Feature Article: Theory and Practice

# Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the 'Politics of Recognition' in Canada

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Over the last 30 years, the self-determination efforts and objectives of Indigenous peoples in Canada have increasingly been cast in the language of 'recognition' — recognition of cultural distinctiveness, recognition of an inherent right to self-government, recognition of state treaty obligations, and so on. In addition, the last 15 years have witnessed a proliferation of theoretical work aimed at fleshing out the ethical, legal and political significance of these types of claims. Subsequently, 'recognition' has now come to occupy a central place in our efforts to comprehend what is at stake in contestations over identity and difference in colonial contexts more generally. In this paper, I employ Frantz Fanon's critique of Hegel's master–slave dialectic to challenge the now hegemonic assumption that the structure of domination that frames Indigenous–state relations in Canada can be undermined via a liberal politics of recognition. Against this assumption, I argue that instead of ushering in an era of peaceful coexistence grounded on the Hegelian ideal of *reciprocity*, the contemporary politics of recognition promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonial power that Indigenous demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend.
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## Introduction[1]

Over the last 30 years, the self-determination efforts and objectives of Indigenous peoples[2] in Canada have increasingly been cast in the language of 'recognition'. Consider, for example, the formative declaration issued by my community, the Dene Nation, in 1975:

> We the Dene of the NWT [Northwest Territories] insist on the right to be regarded by ourselves and the world as a nation.
> Our struggle is for the *recognition* of the Dene Nation by the Government and people of Canada and the peoples and governments of the world […] (Dene Nation, 1977, 3–4, emphasis added).

Now fast-forward to the 2005 policy position on self-determination issued by Canada's largest Aboriginal organization, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). According to the AFN, 'a consensus has emerged […] around a vision of the relationship between First Nations and Canada which would lead to strengthening recognition and implementation of First Nations' governments' (p. 18). This 'vision', the AFN goes on to state, expands on the core principles outlined in the 1996 *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP): that is, recognition of the nation-to-nation relationship between First Nations and the Crown; recognition of the equal right of First Nations to self-determination; recognition of the Crown's fiduciary obligation to protect Aboriginal treaty rights; recognition of First Nations' inherent right to self-government; and recognition of the right of First Nations to economically benefit from the use of their lands and resources (AFN, 2005, 18–19). When considered from the vantage point of these perspectives, it would appear that recognition has emerged as the hegemonic expression of self-determination within the Indigenous rights movement in Canada.

The increase in recognition demands made by Indigenous and other marginalized minorities over the last three decades has prompted a surge of intellectual production which has sought to unpack the ethical, political and legal significance of these types of claims. Influenced by Charles Taylor's catalytic 1992 essay, 'The Politics of Recognition' (1994), much of this literature has tended to focus on the relationship between the affirmative recognition of societal cultural differences on the one hand, and the freedom and well-being of marginalized individuals and groups living in ethnically diverse states on the other. In Canada, it has been argued that this synthesis of theory and practice has forced the state to re-conceptualize the tenets of its relationship with Aboriginal peoples (Cairns, 2000, 2005), whereas prior to 1969 federal Indian policy was unapologetically assimilationist, now it is couched in the vernacular of 'mutual recognition' (RCAP, 1996; also see Tully, 1995, 2000; Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1997, 2005).

In this essay, I challenge the idea that the colonial relationship[3] between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state can be significantly transformed via a politics of recognition. Following Richard Day (2000, 2001), I take 'politics of recognition' to refer to the now expansive range of recognition-based models of liberal pluralism that seek to reconcile Indigenous claims to nationhood with Crown sovereignty via the accommodation of Indigenous identities in some form of renewed relationship with the Canadian state. Although these models tend to vary in both theory and practice, most involve the delegation of land, capital and political power from the state to Indigenous communities through land claims, economic development initiatives, and self-government processes. Against this position, I argue that instead of ushering in an era of peaceful

coexistence grounded on the Hegelian ideal of *reciprocity*, the politics of recognition in its contemporary form promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonial power that Indigenous peoples' demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend.

