

Introduction to Cultural Studies
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Lecture - 15
Fanon – Black Skin, White Masks (Part - III)

Hello and welcome to this Introduction to Cultural Studies NPTEL Course where we are reading Frantz Fanon. We have already started with Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*. We talked about the introduction in the last couple of lectures, Sardar's introduction and Bhabha's introduction. So what we will do today, we will dive right into the text.

So we have in front of us on your screen, the first chapter of this particular book entitled *The Negro and Language* where he talks about the discursive significance of language, the political significance of language and more importantly the relationship between language and agency in colonial conditions. So to what extent does language offer agency, to what extent is language invested in the entire politics of agency an embodiment in the colonial condition where obviously identities are unequal, identities are highly localized and identities are sort of played out across different political and racial parameters.

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I ascribe a basic importance to the phenomenon of language. That is why I find it necessary to begin with this subject, which should provide us with one of the elements in the colored man's comprehension of the dimension of *the other*. For it is implicit that to speak is to exist absolutely for the other.

The black man has two dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with the white man. A Negro behaves differently with a white man and with another Negro. That this self-division is a direct result of colonialist subjugation is beyond question. . . . No one would dream of doubting that its major artery is fed from the heart of those various theories that have tried to prove that the Negro is a stage in the slow evolution of monkey into man.

As Fanon says and this is on your screen, I ascribe the basic importance to the phenomenon of language. That is why I find it necessary to begin with this subject which should provide us with

one of the elements in the colored man's comprehension of the dimensions of the other. For it is implicit that he speaks, that to speak is to exist absolutely for the other. The black man has 2 dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with this white man.

A Negro behaves differently with a white man and with another Negro. That this self-division is a direct result of colonialist subjugation is beyond question. No one would now one would dream of doubting that its major artery is fed from the heart of those various theories that have tried to prove that the Negro is a stage in the slow evolution of monkey into man. So at the very outset we have the tone on this particular book.

It is a provocative tone, it is a very angry tone. It is a tone which does not want to sort of conceal his resentment. So Fanon obviously uses his very resentful rhetoric in terms of looking at how colonial politics plays out and relationship between language and agency sort of is dramatized in a colonial scene, in a colonial agony if you will. So at the very outset also the phenomenon of language and then he talks about how the behavior of the black man changes depending on his location. The location of culture becomes important.

So when he is in a company of other black man and he is in the company of the white man the language changes, embodiment changes and this change of embodiment, this change of language this change of behavior is obviously a result of violence and violence stems from a systematic subjugation which happened during colonialism during the time of colonial control.

The subjugation of identities and violence epistemic violence on identities epistemic violence on ethnicities on racial locations and racial knowledge etc. So we talked about how we read Bhabha for instance. We saw how knowledge can be extremely racialized, knowledge can be bipolarized and that obviously has a major replication psychologically speaking on the behavior of the black man.

And you know just to reiterate what we have and what we said, Fanon is important for us today because he is one of the first philosophers really who looks at the collusion between medicine and race and how this racialization of medicine or the medicalization of race whichever way you

look at it was a very hand instrument, a very important instrument in colonial control and that obviously had its replications in the way the black man spoke to the other black man and to the white men, okay.

And the last bit of this highlighted section is obviously very provocative where he says that his entire idea of the subjugation of black men, the inferiority, the supposed inferiority of the black men you know comes from the you know the entire politics of theories which you know which included the theory that the black man and the Negro is a stage in the slow evolution of monkey to man.

So you know classifying the Negro as a half human being as a half man and someone who is more sort of approximating humanity and someone who is closer really you know to the monkey is obviously one of the dominant theories of racism especially the way it highlight imperialism. And that was obviously part of the plan in terms of you know theorizing the inferiority of the black man which is a very handy theorization in colonial conditions.

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To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization. Since the situation is not one-way only, the statement of it should reflect the fact. Here the reader is asked to concede certain points that, however unacceptable they may seem in the beginning, will find the measure of their validity in the facts.

