

The Question of Horizons in Frantz Fanon's Critical Philosophy of Race

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Abstract

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I show how the concept of horizon, understood with resources from hermeneutics and phenomenology, can account for the fluid meaning of race and adaptive mechanisms of racism. I do so by examining how the horizon concept informs Frantz Fanon's understanding of race and racism in his critical descriptions of the lived, oppressive experiences of them. Fanon reveals that a racial horizon structures racial experience by shaping the world around us that affects our experience. For Fanon, the racial horizon as a structure of experience is neither natural nor interpretively or epistemologically neutral, but it is saturated with power (horizonpower), developed in the history of colonialism. First, I discuss the horizon concept via a provisional method of 'critical phenomenology,' in light of Fanon's distinctive phenomenological-psychiatric diagnosis of the horizon of human experience. Second, to clarify the role of horizon in constituting non-essentialized and anti-naturalized racial identities, I turn to Linda Martín Alcoff's notion of race as an 'interpretive hermeneutic horizon.' Finally, I examine Fanon's notion of racial horizons in *Black Skin, White Masks*, in critical dialogue with both: 1) Alia Al-Saji's reading of the colonial horizon as a temporal *longue durée*, and 2) the philosophical context of Fanon's 'racial horizon.' This includes Sartre's diagnosis of antisemitism through the blocked horizon of the racialized, as well as Beauvoir's transformation of horizon into an ethics of ambiguity. Fanon radically transforms these understandings of horizon and pushes the boundary of this concept to overflow itself at its limit towards a decolonial horizon of freedom.

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Introduction

“Wherever one goes, one remains a Negro” – *Black Skin, White Masks* - Frantz Fanon

“Il ne faut pas dire que tel pays est raciste mais qu'on n'y trouve pas de lynchages ou de camps d'extermination. La vérité est que tout cela et autre chose existe en horizon. Ces virtualités, ces latences circulent dynamiques...” - “Racisme et Culture” - Frantz Fanon

In this paper, I aim to show how the concept of horizon, understood with the resources from hermeneutics and phenomenology, can account for the fluid meaning of race and the adaptative mechanism of racism. I will do so by showing how this concept of horizon informs the philosopher of race, Frantz Fanon's understanding of race and racism. The role of horizon in his understanding of racism is suggested and indicated in a key passage that I cited above. Although Fanon himself does not elaborate on the point, it takes extensive and careful work to explicate it.

Edmund Husserl first introduced the concept of “horizon” in his phenomenology. It refers to the indeterminate, unfolding background of possibilities against and through which we make sense of things perceived or cognized in our experience. Horizon always accompanies our experience dynamically. In hermeneutics, the horizon emphasizes the background contexts that condition our understanding. The task of clarifying Fanon's claims about race in light of horizon requires a critical analysis of “horizon” to show a point that is crucial for Fanon: that a horizon is never interpretively or epistemologically neutral, but saturated with power developed in the violent history of European colonization, its institutions of chattel slavery and pseudo-scientific theories of race. For my purpose, I will focus on the racial horizon of white power. It is also important to clarify both the connections and distinctions between race and racism. Notably, both are contextual, fluid in nature. Understanding them in terms of horizon can account for these characteristics.

The notion of the horizon has been taken up by Linda Martín Alcoff to understand the issue of identity. In her work *Visible Identities*,¹ she argues that race is a hermeneutic interpretive horizon that enables us to understand the fluidity of visible racial identities in specific social contexts. Gail Weiss further offers an account of the dimension of narrativity to the horizon of our embodied identity.² While they point out the fluidity, contextuality and construction of the meaning and experience of racial identities, their thinking about the horizon seems to be insufficiently critical, in that the underlying structure of whiteness as an experiential horizon, and its persistent power, are not elaborated on.

Thus, I return to Fanon to examine his more critical and underexplored notion of horizon in his works, in relation to the issue of whiteness and the colonial horizon of racism. First, I briefly discuss the issue of methodology, specifically critical phenomenology and hermeneutics, as they pertain to the notion of horizon. Second, I turn to Fanon's notion of horizons and provide an original interpretation of it, focusing on his first major work, *Black Skin, White Masks*. I contend that Fanon invents a critical phenomenology of colonial, racial (racist) horizons of whiteness that anticipates and still can contribute to much of the discussions about the horizon and whiteness today. I suggest that critically understanding the issues of colonialism and racism with the notion of horizon requires us to see it not simply as interpretative or epistemological, but as an always already oppressive but contestable nexus of power structures at the heart of significance, translation and distortion in the ambiguous lived experience of racial embodiment and subjectivity. For Fanon, horizons are power formations that are crucial to colonialism's hermeneutic-epistemic power complex. In this regard, Fanon anticipates and resonates with Foucault's analysis of the inseparability of power and knowledge, a point evident throughout much of Fanon's work. Fanon's experience of working in psychiatric hospitals led to his psychiatric writings

¹ Alcoff, 1998, *Visible Identities*, henceforth, 'VI.'

² Weiss, 2014, *Reconfiguring the Ordinary*, henceforth, 'RO.'

that are concerned with the embodied phenomenon of torture and the resistance to it, medicine, and technology, as well as the experience of madness, in relation to the operations of truth, power, and freedom in the colonizer/colonized paradigm of power/resistance interplay.³ However, by focusing on the notion of the horizon, I will propose the concept of 'horizonpower,' that potentially complements or even challenges the notion of biopower or necropower, and the diffuse power that is theorized by Foucault and interpreters of him, to highlight how the power of oppressive structures is built into the horizon as embodied schema of meaning and experience that preconditions the sovereign power to let die or kill.⁴ Horizonpower (as I conceptualize it and use it here) is a structure of the colonial-racial lifeworld that significantly conditions the capability for action (power) by preconditioning affectivity, desire, meaning, significance and experience with the operation of whiteness as a norm. While phenomenology and hermeneutics enable us to understand Fanon's text, Fanon's description reconfigures these approaches from the perspectives of racism and colonialism that challenge or transcend the boundaries of these methods.⁵

There are several reasons why I think the notion of the horizon can be fruitful for our understanding of the meaning and experience of race and racism. First, the meaning of

³ Though Foucault doesn't seem to pay significant attention to how the notion of power operates dramatically differently in the colonies, see, Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 1997. Foucault, however, is beyond the limited scope of my study, and will not be my main focus.

⁴ For Foucault, power is not centralized, but diffused to the social institutions, discourses and individuals themselves, through which power operates and circulates. His biopower describes how power shifts its focal point from the sovereign's power of deciding the life and death of its subjects, to the technology of managing the population's life and health as a whole to make some sections of the population live and let others die. This can crucially operate through what Foucault calls "state racism," when sovereign power, alongside biopower, targets and lets certain racialized sections of the population die; see, *Il faut défendre la société*, 1997.

Mbembe's 'necropolitics', in contrast, emphasizes the state's power to kill those racialized. He draws on colonialism to develop further this point; see Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, 2019.

⁵ Even a more critical hermeneutics that incorporates power and our capacity for critical reflection requires an elaboration of what Amy Allen calls "distorted subjectivity" and the process of subjugation that is at the foundation of communication and significance, along the lines of oppressed identities such as gender and race. This is also one of my goals; see, 2007, "Systematically Distorted Subjectivity" and 2015, *The End of Progress*. Also see, Outlaw, "Cultural Hermeneutics and Racialized Life-Worlds," 1998.

race is grounded in the hermeneutic field of a specific location (e.g., a country, nation, or jurisdiction) comprised of its juridical, cultural and social-political as well as historical contexts, which are communicatively construed. Multiple racializations can occur to the same individual in different contexts. The legal, juridical, medical and discursive systems of a specific society constitute a horizon through which race is constructed, experienced and understood. For example, in much of the slavery period in the US, the one-drop rule classified a person as black who had even one African ancestor. The legal context constructed the meaning of race at the time to delimit the boundary between whites and non-whites to serve the larger political project of maintaining the purity of whiteness and the domination of whites.⁶ Importantly, accounting for the meaning of race itself epistemologically does not entail the fight against racism. Epistemological accounts of race are manipulable politically, which can contribute to racisms. Yet, an account of race that takes seriously the oppressive history of colonialism and racism and their continual relevance can lead to a better understanding of racism, which helps combat it.

Second, just like the shifting meaning of race, racism, as a praxis of oppression, historically tends to change and shift into different forms and expressions across different contexts and times.⁷ While racism was explicit, institutional and overt in the history of colonialism and European imperialism over much of the last five hundred years, contemporary racism tends to be covert, disguising itself in different practices that adapt to the prevalent norms of our society, such as formal equality and freedom. Racism requires different justifications in different times, to naturalize and normalize itself. Since racism is local and contextual, it would be more appropriate to speak of racisms in the plural.

⁶ See, Bernasconi, 2012, "Crossed Lines in the Racialization Process."

⁷ See, Alcoff, 2019, "The Phenomenology of White Identity," 177; Bernasconi, 2023, "Introduction", in *Critical Philosophy of Race*, 1-18.

Temporally, while an epistemological, contextual account of race can be effective in explaining how race is experienced as meaningful, or indeed, even allows us to anticipate the contour of the future of a certain race,⁸ the analysis of racism, in contrast, often remains necessarily retrospective and retroactive.⁹ This is because racism is a dynamic praxis that, along with the contexts of race, changes all the time, and theoretical reflection can only capture it after the fact, which lags behind the mutation and adaptation of racism in concrete social reality and praxis. Moreover, what constitutes race is not the core or the central characteristics that define it, but the boundary or borders which negatively separate certain races from all others, which are just as historically fluid and unstable.¹⁰ This requires a more flexible and fluid approach to understanding both race and racism.

These are the reasons why I believe that the notion of the horizon, which is inherently fluid, open and dynamic, can be productively attuned to the fluidity of race that often crosses boundaries. When construed critically, horizon can also account for racism itself that operates not only as an interpretative, neutral horizon, but oppressive, rigid and reified horizon that distorts the understanding of others and ourselves. I shall first clarify the methodological status concerning horizon in hermeneutics, phenomenology and Fanon as they pertain to the issue of race, before I proceed to discuss Fanon's notion of horizons.

