

## ***Buberian Intersubjectivity and Racist Encounters***

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*... it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me.<sup>1</sup>*

In this essay, I explore a few ways that the German Jewish philosopher Martin Buber can contribute to the philosophy of race. More specifically, I will here explicate what Buber's dialogical "ontology of the inter-human" in *I and Thou* and *Distance and Relation* can tell us about racist encounters.<sup>2</sup> I begin by defining our term "racist encounter" via a brief analysis of an exemplary case (I.1), and then explicate the Buberian frameworks of intersubjectivity born out of our respective texts, applying each to the racist encounter under consideration (I.2-3). Through this exercise, I reach the counterintuitive conclusion that, vis-a-vis Buberian intersubjectivity, in a racist encounter neither the addressed nor the addressee is a self. In part II, I respond to the objection,

Why apply Buber to the philosophy of race at all? by demonstrating the unique contribution his philosophies of intersubjectivity stand to offer in comparison to the philosophical foundations underlying Frantz Fanon's denouncement of racism in *Black Skin, White Masks*.

## I. Buber, Applied

### I.1 A Racist Encounter

... in the heat of the moment the woman snapped, "You know, it's people like you who make your whole race look bad—You're an utter idiot!" And the young man reflexively retorted, "Oh, I'm the idiot? I study philosophy at UofT!".... "Oh, yeah right buddy!"...

This event shows us three significant features of a racist encounter. First (1), from the woman's initial remark—"it's people like you who make your whole race look bad"—we see that she takes the young man to be not an individual but a representative of a broader type, a "whole race." In order for this to happen the woman must (a) identify the individual's 'racial' quality or set of qualities, i.e., his black skin, and then (b) abstract that quality away from the individual, placing him in a category with others who also share that trait, a *racial group*. Moreover (2), this racial group is no mere assertion of similarity in terms of that singular racial quality. Rather, her perception of that trait is coloured by an as-

sortment of historical-social expectations: biological, psychological, economic, cultural, etc. This racialized group, therefore, has its own definite features, and the young man is perceived as an instantiation of that abstract racial archetype or image. Thus, the woman's unwillingness to accept his claim to intelligence, her "yeah right," reflects that a university education is at odds with her expectations of his racial type. It further reveals her pretension to knowing the stranger; familiarity with a racial archetype poses as knowledge of the man before her. Lastly (3), this image, this simulacrum, is spoken to the man. That is, her perception of him is not only within her mind but is proposed to him in the encounter.

Thus, in this analysis we will broadly define a racist encounter as a moment where an individual (1) picks out a racial quality of another and abstracts away from that individual, placing them in a fictitious racial group with others who also ostensibly share that quality; (2) associates that racial group with another set of attributes (via a socio-culturally given racial image); and (3), pronounces this set of expectations associated with the racial group over the other.

### I.2 Distance and Relation

What can Martin Buber's *Distance and Relation* tell us about such encounters? In this text, he argues that in social life we (a) distance others from ourselves thereby

accepting their independence from us as *an* other, and then (b) (sometimes) relate to them as a unique self before us.<sup>3</sup> In the first act, “setting at a distance”, we grant an individual an existence independent of ourselves, the status of a *general other*.<sup>4</sup> This other is a being that exists “in itself,” rather than a being that only exists “to me,” i.e., as part of my world.<sup>5</sup> The distancing which asserts this otherness makes possible, though does not necessitate, a second movement, *relation* (i.e., “making present”).<sup>6</sup> In this act, the distanced and generic other “becomes a *self* for me,” a person with whom I engage.<sup>7</sup> In relating to them thus I affirm their *selfhood*—their individuated being, i.e., “personal qualities and capacities,” and becoming, i.e., potential, confirming them in their “depth of human individuation.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, the first movement of *distancing* identifies the person before me as an “other”, while the second, occasional movement of *relation* engages with the person before me as *this* unique and particular self.<sup>9</sup>