The problem that we confront in this chapter is this: The Negro of the Antilles will be proportionately whiter—that is, he will come closer to being a real human being—in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language. I am not unaware that this is

So and then Fanon talks about the politics of speaking you know so to what extent is speaking of a political activity especially in a colonial condition when different languages are in contact with each other. So you have this idea of hegemonic and dominant language which obviously more often than not belongs to the colonizer the colonial master if you will and we have the other

language which belongs to the natives which gets more and more violated, which gets more and more you know delegitimized in terms of its proximity to knowledge.

So the language of power, the language of knowledge, the language of politics becomes by default the white man's language and then Fanon says over here in the highlighted section, to speak means to be in a position to use certain syntax to grasp the morphology of this or that language but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization. So every language comes at a weight of civilization.

Every language comes with a certain culture and obviously I just saw as we see already having so looking at this particular text which we are covering in this course that culture is a very loaded term. Culture includes material apparatus. Culture includes things like economy, finance etc. but also includes abstract apparatus which are obviously in collusion with the material apparatus. So to speak is to assume a certain culture, to appropriate a certain culture, right.

So the language in which you are speaking, the language which you are using to communicate yourself that becomes very important marker of your identity, marker of your embodiment, of your race of your privilege etc. So and then he comes to this point where he says, the Negro of the Antilles will be proportionately whiter that is he will come closer to being a real human being in direct relation to his mastery of the French language.

So we come to this very provocative section where Fanon actually says there is a linear direct correlation between your mastery, your skill with the colonizers language and your you know you being considered as a human being. So a direct relationship is established over here by Fanon between language and agencies.

So you become more agentic in the colonial condition depending on your mastery of the English language or the French language in this particular case because you are talking about the French-Algerian condition, the colonial condition of course. So it is directly proportion to his mastery of the French language. So you know the more you master the French language the closer you get in terms of looking at you know how you embody yourself.

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Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. In the French colonial army, and particularly in the Senegalese regiments, the black officers serve first of all as interpreters. They are used to convey the master's orders to their fellows, and they too enjoy a certain position of honor.

And so obviously related to his idea of language, related to the idea of embodiment is the innate idea of inferiority, the supposed idea of inferiority and again we battle the same question of looking at psychology and politics, psychology and political identities because you know this idea of inferiority is obviously a construct, is obviously a very useful and successful construct which was created by series of material and abstract apparatus during colonialism including language including knowledge, including law, including medicine etc.

And we just saw how you know and Fanon would give more examples for how medicine was very conveniently used to racialize knowledge, to talk about racial divisions, racial hierarchies in terms of you know conferring the superiority to certain races and subjugating certain other races as inferior etc.

And then he goes on to say in this highlighted section over here that, every colonized people, in other words every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation. That is with the culture of the mother country the colonized is elevated to do above this jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards.

So the more you appropriate the more you approximate the cultural standards of the colonized, colonizing country which is the mother country, the culture or the cultural parameters of that country become the gold standard really that you aspire to appropriate and the more you appropriate that the more successful you are in terms of appropriating that the better you are as a human being. The the more holistic human being you are then you find yourself elevated, you find yourself liberated.

So there is a liberation quotient there, there is an agency quotient there, there is a privilege quotient there which are all allied to this idea of appropriating culture. The mother country's culture you know and we are elevated from the jungle. So the word jungle over here is important because the black man and the black man society is described very conveniently as a jungle, as a as a space where civilization does not exist because we are obviously looking at civilization from very Eurocentric perspective which becomes a universal perspective by default, right.

So he becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness. So you know we are looking at blackness and whiteness not just as racism, not just as skin color we just mentioned epidermalization yesterday in the last lecture where we saw how the idea of the skin color becomes discursive category, right. So blackness or whiteness become discursive categories over here in a very interesting way.

So blackness is obviously related to inferiority, related to lack of civilization, related to anarchy, related to savagery and everything that comes with that kind of assumption whereas whiteness over here is just the opposite, it is an ontological opposite. It is civilization, it is order, it is logic, it is something which is you know which is worth aspiring for, which is privilege etc. So the black man's whiteness depends on the extent to which the black man approximates the white man's culture, the white man's language.

So we are talking about a very performative approximation over here, a very performative appropriation over here which is something that happens a lot in colonial conditions. So in a French colonial army and particularly in the Senegalese regiments, Senegalese regiment sorry,

the black officers serve first of all as interpreters. They are used to convey the master's orders to their fellows and they do enjoy certain position of honor.