More specifically, through a sustained engagement with the work of anti-colonial theorist and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon, I hope to show that the reproduction of a colonial structure of dominance like Canada's rests on its ability to entice Indigenous peoples to come to *identify*, either implicitly or explicitly, with the profoundly *asymmetrical* and *non-reciprocal* forms of recognition either imposed on or granted to them by the colonial-state and society. Fanon first developed this insight in his 1952 text, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), where he persuasively challenged the applicability of Hegel's dialectic of recognition (1977) to colonial and racialized settings. Against Hegel's abstraction, Fanon argued that, in *actual* contexts of domination (such as colonialism) not only are the terms of recognition usually determined by and in the interests of the master (the colonizer), but also over time slave populations (the colonized) tend to develop what he called 'psycho-affective' (2005, 148) attachments to these master-sanctioned forms of recognition, and that this attachment is essential in maintaining the economic and political structure of master/slave (colonizer/colonized) relations themselves. By the end of this essay it should be clear that the contemporary politics of recognition is ill-equipped to deal with the interrelated structural and psycho-affective dimensions of imperial power that Fanon implicated in the preservation of colonial hierarchies.

This essay is organized into three parts. In the first part, I outline some of the underlying assumptions that inform the politics of recognition from Hegel's master–slave to the work of Charles Taylor. In the second part, I apply the insights of Fanon's critique of Hegel's dialectic of recognition to highlight a number of problems that appear to plague Taylor's politics of recognition when applied to colonial contexts. Although I tend to focus most of my attention on Taylor's work in this respect, it should be clear that the conclusions reached throughout this paper are by no means limited to his work alone. In the third part, I hope to show that the processes of colonial subjection identified in the previous sections, although formidable, are not total. Indeed, as Robert Young (2001) has recently argued, Fanon himself spent much of his career as a psychiatrist investigating 'the inner effects of colonialism' in order to establish 'a means through which they could be resisted, turning the inculcation of inferiority into self-empowerment' (p. 275). Thus, with the intention of closing on a more uplifting note, part three will briefly explore how the self-affirmative logic underlying Fanon's writings on anti-colonial agency and empowerment prefigure a means of evading the politics of recognition's tendency to produce Indigenous subjects of empire.

## Recognition from Hegel's Master–Slave to Charles Taylor's 'Politics of Recognition'

At its base, Hegel's master/slave narrative can be read in at least two ways that continue to inform contemporary recognition-based theories of liberal pluralism. On the first reading, Hegel's dialectic outlines a theory of identity-formation that cuts against the classical liberal view of the subject insofar as it situates social relations at the fore of human subjectivity. On this account, relations of recognition are deemed 'constitutive of subjectivity: one becomes an individual subject only in virtue of recognizing, and being recognized by another subject' (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, 11). This insight into the intersubjective nature of identity-formation underlies Hegel's often quoted assertion that, 'Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged' (1977, 178).

On the second reading, the dialectic moves beyond highlighting the relational nature of human subjectivity to elucidate what Hegel sees as the intersubjective conditions required for the *realization of human freedom*. From this perspective, the master/slave narrative can be read as a normative story in that it suggests that the realization of oneself as an essential, self-determining agent requires that one not only be recognized as self-determining, but that one be recognized by another self-consciousness that is also recognized as self-determining. It is through these reciprocal processes and exchanges of recognition that the condition of possibility for freedom emerges (Pippin, 2000, 156). Hence, Hegel's repeated insistence that relations of recognition be *mutual*. This point is driven home in the latter half of the Hegel's section on 'Lordship and Bondage', when he discusses the ironic fate of the master in a context of asymmetrical recognition. After the 'life-and-death struggle' between the two self-consciousnesses temporarily cashes-out in the hierarchical master–slave relationship, Hegel goes onto depict a surprising turn of events in which the *master's* desire for recognition as an essential 'being-for-itself' is thwarted by the fact that he or she is only recognized by the unessential and dependent consciousness of the slave (1977, 191–192) — and, of course, recognition by a slave hardly constitutes recognition at all. In this 'onesided and unequal' (Hegel, 1977, 191) relationship the master fails to gain certainty of 'being-for-self as the truth of himself [or herself]. On the contrary, his [or her] truth is in reality the unessential consciousness and its unessential action' (Hegel, 1977, 192). Meanwhile, as the master continues to wallow in a lethargic state of increased dependency, the slave, through his or her transformative labor, 'becomes conscious of what he [or she] truly is' and '*qua* worker' comes 'to realize 'his [or her] own independence' (Hegel, 1977, 195). Thus, in the end, the truth of independent consciousness and one's status as a self-determining

actor is realized more through the praxis of the slave — through his or her transformative work in and on the world. However, here it is important to note that for Hegel, 'the revolution of the slave is not simply to replace the master while maintaining the unequal hierarchal recognition' (Williams, 2001, 167). This, of course, would only temporarily invert the relation, and the slave would eventually meet the same fate as the master. Rather, as Robert Williams reminds us, Hegel's project was to move '*beyond* the patterns of domination [and] inequality' (2001, 167) that typify asymmetrical relations of recognition as such. It is also on this point that many contemporary theorists of recognition remain committed.

