

Today's Class:

1. FTT this week: reflections
2. Screening film Frantz Fanon *Black Skin White Masks* (1:10m)
 - on reserve at library
 - you may quote/refer to film for your Discussion Essay & final exam
3. break
4. Fanon Discussion
5. Essay question

Fanon's Black Skin White Masks

"I do not come with timeless truths." (p.1)

- who comes with timeless truths? Why does Fanon avoid them?
- Fanon argues for situated truths, not timeless ones
- situated experiences of a Black man from Antilles in France
- generalizes this to experience of Black colonial subject

"In an age when skeptical doubt has taken root in the world (...) it becomes harder to penetrate to a level where the categories of sense and non-sense are not yet invoked." (p.3)

– like phenomenology's attempt to bracket the "natural attitude", Fanon is trying to get at experience *before* logical categories organize this into hegemonic meanings.

"Should one postulate a type for human reality and describe its psychic modalities only through deviations from it, or should one not rather strive unremittingly for a concrete and ever new understanding of man?"

- how should we (scholars, experts) understand personhood, as a static type with the shape of a normal curve, or as ever new relations and shifting meanings? Note his use of "concrete."

Fanon's Black Skin White Masks

Fanon draws on psychoanalysis, but in a new way

- Sigmund Freud and the radical contribution of "the unconscious"
 - the unconscious is a space outside of logical categories & rationality
 - challenges a fully materialistic view of human nature
- "Reacting against the constitutionalist tendency of the late nineteenth century, Freud insisted that the individual factor be taken into account through psychoanalysis. He substituted for a phylogenetic theory the ontogenetic perspective. It will be seen that the black man's alienation is not an individual question. Beside phylogeny and ontogeny stands sociogeny. In one sense, conforming to the view of Leconte and Damey, let us say that this is a question of a sociodiagnostic."
 - Fanon generalizes this to experience of Black colonial subject
 - He is not psychoanalyzing Black men, but the lived encounter between Black colonial subjects and European culture.
 - pathology here is colonialization itself, its manifestation is **alienation** for Black colonial subjects and for European White subjects.

Language:

"I ascribe a basic importance...to language (...) For it is implicit that to speak is to exist absolutely for the other" (p.8)

1. Language as logical and computational, able to capture the world

-- logical positivism

2. Language as situated

J.L. Austin's *How To Do Things With Words*:

performative

oriented and meaningful in respect to occasion

Goffman's *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*:

theatrical

language practices are not only oriented to interactional goals but to social conventions, and in their enactment, form the fabric of those social conventions

Wittgenstein's "language games"

what is logical, rational, and coherent depends on the language game played

3. Language as relational, performative, powerful for enforcing norms, but also for disrupting them

Fanon (and, next week's readings, Butler, Goodwin)

Colonial language and alienation:

“Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle.” (p.9)

- value, self-worth and legitimacy tied to renouncing cultural Self**
- yet this sacrifice cannot actually be made – see Fanon’s extended discussion of French use of “pidgin” when speaking with Blacks (see esp. p. 20-21)**
- myth of self-making is revealed when confronted with colonizing gaze**

Colonial language and alienation:

“I meet a Russian or a German who speaks French badly. With gestures I try to give him the information that he requests, but at the same time I can hardly forget that he has a language of his own, a country, and that perhaps he is a lawyer or an engineer there. In any case, he is foreign to my group, and his standards must be different.

When it comes to the case of the Negro, nothing of the kind. He has no culture, no civilization, no ‘long historical past.’” (p.21)

-- is this a problem for Schutz’ theorization of enculturation?

Colonial language and alienation:

What happens to Fanon's colonial subject when he goes to France?

- from the POV of the French
- from the POV of himself in France
- from the POV of those left behind in Antilles
- how might Schutz describe this process, based on his essay "The Stranger"?
- what aspects does Schutz miss, that Fanon emphasizes?

What happens when he comes home?

- from POV of locals
- from POV of himself

Discussion Essay question:

“How would Schutz analyze the experience of a colonized Black man trying to participate in French culture, as described by Fanon? How does Fanon’s own analysis differ from or extend Schutz’ analysis?”