To Buber, this completed act of relation is the ground of self-becoming for both I and other.<sup>10</sup> He argues, “when the other knows that he is made present by me in his self... this knowledge induces the process of his inmost self-becoming.”<sup>11</sup> That is, the other is only able to become a self via my recognition and affirmation of their selfhood.<sup>12</sup> Importantly, this is a *reciprocal* encounter whereby both become selves together symbiotically,

“in the mutuality of making each other present.”<sup>13</sup> More awkwardly, the other must recognize me in my selfhood in order for me to simultaneously become a self which can give them their selfhood.<sup>14</sup>

Understanding this odd claim requires us to clarify Buber’s notion of selfhood. When we prod deeper into Buber’s work, we find that he does not picture selfhood as something that an individual attains at some obscure stage of development, once and for all. Rather, *he sees selfhood as a mode of being which emerges or retracts depending on how/if we are engaged with others*. Since it is clear that we are self-conscious in moments when we are not directly engaged with an other, in order for this claim to be plausible, one must distinguish between self-consciousness and selfhood. This distinction is forthcoming in Buber’s above argument: before “*making present*” one another and thus becoming selves, both individuals must have already *distanced* the other from themselves, and such distancing requires some minimal level of self-consciousness (since to say that another is not-I requires a concept of I).<sup>15</sup> Here it is evident that Buber does not see the minimal self-awareness necessary for distinguishing an individual from oneself as constituting full selfhood. Just as my awareness of the other in the mode of distancing is generic, my self-awareness is similarly indeterminate.<sup>16</sup> Buberian selfhood thus exceeds vague self-aware-

ness; it is *significant cognition and realization of one's unique particularities and potentialities in relation to another*.<sup>17</sup> With this definition in place, we can understand Buber's claim that two individuals can not be selves without a certain form of encounter. Until they engage in a mutual exchange of affirmation and confirmation of each other's being and becoming, they can not actualize integral aspects of their being (their self) which only emerge in relation to a "you" which calls back "you."<sup>18</sup> This principle I will henceforth designate as 'co-dependent selfhood'.

Vis-à-vis this framework of intersubjectivity, the racist encounter is a moment of distancing without relation. To begin, the racist encounter requires the act of *distancing* since the racist individual must see their addressee as another human being before them, existing independent of them, in order to address them with language at all. Insofar as our woman has addressed the man, she distances him to recognize him as a *generic other*. Here, however, the movement stops short; she does not encounter the man in a genuine form of *relation*. In the act of relation, an individual "makes present" the other in their unique individuation, affirming their particular being and becoming.<sup>19</sup> But in our ordeal, the woman engages with the young man as an instance of a racial group and thus obstinately encounters the qualities associated with that group rather than him. Thus,

her artificial assertion of his sameness with others, her projection of his racialized identity, bypasses his unique selfhood which stands ontologically distinct from the foisted racial image. In this sense, he remains scarcely perceived by the woman at all. Our subject here shares in the all-too-common experience of black subjectivity illustrated by Ralph Ellison's "invisible man":

I am an invisible man... [though] I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone. Fibre and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me.<sup>20</sup>

The insidious character of the racist act here begins to rear its head. If selfhood only comes into being when both individuals make the other present to themselves in a mutual relation, the woman's inability to see the man's individuated self means that he is not given the possibility to actualize it.<sup>21</sup> This certainly resonates with our common-sense understandings, and experiences, of the effects of racism on subjects. When an individual is addressed as a mere instantiation of a racial group, there is little they can do to become an individuated self *to their addressee*. Those attributes which conflict with the racial image remain unseen, deemphasized, or altogether rejected. Indeed, even those with salient qualities that conflict with the racial image do not escape

the stereotypical pigeon-hole, as they are then defined by their contrast to that image and are given the status of 'walking paradox,' e.g. "he's such an *articulate* black man." As Fanon incisively describes, "I was walled in: neither my refined manners nor my literary knowledge nor my understanding of quantum theory could find favour [to the white gaze]."<sup>22</sup> Further, via Buber's theory of co-dependent selfhood, individuals who are deprived of the opportunity to unfold their self to an other are also denied the ability to be a self *to themselves*.