I. The Critical Phenomenological Horizon

In this section, I briefly discuss the notion of horizon as it is understood in classical phenomenology. Next, I discuss Fanon's distinctive method in his concern with psychiatric practice in relation to contemporary critical phenomenology and the notion of the horizon. This will prepare for the discussion of the overall goal, which is to show how the shifting, flexible, and

⁸ For example, see, Alcoff, 2014, *The Future of Whiteness*.

⁹ See, Paris, 2024, "'Without Losing Sight of the Concrete': Critical and Metacritical Theories of Race," and Bernasconi, 2023, "Introduction", in *Critical Philosophy of Race*, 1-18.

¹⁰ Here, I agree with Bernasconi's position, 2012, "Crossed Lines in the Racialization Process."

ever-changing horizon of racial understanding can still contribute to the contemporary debate on race and racism, through Fanon's notion of the horizon of colonial whiteness in the third section.

To analyze colonialism and racism, Fanon draws on multiple resources from different approaches to reveal the mechanisms and effects of colonial oppression. Although my focus is on phenomenology, because of its central emphasis on the structure and significance of human experience, this does not preclude other tools of analysis. Various other methods can serve as starting points for approaching structures of oppression under colonialism; these methods are neither reducible nor necessarily incompatible with one another in helping us understand racial oppression.¹¹ But there are advantages to taking phenomenology as a starting point.

First, phenomenology starts with the description of concrete experience from the first-person perspective without taking for granted our assumptions about our experiences of the world through what Husserl calls the *epoché*, or the suspension of our "naïve attitude." This is crucial for the issue of race and racism because how we experience race is grounded in the first-person perspective, and our naïve attitude tends to naturalize the meaning of race and obscure its constructed and sedimented dimensions within the history and power structure of colonialism and racism. Phenomenology can show the significance of one's unique, situated experience, without making it solipsistic or subjective, because individual experience, from the first-person perspective, is intersubjectively verifiable through a phenomenological, epistemological community of other people sharing similar identities and experiences. Second, phenomenologically, the significance of race is irreducible to either nature (biology) or culture (anthropology). Instead, the meaning of race is mostly ready to hand to us within the life-world containing the significance of both the sciences and culture in the meaningful context of the totality of the lived world. Thus, phenomenology takes the lived experience seriously, but without

¹¹ For example, David Marriott takes a more psycho-political approach that emphasizes the power of the affective economy of sexuality, the psychic power of desire, anxiety, fear and fantasy from the perspective of psychoanalysis; see, *Whither Fanon?*, 2018, 20; 52; 56.

accepting it as given. Third, I am approaching racism through Fanon's critical engagement with the concept of horizon. Husserl introduced the concept of "horizon" in his phenomenology. It refers to the unfolding (and in principle open-ended) background of possibilities against and through which we make sense of things perceived or cognized in our experience. To see an actual house, when I only see its frontside, is to perceive it in light of a backside that *would* appear, were I to walk behind it. This possibly perceived backside is part of the horizon against which a house appears as a house. The horizon accompanies the unfolding of our lived experience through which things appear in their "determinable indeterminacy."¹² Similarly, to perceive an individual as racialized as such also involves a background of possibilities in the cultural world of history (colonialism), narrative (racist ideologies, stories, myths) and politics (nationalities), etc., against which race is experienced.

What is distinctively unique about Fanon's notion of the horizon is his theorization of it in his efforts to understand psychiatric illness and psychopathology within the broader context of society under colonialism. His realization that the social environment is indispensable to both the cause (sociogeny) and solution of psycho-illness led him to embrace a method of social psychiatry, along with the experiment of day clinics that allow patients to return home while receiving treatments.¹³ Day clinics aim at giving patients greater agency and better integration into the social environment against the institutionalization of psychiatric hospitals. I contend that Fanon's turn to social psychotherapy shows the necessity of conducting therapy in relation to broader horizons, or the background context and possibilities, from society and the surrounding environment, as experienced by the lived body in the lived world, since this is the experiential

¹² See, for example, Husserl, "Analysis Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis," pp. 39-43. For a detailed account of Husserl's notion of the horizon, see, Geniusas, 2012, *The Origins of the Horizon in Husserl's Phenomenology*.

¹³ See a collection of Fanon's psychiatric writings in *Alienation and Freedom*, 2018, especially "The Meeting Between Society and Psychiatry," 511-530, [1959-1960]. The key psychiatric writing in the period of *Peau noire* is "Le « syndrome Nord Africain »", 1952.

context through which rehabilitation can occur, at both the social and individual level (I do not assume these levels are separable in the first place).

In Fanon's resignation letter from the psychiatric hospital in Blida, Algeria, in 1956, where he worked as a psychiatrist during the Algerian War of Independence against French colonialism, he shows the impossibility of psychotherapy in the context of colonial Algeria, which did not allow him to take into account the broader colonial social context in his psychiatric practice.¹⁴ I suggest that Fanon aims to enlarge the practical-phenomenal horizontal field of psychotherapy to the level of praxis in the struggle against the colonial system to rebuild horizons of liberation and freedom that were traumatically diminished by colonial wars and violence. The anti-colonial struggle at the levels of the material and military, essential though they are, is not to be confused with the fight against the colonial horizonpower that resides in subjectivity itself, which can be manifested in mental illness and circulated through the social environment and the bodies of the colonized/colonizers themselves. Thus, Fanon's unique notion of horizon partly comes from his understanding of social-therapeutic psychiatric praxis. Beyond being the source of his horizon concept, phenomenology itself is also crucial for understanding the lived experience of psychiatric upheavals and for grasping Fanon's insights of the horizon.¹⁵ Thus, I argue that the notion of the horizon is key to understanding the central connections between Fanon's thoughts on racism, colonialism and his psychiatric writings.

However, there are certain problems with phenomenology as a method to understand racism and white power. I provisionally follow what recent scholars called "critical phenomenology," which is partly the result of critically engaging with structural injustice and oppressions with phenomenology.¹⁶ First, critical phenomenology emphasizes the inherent transformative power in the description of lived experience from the first-

¹⁴ "Letter to the Resident Minister", 1956, in, 2018, *Alienation and Freedom*, 433-436.

¹⁵ See, for example, Zahavi, and Loidolt, 2021, "Critical Phenomenology and Psychiatry."

¹⁶ However, some argue that phenomenology is inherently critical, see, Aldea, Carr, and Heinämaa eds, 2022, *Phenomenology as Critique*.

person perspective that allows significant phenomena to show up to us, in multiple, differential aspects that challenge our taken for granted experience of them and potentially challenge how we subsequently experience them. Second, the critical phenomenologist is suspicious of the eidetic reduction, which focuses on finding the essences, or universal structures of experience. This is because the reduction risks finding social-culturally situated experience, for example, the experience of white Europeans, as the universal that ignores particularity and difference. Instead, the critical phenomenologist is concerned with oppressive phenomena such as racism, sexism and ableism that significantly structure experience. Although there are transcendental structures such as intentionality and intersubjectivity that are the universal conditions for the possibility of experience, structures such as white supremacy, heteronormativity, and patriarchy are cases of what Lisa Guenther calls “quasi-transcendentals,” in that they significantly condition the possibility of our experience, yet remain contingent on the historically developed structures of a specific society.¹⁷ Critical phenomenology is concerned with the analysis of the quasi-transcendental conditions for the im/possibility of our (oppressive) experience. Most importantly, it has the critical task of transforming, overturning and abolishing those quasi-transcendental structures that maintain and reproduce oppressive experiences.

My purpose is to understand how the concept of horizon, despite its inheritance from the phenomenological and hermeneutic tradition, acquires a significance of its own, potentially beyond those methods themselves, in contemporary philosophy of race and Fanon’s discussion of the horizon of racism and colonialism. It is in the spirit of undogmatically starting with critical phenomenology provisionally, without assuming its status as a stable, pre-established method,¹⁸ that I examine Fanon’s notion of the horizon

¹⁷ See, Guenther, 2019, “Critical Phenomenology,” and 2022, “Abolish the World as We Know It.” See also, Antich, 2023, “Mitigating Tensions Between Phenomenology and Critique.”

¹⁸ For example, Heinämaa argues that phenomenology is “metaphysically neutral,” or that it does not have pre-established norms or concepts. Instead, its goal is to describe phenomena as

of race, which I think functions as a quasi-transcendental within his thinking of race and experience of oppression, even if he himself does not use that term (it has not yet been invented). Fanon's insight into the quasi-transcendental of racial horizon allows the account for both the descriptive concreteness of the lived experience of oppressions and (crucially) the transformative potential inherent within the horizon structure, against oppressive structures of human experience. Fanon does this without either assuming horizon as a pre-established tool of analysis or predicting its teleological course of development. However, I do not assume or claim that Fanon is a 'critical phenomenologist,' which risks reducing the originality of his method and his unique, revolutionary status for Africana philosophy, the critical philosophy of race and decolonial philosophy. To prepare my discussion of Fanon's notion of the horizon, I now turn to the contemporary discussion of race as a hermeneutic interpretive horizon.

II. The Embodied Hermeneutic Interpretive Horizon of Race

In this section, I briefly discuss hermeneutics to prepare for arriving at my main focus, the way that Alcoff conceptualizes race as a hermeneutic interpretative horizon and Weiss's emphasis on the body as a narrative horizon from the perspective of racial embodiment. Hermeneutics is the study of the interpretation and understanding of texts. It applies not only to written texts, since understanding other objects, for example, works of art, also requires our interpretation of them. Moreover, the body itself is a site where meanings are constituted through interpretation and understanding. In hermeneutical terms, horizon is the set of background assumptions and context that are embedded in the specific location that we find ourselves in. Horizon is the condition for the possibility of interpreting objects of

they are given to us. Any pre-established concepts and categories such as intentionality can become inadequate to describe and account for variants of experience that show themselves to us. The phenomenologist must abandon those pre-conceived concepts and invent new ones to explain them in the process of description, 2022, *Contemporary phenomenologies of normativity*, 2.

understanding through participating in conversation in different forms through the language of a specific tradition.¹⁹ My focus here is on hermeneutics' relation to the issue of race.