Patchen Markell (2003) has recently suggested that one of the most significant differences between recognition in Hegel's master/slave and the 'politics of recognition' today is that state institutions tend to play a fundamental role in mediating relations of recognition in the latter, but not the former (pp. 25–32). For example, regarding policies aimed at preserving cultural diversity, Markell writes: 'far from being simple face-to-face encounters between subjects, *à la* Hegel's stylized story in the *Phenomenology*', multiculturalism tends to 'involve large-scale exchanges of recognition in which states typically play a crucial role' (p. 25). Charles Taylor's 'The Politics of Recognition' (1994) provides a case in point. There Taylor draws on the insights of Hegel, among others, to mount a sustained critique of what he claims to be the increasingly 'impracticable' (1994, 61) nature of 'difference-blind' (1994, 40) liberalism when applied to culturally diverse polities such as the United States and Canada. Alternatively, Taylor defends a variant of liberal thought which posits that, under certain circumstances, diverse states can indeed recognize and accommodate a range of group-specific claims without having to abandon their commitment to a core set of fundamental rights (1994, 61). Furthermore, these types of claims can be defended on liberal grounds because it is within and against the horizon of one's cultural community that individuals come to develop their identities, and thus the capacity to make sense of their lives and life choices (1994, 32–33). In short, our identities provide the 'background against which our tastes and desires and opinions and aspirations make sense' (1994, 33–34). Without this orienting framework, we would be unable to derive meaning from our lives — we would not know 'who we are' or 'where [we are] coming from' (1994, 33). We would be 'at sea', as Taylor puts it elsewhere (1989, 27).

Thus, much like Hegel before him, Taylor argues that human actors do not develop their identities in 'isolation', rather they are 'formed' through 'dialogue with others, in agreement or struggle with their recognition of us' (1991, 45–46). However, given that our identities are formed through these relations, it follows that they can also be significantly *de*formed when these processes run

awry. This is what Taylor means when he asserts that identities are shaped not only by recognition, but also its *absence*:

> often by the *mis*recognition of others. A person or a group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning one in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being (1994, 25).

This idea that asymmetrical relations of recognition can impede human freedom and flourishing by 'imprisoning' someone in a distorted relation-to-self is asserted repeatedly in Taylor's essay. For instance, we are frequently told that disparaging forms of recognition can inflict 'wounds' on their 'victims', 'saddling [them] with a crippling self-hatred' (1994, 26); or that withholding recognition can 'inflict damage' on 'those who are denied it' (1994, 36). And given that misrecognition has the capacity to 'harm' others in this manner, it follows, according to Taylor, that it be considered 'a form of oppression' (1994, 36) on par with 'injustices' such as 'inequality' and 'exploitation' (1994, 64). In Taylor, recognition is elevated to the status of a 'vital human need' (1994, 26).

At this point the practical implications of Taylor's theory begin to reveal themselves. In his more prescriptive moments, Taylor suggests that, in Canada, both the Quebecois and Indigenous peoples exemplify the types of threatened minorities that ought to be considered eligible for some form of recognition capable of accommodating their cultural distinctiveness. For Indigenous peoples specifically, this might require the delegation of political and cultural 'autonomy' to Native groups through the institutions of 'self-government' (1994, 40; 1993, 148, 180). Elsewhere, Taylor suggests that this could mean 'in practice allowing for a new form of jurisdiction in Canada, perhaps weaker than the provinces, but, unlike municipalities' (1993, 180). Accommodating the claims of First Nations in this way would ideally allow Native communities to 'preserve their cultural integrity' (1994, 40), and thus help stave-off the psychological disorientation and resultant unfreedom associated with exposure to structured patterns of mis- or nonrecognition. In this way, the institutionalization of a liberal regime of reciprocal recognition would better enable Indigenous peoples' to realize their status as distinct and self-determining actors.

