of intersubjectivity for forgetting to ascribe an ethical meaning to the I-Thou relationship; as it stands, Buber's structure can only account for a relationship of friendship based on reciprocity, where response is obtained within an amicable dialogue. (1996: 68-9, 1998b: 59, 72) Because Buber only considers the individual as integrated within a totality, on one hand he places both same and Other on an equal level, and, on the other hand, he fails to account for the process of separation in which subjectivity arises; a sense of justice, founded upon the transcendence of the face, is thus missing from his theory. (1998b: 60, 72)

... in the case of ethical relations, where the Other is at the same time higher than I and yet poorer than I, the I is distinguished from the Thou not by the presence of specific attributes, but by the dimension of height, thus implying a break with Buber's formalism. (1998b: 72)

The 'epiphany' of the face, wounding me in its destitution from above, is, according to Levinas, a 'You' of majesty rather than a 'Thou' of intimacy. (1996: 75) The face-to-face relation cannot restrict itself to a private sphere between two people, but must concern everyone within the 'public order'. Because language is justice, the whole of humanity looks at me in the eyes of the Other: the face in its destituteness presents the 'third party'.

The poor one, the stranger, presents himself as an equal. His equality within this essential poverty consists in referring to the *third party*, thus present at the encounter, whom in the midst of his destitution the Other already serves. He comes to *join* me. But he joins me to himself for service; he commands me as a Master. This command can concern me only inasmuch as I am master myself; consequently this command commands me to command. (1996: 213)⁶⁵

⁶⁵ According to Jean-François Lyotard, Levinas's ethics aim to place expressions of obligation above the ontological, or the tautological. As

For Levinas, the 'We' inherent in society precedes the 'Thou' of friendship or love. The face-to-face bears the dimension of transcendence, of the absoluteness of terms that engage in relationship but that do not participate in a totality. This non-reciprocity, this asymmetry inherent in direct confrontation is opposed to communication as an 'ideal speech situation', where certainty is attained through the coincidence of the ego with itself. (1999: 118)

... communication would be impossible if it should have to begin in the ego, a free subject, to whom every Other would be only a limitation that invites war, domination, precaution and information. To communicate is indeed to open oneself, but the openness is not complete if it is on the watch for recognition. It is complete not in opening to the spectacle of or the recognition of the other, but in becoming a responsibility for him. (1999: 119)

Communication, as a 'sign of the giving of signs' is a saying, beyond the crystallised said of ontology, and is thus based on uncertainty rather than the clarity inherent in the openness of disclosure; due to responsibility for the Other in this non-reciprocal relation, one must resign oneself to the risks of misunderstanding, paucity or refusal of communication. As such, transcending phenomenal or inward existence does not correspond to obtaining recognition from the Other; rather, it consists in offering him a world, hitherto mine, through language. By thematic generalisation, that is, objectivity, I can propose that which is subjective to the Other. Thus, to express oneself consists in being-for-the-Other.

such, Levinas wishes to liberate the prescriptive from justification. By positing an obligation presupposing a complete receptivity to an order which does not have criteria of validity, Levinas interrupts the Western system of knowledge founded on an 'infatuation with the enunciation'. (1986: 129, 152-3)

Because transcendence of the same implies Goodness, to express oneself is already to provide the ground for the Good.

XII. Levinas and Arendt: On Community and Recognition

Both Levinas and Arendt place emphasis on the 'we' inherent in sociality or community in detriment to inward subjectivity. However, whereas Arendt regards identity as primarily political, to the extent that it is through word and deed performed in the public realm that one achieves recognition and thus confirmation of identity from others (1989: 179-80), Levinas considers identity to be an absoluteness in itself, a necessarily separate term that engages in a non-reciprocal relationship with an Other. It is due to this distance between terms that do not participate in a totality that the face-to-face relation is one of transcendence, whereby the unencompassable Other reveals himself to me through expression. Nevertheless, because the face-to-face relation consists in a primordial signification that precedes all others, reason, or thought, is founded upon it. Thus, language, the instrument through which I can convert my personal subjective world into an objective offering to the Other, is reason, enabling identity to transcend itself in the for-the-Other in which expression consists of.