More alarmingly, in the racist encounter the woman, i.e., the racist individual, makes impossible her own self-becoming. That is, since one becomes a self in a reciprocal relation of making present an other, the racist thought-act effectively forecloses the possibility for the racist individual to actualize their selfhood. In relation to this "negro," this simulacrum, I am unlikely to see much more of myself than I would vis-a-vis an inanimate object or non-human animal posited as already-known. The other is given as a captured animal and further interrogation into the banal creature is unnecessary when one has recourse to zoo sign descriptions. In not seeing the one before me as a self, I have no opportunity to see my self by relating to them as such. Instead, here both remain generic to each other and themselves. Like ships in the night, they discern the distant silhouette of *an other*, yet both remain engulfed

in darkness, indeterminate. In short, the double-edged consequence of Buber's theory of co-dependent selfhood in *Distance and Relation* is that in refusing to see the self before us, as one does in a racist encounter, we simultaneously reject our own.

### I.3 I and Thou

What light does Buber's philosophy of dialogue in *I and Thou* throw on our affair? In this text, Buber famously argues that there are two ways of addressing an other, which correspond to two modes of being for the addressee. As he writes, "the world is twofold for man in accordance with his twofold attitude," and accordingly "the I of man is also twofold."<sup>23</sup> The two ways to address the other, as You or as It, reconstitute the individual who speaks them. Thus, these means of address are reflected in two word pairs: I-It and I-You.<sup>24</sup> In the basic word pair I-You, one addresses the other as the immediate presence (*Gegenwart*) before them and, in explicit correspondence with the act of relation in *Distance and Relation*, "stands in relation [to them]."<sup>25</sup> This address is an encounter whereby one relates to the person before them with their whole being, encountering them as a presence *unmediated by and irreducible to any qualities or concepts*, as an indescribable and whole "You."<sup>26</sup> Further, this "relation is reciprocal" as it requires the You to also approach them as a You in return, and only in this way does either individual become an I.<sup>27</sup> Impor-

tantly, since the person is not encountered as an object but as a presence, in this form of address they are not able to be manipulated, coordinated, instrumentalized, or ordered as such.<sup>28</sup>

On the other hand, one can address the other before them as an It. In the I-It address, the subject turns toward the other as an object, an aggregate of qualities caught in the web of Newtonian time-space.<sup>29</sup> The subject's view of the objectified other is mediated by concepts and qualities, they perceive them as "a condition that can be experienced and described."<sup>30</sup> In contrast to the I-You relation, this experience of the person as an object (*Gegenstand*) allows one to coordinate, order, and manipulate that person, employing them as a means to an end, as an "It for self."<sup>31</sup> In engaging with the other as an object perceived by a subject, the subject has a superficial experience (*Erfahrung*) rather than a relational encounter (*Erlebnis*) with the other.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, just like in the mode of distancing without relation, the I in the word pair I-It is not given to either party in this encounter. Though the perceiving subject certainly has some vague awareness of their own being as the one who is desiring, thinking, experiencing, etc.—what some characterize as "pre-reflexive self-consciousness"—they do not experience themselves in their fullness, in relation to the other.<sup>33</sup> Here we see again the distinction between a *self* and a *self-aware subject* in

Buber's thought. Though the I of I-It is a subject, they are reduced from their "substantial fullness to the functional one-dimensionality of a subject that experiences and uses objects."<sup>34</sup>

The racist act is certainly an I-It experience. In the I-It address, a subject perceives the other as an aggregate of apparent qualities and as mediated by concepts.<sup>35</sup> Correspondingly, in our racist encounter the woman picks out a quality of the individual, his black skin, and associates it with a larger set of expectations by placing him in a racial group. She does not *encounter* the individual present before her but *experiences* him as mediated by and reducible to the racial image/concept.<sup>36</sup> Undoubtedly, his blackness is "a condition that can be described."<sup>37</sup> With the racist encounter now situated within this Buberian framework as an I-It experience, we can employ Buber's descriptions of such experience to delineate consequences of such behaviour for both the addressed racialized subject and the racist addressee.