One of the most fruitful discussions of Gadamer's hermeneutic notion of horizon for the purpose of understanding race is Alcoff's theorization of race as a hermeneutic interpretive horizon. Her goals are to provide a metaphysical and epistemological account of how identities can be coherent despite their fluid, multiple and changing meanings in different locations, how to make sense of our understanding of identities such as race and gender, and of how they structure our understanding of ourselves (VI, 85). She aims to defend the thesis that social identities are relational, contextual and fundamental to the self (VI, 90).

Alcoff's first point, that social identities are relational, entails that they are non-essential, but fluid categories that are only meaningful in our relations to others and to social institutions in the specific arrangements of social context. The relational nature of identities means that they have different ramifications on one's life in different contexts, and the identity designations are also context-dependent. This leads to her second point, which is that identities are fundamental to how we understand, interact with, perceive and are perceived by others. They, in turn, significantly condition how we experience and understand our own identities (VI, 91). For Alcoff, the notion of hermeneutic horizon is a "substantive perspectival location" from which one approaches the world (VI, 95). The horizon is substantive because it is infused with our 'prejudices,' or pre-understanding within our time, place and experiences, which are not obstacles, but contributions to understanding. Although the horizon is sometimes understood as an abstract location that transcends the interpreter, for Alcoff, it is always embodied with its immanent, physical materiality. Alcoff draws on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology to provide an embodied account of the visible subject that occupies a concrete location (VI, 102).

¹⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 385-391.

Alcoff's understanding of the horizon in terms of the ambiguous, fluid nature of the body can thus enable an understanding of the ambiguous nature of race, as an embodied identity that fluidly appears in different ways according to different contexts. For her, the horizon is never closed but dynamically interacts with and is influenced by other horizons. By virtue of the centrality of the body, the horizon is also individualized according to each person's particular positionality and her substantive perspective, and it partly constitutes one's personhood, which is, as she argues "consisting of his or her background assumptions, form of life, and social location or position within the social structure and hierarchy" (VI, 96). Thus, the notion of the horizon can provide a concrete account of the substantive location of the knower without inscribing an *a priori*, determinate or essential identity to that individual. Importantly, Alcoff points to the phenomenon of the clash of hermeneutic communication between the Europeans and Indigenous peoples in the Americas under the condition of colonial conquest in 1492 (VI, 98-99). The "clash of two different lifeworlds" shows that hermeneutic horizon is inherently saturated with the power dynamic between the interlocutors, which could enable, prevent or distort communication. As I will show in the next section, Fanon diagnosed the crumbling of the horizons in Madagascar during the invasion of European colonizers who attempted to diminish and foreclose the horizons and the meaning-generating agency of the colonized.

There are several limits to Alcoff's hermeneutic account of race. First, her theorization here gives the impression that one can simply investigate the meaning of race as an epistemological, metaphysical question without accounting for the power structure that always already accompanies our horizon, including the horizon of race. In other words, the salience of colonial racism and its corresponding interpretative dominance over other horizons seems to be underemphasized. I believe that any epistemological, metaphysical accounts of race cannot be separate from the critical analysis of how colonial racism structures oppressive meanings and experiences of race at the level of the horizon of our experience and subjectivity.

In the hermeneutic account of race, the hermeneutic interpretative horizon not only overinterprets and overdetermines some bodies (racialized) over other bodies (white), but I would argue, it is predominantly structured by whiteness and the colonial way of seeing and knowing. Crucially, in commenting on Fanon's description of the breakdown of the body schema in a racist world, Alcoff notes: "Here, one's interpretive horizon, the space from which one looks out to understand and make meaning in the world, becomes doubly inhibited and self-conscious" (VI, 108). But Alcoff does not provide a detailed account of how one's interpretive horizon becomes "doubly inhibited and self-conscious." In the next section, I will try and unpack this issue. Alcoff does recognize the importance of white supremacy in the hermeneutic horizon, as she writes: "When one realizes how one's own hermeneutic horizon of shared meanings has been infected by white supremacy, one's own sense of identity becomes invalidated" (VI, 206). However, I suggest that the horizon is not simply being "infected" by white supremacy, but fundamentally structured by it ever since the European 'discovery' of the Americas from the 1500s, when the colonial horizon of European supremacy becomes fundamental to any hermeneutic horizon of race. In other words, the power configuration of horizon in contemporary society is structured by the ongoing system of colonial whiteness that transforms, sustains and intensifies itself in the present.

This is partly the constitution of what decolonial thinkers, including Aníbal Quijano and Sylvia Wynter call "the coloniality of power/knowledge" during the 15th century through the colonization of the Americas.²⁰ One effect of the hermeneutic horizon of whiteness would result in what Wynter calls "the overrepresentation of man" of white European males as the descriptive-prescriptive statement of the human over and against the onto-biologized other non-whites who are considered irrational/underdeveloped and symbolically non-human. For my purpose, the contemporary descriptive statement of the white human would function as a

²⁰ Quijano, 2000, "Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America." Wynter, 2003, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom."

normative, quasi-transcendental horizon against which all other races become intelligible/unintelligible, and valuable/disposable. Thus, it is not only that one's self-consciousness of one's identity is invalidated, but that the possibility of its very 'validation' or invalidation is based on the logic of the colonial system of hierarchical categorization of the human politically and epistemologically instituted by the modern (Euro-centric) knowledge of the human, as Wynter declares:

That therefore, our varying ontogeny/sociogeny modes of being human, as inscribed in the terms of each culture's descriptive statement, will necessarily give rise to their varying respective modalities of adaptive truths for, or epistemes, up to and including our contemporary own...²¹

Wynter draws on Fanon's notion of sociogeny to theorize how different modes of being humans and the knowledge of them are socially instituted and transformed historically.²² Wynter's genealogical analysis of the descriptive forms of the human allows me to theorize racial horizon from the perspective of the operation of episteme power complex and its socially instituted characteristic, which shifts temporal-historically, along with the critical phenomenological, hermeneutic understanding of race as an identity as we experience and understand it.

In Alcoff's recent phenomenological analysis of whiteness as a lived identity, she turned to Husserl's notion of "natural attitude" in examining some of the features of the taken for granted, lived experience of whiteness developed historically and politically in the case of the US.²³ I think Alcoff offers a starting point to critically reveal the meaning of race as a hermeneutic interpretive horizon that is dominated and fundamentally structured by colonial whiteness behind its taken for granted natural attitude. This is ever more important due to the increasingly problematic praxis of uncritically identifying oneself with whiteness as a way of

²¹ Wynter, 2003, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," 269.

²² Wynter, 2003, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," 318.

²³ Alcoff, 2019, "the Phenomenology of White Identity."

sustaining one's white privilege by implicating and participating in it²⁴ (I will further elaborate on this through Beauvoir's notion of entanglement and ambiguity as a horizon).

Similarly, I argue that revealing and critiquing the structuring forces of whiteness are crucial for Gail Weiss's task of reimagining the horizon through initiating a 'politics of horizon' in her discussion of the body as a narrative horizon (*RO*, 62-71). For Weiss, the body not only can be read and interpreted as a text, but texts themselves are embodied with their materialities (in a printed book or on an electronic device, for example) (*RO*, 64). Following Paul Ricoeur, she maintains that identities and our understanding of ourselves are woven through the telling of stories in both the chronological and a-chronological (which focuses on the significant events) dimensions. The significance of the a-chronological narrative points to the non-linearity of identity constitution. Crucially, she argues that the body itself is what Ricoeur calls "discordant concordance" in human lives and narratives, that resists coherent unity (*RO*, 70). Thus, resisting oppressive narratives based on identities such as race and gender must first reject the ideal of a pre-existing narrative coherence that normalizes certain narrative bodies as more coherent and rejects "incoherent" or unintelligible narratives (*RO*, 71). The discordance in narrative is the result of the openness of our narrative, embodied horizon that is not always intelligible, linear or coherent, but such unintelligibility is a necessary feature of human existence as a discordant narrative that opens up the transformation of the narrative self and other.

Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, Weiss further calls for a "politics of the horizon" that shifts our focus from the figure, or the particular events, to the often invisible ground that plays a more fundamental, structuring role, which renders those events perceivable and meaningful to us (*RO*, 112). Weiss's example is the event of the violent beating of the African-American Rodney King by the police (*RO*, 102-112). There are different ways of seeing

²⁴ See Jaima, 2020, "'Don't Talk to White People,'" Jaima draws on James Baldwin, who refers to whites as "those-who-think-of-themselves-as-white." Jaima provides contemporary empirical analysis to argue that racial identities are largely psychological identifications.

the video, other than the *prima facie* level, from the perspective of our immediate perception, which is an important way in which racialization and racialized perception occur. For example, a racist way of seeing and interpreting it would automatically assume the association of the black body and blackness to violence, criminality and unlawfulness, and police action as legitimate force against them. A non-racist or racism sensitive way of interpreting, in contrast, would emphasize the inherent bias and prejudice in the long history of white-supremacist, institutional violence against African-Americans that results in such disproportionate use of force. Although Weiss also touches on the horizon of whiteness by briefly mentioning Fanon's description of how children's literature has an influence on their association of blackness with evil and whiteness with virtue (*RO*, 104), she does not elaborate on it sufficiently. I will later argue that this normative association based on race is, in Fanon's account, a cultural imposition that functions as a mechanism for the institution and maintenance of a colonial horizon of whiteness.