So he talks about the subcategories inside space of this army, the military for instance which is supposedly a mixed kind of people where people from all kinds of backgrounds come. Now he says in a French colonial army the Senegalese people who know French they have positional agency because they are then used by the French officers to be the sort of interpreters between them and the people who do not know French.

Something similar happened in Indian context if you remember the very famous Macaulay's Minute on Education which is published or which is first presented in British Parliament in February 1835 which had this proposal or which create this you know men who were go between you know in between who would service go between us and the natives which we you know whom we desire to control.

So in other words we create certain creed of people who are Indians in race Indians in plot, Indians in color, but British in temperament and something similar is happening over here in a more micro category. We have a Senegalese army, French Senegalese army obviously French being the colonizing nation over here and in the army the Senegalese people who know French who happen to know French they are the ones who enjoy certain degree of privilege.

Because they are used conveniently by the French officers and they are given certain honors certain privileges in return of being in the practice you know between them and the other people who do not know French, okay.

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On the basis of other studies and my own personal observations, I want to try to show why the Negro adopts such a position, peculiar to him, with respect to European languages. Let me point out once more that the conclusions I have reached pertain to the French Antilles; at the same time, I am not unaware that the same behavior patterns obtain in every race that has been subjected to colonization.

So, so we are looking at the relationship between language and culture, language and agency over here and it is a very important relationship because you know indirectly whether it is the embodiment (()) (12:13) identity. So what kind of identity are we talking about over here? What kind of idea of embodiment are we talking about over here? So embodiment over here is the way in which it is obviously a very psychological phenomenon, embodiment.

It is a it is something to do with the body, it is something to do with the nerves, your muscles, your arteries, etc. But also it is quite discursive in quality. It is how you navigate your self with the environment around you and environment over here being the colonial condition, it is but obviously that embodiment which include will include and will be invested with the with your mastery of language, with your control of language with the way you maneuver with language in a colonial condition.

So you know and then Fanon goes on to say, on the basis of certain studies and my own personal observations, I want to try to show why the Negro adopts such a position, peculiar to him, with respect to the European languages. Let me point out that once more that the conclusions I have reached pertain to the French Antilles. At the same time, I am not unaware that the same behavior pattern obtain in every race, patterns obtained in every race that has been subjected to colonization.

So Fanon over here makes a claim that he is talking about obviously the French Antilles condition but he is quite confident that you know this kind of a condition this kind of a sense of inferiority which is projected which is injected Antilles population with obviously a strategic motive, a discursive motive, a political motive is something which is true for every race who has been that has suffered colonialism or colonization by another race, okay.

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I have known—and unfortunately I still know—people born in Dahomey or the Congo who pretend to be natives of the Antilles; I have known, and I still know, Antilles Negroes who are annoyed when they are suspected of being Senegalese. This is because the Antilles Negro is more “civilized” than the African, that is, he is closer to the white man; and this difference prevails not only in back streets and on boulevards but also in public service and the army. Any Antilles Negro who performed his military service

And then he goes on to say, I have known and unfortunately I still know people born in Dahomey or the Congo who pretend to be natives of the Antilles. I have known and I still know, Antilles Negroes who are annoyed when they were suspected of being Senegalese and this is because the Antille Negro, Antilles Negro is more civilized than the African that is he is closer to the white man.

And this difference prevails not only in black streets, in Boulevards but also in the public service and the army. So this idea of being close to the colonizer, this idea of having some kind of a discursive proximity to the colonizer with the use of language through the use of language because you know you have the mastery of the language so you know language becomes the instrument which makes you know closer which gets you closer, which gets you certain agentic status.

And it becomes very important in a colonial condition because that is why the Antilles Negro, the Antilles black man is Fanon describes them this thing to have a certain privilege section inside that you know entire demography of the colonized people, okay. So even inside the colonized people there is this hierarchisation that happens because depending on the proximity to the master narrative, the language of the colonizer, okay.

So again we are back to this idea of privilege of agency, of identity and how everything comes together in terms of elevating yourself from your supposed inferiority. So again inferiority over here becomes an ideology you know. It becomes a projected ideology which is used confidently to consolidate the superiority of the white man of the colonizer, okay.