*I and Thou* spells out ethical implications for the recipients of racist acts that reach beyond the denial of selfhood we discerned in *Distance and Relation*. Everyday racist encounters like our subject's are commonly thought of as one-off aberrations which, though potentially psychologically damaging for the racialized individual, do not have deeper ties to systemic racial

oppression. However, understood as an I-It encounter, such seemingly benign encounters reveal a latent ontological foundation at the core of the exploitation and oppression of people groups. This is because in experiencing individuals as reducible to an aggregate of qualities as one does in a racist encounter, we experience them as objects to be used for our purposes, manipulated and coordinated as beings “for us.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, the *prima facie* relatively harmless perception of an individual as reducible to a racialized quality prepares the ontological groundwork for them to become fodder within the cogs of a system, consumed as natural resources, disposable. This insight, paired with the historical contours of transatlantic slavery, renders Achille Mbembe’s thesis “to produce Blackness is to produce... *a body of extraction*.”<sup>39</sup> Let me here speak directly: to delimit and describe me as a black person as being *x*, *whatever x may be*, reflects a mode perception akin to enslavement; in both cases I am reduced to an object ready-at-hand for your use.<sup>40</sup>

*I and Thou* also gives us resources to understand how the racist act, in a ricochet, harms the racist addressee. Since the I of the I-It relation only experiences the other as an object, it does not have a substantial You from which it can receive its own You, and thus, it cannot become a self.<sup>41</sup> This accords with what we have said of the self-denying nature of the racist act in our

application of *Distance and Relation* to the issue. Yet, *I and Thou* further clarifies just how the subjectivity of the addressee is barren in the I-It relation by its characterization of such an I’s subjectivity as *experiencing (erfahrung)* rather than *encountering (Erlebnis)*.<sup>42</sup> In contrast to the encounter, experience is a superficial ordeal: we send our ideas out ahead of us to order the world before us. However, in doing so we do not meet the world itself, but our own ideas.<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, the German verb for experience used here, “*erfahrung*,” has the connotation of superficial driving (*fahren*) over rather than deep familiarity (*kennen*), and is thus also used as a term for dry empirical knowledge.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the I-It experience has a monological character: “we do not participate in the world,” but meet only our mental apparatus projected onto it.<sup>45</sup> And since it is the core of Buber’s dialogical philosophy that “actual life” is an encounter with otherness, those who remain siloed within the I-It experience are not engaged with the deep recesses of life itself but partake in a pseudo-life.<sup>46</sup> Bereft of a genuine experience of otherness, the racist individual remains alone while before an other. Their counterfeit gaze has deprived both themselves and the other of a genuine encounter, the only place where either could arise from their hiddenness to become a self in the full Buberian sense.<sup>47</sup> Thus, Buber’s theory of co-dependent selfhood and philosophy of dialogue univocally indict: no one is their self in the

racist encounter, indeed, they barely drink from the living waters at all.<sup>48</sup>

## II. Why ask Buber at all?

Though we have been able to produce fruitful insights regarding racism via the application of Buberian thought, there are certainly much more direct routes to a philosophical discussion of racist encounters. Since we can point to numerous texts in critical race theory which speak to the phenomenology of racism insightfully and explicitly, why go to the trouble of fleshing out Buber's philosophy and applying it to racism at all? In response, I will here compare Buber's dialogical philosophy with the philosophical foundation of a preeminent text in critical race theory, Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, in order to show the unique philosophical contribution that it brings to the discussion.