Phenomenologically, the horizon of whiteness is not easily revealed to those who inhabit it because the horizon is constitutive of the self and its perspective. Following Merleau-Ponty, one of Weiss's premises is that "one interrogates the very nature of the horizon qua horizon and that one must do so not from a detached perspective but from the standpoint of one who is part of that horizon" (*RO*, 99). This is to say that even the philosophical reflection of the notion of horizon is itself based on a specific horizon that structures our reflection. This also further clarifies Alcoff's argument that the horizon is constitutive of the self: while we can take a step back and reflect on our horizon, we can never do so as if we are detached from it. Instead, we are embodied, situated, finite beings who are necessarily partial with a specific perspective in the world. But we can, nevertheless, attempt to reach out to and comprehend other perspectives through our power of reflection and the phenomenological possibility of empathizing with the experience of others intersubjectively.²⁵ I would argue that restructuring the

²⁵ See, Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*; Husserl's "Meditation V," in *Cartesian Meditations*,

horizon of whiteness is a precondition for the possibility of the 'politics of horizon' since the white self, and even the colonized self, cannot completely detach its self from the colonial horizon of whiteness. This would first require an analytic of the horizon of colonial whiteness.²⁶

Another significant development of the notion of horizon can be found in the tradition of existentialism, which influenced Fanon. Notably, Simone De Beauvoir transformed the indeterminacy of the phenomenological horizon into a productive notion of the ambiguous nature of existential choices and intersubjective entanglement for an existential ethics.²⁷ In the next section, I will discuss how Fanon aims to critically rethink the issue of ambiguity under the condition of colonialism, where existential ambiguity is rendered inoperative, foreclosed and resolved by the concrete lived experience of exclusion and racialization. This calls for a more critical, anti-colonial ethics of ambiguity that potentially transforms the ethics of ambiguity.

III. Fanon's Radical Reconfiguration of Horizons

In this section, I will propose the notion of 'the world horizon of whiteness,' inspired by Fanon's initial, preparatory diagnosis of the 'de-structuration' of the Malagasy society by the European invaders' "overturning" (*bouleversement*) of their horizons.²⁸ I argue that for Fanon, the indeterminacy of the horizon is manifested through the existential structure of ambiguity that seems to be "resolved" (*se résout*) under colonialism. This calls for a decolonial ethics of horizontal ambiguity to rethink ethics and counter the foreclosure of the free horizon. I will discuss both recent critical phenomenologists' reading of Fanon (especially Alia Al-Saji's), and the philosophical context of the horizon by offering an original reading of Fanon's notion of ambiguity through Beauvoir and briefly trace back the notion of the horizon of race in Jean-Paul Sartre's existential-phenomenological analysis of racism.

²⁶ Dhanvantari also notes the "white horizon" in Fanon that limits black subjectivity, but I focus on the phenomenological and hermeneutic basis of the horizon to read both Fanon and Beauvoir. See, "Beauvoir, Fanon, and the Existential Ethics of Liberation," 2019, 66-67.

²⁷ Beauvoir, *Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté*; henceforth, *PMA*.

²⁸ The French verb '*bouleverser*' can be translated in English as "upheaval", "upending", "flipping around" etc.. depending on the context.

Previous commentators, for example, Shannon Sullivan, have identified the phenomenon of the “shattered horizon” in Fanon’s work.²⁹ But she has a different purpose and approach than I do, since her starting point focuses more on the interaction between the psyche and the body, through the method of psychoanalysis. Thus, the phenomenological-hermeneutic foundation of Fanon’s notion of horizon seems to be overlooked. Fanon describes the phenomenon of the crumbling of horizons in Madagascar:

Ce que M. Mannoni a oublié, c’est que le Malgache n’existe plus; **il a oublié que le Malgache existe avec l’Européen. Le Blanc arrivant à Madagascar a bouleversé les horizons et les mécanismes psychologiques.** Tout le monde l’a dit, l’altérité pour le Noir, ce n’est pas le Noir, mais le Blanc. Une île comme Madagascar, envahie du jour au lendemain par les « pionniers de la civilisation », même si ces pionniers se comportèrent du mieux qu’ils purent, **connut une déstructuration** [My emphases in bold] (PN, 94).

What Mr. Mannoni has forgotten, is that Madagascar no longer exists; **he has forgotten that Madagascar exists with the European. The white arriving in Madagascar has overthrown [a bouleversé] the horizons and psychological mechanisms.** Everyone said, the alterity for the black, is not the black but the white. An island like Madagascar, being invaded overnight by “pioneers of the civilization,” even if these pioneers behaved the best they could, **experienced a de-structuration** (My translation and emphases).

The context of this statement is part of Fanon’s refutation of the psychoanalyst Octave Mannoni’s argument that the Malagasy culture is characterized by their reliance on the power of their ancestors and Gods. Mannoni claims that this phenomenon of “dependency complex” explains the need for the Malagasy to be colonized by transferring the source of their pre-existing dependency from their ancestors to the colonizers. Fanon’s objection points out the historical and hermeneutic inadequacy of Mannoni’s psychoanalytic interpretation of the colonial situation, which abstracts away from the colonial situation of violent conquest, continual political and economic domination and inequality that constitute the background horizon of Mannoni’s retroactive interpretation of it.

It is important to note that Fanon uses “horizons” in the plural. This provides resources to potentially think against the danger of the traditional hermeneutical and phenomenological

²⁹ Sullivan, 2004. “Ethical Slippages, Shattered Horizons,” 15.

horizon, which tends to be monologic and monotopic in ignoring multiple, divergent traditions and horizons, as Alcoff and decolonial philosophers such as Walter D. Mignolo and Emily S. Lee have noted (VI, 124). In contrast, contemporary phenomenologists of race, including Lee and Mariana Ortega, point to multiplicitous horizons, drawing from Maria Lugones's notion of "world travelling" that is more attuned to the experience of those who cross multiple boundaries, including racial, national, ethnic, cultural, linguistic and sexual differences in different worlds of experience.³⁰ The phenomenologist David Morris also points to the possibility of "intersectional horizons" that are never monotopic or closed, but dynamic, open and indeterminate across different identities.³¹ The point is that for Fanon, multiple horizons condition differential experiences across a multiplicity of existential positionalities.

Most importantly, Fanon's notion of the "de-structuration" of the colonized society not only points to the economic, material or political dimensions, but the phenomenological-hermeneutic structural dimensions of human experience, and the constitution and understanding of the self. Thus, Fanon stated the thesis that the pre-colonial Madagascar no longer exists with the arrival of the Europeans, and he also writes that the invasion provoked an absolute wound ("*provoquait une blessure absolue*").³² One reading is that such de-structuration and wound occur on the ontological dimension of being.³³ The most prominent commentator on this is Alia Al-Saji, who argues that this process of colonial de-structuration through which colonialism ontologizes itself is ongoing, which cannot be "bracketed" away through the phenomenological *epoché* in describing any lived experiences and their essential structures.³⁴ It is necessary to elaborate on her reading since critical phenomenology is crucial to my project of understanding horizon and its relation to race and racisms.

³⁰ Lee, *A Phenomenology for Women of Colour*, 2024; Ortega, *In-Between*, 2016.

³¹ Morris, 2019, "Horizons," in *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology*, 178.

³² *PN*, 93-94; 94-97; *BS*, 71-72.

³³ Al-Saji, 2024, "Fanon's Anti-Colonial Critical Phenomenology," 18.

³⁴ Al-Saji, 2024, "Fanon's Anti-Colonial Critical Phenomenology," 10, 17.

Al-Saji criticizes the “trap of specularization,” a tendency in phenomenology to render experiences and their structures too transparent and visible, which risks imposing a colonial epistemology in rendering representations of the racialized experience within the supposedly universal framework of deducing the structures of experience.³⁵ She compares this tendency to Saidiya Hartman’s critique of white slavers’ empathy for the suffering of the slave,³⁶ which ambivalently includes the master’s desire to penetrate into the slave’s interiority and thereby negate the particularity of the latter by rendering her or him enjoyable, replaceable and interchangeable at the same time for the masters. This subsumption of the slave’s particularity as an individual is what makes them “fungible.” Thus, “specularization” risks reproducing the affective economy of slavery. Instead, Al-Saji argues that phenomenologists need to grasp the “duration” of colonialism affectively, or to describe structures of experience in its opacity and affective experience that resists the imposition of universality, as she writes: “Any epistemic apprehension of colonial duration needs to pass through, to be rooted in, the affectivity of colonial wounds.”³⁷ The phenomenologist’s attempt to bracket their natural attitude turns out to reveal the structuring forces of colonial affective-temporal duration that resists being bracketed. Colonialism and its violence have thoroughly structured the field of phenomenology at the level of sense and affectivity by creating an “absolute wound.”³⁸ Instead of simply performing the phenomenological *epoché* as a continuous, unending, ongoing effort, Al-Saji pushes it further by arguing that the colonial “absolute wound” is where the phenomenologist already dwells on as the condition for the possibility of philosophy under colonialism.³⁹ Dwelling on the wound is the refusal to be flown away by the current of the ever deferred (white) future that disregards the *durée* of colonialism.⁴⁰ Thus, Fanon’s critical description of the lived experience of racialization

³⁵ Al-Saji, 2024, “Fanon’s Anti-Colonial Critical Phenomenology,” 16; 2020, “Frantz Fanon,” 207.

³⁶ Al-Saji, “Frantz Fanon,” 2020, 208.

³⁷ Al-Saji, 2024, “Fanon’s Anti-Colonial Critical Phenomenology,” 10; 8.

³⁸ Al-Saji, 2020, “Frantz Fanon,” 210-211.

³⁹ Al-Saji, 2024, “Fanon’s Anti-Colonial Critical Phenomenology.”

⁴⁰ Al-Saji, 2024, “Fanon’s Anti-Colonial Critical Phenomenology,” 4.

reveals the affective colonial wounds through which the description, analysis, and critique, as well as the transformation of the structures of colonialism, can be initiated.