While it is true that the normative dimension of Taylor's project represents a marked improvement over Canada's 'past tactics of exclusion, genocide, and assimilation' (Day and Sadik, 2002, 6), in the following section I argue that the logic undergirding this dimension — where 'recognition' is conceived as something that is ultimately 'granted' (Taylor, 1993, 148) or 'accorded' (Taylor, 1994, 41) to a subaltern group or entity by a dominant group or entity

— prefigures its failure to significantly modify, let alone transcend, the breadth of power at play in colonial relationships. I also hope to show that Fanon, whose work Taylor relies on to delineate the relationship between misrecognition and the forms of unfreedom and subjection discussed above, anticipated this failure over 50 years ago.

## Frantz Fanon and the Problem of Recognition in Colonial Contexts

In the second half of 'The Politics of Recognition', Taylor identifies Fanon's classic 1961 treatise on decolonization, *The Wretched of the Earth* (2005), as one of the first texts to elicit the role that misrecognition plays in propping up relations of domination (Taylor, 1994, 65–66). By extension Fanon's analysis in *The Wretched* is also used to support one the central political arguments undergirding Taylor's analysis, namely, his call for the cultural recognition of sub-state groups that have suffered at the hands of a hegemonic political power. Although Taylor acknowledges that Fanon advocated 'violent' struggle as the primary means of overcoming the 'psycho-existential' (Fanon, 1967, 12) complexes instilled in colonial subjects by misrecognition, he nonetheless insists that Fanon's argument is applicable to contemporary debates surrounding the 'politics of difference' more generally (Taylor, 1985, 235, 1994, 65–66). Below I want to challenge Taylor's use of Fanon in this context: not by disputing Taylor's assertion that Fanon's work constitutes an important theorization of the ways in which the subjectivities of the oppressed can be deformed by mis- or nonrecognition, but rather by contesting his assumption that a more accommodating, liberal regime of mutual recognition might be capable of addressing the types of relations typical of those between Indigenous peoples and settler-states. Presciently, Fanon posed a similar challenge in his earlier work, *Black Skin, White Masks* (*BSWM*).

Fanon's concern with the relationship between human freedom and equality in relations of recognition represents a central and reoccurring theme in *BSWM*.[4] As mentioned at the outset of this essay, it was there that Fanon convincingly argued that the long-term stability of a colonial system of governance relies as much on the 'internalization' of the forms of racist recognition imposed or bestowed on the Indigenous population by the colonial state and society as it does on brute force. In this sense, the longevity of a colonial social formation depends, to a significant degree, on its capacity to transform the colonized population into *subjects* of imperial rule. Here Fanon anticipates the well-known work of Louis Althusser (1994), who would later argue that the reproduction of capitalist relations of production rests on the 'recognition function' of ideology, namely, the ability of a state's 'ideological apparatus' to 'interpellate' individuals as subjects of class rule. For Fanon,

colonialism operates in a similarly dual-structured manner: it includes 'not only the interrelations of *objective* historical conditions but also human *attitudes* to these conditions' (1967, 84, emphasis added). Fanon argued that it was the interplay between the structural/objective and recognitive/subjective realms of colonialism that ensured its hegemony over time.

On the subjective front, *BSWM* painstakingly outlines the myriad ways in which those 'attitudes' conducive to colonial rule are cultivated among the colonized through the unequal exchange of institutionalized and interpersonal patterns of recognition between the colonial society and the Indigenous population. In effect, Fanon revealed how, over time, colonized populations tend to internalize the derogatory images imposed on them by their colonial 'masters', and how as a result of this process, these images, along with the structural relations with which they are entwined, come to be recognized (or at least endured) as more or less natural. This last point is made agonizingly clear in arguably the most famous passage from *BSWM*, where Fanon shares an alienating encounter on the streets of Paris with a little white girl. 'Look, a Negro!', Fanon recalled the girl saying, 'Moma, see the Negro! I'm frightened! frightened!' (1967, 111–112). At that moment the imposition of the child's racist gaze 'sealed' Fanon into a 'crushing objecthood' (1967, 109), fixing him like 'a chemical solution is fixed by a dye' (1967, 109). He found himself temporarily *accepting* that he was indeed the subject of the girl's call: 'It was true, it amused me', thought Fanon (1967, 111). But then 'I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects' (1967, 112). Far from assuring Fanon's humanity, the other's recognition imprisoned him in an externally determined and devalued conception of himself. Instead of being acknowledged as a 'man among men', he was reduced to 'an object [among] other objects' (1967, 109).