In the capstone chapter of *Black Skin White Masks*, "The Lived Experience of the Black Man" (ch. 5), Fanon explicates the psychological effect that being treated as a racialized object has on a subject. He begins the chapter thus:

I came into this world anxious to uncover the meaning of things, my soul desirous to be at the origin of the world, and *here I am an object among other objects*. Locked in this suffocating reification, I ap-

pealed to the other so that his liberating gaze... [by] taking me out of the world [would] put me back in the world. But... *the Other fixes me with his gaze, his gestures and attitude.*<sup>49</sup>

Fanon here beautifully describes how a racialized subject is denied the realization of those aspects of themselves which transcend the status of object via their perception by those around them, i.e., "the white gaze." He re-states this experience of being "locked in" a perception of oneself as a racialized object in explicitly philosophical terms when he writes: "the black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man."<sup>50</sup> That is, racialized subjects are not perceived as having aspects of their being which elude the domineering omniscience of the white gaze. This reverberates in James Baldwin's autobiographical remark; he was not only "spat on" but "*defined and described.*"<sup>51</sup> Thus, Fanon's goal in the wider text is to "release" the black man from this prescriptive image and its effect via psychoanalytic and phenomenological analysis aimed at the "disalienation of the black man."<sup>52</sup>

To a certain degree, Buber and Fanon are concerned with the same content: Buber treats the objectification of persons in an abstract and general manner, while Fanon treats it in the specific case of European anti-black racism. Where Buber, in *Distance and Rela-*

tion, gestures toward the idea that the self is formed and comes to the surface only in contact with another who meets one in a reciprocal relation as a individualized self, Fanon begins with a racialized individual harkening another's "liberating gaze" to bring them to the plane of humanity.<sup>53</sup> Again, where Buber, in *I and Thou*, argues that humans should not be only experienced as objects but encountered as I's, Fanon informs us of the specific experience a "black" subject has when their perception is mediated by the objectifying gaze of the dominant "white" world. Therefore, though Buber's general philosophy can be applied to speak abstractly to racism, Fanon speaks with a clear and direct voice of its concreteness. Further, Fanon, unlike Buber, takes up an in-depth analysis of the genesis, internalization, and phenomenology of racialized subjects.<sup>54</sup> Thus, we again ask, why bring Buber to bear on the issue at all?

Our answer lies in the ideal toward which Fanon drives and by which he condemns the racist act, his philosophical foundations. Fanon's critique of the racialized perception of individuals is couched within an individualist-existentialist philosophical anthropology that views humans as, ideally, self-creating individuals. As he writes, "There should be no attempt to fixate man, since it is his destiny to be unleashed. The density of history determines none of my acts. *I am my own foundation*."<sup>55</sup> Vis-a-vis this ideal that humans are self-deter-

mining and self-creating beings, their "own foundation," the projection of a racist image upon a subject and the binding of individuals to a racial group is a sin against their human potentiality to be a world transcending creative agent.<sup>56</sup> Thus, Fanon's goal of disalienating the black man is precisely aimed at unlocking both whites and blacks from the strictures of historical-racial ideas, allowing each individual to assume "the universalism inherent in the human condition" and take up their calling as free-standing individuals.<sup>57</sup>

This self-creation ideal by which Fanon here criticizes racism tends toward an egregious hyper-individualism. Fanon is certainly aware of the role of others in forming a subject's sense of self, i.e., of intersubjectivity, as without such awareness, the impression of a foreign racialized image on an individual would be near negligible and not require his extirpation.<sup>58</sup> Despite this acknowledgement of intersubjectivity, *Black Skin, White Masks* views the role of others in the formation of a self as almost wholly negative. Since the ultimate goal of the project is individual self-creation, others and the outside world more generally only stand to get in the way of one's becoming their "own foundation."<sup>59</sup> And, even when an other, like Fanon here, comes on the scene to help a subject recover their essential commission, their task is predominantly negative: they are to clear away alien artifices and get out of the way so that the subject

can take up the mantle of self-creation. Thus, though in later works Fanon seeks to develop a conception of intersubjectivity that provides room for a community and others to inform and affect a subject in a healthy way, such space is markedly absent in this landmark analysis. Though this hyper-individualism is by no means philosophically indefensible, it does operate without an eye toward the positive role that others stand to play in the formation of our selfhood.