Al-Saji's reading of the colonial wound is based on her interpretation of colonial temporality through the Bergsonian understanding of the experience of time as "*durée*," which is an uninterrupted, non-spatializable and undivided, heterogeneous flow that snowballs by retaining the past into the present that is actualized selectively and partially.⁴¹ Combining "*durée*" with Fanon's description of racialized experience of time, Al-Saji argues that instead of seeing the linear events of colonial history sequentially, "*longue durée*" grasps how colonialism snowballs, accumulates and intensifies the weight of its past that differentially distributed to bodies that are colonized and non-white versus white, and the formers take on thicker layers of affective texture overtime built on the accumulated historical experience of oppression, which can be actualized and reconfigured in the present.⁴² Thereby, colonialism continues to structure the experience of the present in the affective-temporal register that intertwines with the colonial past and can be intensified by oppressive or racist events in the present.

Different from Al-Saji's reading of the ontological "absolute wound," I focus on Fanon's use of the horizons and his critical diagnosis of whiteness as a structure of world horizon, with its phenomenological-hermeneutic meaning in significantly structuring, but without completely determining experiences under colonialism. Although Al-Saji also recognizes the need to deconstruct whiteness and coloniality within the tradition of phenomenology, the meaning of the horizon is not elaborated by her in terms of Fanon's works:

...by leaving its whiteness and "coloniality" undeconstructed, this could only be a regional phenomenology of white existence. What classical and sometimes critical phenomenology elide is colonial duration as the horizon for philosophy and the condition of possibility structuring how phenomenology is done in the first place.⁴³

⁴¹ See, Al-Saji, 2018, "Hesitation as Philosophical Method."

⁴² Al-Saji, 2024, "Fanon's Anti-Colonial Critical Phenomenology," 18.

⁴³ Al-Saji, 2024, "Fanon's Anti-Colonial Critical Phenomenology," 20.

Importantly, Al-Saji also identifies colonial duration as the horizon that structures the possibility of phenomenology and philosophy at large, but she does not elaborate on the meaning of horizon. This is crucial because Al-Saji's account points to the ontologizing effect of colonialism, which has the impression of making colonialism all too-determining and lacks fluidity in its retrograde movement and teleological projection that attempts to ontologize itself and foreclose alternative temporalities. Or, in Fanon's words, the colonized have no "ontological resistance" (PN, 108). I will further elaborate on Fanon's critique of ontology.

Although the Bergsonian "*durée*" can be reconfigured and actualized differently through multiple possibilities, which are, in principle, open-ended, it is unclear how the creation of different temporalities other than the dominant colonial one would be possible ontologically. To account for the fluidity of experience and to allow exceptions and singularity that cannot be comprehended by the colonial framework of time, "*longue durée*" can also be understood as a temporal horizon. For example, from the perspective of the horizon, an individual who lives in a racially homogeneous society may not be consciously aware of or experience the existence of any racial horizon at all. Conversely, a person in a racially diverse society may change their horizons constantly as they walk into space, communicate with people and interact with social institutions with different degrees of racial differences and designations. Thus, Al-Saji's account of the Fanonian "wound" and "de-structuration," with her own notion of "*longue durée*" that structures temporal-affective experience ontologically, should also consider the phenomenon of the colonial overturning and overdetermining of the horizons in the phenomenological-hermeneutic dimension without rendering colonialism too determining of the infinite human experiences that tend to escape ontological analysis.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ In Fanon's psychiatric writing on the issue of confession and criminality in the French colonial Algeria, he repeatedly emphasizes that we are dealing with a system that "ontologically escapes us," see, Fanon, 2018, "Conduites d'aveu en Afrique du Nord," 428; 434.

If we read Fanon's horizon with Alcoff's account of the hermeneutic interpretive horizon, which includes the constitution of the self that consists in its hermeneutic perspective, this would mean that Fanon's description of the destruction of the horizons of the Malagasy society shows the destruction of the Malagasy collective self in its hermeneutic interpretive horizon. Thus, he states that "Madagascar no longer exists; he [Manonni] has forgotten that Madagascar exists with the European" (*PN*, 94). This implies that the de-structuration of one's horizons destroyed one's or one's group's interpretive, hermeneutic agency and autonomy, since the collective context, background assumptions, along with its institutions that enable one to transmit, understand and participate in traditions, are shattered. These assumptions, context partly constitute the self, and the agency of understanding and having a perspective which allows one to navigate, interpret and participate in a world of traditions and cultures. As I have argued through Weiss and Alcoff, the horizon is constitutive of the self, and one cannot simply detach oneself from one's horizons, as a result, the overriding of one's horizons implies the imposition of other horizons. In the case of European colonialism, the colonial horizon of whiteness replaced the pre-existing horizons of the colonized. As I will argue, the colonized not only experienced a "de-structuration," but a negative re-structuration by way of the imposition of a horizon of whiteness through the mechanism of cultural imposition, as I will elaborate.

The more crucial reason why Al-Saji's diagnosis of the ontologized colonial temporality may not be compatible with Fanon's diagnosis of colonialism is that for him, the failures of ontology to understand racialized existence are crucial to the oppressive operation of colonialism. This is important for my purpose since it is necessary to perform a hermeneutic investigation alongside ontology, or a hermeneutic ontology, since ontology itself requires interpretation and, thus, the history of the interpretation of being.⁴⁵ However, for Fanon, ontology has been white, which describes the being of the white. One of Fanon's central contentions in

⁴⁵ See, Dahlstrom, 2010, "Hermeneutic Ontology."

his works is that the history of ontology fails to understand the being of the colonized. As he warns repeatedly:

But all ontology is rendered unrealizable [*irréalisable*] in a colonized and civilized society...there is, in the *Weltanschauung* of a colonized people, an impurity, a flaw that forbids all ontological explanation...Ontology, when we recognized once and for all that it ignores existence [*laisse de côté l'existence*], does not allow us to understand the being of the black. Because the black can no longer be black [*n'a plus à être noir*], but he only is in front of the white [*mais à l'être en face du Blanc*] ...The Black has no ontological resistance in front of the white gaze (My translation, *PN*, 197).

Fanon's point is that it requires socially and politically situated institutions and interpretation for ontology to realize itself, and that the possibility of genuine interpretation is rendered unrealizable in a colonized society where one is alienated from one's own language, culture and identity. For him, the history of ontology has been the history of white Europeans and the realization of white interpretations of being. Thus, the being of the blacks and colonized is realized only in relation to whites, not just in that the meaning of their racial identity is made derivative of whiteness and whites' interpretation of them under the colonial, 'Manichean,' racial normative schema of categorization, but that the very capacity, agency and possibility for meaning-making is also conditioned by whiteness. Thus, the colonized are contradictorily turned into the being of the sub-ontological or even non-ontological. In Fanon's language, they exist in "the zone of non-being" (*PN*, 8). Fanon's critique of ontology hinges on his concrete description of experience, particularly on the black's lack of "ontological resistance" in relation to the phenomenon of the white gaze. I will start approaching the issue of the phenomenological lived experience of racialization and return to the phenomenon of the gaze in a moment.

After Fanon's famous phenomenological description of lived experience in chapter 5 of *Peau noire*, in chapter 6, he declares that: "Wherever one goes, one remains a Negro" (*PN*, 168). Decolonial philosophers have offered different interpretations of this declaration. In Sylvia Wynter's reading, the black is made to confront the fact that they occupy the signifying place of the non-human/irrational that falls outside the Western, descriptive-prescriptive statement of the

human.⁴⁶ However, a closer reading of Fanon's text reveals something phenomenologically significant in the lived experience of racialization. The context of Fanon's statement is his discussion of Gabriel d'Arboussier's objection to Sartre's theorization of the negritude movement (a movement of asserting blackness against colonialism and anti-black racism) (*PN*, 167). D'Arboussier criticizes the abstractness of Sartre's discussion of the negritude movement in "Black Orpheus," a preface that Sartre wrote for the negritude thinker Léopold Sédar Senghor's *Nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache*.⁴⁷ Sartre argues for the self-destruction of negritude as an "anti-racist racism" in negating anti-black racism (white-supremacy) and transitioning into a raceless society in the future, which is based on a neo-Hegelian, Marxist logic of dialectics.⁴⁸ D'Arboussier objects that first, Sartre overgeneralizes black experiences, because there are diverse cultures, nationalities and ethnicities within the black diaspora (*PN*, 167). Second, he thinks that the one-sided emphasis on black struggle would skew the course of the universal communist liberation from class by turning it into a particularism.

Fanon initially thought the criticism of generalization could apply to himself in his generalized discussion of black people. In fact, Fanon dialectically extended at least some of his analysis of the Martinicans with respect to the experience of language to all the colonized in the world.⁴⁹ Yet, against d'Arboussier's objection, Fanon announces that:

Toute description doit se situer sur le plan du phénomène, mais là encore nous sommes renvoyé à des perspectives infinies. *Il y a une ambiguïté dans la situation universelle du nègre, qui se résout toutefois dans son existence concrète.* Par-là il rejoint en quelque sorte le Juif. Contre les obstacles allégués ci-dessus, nous ferons appel à une évidence: *où qu'il aille, un nègre demeure un nègre.*

All description should situate itself at the level of phenomenon, but once again, we are thrown back to infinite perspectives. *There is an ambiguity in the universal situation of the black, which resolves itself nonetheless in his concrete existence.* Thereby, he joins in some way the Jew. Against the alleged obstacles above, we will appeal to an

⁴⁶ Wynter, 2003, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," 319.

⁴⁷ Sartre, 1948, "Orphée noir".

⁴⁸ Sartre, "Orphée noir," XLI.

⁴⁹ See, for example, *PN*, 16; 23.

evidence: *wherever one goes, one remains a negro* (My emphases and my translation) (PN, 168).