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Dr. H. L. Gordon, attending physician at the Mathari Mental Hospital in Nairobi, declared in an article in *The East African Medical Journal* (1943): "A highly technical skilled examination of a series of 100 brains of normal Natives has found naked eye and microscopic facts indicative of inherent new brain inferiority. . . . Quantitatively," he added, "the inferiority amounts to 14.8 percent."⁹

It has been said that the Negro is the link between monkey and man—meaning, of course, white man. And only on page 108 of his book does Sir Alan Burns come to the conclusion that "we are unable to accept as scientifically proved the theory that the black man is inherently inferior to the white, or that he comes from a different stock. . . ." Let me add that it would be easy to prove th

And now Fanon would go on to say and go on to give a series of examples of people who have published medical articles, medical journals, you know medical text which corroborate really this supposed inferiority of the African you know where the people actually say that the Africans suffer from inferiority or inferiority complex and dependency complex. They have some kind of a need for you know a master. Someone who would come and rescue them etc.

But obviously we know that this is a very strategic kind of a discursive formation using medicine, drawing on medicine, using a medical vocabulary with the purpose of legitimizing colonialism, legitimizing racism or racialization of you know knowledge, racialization of

difference, etc. So if you can medicalize it, if you can use the medical metaphor, if you can get published in a medical journal you obviously empirically prove it through a “scientific method”. So science, medicine, medical knowledge all become very discursive in colonial conditions.

And Fanon is one of the first people one of the first thinkers who actually dramatize this discursivity of medicine, discursivity of knowledge. So he is a really profound and important philosopher for his day, okay. So he mentions someone called Dr. H.L. Gordon who attending physician at the Mathari Mental Hospital in Nairobi to declare an article entitled the East African Medical Journal in 1943.

A highly technical and skilled examination of a series of 100 brains of normal natives has found naked eye and microscopic facts indicative of inherent new brain inferiority. Quantitatively he added the inferiority amounts to 14.8 percent. So this is really outrageously racist but obviously you know it is racist today because we know this is perhaps bogus knowledge etc. But mind you this was used as a very handy, convenient and respectable knowledge in 1943 when this was originally published in this particular journal where someone is actually quantifying the inferiority of the African.

You can see the extent to which this collusion between medicine and racism happens over here. So this quantifiability of inferiority becomes to Fanon in itself a discursive you know a tradition where he can actually quantify he can put a number to the inferiority, he can put an index to the inferiority of the African. So you know this is actually a published article in 1943 which says that inferiority complex amounts to 14.8 percentage, right.

So this is really how racism was medicalized and legitimized through the use of medical vocabulary. And the Fanon comes back and says again, it has been said that the Negro is the link between monkey and man meaning of course white man. So you know man over here is the white man, man over here is the desirable man, the desirable humanity which obviously is localized entirely in the white man.

Because the white man obviously becomes the symbol the titan really of civilization, of order, of logic, of rationality, of everything as lofty in humanity. So the white man becomes by default the aspired figure, the figure the signifier the people aspire for and on page on your page 108 of his book this Alan Burns come to the conclusion that and I quote Fanon quotes over here we are unable to accept as scientifically proved the theory that the black man is inherently inferior to the white or that he comes from a different stock.

So this is the book that is referred to is alluded to over here, a book by Sir Alan Burns and only in page 108, it takes 107 pages to come to the conclusion that there is actually no scientific evidence which proves once and for all that inferiority of the black man or you know the black man comes from a different stock from the white man. So again we are looking at how racism was legitimized using medicine and how there were sophisticated publications which were used in order to corroborate really, consolidate and corroborate the discursive formation of the black man.

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

When it comes to the case of the Negro, nothing of the kind. He has no culture, no civilization, no "long historical past."

The black man as inferior, the black man as the inferior by default as someone who does not deserve civilization, as someone who needs to be civilized, as someone who needs to be rescued from his anarchy, from his wildness, from his savagery etc. Now next Fanon moves on to a very interesting example of how language or your skill of language becomes you know it can be racialized as well.

Because your inability to speak a certain language can obviously come does definitely come from the ignorance of the language. Now Fanon look at how this ignorance is racialized. So he talks about how if a German or Russian cannot speak French then obviously that is a different kind of issue as different from the way black man cannot speak French because we assume that the German and Russian has a language.