In light of this weakness, Buberian intersubjectivity — his dialogical philosophy and theory of co-dependent selfhood—provides us with an alternative philosophical foundation by which to criticize racism and towards which to push. Recall that in applying Buber's thought in *Distance and Relation*, we concluded that since self-becoming is dependent on one entering into proper relation with another, and the racist encounter is an affair without such a relation, in such encounters neither party is a self (in the full Buberian sense). And in applying *I and Thou*, the racist act was rendered as an I-It affair in which both parties are manifested as manipulable objects of superficial experience. Both of these indictments of the structure and consequences of racist encounters rest upon Buber's unique philosophical anthropology and human ideal that "all actual life is an encounter" and "whoever lives only with [experiences of objects] is not human."<sup>60</sup> That is, in stark contrast

with Fanon, the racist act is condemned on Buberian grounds because it falls short of the proper form of inter-human relation and not because such inter-human affectation is in principle wrong since interruptive. Put otherwise, where Fanon criticizes racism because it interferes with the human commission to 'create oneself,' Buber criticizes it because it is a perversion of the genuine human contact central to our experience of ourselves.

Therefore, though Buber's work admittedly lacks the explicitness regarding race that a critical race theorist like Fanon has, he stands as an important voice to bring into the conversation chiefly because his ontology of the inter-human offers us an alternative philosophical anthropology by which we can criticize racism and seek a more humane future of relations across difference.<sup>61</sup> Ultimately, despite the fact that Fanon's criticisms are undergirded by a philosophical ideal which drives in a different direction than Buber's, there are points at which it seems that Buberian intersubjectivity provides the path to where Fanon hopes to go, a world in which "both ['black' and 'white' persons] move away from the inhuman voices of their respective ancestors so that a genuine communication can be born."<sup>62</sup>

### III. Conclusion

In part I of this essay, I explicated Buber's theories of

intersubjectivity in *I and Thou* and *Distance and Relation* and applied them to an exemplary racist encounter. From this exercise we worked out the insight that Buber's philosophy of dialogue and co-dependent selfhood renders the racist confrontation a rejection and mutilation of the selfhood of both the addressed and the addressee, removing both from the depths of human life found in encounter. In part II, I defended the legitimacy of applying Buber to the issue of racism by showing the unique philosophical contribution his philosophy of dialogue and theory of co-dependent selfhood stand to offer vis-a-vis the individualistic philosophical anthropology foundational in *Black Skin, White Masks*. That Buber's philosophy can make such a contribution, we must add, should not be surprising given his personal experiences as a Jew living in Germany and Austria through the early-to-mid 20th century.<sup>63</sup> As we know all too well, this historical-social position designated him as a manipulable, racialized object and, I hope to have shown here, his abstract philosophy of intersubjectivity stands as a living indictment of such modes of encounter.<sup>64</sup>

### Notes

1. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, (New York: Random House, 1992 [1952]), 3.
2. Paul Mendes-Flohr, *Martin Buber: A Life of Faith and Dissent*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2019), 50.