Left as is, Fanon's insights into the ultimately subjectifying nature of colonial recognition appear to square nicely with Taylor's work. For example, although Fanon never uses the term himself, he seems to be mapping the debilitating effects associated with *mis*recognition in the sense that Taylor uses the term. In fact, *BSWM* is littered with passages that illustrate the innumerable ways in which the imposition of the settler's gaze can inflict damage on the Indigenous society at both the individual and collective levels. Even with this being the case, however, I believe that a close reading of *BSWM* renders problematic Taylor's approach in several interrelated and crucial respects.

The first problem has to do with its failure to adequately confront the dual structure of colonialism itself. Fanon insisted, for example, that a colonial configuration of power could be transformed only if attacked at both levels of operation: the objective and the subjective (1967, 11–12). This point is made at

the outset of *BSWM* and reverberates throughout all of Fanon's work. As indicated in his introduction, although a significant amount of *BSWM* would highlight and explore the 'psychological' terrain of colonialism, this would not be done in a manner decoupled from a structural/material analysis of colonial power. Indeed, Fanon claimed that there 'will be an authentic disalienation' of the colonized subject 'only to the degree to which things, in the most materialistic meaning of the word, [are] restored to their proper places' (1967, 11–12). Hence, the term 'sociodiagnostic' for Fanon's project: 'if there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process […] primarily economic; [and] subsequently the internalization […] of his [or her] inferiority' (1967, 11). Fanon correctly situated colonial-capitalist exploitation and domination alongside misrecognition and alienation as foundational sources of colonial injustice. 'The Negro problem', wrote Fanon, 'does not resolve itself into the problem of Negroes living among white men [sic] but rather of Negroes being exploited, enslaved, despised by a colonialist, capitalist society that is only accidentally white' (1967, 202).

Fanon was enough of a Marxist to understand the role that the capitalist economy plays in overdetermining hierarchical relations of recognition. However, he was also much more perceptive than many Marxists in his insistence that the subjective realm of colonialism be the target of strategic transformation along with the socio-economic structure. The colonized person 'must wage war on both levels', insisted Fanon. 'Since historically they influence each other, any unilateral liberation is incomplete, and the gravest mistake would be to believe in their automatic interdependence' (1967, 11). For Fanon, attacking colonial power on one front, in other words, would not guarantee the subversion of its effects on the other. 'This is why a Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched when it comes to addressing the colonial issue', Fanon would later write in *The Wretched* (2005, 5). Here I would argue that Fanon's 'stretching' of the Marxist paradigm constitutes one of the most innovative contributions to classical Marxist debates on ideology. In Fanon's work, not only is the relationship between base and superstructure posited as both interdependent and semi-autonomous, but more significantly, those axes of domination historically relegated in Marxism to the superstructural realm — such as racism and the effects it has on those subject to it — are attributed a substantive capacity to structure the character of social relations.

Lately a number of scholars have taken aim at the contribution of recognition theorists like Taylor on analogous grounds: that their work offers little insight into how to address the more overtly structural and/or economic features of social oppression (Rorty, 1998, 2000; Bannerji, 2001; Day, 2001; Day and Sadik, 2002; Barry, 2002; Fraser and Honneth, 2003). We have also been told that this lack of insight has contributed to a shift in the terrain of

contemporary political thought and practice more generally — from 'redistribution to recognition', to use Nancy Fraser's formulation (Fraser and Honneth, 2003). According to Fraser, whereas proponents of redistribution tend to highlight and confront injustices in the economic sphere, advocates of the newer 'politics of recognition' tend to focus on and attack injustices in the cultural realm (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, 13). On the redistribution front, proposed remedies for injustice range between 'affirmative' strategies, like the administration of welfare, and more 'transformative' methods, like the transformation of the capitalist mode of production itself. In contrast, strategies aimed at injustices associated with misrecognition tend to focus on 'cultural and symbolic change' (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, 12–13). Again, this could involve 'affirmative' approaches, such as the recognition and reaffirmation of previously disparaged identities, or these strategies could adopt a more 'transformative' form, such as the 'deconstruction' of dominant 'patterns of representation' in ways that would 'change everyone's social identities' (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, 12–13).