Descriptions should be situated at the level of the phenomenon or attend to how the phenomenon, which is indeterminately determinable and ambiguous, appears to our concrete experience. Phenomena can, in turn, alter the tools and methods of description itself, which are unstable, contingent on their capacity to adequately describe experience. Thus, methods must constantly adapt themselves to phenomena as they appear, and to the evidence that is presented to us in our lived experience. There are infinite perspectives or variations in terms of how phenomena correlate to different modes of intentionality. Hermeneutically, our different locations also condition how we interpret and understand things and others. Thus, “nous sommes renvoyé à des perspectives infinies,” which literally means “we are sent back to infinite perspectives,” emphasizes how infinite perspectives from differential positionalities and lived experience constantly and continually displace us and disturb the supposed ease at which the phenomenologist is describing experience uncritically.

What does it mean for the ambiguity in the universal situation of the black to resolve itself (*se résout*) in the concrete experience? The decisive phenomenological evidence Fanon has against d'Arboussier's objection is his own lived experience of racialization, through which he confronted the experience of “wherever one goes, one remains a Negro” (PN, 168). But to understand what Fanon means by “universal situation” and “ambiguity,” we need to take a detour to Sartre and Beauvoir, where the context of these philosophical concepts is situated.

Fanon's understanding of racialization is heavily influenced by Sartre in the latter's early analysis of antisemitism in *Réflexion sur la question juive* in 1946.⁵⁰ He critically engages with and advances some important analysis of racism that Sartre proposes. Although, as a white, French European, Sartre's descriptions of the lived experience of the Jew can be problematic, the perspective he has on the lived experience of the anti-Semite French, or the experience of

⁵⁰ Fanon refers to this book for at least 8 times in PN, 85; 91; 113; 116; 147; 157; 162; 176.

whiteness, is valuable. First, Sartre points out the danger of the dilutional and perverting effect that racism has in the dimension of stereotype on the lived experience of the racists in creating a vicious circle of racism. For Sartre, it is the experience of the pre-existing, stereotypical, racist notion of the Jew that created the imaginary, negative Jewish identity and condition how the racists experience the Jew, as he writes: “far from the experience engenders the notion of the Jew, it is the latter that illuminates the experience; if the Jew did not exist, antisemitism invented it.”⁵¹ Sartre is replying to the often-used racist argument that it is the lived experience of encountering the negative qualities of the Jews, for example, the criminality of Jewish criminals, that establishes their stereotypical identity. But for Sartre, the antisemites, or those who encounter a Jewish criminal, perceive not criminality itself, but Jewishness that precedes any instance of negative qualities. Thus, it is the pre-existing antisemitism that retroactively projects negative qualities onto the Jewish identity, which constructs, maintains and reinforces the circulation of the existing racist notion of the Jew.

Second, this leads to Sartre’s analysis of the gaze from the perspective of the antisemite. He emphasizes the effect it has on one’s action and one’s consciousness of oneself as a Jew: “He is only sure of one thing: it is at the gaze of others, whatever he does, he is and he will stay Jewish [*quoi qu’il fasse, il est et restera Juif*]” (RQJ, 93). The antisemite gaze overdetermines the Jew as an object of Jewishness, which leads to the vicious racial circle where one cannot detach from one’s externally imposed identity that exists in the dimension of what Sartre calls “being-for-another” from any performance and action.⁵² The early Sartre already noted the possibility of projecting and creating the meaning of one’s identity, which is grounded in the power of negation in one’s self-consciousness, is severely constrained to the

⁵¹ *Réflexion sur la Question Juive*, henceforth, RQJ, 15.

⁵² Sartre, *L’Être et le néant*.

extent that one can only control the responses and reactions that one can have towards the meaning others project upon oneself.⁵³

Fanon radicalizes Sartre by pointing out that the black is “overdetermined from without” immediately as the effect of the difference of one’s phenotype (*PN*, 113). Thus, advancing Sartre’s description of the Jew: “whatever he does, he is and will stay as Jewish,” Fanon thinks that racialization against the black precedes any performative enunciations or existential actions: “whenever he goes, a negro remains a negro.” Moreover, in the lived experience of accessing various spaces, the difference of one’s skin colour reveals space itself to be through and through racialized. Thus, moving into white space as a non-white person is immediately racializing. This is possible partly because space is hermeneutically interpreted according to the horizon of whiteness through which racialized bodies are always already overinterpreted in their phenomenological hypervisibility. Therefore, racism is irreducible to bad habits of the agent who may hold certain racist beliefs or attitudes. Instead, a whole world of historical, discursive truth, myths, material, economic and political systems of white power give rise to an episteme of race which partly constitutes the persistent horizon of whiteness.

Finally, Sartre turns his analysis of the Jew to their universal situation of racialization, having made and constantly having to re-make the ontological choice of choosing oneself as a Jew in one’s response that characterizes such a situation (*RQJ*, 110-115). For Sartre, the authentic Jew is the one who chooses to acknowledge the situation of being a Jew and negotiates one’s facticity, and the inauthentic Jew takes flight from their situation by choosing to ignore such a situation in denying the relevance of one’s race. Thus, for Fanon, similar to the Jew, the black is also in a universal situation of negotiating the facticity of their race, choosing and having always already chosen by responding to and being responsible for one’s choice. However, Fanon sees the infinite ambiguity that arises from diverse choices with the differential

⁵³Sartre, *L’Être et le néant*, 569-574.

situations of the black. Different from Sartre, Fanon thinks that the horizon of whiteness fundamentally conditions one's option of choosing to respond to one's situation. As I will show through Fanon's notion of cultural imposition, he uses the example of his lived experience of living in the Martinique, to show that not only the social structure renders it impossible to choose to be authentically black, but the horizon of whiteness makes it impossible to not emulate whiteness under the condition of colonization and cultural imposition, a situation which Fanon calls "white destiny" that is predestined to maintain the purity of whiteness towards a white future (*PN*, 10). Crucially, Sartre has already acknowledged that the horizon of the racialized in a racist society is metaphysically differentiated and differed:

The concern (*inquiétude*) of the Jew is not metaphysical, but social. What makes the ordinary object of his care (*souci*), is not yet the place of man in the world, but his place in society: he doesn't see the abandonment (*délaissement*) of each amidst a mute universe, because he doesn't yet emerge from the society in the world. It is amidst men that he feels himself abandoned; the racial problem blocks (*bouche*) the horizon (My translation, *RQJ*, 165-166).

Instead of having concern about one's finitude, which is the foundation of one's care in disclosing the world that one is thrown into, in the Heideggerian language, for Sartre, the racialized Jew is not primarily abandoned into a meaningful world of meaninglessness, but first and foremost concerned about being abandoned by a racist society. For the racialized Jew, their concern is first of all social, not metaphysical. Thus, the existential horizon of projecting oneself towards the future is blocked by racism. As a result, the structure of existential abandonment has to be radically rethought. The racialized experiences a double abandonment in both the social and metaphysical sense. For them, the metaphysical is not the primordial, and the possibility of authentic projection implicitly relies on an intersubjective social space of participation and belonging. The possibility of meaningful existential projection depends on the resolution of racism. Therefore, Sartre points to a socialist revolution and the abolition of class as the solution to the "Jewish problem," which is actually the problem of antisemitism that Sartre attributes to the contradictions under the exploitative, divisive structure of capitalism (*RQJ*, 184-185). Sartre believes that capitalism creates divisions, including those of the rich and the poor,

the workers and the owners of means of production, the rural and the urban, etc., which requires a higher form of contradiction to resolve them (*RQJ*, 183-184). The representation of Jewish and non-Jewish is a greater division that serves to unite a nation in scapegoating the former for all those divisions that capitalism is responsible for. This is why Sartre thinks that the resolution of capitalism itself is the solution to racism. Thus, Sartre concludes that despite his description of the (in)authentic Jew, neither of these options is capable of solving antisemitism, which Fanon also notices (*PN*, 176).

As a careful reader of Sartre's *Réflexion*, it is reasonable to speculate that Fanon notices the importance of the notion of horizon discussed above. But what Sartre might have missed is that the supposed universal existential projection presupposes a white horizon that privileges whiteness as transcendence. However, there are other important contentions in Fanon's critical reception of Sartre. First, Fanon rejects Sartre's emphasis on class struggle in his objection to Sartre's "Black Orpheus," where the latter once again offers a solution to anti-black racism through the universal class struggle. Instead, Fanon insists on the irreducibility of race in distinction from class (*PN*, 130), since different forms of oppression and racism have their distinct history and problems that require different strategies to address. How the racialized groups themselves internally negotiate and deal with racism in their own initiation and agency is also irreducible to the subsumption of any universal solutions. Second, importantly, different from Sartre in this period, and similar to Beauvoir's emphasis on ambiguity, Fanon places more attention on the significance of ambiguity in the existential structure of experience.⁵⁴ Recall that in chapter 5 of *Peau noire*, Fanon describes the ambiguous experience of the black by quoting different styles of black poems from black writers who hold divergent views and existential perspectives, and he comments: "The negro experience is ambiguous [*l'expérience nègre est*

⁵⁴ Beauvoir's *Ethics of Ambiguity* was published one year after Sartre's *Réflexion*. Dhanvantari has connected Beauvoir's ethics of ambiguity with Fanon, but she focuses on revolutionary actions, whereas I focus on the phenomenological notion of the horizon in both Beauvoir and Fanon. See, "Beauvoir, Fanon, and the Existential Ethics of Liberation," 2019.

ambiguë], because there is not only one negro, but negroes” (PN,133). In commenting on Sartre’s description of antisemitism, Fanon also points out: “It is all the ambiguity [*toute l’ambiguïté*] that Sartre described” (PN, 176). Much like the dynamic horizon that conditions our lived experience, existence is characterized by the tension and interpenetration between the universal structure of having to choose one’s facticity, and the concrete, particular lived experience of our ambiguous situations and contexts. Ambiguity arises in the diverse circumstances and hermeneutic locations in which the black’s universal situation of negotiating with whiteness takes place. Ambiguity makes possible meaningful experience in those situations that are indeterminately determinable, which gives possibilities to choosing and responding to one’s facticity. This ontological ambiguity is being resolved [*se résout*], in the sense of being diminished or suspended in the concrete experience of global anti-black racism that reaffirms the inescapable situation of having to escape from colonialism, racism and whiteness as the conditions for the possibility of blackness and their meaningful experience of racial identity.