3. Martin Buber, "The Social Dimensions of Man: Distance and Relation" in *Martin Buber on Intersubjectivity and Cultural Creativity*, ed. S. N. Eisenstadt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 58.
4. Buber, "Distance and Relation", 58, 66, 64.
5. Buber, "Distance and Relation", 58.
6. Buber, "Distance and Relation", 58, 66, 67.
7. Buber, "Distance and Relation", 66, 67.
8. Buber, "Distance and Relation", 63, 64, 65, 67.
9. Buber, "Distance and Relation", 66.
10. Buber, "Distance and Relation", 67.
11. Buber, "Distance and Relation", 67.
12. Buber, "Distance and Relation", 67.
13. Buber, "Distance and Relation", 67.
14. Buber, "Distance and Relation", 67.
15. Buber, "Distance and Relation", 67.
16. Buber, "Distance and Relation", 66.
17. Buber, "Distance and Relation", 67.
18. Buber, "Distance and Relation", 67.
19. Buber, "Distance and Relation", 63-65, 67.
20. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 3.
21. Buber, "Distance and Relation", 67.
22. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2007 [1952]), 97.
23. Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 53.
24. Buber, *I and Thou*, 53.
25. Buber, *I and Thou*, 55, 59.

26. Buber, I and Thou, 59, 62, 81.
27. Buber, I and Thou, 62.
28. It is worth noting here that this qualification bespeaks the foundational influence of Kantian ethics in the work; Buber, I and Thou, 63, 68, 81.
29. Buber, I and Thou, 59, 81.
30. Buber, I and Thou, 59, 62-63.
31. Buber, I and Thou, 63, 80.
32. Buber, I and Thou, 55.
33. Buber, I and Thou, 63-64, 62, 80.
34. Buber, I and Thou, 80.
35. Buber, I and Thou, 59.
36. Buber, I and Thou, 59.
37. Buber, I and Thou, 59.
38. Buber, I and Thou, 63, 80, 81. This connection between the subject-object relation and the domination of the object, even when human, is also well expressed by Adorno and Horkheimer in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: "Enlightenment stands in the same relationship to things as the dictator to human beings [as a subject to an object]. He knows them to the extent that he can manipulate them... their "in-itself" becomes "for him"" (Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr [California: Stanford University Press, 2002], 6).
39. Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, trans. Laurent Dubois (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017), 18.
40. I am not here comparing the experience of a racialized subject with an enslaved person. Rather, pointing to the common percep-

- tive-ontological structures operating within an oppressor's mind in both cases.
41. Buber, I and Thou, 62.
  42. Buber, I and Thou, 80.
  43. Buber, I and Thou, 56.
  44. Buber, I and Thou, 56.
  45. Buber, I and Thou, 56.
  46. Buber, I and Thou, 62, 83.
  47. Buber, I and Thou, 67.
  48. This claim of the absence of selfhood of both parties must not be confused with the claim that neither are persons. Contrariwise, for all intents and purposes both are and remain moral and legal persons. However, our conclusion is that both are deprived of the fullest manifestation latent in the ontic position of 'person', selfhood. One suspects, however, that the disintegration of selfhood undermines the moral and legal personhood which is its symbolic representative.
  49. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 89. (emphasis mine)
  50. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 90. A common lament against Fanon is his androcentric focus, he is often found writing as if the only note-worthy agents in race relations are men. The exclusion of women from this picture is certainly problematic and consequential. However, it is outside of our scope here to discuss it. Thus, for our purposes, we will read his descriptions and prescriptions for "man" as denoting "humanity".
  51. James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*, (New York: Dell Publishing, 1969 [1964]), 37.
  52. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, xii, xiii, xiv.

53. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 89.
54. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 91, 92.
55. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 205.
56. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 119.
57. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, xiii-xiv, 201.
58. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, xiv.
59. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 205.
60. Buber, *I and Thou*, 62, 85.
61. Paul Mendes-Flohr, *Martin Buber: A Life of Faith and Dissent*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2019), 50.
62. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 206.
63. See Mendes-Flohr's *Martin Buber* for an outstanding English bibliography.
64. For example: living in a Vienna whose mayor's platform rested on anti-semitism. Steven Beller, *Antisemitism: A Very Short Introduction*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 68; George Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism*, (New York: Howard Fertig, 1978), 141.

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