They have a language. They have their own respective languages and you know it is difficult for them to come out of the language and speak French but the assumption that comes to the African or the black man is that the black man has no language at all. So the black man does not speak French. That means black man actually does not have a language or cannot speak human language, right.

So again the ignorance over here the ignorance of particular languages immediately racialized in this kind of a racist rhetoric that Fanon critiques and imperialism and racism and the collusion between racism and you know colonialism and he actually says over here it is on your screen, I meet a Russian or a German who speaks French badly with gestures I try to give him information that he requests so you know Fanon says so Fanon speaks French and he meets the Russian or a German who cannot speak French at all you know very badly if any at all.

And so Fanon would have to give information using gestures using body language but at the same time I can hardly forget that he has a language of his own, a country, and that perhaps he is a lawyer or an engineer there. So not being able to speak French does not automatically make you agencyless does not automatically make you identity less. You still retain your identity as the Russian or a German or an Englishman or a Scottish or an Irish whatever.

And you cannot speak French at the same time we are respectable citizen in your own country. You can be an engineer, a doctor, someone who has a decent job someone who has looked up to you socially speaking with social status. In any case he is foreign to my group and his standards must be different. So the question of relativity comes in you know very conveniently when he comes to another white man who come and speak French.

So if a German cannot speak French the automatic assumption is that the German does not know French but he has a culture he has his own language. Is just a question of not being able to acclimatize to the French language. However, (()) (21:48) at all there is no question of assuming language at all if a black man cannot speak French. If a black man cannot speak French that means the black man cannot speak his own really human or not really civilized as a person.

So when it comes to the case of the Negro nothing of the kind. He has no culture, no civilization, no historical past.

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Willy-nilly, the Negro has to wear the livery that the white man has sewed for him. Look at children's picture magazines: Out of every Negro mouth comes the ritual "Yassuh, boss." It is even more remarkable in motion pictures. Most of the American films for which French dialogue is dubbed in offer the type-Negro: "Sho' good!"

So the point is, this is what we call in colonial studies and postcolonial studies as erasure. So erasure is an act of brachiating any kind of civilization, any kind of culture which existed before colonialism. So you know by saying that and the black man does not have any language or black man does not have any culture or any civilization you are essentially enacting an erasure, right in a systematic erasure.

So you are doing away all kinds of knowledge which may have existed before this the colonial people came in, before the white man came in right. So Willy-nilly this is page 22 on your screen, Willy-nilly, the Negro has to wear the livery that the white man has sewed for him. Look

at the children's picture magazines. Out of every Negro mouth comes the ritual "Yassuh, boss." And it is even more remarkable that in motion pictures.

Most of the American films for which the French language is dubbed in offer the type-Negro "Sho good!" So you know the Negro in popular culture, the representation of Negro in popular culture is always you know depicted as someone speaking in very poor language you know half chopped language someone who does not have any sophistication of expression, cannot master the European language.

Either speaks pidgin, either speaks some kind of a broken English or broken French and that is something which is circulated and consumed across media in films, in popular magazines etc., right. So this is the image of the white man as orchestrated for the Negro, for the black man and again we are back to Sir Edward Said's way of looking at Orientalism and the way the projection is happening over here, inferiority is projected on to the black man and it becomes a very convenient projection the case that determines or over determines to a great extent the identity of the black man.

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Yes, the black man is supposed to be a good nigger; once this has been laid down, the rest follows of itself. To make him talk pidgin is to fasten him to the effigy of him, to snare him, to imprison him, the eternal victim of an essence, of an *appearance* for which he is not responsible. And naturally, just as a Jew who spends money without thinking about it is suspect, a black man who quotes Montesquieu had better be watched. Please understand

So the black man is imprisoned in his inferiority which is actually a construct, a fantasy of the of the European of the white man. So this idea of fantasy and imprisonment and inferiority all come together in Fanon's study over here when he examines the colonial condition in Algeria. So and

he goes on to say and you know he will now compare very interestingly anti-Semitism and racism, right.