Subjectivity in Levinas is constituted through a movement of separation of identity, a dualistic structure in which the ego is self-sufficient and yet geared towards exteriority, giving rise to what can be termed a 'split identity'. Arendt considers that the split subject - the division between 'me and myself' patent in the thinking faculty - regains unity through contact with the Other in speech and action. (1978: 75) Where Martin Buber sees the self as pure relation, reuniting itself with the totality of being by addressing the Other, Arendt's emphasis is, likewise, on a world of appearance - which for Levinas might consist in a totality seeking to integrate a plurality of differences into One -, in which

individuality is concretised by way of expression within and action upon this common world.

The notion of community in Levinas consists in the asymmetrical face-to-face relation in which I am confronted with the Other from a dimension of height. In the eyes of the Other is presented the whole public order, the whole of humanity, or the 'third party'. For Levinas, the primacy of judgement and accusation are extremely important in the formation of subjectivity: identity transcends itself by feeling ashamed of the offence caused to the Other by its own arbitrary freedom; this gives rise to the infinite responsibility of the will that seeks to respond to the Other's judgement of my freedom. Because identity is in its structure already constructed upon a for-the-Other, be it through the situations of mortality, suffering, sexuality, or fecundity, it is already assigned to be 'obsessed', 'persecuted' by the primordial signification which commands the ego to replace itself for the Other. This replacement could be read, from Arendt's perspective, as a modality of the Kantian 'enlarged mentality', the realm of relativism whereby through the activity of judgement, operating on the basis of common sense, one attempts to think in the place of others. (1961: 220-1) Although Levinas might agree with Arendt that the realm of human affairs should be composed of the confrontation of different views between people so as to prevent any particular opinion from assimilating all others into a totality, he nevertheless would take issue with her view that identity is confirmed on the basis of recognition by others in the public realm. For, in Levinas, a search for recognition implies a presumed equality in relationship, where both terms partaking of a totality legitimate each other in reciprocity. This, as in Buber's case, does not account for ethical relations, for justice.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Scott Lash argues that the Levinasian deconstruction of ontology denies the possibility for solidarity and recognition due to its lack of tradition, that is, due to its 'groundlessness' or negation of the fact that subjects are enracinated in some form of 'given'. Difference, as a space open to absolute alterity, does not allow for intersubjectivity, for a shared tradition and shared understandings. Infinite as in the Kantian

Arendt argues that because 'genocide', or 'administrative massacres', consist in a violation of the community of humankind through the attack on human diversity, criminal proceedings must occur to restore the public order. (1994: 261) Levinas, in turn, places emphasis not on punishment, but rather on an ubiquitous guilt that incriminates not only the Other but myself as well, for, due to the split nature of identity, I am responsible for the Other, or, I am the Other.

'Each of us is guilty before everyone for everyone, and I more than the others' writes Dostoyevsky in *Brothers Karamazov*. The subjectivity of the subject is persecution and martyrdom. It is a recurrence which is not self-consciousness, in which the subject ... would still remain somehow in itself and be able to veil its face. This recurrence is not self-coinciding ... It is a substitution for another. (1999: 146)

Levinas's notion of an obsessive command that compels me to respond to the Other could, in an Arendtian view, have the counter effect of resistance. This, according to Levinas, would correspond to ontological thought, where will and counterwill complement each other: when one finds oneself in the excluded middle beyond being and non-being, one is moving in the realm of metaphysical transcendence, that of ethics, where identity is transcended in its condition of being constantly confronted with alterity.

noumena which cannot be known, Levinas's Other points towards a proximal, rather than universal, humanism: 'our humanity is ... in that left-over part, our own *part maudite* that exits from Being's neutralisation'. (1996: 252-3, 267-8, 272)

CONCLUSION

This thesis does not intend to trace the humanist outlook in philosophical or historical terms. Neither does it focus on the links between humanism and the specificity of colonial situations. Rather, it aims to hint at the extent to which the contemporary subject is still immersed in modernity. The pervasive influence of the modern is witnessed in the current tension between anti-humanist and humanist outlooks within post-colonial theory. While the celebration of utopian differences relies on the decentring of the subject, the affirmation of 'otherness' only makes sense in light of the aspiration to an identity freed from social constraints. The socially constituted and ideologically produced subject ultimately relies on a moral autonomy that enables it to question its environmental conditioning. The conception of the Enlightenment subject thus looms over the attempt to escape from modernity's binary oppositions, where thesis corresponds to antithesis united in a synthesis.