Fanon’s notion of ambiguity here is distinctively phenomenological, as he asserts that “*Toute description doit se situer sur le plan du phénomène.*” Beauvoir’s notion of ambiguity from *Pour une morale de l’ambiguïté* is crucial here.⁵⁵ She transforms the indeterminacy of horizon into existential ambiguity, which entails that our experience of meaning is never fixed in advance, but always ambiguously reconfigurable in its indeterminacy into infinite possibilities (PMA, 180). To develop further the relevance of the horizon, it is necessary to briefly reconstruct Beauvoir’s horizontal ambiguity before returning to Fanon.

For Beauvoir, our ontological ambiguity comes from our embodiment, through which we experience ourselves and others as both a transcendent self-consciousness and an immanent

⁵⁵Renault found a phrase that Fanon mistakenly attributed to Nietzsche in *Peau noire*: “Le malheur de l’homme, disait Nietzsche, est d’avoir été enfant” (PN, 8), according to Renault, the exact phrase can only be found in Beauvoir’s *Pour une morale de l’ambiguïté*, see, 2014 “Fanon, Lecteur de Beauvoir,” 36-37. In Fanon’s analysis of antisemitism, he also describes Beauvoir’s own experience of witnessing anti-black racism in the US, PN, 177.

facticity of biological thingness. Both are necessary existential conditions for human existence in our situation, which is characterized by the tensions and misrecognitions of the two that can result in violence. This entails that for our projects to be meaningful, it is required that we posit the transcendent freedom of all others, (*PMA*, 127) since we co-exist in a field of action in a world of finitude where the realization of our projects is interdependent on the freedom of those who recognize, advance or impede our projects through their freedom and actions. Thus, oppression, for example, arises from denying oneself as a bodily, biological facticity that requires others for the fulfillment of one's needs, or denying the transcendence of others as free agents who can also interpret such biological facticity, posit goals, influence, and recognize my projects (*PMA*, 143). Consequently, oppression entails the denial of our own or others' existential entanglement in the ontological structure of ambiguity.⁵⁶

Beauvoir's account of freedom, based on our ontological ambiguity, is built on her earlier works on the structures of human existence, where she articulates the condition that the realizations of our existential projects are necessarily entangled with those of others (*PMA*, 157). Sara Heinämaa's recent interpretation of Beauvoir's notion of "*empiètement*" (encroachment) and ambiguity is especially helpful for my purpose. Drawing on the phenomenological concept of "conative consciousness," Heinämaa argues that such consciousness is characterized by its future-orientedness and the indeterminacy of the creation of its will to posit goals, as she writes: "Rather than being simply directed at pre-given objects with determinate but open horizons, the will creates its own objects in the form of goals and means."⁵⁷ Conative consciousness is future-oriented in that it is directed towards concrete actions that bring those goals into fruition in the material world. The realization of the willing agent's goals and projects in the material field of limited resources and finite human abilities necessarily entails the unequal fact that while some projects can be realized, others would fail to

⁵⁶ Heinämaa, 2024, "Simone de Beauvoir: Encroachment, Agency, Embodiment," 92.

⁵⁷ Heinämaa, 2024, "Simone de Beauvoir: Encroachment, Agency, Embodiment," 88.

come to fruition. Thus, the realization of projects links different willing agents together by implicating them in the world, which influences how everyone is (un)able to realize goals that they posit for their projects.

To draw out Beauvoir's further development of conative consciousness and its implications for intersubjectivity, Heinämaa turns to Beauvoir's notion of "*empiéter*" [to encroach], in *The Blood of the Others* of 1945 and argues that encroachment is:

A special type of intertwinement of conative consciousnesses: more precisely, the coincidence and overlap of human wills and desires in the material world in the form of realizing actions and motivating expressions.⁵⁸

Our wills interpenetrate with those of others and also constrain one another at the same time in the world of finitude and material scarcity. The realizations of our project have concrete material and empirical effects on the field of action for others, which can either impede, hinder or advance them.⁵⁹ However, there is a crucial distinction between the conditions of encroachment in human co-existence and the ontological structure of ambiguity on the one hand, and the existential choices, or our transcendence to take up, interpret and react to these conditions and structure on the other. Thus, Beauvoir's ethics is a situational ethics that requires an irreducibly singular interpretation of one's situation in the structure of ambiguity and the field of entanglement with others, who we reciprocally and antagonistically encroach on.

Following my reading of the horizon as indeterminacy, it follows that Beauvoir is describing the existential horizon of ethics, or what I would call an 'ethics of horizontal ambiguity' which is founded on the existential field of intertwinement that implicates acting and willing agents together, conditioning everyone's (im)possibility of realizing and/or impeding oneself/other's projects. Ontological ambiguity, freedom and existential conditions of entanglement and encroachment constitute a horizon for the possibility of realizing and understanding the meaning of each one's projects. In both the earlier Sartrean account of

⁵⁸ Heinämaa, 2024, "Simone de Beauvoir: Encroachment, Agency, Embodiment,"88.

⁵⁹ Heinämaa, 2024, "Simone de Beauvoir: Encroachment, Agency, Embodiment,"89.

existential responsibility and the Beauvoirian notion of existential “*empiètement*”, there is a strong commitment against systemic oppression. Thus, for example, for them, the contemporary phenomenon of white innocence, or the belief that whites who engage in neither overt nor implicit racist practice simply have nothing to do with racism, is untenable, since we would always be implicated in and responsible for the power structure within the horizon of colonial whiteness in its material, intersubjective condition of existential *empiètement*.⁶⁰

Beauvoir’s account of ontological ambiguity and existential intertwinement would still be problematic for Fanon. For him, the racialized, especially the enslaved black people, had historically been excluded, utilized and suspended from the field of intertwinement. The marginalization of the colonized within such a field of ethical horizon rendered them merely passive, objective and disposable things or factual immanence that, contrary to the Kantian imperative of the ends, they are to be manipulated and used for the realization of others’ purposes, wills and transcendence. In Fanon’s words: “the Negro is a toy at the hands of the white men” (*PN*, 136). For sure, this shows the “bad faith” of colonialism and slavery in denying the free transcendence of others, which still shows an extreme intertwinement of existential action. But, as Fanon repeatedly announces the failure or the unrealizability of ontology for the colonized, Beauvoir’s existential-ontological analysis of ethics, however productive it may be in thinking about and against oppression, is not adequately critical to understand the existence of the black and the colonized. Even the ontological structure of ambiguity has to be radically rethought to understand the issue of racial oppression at the level of ontology that implicitly ‘sub-ontologizes’ groups of people into a sub-ontological level of non-being. I will argue that the distinctiveness of Fanon’s notion of ambiguity, seen from the perspective of the horizon, is that he critically combines the Sartrean analysis of the situation and the racializing gaze with the

⁶⁰ Remarking on the necessities of both raising the slave’s consciousness of their situation of enslavement and not to be in the position of the tyrant, Beauvoir points out that “toute abstention est complicité” [all abstention is complicity], *PMA*, 121. In my reading, this is because we are entangled automatically in the horizon of white power.

Beauvoirian analysis of ambiguity, entanglement and *empiètement*, while taking them to places neither Sartre nor Beauvoir has ever been to by critically transforming them both.

At the least, for Fanon, there is a constant attempt to foreclose the horizon of indeterminacy out of the existential ambiguous possibilities of projection in negotiating the facticity of one's skin within the tension of an oppressive anti-black society. The ethical horizon again risks describing a white horizon of an abstract field of action where only whites can effectively act as agents of willing and positing goals. Thus, a decolonial ethics of horizontal ambiguity urges us to be attentive to the horizon of our action that risks being entangled in a white, colonial powerhorizon, which operates within the nexus of interpretative power episteme that can become oppressive by concretely impeding the realization of others' meanings through encroaching on non-white projects. This account of ethics as horizontal ambiguity is consistent with my notion of horizonpower.

I have shown how the oppressive horizon of colonial whiteness can distort one's interpretive agency, foreclose possibilities, projections and actions as well as 'disentangle' the colonized from the field of meaningful, ethical existence all together. It would require an account of the mechanism of how the indeterminacy of horizon, and thus, ambiguity itself, can be contingently diminished, foreclosed, and resolved into an oppressive horizon of racism and white supremacy. In other words, I aim to further investigate the mechanisms through which the colonial horizon is established, sustained and operates in Fanon's analysis. Fanon's account of how the phenomenon of racialization, or the condition for the process of suspending ambiguity, is the phenomenon of cultural imposition, which is one of the fundamental mechanisms of colonialism that he reveals. Fanon describes in Chapter 6 of *Black Skin, White Masks*:

In Martinique, the young black man, who at the school does not stop repeating "our fathers, the Gauls," identifies himself with the explorer, the civilizer, the white who brings truth to the savages, a complete white truth. There is an identification, that the young black man adopts subjectively an attitude of the white (*PN*, 145).

In Martinique, the black population were indoctrinated with the idea that they were white French from school, which was modelled on the same metropolitan French Republican education

system. Since youth, they are immersed in other social, cultural media such as magazines, novels and films that are infused with the representation of whiteness and identify themselves with it on the one hand, and the denigration of blacks and other non-whites in the lived experience of everydayness. The imposition of whiteness often takes the form of a political, national-ethnic identity. The imposition of a horizon of truth in the form of whiteness in cultural imposition is an operation of power that penetrates the subjective psychic life of the colonized. Fanon intended to show this from the beginning of *Peau noire*. In the first chapter, by describing the various phenomena of speaking the colonizer's language (French), he shows an inescapable dimension of colonial cultural imposition that subjectively configures one's identification of oneself as white French (*PN*, 15-37). In the two chapters that follow, he shows that the orientation towards and desire for whiteness foreclose any genuine love in the colonial situations (*PN*, 39-79; 43-45). Fanon is neither simply showing the impossibility of living authentically in a racist society, nor just describing, as Lewis Gordon suggests, the inevitable failures of existing as a human being through choosing the options of either being black in an anti-black society, or being white as a black under colonialism, with only these options of being (white) human in racial modernity.⁶¹ It is my contention that Fanon is also offering a diagnosis of the horizon of colonial whiteness in order to destroy and change it.