He talks about the racism directed against the black man and the anti-Semitism directed against the Jew and how both create and construct pseudotypes using certain kind of linguistic strategies, certain kind of racial strategy, certain kind of you know epidermal strategy in the case of the black man is more explicit because the black man is black and so there is an immediate epidermalization that happens which leads on to racism and the next natural step is racism etc.

And then he goes on to say, yes the black man is supposed to be a good nigger. Once this has been laid down the rest follows of itself. To make him talk pidgin is to fasten him to the effigy of him, to snare him, to imprison him, the eternal victim of an essence, of an appearance for which he is not responsible. So the whole idea of making the black man speak in pidgin French broken French is to imprison him anxiety of inferiority that a black man cannot speak in sophisticated language.

So you know to make a mummification of him, to mummify him, to completely reify him to commodity him in his inferiority you know he becomes an eternal victim of an essence, a stereotype. He becomes victim of a stereotype, a permanent victim of an appearance for which he is not responsible. So again he becomes more of a mimetic image, more of a mimetic signifier rather than a real human being who is complex, who is ambivalence.

So black man becomes just a shallow mimetic signifier in appearance for which he is not responsible. It is conferred to him, it is projected on to him and he has to enact it by default and that is how he is represented in popular cultures now. And naturally just as the Jew who spends money without thinking about it is suspect, a black man who quotes Montesquieu had better be watched.

So again this very racist stereotype of the Jew as being miserly, the Jew as being someone who is very very stingy with money, someone who does not spend at all, someone who hoards money, as someone who basically steals other people's money and makes an empire out of it which was a

rhetoric used against the Jews by the Germans by the Nazi party really during Second World War. They had essentially stolen all the German money by sort of pilfering it with their really dark businesses, with their really doggy businesses.

So the Jew is never known to spend any money. The Jew is always known to hoard money, right. So a Jew who spends money without thinking is automatically suspicious because that sort of goes against stereotype of the Jew. So naturally and similarly the black man who quotes Montesquieu had better be watched. So you know if the black man is philosophizing something, is quoting something elegantly that is something that needs to be watched out.

Needs to be sort of you know guarded yourself against. That is not natural that is not the stereotypical representation of the black man at all. So that is something which goes against the grain.

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What I am asserting is that the European has a fixed concept of the Negro, and there is nothing more exasperating than to be asked: "How long have you been in France? You speak French so well."

It can be argued that people say this because many Negroes speak pidgin. But that would be too easy. You are on a train and you ask another passenger: "I beg your pardon, sir, would you mind telling me where the dining-car is?"

"Sure, fella. You go out door, see, go corridor, you go straight, go one car, go two car, go three car, you there."

And then he goes on to say, what I am asserting is that the European has a fixed concept of the Negro. So again the battles Bhabha's idea of fixity right so it is fixated and at the same this fixity needs to be replicated over and over again at infinitum and therein lies the ambivalence. So it is fixated as permanent, you cannot change it, the inferiority of the Negro. But at the same time that inferiority needs to be replayed over and over again across the media, across the skills, across languages etc. just to hum along the point, just to make it more and more permanent.

So therein lies the ambivalence of representation. So what I am asserting is that the European has a fixed concept of the Negro and there is nothing more exasperating than to be asked, how long have you been in France? You speak French so well. So you know this is obviously an example of covert racism. So there are different kinds of racism. There is overt racism where someone is attacked racially in a very direct explicit manner.

There is also covert racism where racism operates the most surreptitious, the most sophisticated kind of race where you ask the black person, how come you speak French so well and how long have you been in France? So the automatic assumption is that the black man should not be able to speak French well you know the black man should just speak in broken French, just speak in pidgin French because sophisticated French is beyond they can beyond the realm of the black man's abilities, his neurotic abilities, his motor abilities because of his supposed inferiority.

And you know and he goes on to say it does become sort of darkly humorous and he gives an example over here. You are on a train and you ask another passenger, I beg your pardon sir, would you mind telling me where the dining-car is? Suppose you are the black man travelling in a train and he ask a fellow passenger I beg your pardon sir, would you mind telling me where the dining-car is.

And look at the response that Fanon gives over here which is what the response that he gets as a black man travelling across France and this response is something along these lines. Sure fella. You go out door, see, go corridor, you go straight, go one car, go two car, go three car, you there. So the automatic assumption is the black man would not understand sophisticated French, would not understand you know polite French.