The Hegelian dialectic, connoted with the structure of modern thought, is referred to as the origin of the West's totalising will to power, whereby the other is assimilated into the same. The postmodern aim is to let the other be truly other. However, by setting up a clear dichotomy between modernity and postmodernity, this type of thought not only perpetuates the binaries attributed to Hegelianism, but also participates in the logic of violence it seeks to overturn. In *White Mythologies*, Robert Young counters modernity's totalising logic with the impossibility of coincidence between signifier and signified, where the former evades any attempt at containment by the latter. This transcendence, however, is not open, for it ultimately refers back to itself in a tautological manner. By emphasising the singular without its contraries - the universal and the particular - postmodernism would mend diremptions, founding, in Gillian Rose's terms, a 'new ecclesiology', a 'sociality of saints', a

'sociology of control'. Freed of tensions between opposites, the singular manifests itself as 'unconceptualised aporia'. (1992: xiii)

I want to argue that the equation of modernity with a straightforward binary logic based on coincidence and totalisation is in itself problematic. Hegel's description of the consolidation of self-consciousness, whereby the latter transcends itself by dwelling in its opposite only to return back from whence it came but no longer coinciding with itself, reveals a permanent fissure, or gap, at the heart of his thinking. If Hegelianism is considered as determinant for modernity, then modern discourse is characterised by a permanent diremption, or lack, which cannot be mended. The postmodern emphasis on fragmentation and disunity thus can ultimately be read as deriving from within modernity itself.

The ambivalence that characterises modernity is patent in the non-linearity of its project, where humanism and universalism reside side by side with oppression and exploitation. Alongside the violence of colonisation that characterised the birth of modernity lies the counter-discourse of domination. The telling of the 'suppressed tale' of European confrontation with alterity in the New World and the subsequent development of racial slavery in the Americas maps the terrain in which the demise of old certainties led to the consolidation of the racialised, autonomous, and rational modern subject defined against its 'others'. However, the debates that sought to justify slavery and the status of the natives reveal the extent to which 'totalisation' was not a pacific, simple process: from within the tradition that paved the way for conquest came voices that problematised the terms of this very conquest.

Having inaugurated modernity, the European encounter with the Americas articulates a tension between two conflicting forms of government, that of a centralised State, the revenue of which derived from concessions, and that of decentralisation, whereby the State levied excise and duties on cash crops, allowing private

initiative to flourish. Blackburn argues that although centralised government is often equated with attempts at totalisation, civil society is nevertheless pregnant with disaster and mayhem, as shown in the workings of plantation slavery in the New World. The connivance between civil society and the rise of capitalism charts the break down of a generalised, abstract Other into a multiplicity of others, taxonomically categorised into units.

Blackburn's critique can be read as sponsoring a subsumption of the particular by the universal, that is, of the individual interests that compose civil society by the State. However, in light of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, civil society is considered to act as mediator between the particular and universality, thus enabling individual freedom to be actualised through the rational system of social institutions. Civil society thus promotes the harmonisation between the collective interests embodied in the State and the objective good of the individual: freedom is concretised when the individual is in harmony with the social, that is, when individuals identify themselves with the institutions of their community due to regarding the latter as rational. (Hegel, 1991: 220-1; Wood, 1991: xii-xiii)

Blackburn forecloses the possibility of mediation between State and individual through the rational institutions of civil society, due to opposing a rational State, in the form of a non-divisive whole, to the ravages of civil society. By ignoring the concept of mediation between universal and particular, Blackburn's argument would appear to perpetuate a rigid dichotomy between centralisation and decentralisation. This binary opposition does not allow for the articulation of the aporias inherent in finding a path from the universal concept to the particularity of each instance. (Rose, 1997: 115)

Blackburn implies that the relation to a generalised Other that characterises centralisation provides for greater awareness of the

ethical issues involved in slavery than the capitalist implosion of alterity into units distinctive of decentralised government, the latter which allowed for the reduction of the slave to chattel. This position can again be interpreted as representative of dichotomical thought, whereby the generalised Other corresponds to a universalist concept and the implosion of alterity is associated with the particular. Blackburn depicts universality in an essentially positive light, be it under the guise of State centralisation or an abstract alterity. Simultaneously, particularity is portrayed as inherently negative, as embodied in decentralisation as well as in the disintegration of alterity into a myriad of capitalist 'units' representative of plantation slavery. The opposition between universal and particular in the form of State and civil society, or generalised Other and 'units' of alterity, thus appear as warring factions, whereby universalism triumphs by assimilating the particular.