Colonial domination necessarily requires discursive truth to instill white power in the colonized and colonizers. Martinicans are taught to self-identify with whites against blacks or even other non-whites. The regime of truth is necessarily a white one that is governed by the 'categorical imperative' of the law of white supremacy and black inferiority that the colonized themselves were taught to embrace. Their interpretation of the world, thus, is based on a white world that starts from whiteness and ends with white supremacy, which Fanon calls "white destiny," in the sense that there is no alternative to another interpretative agency of the world

⁶¹ Gordon, *What Fanon Said*, 24; 35; 69.

and understanding of it other than that which whiteness has predestined it to be. White power circulates among both white and non-white bodies through the operation of white truth (*vérité toute blanche*), which is partly constituted by the white perspective that one has. As a result, even when all or most of the formal, political, military and material economic, e.g., power of the colonizers is no longer dominant in the former colonies after the latter's independence, white power sustains itself and could perpetuate itself parasitically in the form of truth which circulates intersubjectively and exists in the horizon of existence.

For Fanon, the horizon is fundamentally embodied. Fanon's reading of the body schema comes from the neuropsychiatrist Jean L'Hermitte (*PN*, 109), the same sources that Merleau-Ponty often cites. Fanon's description of the body schema highlights the operation of bodily motility and actions as pre-reflective habitual movements in space (*PN*, 109). Importantly, many readers of Fanon assumed that it is the racist society that disrupts the function of the body schema, which is no doubt true. Let's consider the sentence where Fanon first introduces the notion of the body schema:

And so, to affront the white gaze was a given fact. An unusual weight oppressed us. The real world contested our existence in it. In the white world, the man of colour encounters difficulties in his corporeal schema (my translation) (*PN*, 108).

What precedes the body schema is the structure of the white world, which is crucially signified by the phenomenon of the white gaze that was a given. The white gaze was given to the racialized to confront, which presupposed the existential structure of the white world. The white gaze does not just come from particular white bodies who perform racist acts/interpellations, but the white world itself, with its phenomenal, existential configurations of oppressive functions as an objectifying gaze that transforms embodiment and the self-consciousness of the racialized. The unaccustomed weight that oppresses the racialized body has an unordinary, uncanny, strange feeling that affectively penetrates the self-consciousness of one's embodiment. There is an omnipresent surveillance of the white gaze, or, in Foucauldian terms, a disciplinary power of the invisible gaze in the white world. Thus, the "real" world disputes the existence of the

racialized because the “real” or the white world disavows one’s interpretation of the world and of oneself. The white world is an oppressive hermeneutic horizon that imposes whiteness and its interpretation of all other races on the horizon of the racialized body.

Here, it is important to return to Fanon’s description of the white gaze in relation to ontology, because just before the above paragraph, Fanon introduces the notion of the white gaze that founds the ontological-phenomenological order of the white world:

Because the black can no longer be black, but he only is in front of the white...The Black has no ontological resistance in front of the white gaze. The negroes, overnight, had two systems of reference by which he would have to situate himself (My translation) (*PN*, 108).

The second system of reference is the colonial system of whiteness that was imposed on the racialized in the process of colonization to differentiate the ‘superior’ from the ‘inferior.’ This, as I have argued, is analyzed by Fanon through the phenomenon of cultural imposition.

Furthermore, the epidermal-racial schema can be seen as the imposition of a hermeneutic horizon internalized into one’s own consciousness, or one’s understanding of one’s own identity in one’s skin colour. As Fanon describes:

I had created below the body schema a historico-racial schema. The elements that I had used were not given by “the residues of sensations ...,” but by the other, the white, who had woven me out of thousands of details, anecdotes and stories (My translation, *PN*, 109).

This is why Fanon said that it is the “I” who “created a historical-racial schema.” The elements that “I” used were furnished by the white’s thousands of details, anecdotes and stories which weaved me into a phenomenological-hermeneutic, narratively constituted black body. Part of the process of this ‘weaving’ was, of course, the phenomenon of cultural imposition that internalizes such a narrative. Thus, the self, or one’s perspective and one’s hermeneutic understanding of oneself and one’s identities, are fundamentally structured by the hermeneutic interpretive horizon of whiteness. Fanon is describing the concrete process through which we come to realize our understanding of ourselves and our bodies through the internalization of colonial,

white norms that render those bodies meaningful to others around us, which are, in turn, imposed on the racialized consciousness and racialized interpretive perspective.

The imposition of the white horizon is not limited to the racialized themselves, but also to the colonizers/whites in the construction of the boundary that demarcates the identity of whiteness. What gives racism salience and makes it intransigent is that it tends to fix both the horizons of the racist person and the racialized in dramatically different ways. As part of our facticity, horizon is not simply something that we fully control, but something that is given to us and often imposed upon us externally in our interactions with others and in the surrounding environment. Therefore, one cannot easily choose to renounce or deny one's own white privilege. I would argue that whiteness and its white privilege are part of the constitutive horizons of racial modernity in that they have significant ramifications in one's interaction with others, institutions and understanding of oneself. We are neither fully active nor simply passive in relation to the colonial-racial horizon. In George Yancy's critical analysis of blackness, he notices that Sartre's existential formula is reversed; instead of "existence precedes essence," for the racialized, their "[racial] essence precedes existence."⁶² But as I have shown through the notion of race as a horizon, it is not "essence precedes existence", but "(racist-white) horizon precedes existence." This is because one's horizon is never all-determining and essential, but flexible, context-dependent and changing. Understanding these dynamics through the notion of the horizon can allow us to grasp both the quasi-transcendental aspects of the colonial horizon of whiteness and, at the same time, to conceive of fluid singularities and possibilities that exist otherwise than ontological possibilities.

Importantly, although the current configuration of hermeneutic, phenomenological horizon of race is conditioned by whiteness, the disappearance of whiteness, if it were ever possible, would not mean the disappearance of anti-black racism, anti-Asian racism or other

⁶² Yancy is also trying to emphasize how historically contingent structures of racial identity appear to be essentialized in a deeply racist society, see, Yancy, 2012, *Look, A White!*, 35.

forms of racism. The abolition of whiteness would not solve racism once and for all. Instead, anti-racism must be multidirectional. But the task of challenging and decentring whiteness as the centre of power and meaning remains significant for combating racial exclusion and violence predicated on whiteness as the global norm of human. My reading of Fanon's notion of the colonial horizon of whiteness allows the possibility of re-reading Fanon's notion of the mutation of racism in "Racisme et culture (1956)." In this article, which was written about four years after the publication of *Peau noire*, he further analyzes the phenomenon of cultural imposition. As the pretense of the Manichean system and its material, economic and military power of terror no longer dominate social and political life, racism and white power recede into a virtual horizon that circulates between bodies subjectively and affectively:

It should not be disputed that certain country is racist but one cannot find lynching or extermination camp in it. The truth is all this and other thing exists on horizon (*en horizon*). These virtualities (*virtualités*), these dynamic latencies circulate and are tied into the psycho-affective and economic life relations (my translation).⁶³

For Fanon, racism is a systemic form of exploitation where the global capitalist schema of production forces immigrants from underdeveloped countries to work in low-wage sectors with precarious, dehumanizing work conditions and deportable legal status in settler-colonial countries. Fanon's uses of the horizon, virtuality and their relations in affective life show how colonial power of racism operates in its differential, diffuse and disguising dimensions of psycho-affective relational life, which often escape retroactive, theoretical and formal analysis. Domination and oppression are made possible by the circulation of the horizonpower in the virtual dimension. In other words, what gives colonialism and racism the ability to mutate, transform and maintain themselves in a new configuration is not solely due to their material, economic and political foundations, but the virtual possibilities and the dynamic thereof that co-engage colonial materiality, which transcend colonial material organizations virtually.

⁶³ Fanon, 1956, "Racisme et culture," 129.

Thus, we can understand Fanon's call for "*dépouillement*" (skin-shedding) at the end of *Peau noire*, or what he later calls a "new humanism," as the invention of a liberatory world horizon of understanding and being differently in a new, inventive way. For Fanon and Sartre, one's freedom in a decolonizing society is associated with how much one has detached the relevance of one's race from oneself.⁶⁴ The more one is able to live without the determinacy of one's skin, the freer one is. Here, I attempted to think the possibility of restructuring the colonial world that is built on the violence of the horizon.

IV Conclusion

I have examined the notions of race and racism in light of Fanon's critical description and analysis of them, in relation to the contemporary debates of critical phenomenology, with the notion of the horizon. Race is experienced as a phenomenological, hermeneutic interpretative horizon that remains fluid and dynamic. The horizon can explain the continual oppression of the racialized under the conditions of colonial whiteness's domination of the horizons. Fanon's diagnosis of the colonial horizon of whiteness shows that it not only operates as a quasi-transcendental form of racial experience, but the inherent oppressive structure of such racial experience is grounded in the horizonpower of racial modernity. Colonial horizon is established through the initial violent colonial conquest that established the phenomenon of cultural imposition. Powerhorizon, saturated with the power of whiteness, manifests itself in different modes of domination in social-psychic life. Although it remains open to contestation, the indeterminacy of the horizon is constantly being transformed into an oppressive, enclosed one that obliterates ambiguity from racialized existence. A decolonial ethics of horizontal ambiguity urges us to recognize the fact that we can be actively but also passively responsible for constituting the intersubjective colonial, white horizon of action and projection that prevents or advances the realization of the projects of others. Such ethics of horizontal ambiguity calls for

⁶⁴ Bernasconi, 2023, "Frantz Fanon's Engagement with Phenomenology," 198.

continual contestation against the foreclosure of our ambiguous, open horizon and the transformation of an oppressive horizon into a horizon of indeterminate freedom without destiny.

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