So the obvious thing to do is to reply to him in a way which is broken, which is more befitting of the linguistic abilities of the black man. So this presupposition is obviously racial, is obviously part of this racist rhetoric that the black man is inferior knowledge wise, linguistically the black man cannot (()) (29:19) language, cannot maneuver language. So you better speak to him in a way which is understandable, broken, slur and you know unmetaphoric, unfigurative right.

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No, speaking pidgin-nigger closes off the black man; it perpetuates a state of conflict in which the white man injects the black with extremely dangerous foreign bodies. Nothing is more astonishing than to hear a black man express himself properly, for then in truth he is putting on the white world. I have had occasion to talk with students of foreign origin. They speak French badly: Little Crusoe, alias Prospero, is at ease then. He explains, informs, interprets, helps them with their studies. But with a Negro he is completely baffled; the Negro has made himself just as knowledgeable. With him this game cannot be played, he is a complete replica of the white man. So there is nothing to do but to give in.¹¹

After all that has just been said, it will be understood that the

So and Fanon goes on to say, No speaking pidgin-nigger closes off the black man, right. So it perpetuates a state of conflict in which the white man injects the black with extremely dangerous foreign bodies. So again he is using medical metaphors over here and this is very interesting. It is almost like an injection which pathologises the black man, an injection of foreign bodies into the body of the black man; the sense of inferiority, the sense of linguistic inability, the sense of linguistic inadequacy etc.

So nothing is more astonishing that to hear a black man express himself properly for then in truth he is putting on the white world. So the black man express himself properly then obviously he is becoming white, he has not become black man anymore because the black man by default cannot should not express himself properly or elegantly. Elegance is in a domain of the white man, the whiteness and elegance are equated over here in a very unproblematic kind of a way.

I have had occasion to talk to students of foreign origin. They speak French badly. Little Crusoe, alias Prospero is at ease then. So he uses the metaphor of Crusoe and Prospero, two archetypal figures in white English literature of colonizers who come and control and “rescue” the original natives, give them language, give them knowledge etc. So Crusoe and Prospero over here become metaphors of the archetypal white colonizer who comes and territorializes the non-white space.

Who comes and you know enacts epistemic violence on the non-white space you know gives violence in terms of language that confers language, imposes language, imposes civilization, imposes culture etc. Now those Crusoes and Prosperos they are metaphors used by Fanon over here by the way. Those Crusoes and Prosperos are at ease completely where the black men speak badly because you know they are meant to speak badly because that is how you know black men are supposed to represent themselves, because the white man has given them the language.

So obviously language is something that they have got from the white man. So they cannot possibly speak a language or speak in a language which is as elegant as the white man. So the black men can only speak in very stuttered, a very pidgin kind of a language; pidgin French or pidgin English. So as long as they speak in that kind of a language, broken, stuttered, fragmented, grammatically incorrect etc. the Crusoes and Prosperos are completely at ease okay.

He explains, interprets, informs, helps them with their studies. So he becomes a benevolent colonizer. He is unthreatened and hence benevolence comes. So benevolence comes from not being threatened. So he is like completely at ease and the black men speaks like the black men should you know fragmented, broken etc. So the white man out of kindness out of racialized kindness, the superiority, this knowledge of superiority helps the black man.

But with the Negro he is completely baffled. The Negro has made himself just as knowledgeable. With him the game cannot be played. He is a complete replica of the white man. So there is nothing to do but to give in. So when he comes to foreign students, when he comes to other European students the French and the French white man is completely at ease when he speak bad French. They are absolute at ease as well when the black man speaks bad French.

However, when the black man speaks perfect French, when the black man speaks French which is elegant and polite and sophisticated then the problem comes. Then there is nothing to be done because it totally goes against the grain, totally goes against the stereotype of the black man which is obviously a construct of the white man's fantasy. So we just conclude this lecture today.

But I think we are getting into this, the heart of the matter over here is that how language is obviously agentic, how language is discursive in quality, how language comes with presuppositions of privilege, how language comes with performances of privilege and how language comes with performances in racism really and all these presuppositions of language is heavily racialized, is something which Fanon examines throughout this particular book and we will continue with that study in the next lectures. Thank you for your attention.