The discussion revolving around the possibility for mediation between universal and particular is pertinent to attempts to salvage a modern project inextricably complicit with colonialism. One such attempt resides in the release, or suspension, of the 'broken middle', the site of diremptions which are not united into a totality. (Rose: 1992) Modernity can be viewed as a stage of apprenticeship in an 'ethics of responsibility' (Venn, 2000: 235) by paying heed to the tension between humanism and oppression within the modern tradition.

Robert Young attenuates the degree to which Spivak and Bhabha attempt to mediate between universality and particularity. By reading these authors as post-structuralists, Young forecloses the possibility that they may be operating strategically on this terrain. The strategic recourse to post-structuralism as a form of negotiating between humanism and anti-humanism can be regarded as a 'broken middle', a site in which aporias are kept alive. Instead of conveying the post-structuralism of Spivak and Bhabha as

diremptive, Young attempts to present it as a singularity. The singular, that which unites contraries, camouflages the process of mediation between universal and particular.

The modern trilogy of equality, liberty, and fraternity is represented, in this thesis, by Fanon, Arendt, and Levinas, respectively. The complicity of modernity with oppression brings each of these authors to privilege a specific term within the trilogy as a form of mediating between universality and the particular. Fanon's emphasis falls on equality: it is the desire for recognition of black as equal to white that provides the impetus for Fanon's strategic use of violence. In a colonised society, in which the native is deprived of agency, the external violence that victimises him often resurfaces in a myriad of psychosomatic symptoms. These serve as a means of achieving homeostasis with the environment. The cathartic power of violence will therefore break the chain whereby the colonised attains equilibrium with his social surroundings through body and mind. By becoming conscious of the sociogenic roots of his psychopathologies, the colonised realises that by changing the social he will also change himself.

Fighting violence with violence, the native seeks to set the scales right, achieving a new synthesis whereby both colonised and coloniser can relate to each other as equals. Whereas it is through work that Hegel's slave objectifies himself and becomes conscious of his own self-worth, Fanon's 'slave' objectifies himself through violence. Kojève's emphasis on the desire for recognition almost becomes a desire against misrecognition in Fanon. Violence thus provides the basis for a refiguration of identity, a recasting of a misrecognised identity in a novel frame. Négritude had sought to write back against whiteness by infusing white stereotypes of blackness with a positive meaning. Fanon, however, realises that this attempt at refiguration is only a particular subsumed within the universal concept of a liberated mankind. Violence is cathartic in that it allows for identity to refigure itself by mediating between

colonised and coloniser: the particular is no longer subsumed within the universal in singularity for violence marks the site of diremption between opposite poles. Moreover, by rupturing the process through which human beings achieve homeostasis with the environment, fanonian violence consists in fundamentally ethical action through which the individual refuses any logic of necessity, taking life into his own hands. Violence thus becomes an aporetic site mediating between the individual and the environment.

Contrary to Fanon, Arendt's focus within the trilogy of modernity is on freedom. Her major preoccupation is the preservation of individual freedom in a context divorced from the absolutisms of tradition, authority, and religion. The public realm, destined to defend all citizens as equal in their differences, provides the space of freedom, hedged in by laws, within which men act. Whereas man is distinguished by the capacity to begin, to initiate a new series in time, he is inherently unequal to his fellow man. The public realm is thus the domain in which both equality and freedom to act are preserved. This may then be considered to be a site of diremption between the freedom of the individual on one hand, and the equality of citizens on the other.

Arendt's position regarding desegregation in schools in Arkansas illustrates the aporias kept alive within the public realm. She opposes desegregation on the grounds that to force a non-existent welcome on children would be akin to allowing the latter to suffer for the sins of their parents: adults are exempting themselves from solving issues of racial inequality in the public realm by delegating these problems to the educational sphere, part of the social realm, where the innocence of childhood should be preserved. Underlying Arendt's stance is her portrayal of the social realm as that of preference, where individuals choose with whom to associate, often abiding by the norm according to which 'like attracts like'. Arendt considers the social realm to be that of inequalities, for human beings are inherently unequal to each

other. The public realm, on the contrary, is that in which equality reigns, due to protection of the right to difference under the eyes of the law. State intervention in the social realm would, however, consist in a violation of individual rights to freedom.