I think that Fanon's work, which anticipates the recognition/redistribution debate by half a century, highlights several key shortcomings in the approaches of both Taylor and Fraser. Taylor's approach is insufficient insofar as it tends to, at best, address the political economy of colonialism in a strictly 'affirmative' manner: through reformist state redistribution schemes like granting certain cultural rights and concessions to Aboriginal communities via self-government and land claims processes. Although this approach may alter the intensity of some of the effects of colonial-capitalist exploitation and domination, it does little to address their generative structures, in this case a racially stratified capitalist economy and the colonial state. When his work is at its weakest, however, Taylor tends to focus on the recognition end of the spectrum too much, and as a result leaves uninterrogated deeply rooted economic structures of oppression. Richard Day has succinctly framed the problem this way: 'although Taylor's recognition model allows for diversity of culture within a particular state by admitting the possibility of multiple national identifications', it is less 'permissive with regard to polity and economy […] in assuming that any subaltern group that is granted [recognition] will thereby acquire a *subordinate* articulation with a *capitalist state*' (2001, 189). Seen from this angle, Taylor's theory leaves one of the two operative levels of colonial power identified by Fanon untouched.

This line of criticism is well worn and can be traced back to at least the work of early Marx. As such, I doubt that many would be surprised that Taylor's variant of liberalism *as liberalism* fails to confront the structural/economic aspects of colonialism at its generative roots. To my mind, however, this shortcoming in Taylor's approach is particularly surprising given the fact that, although many Indigenous leaders and communities today tend to

instrumentally couch their claims in reformist terms, this has not always the case: indeed, historically, Indigenous demands for *cultural recognition* have often been expressed in ways that have explicitly called into question the dominating nature of capitalist social relations and the state-form (Adams, 1975, 1999; Watkins, 1977; Marule, 1984). And the same can be said of a growing number of today's most prominent Indigenous scholars and activists (Maracle, 1996; Alfred, 1999, 2005; Smith, 2005). Mohawk political scientist Taiaiake Alfred, for example, has repeatedly argued that the goal of any traditionally rooted self-determination struggle ought to be to protect that which constitutes the 'heart and sole of [I]ndigenous nations: a set of values that challenge the homogenizing force of Western liberalism and free-market capitalism; that honor the autonomy of individual conscience, non-coercive authority, and the deep interconnection between human beings and other elements of creation' (1999, 60). For Alfred, this vision is not only embodied in the practical philosophies and ethical systems of many of North America's Indigenous societies, but also flows from a 'realization that capitalist economics and liberal delusions of progress' have historically served as the 'engines of colonial aggression and injustice' itself (2005, 133). My point here is that an approach that is explicitly oriented around dialogue and listening ought to be more sensitive to the claims and challenges emanating from these dissenting Indigenous voices.

However, if Taylor's account pays insufficient attention to the clearly structural/economic realm of domination, then Fraser's does so from the opposite angle. In order to avoid what she sees as the pitfalls associated with the politics of recognition's latent essentialism and displacement of questions of distributive justice, Fraser proposes a means of integrating struggles for recognition with those of redistribution without subordinating one to the other. To this end, Fraser suggests that instead of understanding recognition to be the revaluation of cultural or group-specific identity, and misrecognition as the disparagement of such identity and its consequent effects on the subjectivities of minorities, recognition and misrecognition should be conceived of in terms of the 'institutionalized patterns of value' that affect one's ability to participate *as a peer* in social life (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, 29). 'To view recognition' in this manner, writes Fraser, 'is to treat it as an issue of *social status*' (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, 29).

Although Fraser's status model allows her to curtail some of the problems she attributes to identity politics, it does so at the expense of addressing one of the most pertinent features of injustices related to mis- or nonrecognition. My concern is this: if many of today's most volatile political conflicts *do* include subjective/psychological dimensions to them in the way that Fraser admits (and Taylor and Fanon describe), then I fear her approach, which attempts to eschew a direct engagement with this aspect of social oppression, risks leaving

an important contributing dynamic to identity-related forms of domination unchecked. By avoiding this 'psychologizing' tendency within the politics of recognition, Fraser claims to have located what is wrong with misrecognition in 'social relations' and not 'individual or interpersonal psychology' (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, 31). This is preferable, we are told, because when misrecognition 'is identified with internal distortions in the structure of the consciousness of the oppressed, it is but a short step to blaming the victim' (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, 31). However, if I understand Fanon correctly, this does not have to be the case. Fanon was unambiguous with respect to locating the cause of the 'inferiority complex' of colonized subjects in the colonial social structure (1967, 11). The problem, however, is that any psychological problems that ensue, although socially constituted, can take on a life of their own, and thus need to be dealt with independently and in accordance with their own specific logics. As mentioned previously, Fanon was insistent that a change in the social structure would not guarantee a change in the subjectivities of the oppressed. Stated simply, if Fanon's insight into the interdependent yet semi-autonomous nature of the two facets of colonial power is correct, then dumping all our efforts into alleviating the institutional/structural impediments to participatory parity (whether redistributive or recognitive) may not do anything to undercut the debilitating forms of unfreedom related to misrecognition in the traditional sense.

