

## Stripping Away the Masks of Identity: Adorno and Fanon's Negative Dialectics

Sid Simpson (Wooster) and Ryan Curnow (Wooster)

"I am not a prisoner of History. I should not seek there for the meaning of my destiny. I should constantly remind myself that the real leap consists in introducing invention into existence. In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself."

- Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

"Although [the magician's] task was impersonation he did not claim to be made in the image of the invisible power, as does civilized man, whose modest hunting ground then shrinks to the unified cosmos, in which nothing exists but prey. Only when made in such an image does man attain the identity of the self which cannot be lost in identification with the other but takes possession of itself once and for all as an impenetrable mask."

- Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

"Concepts are no longer measured against their contents, but instead are taken in isolation, so that people take up attitudes toward them without bothering to inquire further into the truth context of what they refer to."

- Theodor W. Adorno, *Lectures on Negative Dialectics*

"The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man. From one day to the next, the Blacks have had to deal with two systems of reference. Their metaphysics... were abolished because they were in contradiction with a new civilization that imposed its own."

- Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

"When the doors are barricaded, it is doubly important that thought not be interrupted. It is rather the task of thought to analyse the reasons behind this situation and to draw the consequences from these reasons. It is the responsibility of thought not to accept the situation as finite. If there is any chance of changing the situation, it is only through undiminished insight. The leap into praxis will not cure thought from resignation as long as it is paid for with the secret knowledge that this course is simply not the right one."

- Theodor Adorno, "Resignation"

"Violence is a cleansing force. It rids the colonized of their inferiority complex, of their passive and despairing attitude. It emboldens them, and restores their self-confidence."

- Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

"Critique is essential to democracy. Not only does democracy require the freedom to criticize and need critical impulses. Democracy is nothing less than defined by critique."

- Theodor Adorno, "Critique"

"But by common consent, after an exchange of views, it would be decided that the *Voice* had in fact spoken of these events... A real task of reconstruction would begin. Everyone would participate, and the real battles of yesterday and the day before would be re-fought in accordance with the deep aspirations and unshakable faith of the group. The listener would compensate for the fragmentary nature of the news by an autonomous creation of information."

- Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*