Arendt thus articulates the aporia inherent in thinking the collective and the individual, the universal concept and the particular. All individuals in the public realm are equally free to act within the space provided by law; however, these freedoms will run counter to each other in the social realm, the domain of antagonisms and difference. The major problem here lies in thinking the extent to which public and social can be divorced from each other: as long as the law affects each individual in both his political, social, and private life, the public and social realms must be mediated with each other. In Arendt, this mediation occurs through the faculty of judgement, which links man to the world he shares with others. The difficult path from the universal concept to the particular instance, from law to ethics, from the public to the social, is articulated through the attempt to assume shared responsibility for a common world.

In opposition to both Fanon and Arendt, Levinas privileges fraternity within the trilogy representative of modernity. Levinas's humanism derives precisely from his considering fraternity as the weak or problematic link in the chain. The latter concept mediates between identity and alterity, two separate totalities engaged in an asymmetric relationship that does not form a whole. Organised around the Other, fraternity allows for a generalised, abstract relationship with alterity, in which the latter takes the form of 'the third party'. The Other, defined as absolutely Other, bears alterity as essence and is thus not defined as Other in relation to identity. 'The third party', entitled to everything because deprived of everything, persecutes me in his forlornness and destitution.

Striking me from a dimension of height in absolute infinity, the Other's transcendence, forever evading my grasp, will rupture the process whereby I coincide with myself. To be in time is to be for the Other, for the human condition is characterised by a perpetual movement of self transcendence towards absolute exteriority. Unlike the Hegelian system, which bears infinity within itself (Rosenzweig, 1985: 255), Levinas posits an infinite alterity, completely beyond ontology. This movement whereby I transcend myself towards the Other is fraternal. It commands me to justify my freedom to the Other in guilt and responsibility. Ultimately, I am judged by the Other; to be fraternal is to respond to judgement concerning the arbitrariness of my freedom. Fraternity thus allows for mediation between the universal and the particular, in the form of an abstract alterity and a specific identity.

Levinas, however, can also be read as positing an excluded middle, beyond being and not-being, as a singularity that camouflages the diremptions inherent in ontology. Gillian Rose implies that the excluded middle cannot be a broken middle, for where the latter seeks to release, or suspend, aporias, the former masks the complexities involved in mediating between the universal and the particular. (Rose, 1992) The excluded middle, as singular, would be akin to the postmodern singular that mends diremptions between contraries.

Nevertheless, the excluded middle can be interpreted, on one hand, as the universal concept in the form of a generalised, abstract, infinite Other which, as transcendent to me, can never partake of a totality with me, as well as, on the other hand, the fraternal mediator between identity and alterity. In the latter case, the excluded middle would enable a fraternal relationship to occur in which each part, the universal and the particular, preserves its separateness and yet engages with one another. Fundamentally asymmetric, this relationship would not be one of equality: because I am in permanent debt to the Other in terms of my having

to justify my freedom to him, he, as 'third party', is the centre around which fraternity is organised.

The Levinasian notion of fraternity would thus consist in a face to face in which identity and alterity do not gather around a common term. Based on a proximity that maintains distance, fraternity escapes from the social ideal of fusion, of the One, hitherto predominant in Western philosophy. As such, Levinas presents a proximal, rather than universal, humanism (Lash, 1996), where freedom reveals itself as finite or inhibited by seeking to maintain plurality between same and Other.

This thesis does not intend to resolve the tensions inherent in thinking the complicity between oppression and the modern trilogy of equality, liberty, and fraternity. Rather, it would aim to open and reveal gaps, pointing, in the process, to ways of positing humanism that provide a break with the common reduction of the latter to a totalising outlook. Thus, while Fanon's concept of lived experience articulates the perplexities, or aporias, inherent in finding a path from the universal to the particular, Arendt and Levinas indicate two paths - one political and the other ethical - to this problematisation. Arendt recognises diremptions but seeks to work beyond them through a Kantian 'enlarged mentality' and *sensus communis*, which, in assuming inter-human relativity and shared responsibility for a common world, escapes the habitual association between humanism and Hegelianism. Levinas keeps open a diremption between same and Other that does not consist in lack: while lack can be satiated, the fissure between myself and Other corresponds to a Desire that increases the more I approach alterity. This is because the Other is elusive to ontology.

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