This brings us to the second key problem with Taylor's theory when applied to colonial contexts. I have already suggested that Taylor's liberal-recognition approach is incapable of curbing the damages wrought within and against Indigenous communities by the structures of state and capital, but what about his theory of recognition? Does it suffer the same fate *vis-à-vis* the forms of power that it seeks to undercut? As noted in the previous section, underlying Taylor's theory is the assumption that the flourishing of Indigenous peoples as distinct and self-determining entities is dependent on their being afforded cultural recognition and institutional accommodation by the surrounding state. What makes this approach both so intriguing and so problematic, however, is that Fanon, who Taylor uses to make his case, argued against a similar presumption in the penultimate chapter of *BSWM*. Moreover, like Taylor, Fanon did so with reference to Hegel's master/slave parable. There Fanon argued that the dialectical progression to reciprocity in relations of recognition is frequently undermined in the colonial setting by the fact that, unlike the subjugated slave in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, many colonized societies no longer have to *struggle* for their freedom and independence. It is often negotiated, achieved through constitutional amendment, or simply 'declared' by the settler-state and bestowed upon the Indigenous population in the form of political rights. Whatever the method, in these circumstances the colonized, 'steeped in the inessentiality of servitude' are '*set free by [the] master*' (Fanon,

1967, 219, emphasis added). 'One day the White Master, *without conflict*, recognize[s] the Negro slave' (Fanon, 1967, 217). As such they do not have to lay down their life to *prove* their 'certainty of being' in the way that Hegel (1977, 113–114) insisted. The 'upheaval' of formal freedom and independence thus reaches the colonized 'from without'.

> The black man [sic] [is] acted upon. Values that [are] not […] created by his actions, values that [are] not […] born of the systolic tide of his blood, [dance] in a hued whirl around him. The upheaval [does] not make a difference in the Negro. He [goes] from one way of life to another, but not from one life to another (Fanon, 1967, 220).

There are a number of important issues underlying Fanon's concern here. The first involves the relationship that he draws between struggle and the disalienation of the colonized subject. Simply stated, for Fanon it is through struggle and conflict (and for the later Fanon, *violent* struggle and conflict) that imperial subjects come to rid of the 'arsenal of complexes' driven into the core of their being through the colonial process (1967, 18). I will have more to say about this aspect of Fanon's thought below, but for now I simply want to flag the fact that struggle — or, as I will argue later, *transformative praxis* — serves as the mediating force through which the colonized come to shed their colonial identities, thus restoring them to their 'proper place' (1967, 12). In contexts where recognition is conferred without struggle or conflict, this fundamental self-transformation — or as Lou Turner has put it, this 'inner differentiation' at the level of the colonized's being (1996, 146) — cannot occur, thus foreclosing the realization of authentic freedom. Hence, Fanon's claim that the colonized simply go from 'one way of life to another, but not from one life to another'; the structure of domination changes, but the subjectivity of the colonized remains the same — they become 'emancipated slaves' (Turner, 1996, 146).

The second important point to note is that when Fanon speaks of a lack of struggle in the decolonization movements of his day, he does not mean to suggest that the colonized in these contexts simply remained passive recipients of colonial practices. He readily admits, for example, that 'from time to time' the colonized may indeed fight 'for Liberty and Justice' (1967, 221). However, when this fight is carried out in a manner that does not pose a foundational challenge to the background structures of colonial power as such — which, for Fanon, will always invoke struggle and conflict — then the best the colonized can hope for is 'white liberty and white justice; that is, values secreted by [their] masters' (1967, 221). Without conflict and struggle the terms of recognition tend to remain in the possession of those in power to bestow on their 'inferiors' in ways that they deem appropriate (Oliver, 2001). Note the double level of subjection here: without transformative struggle constituting an integral aspect

of decolonization the Indigenous population will not only remain subjects of imperial rule insofar as they have not gone through a process of purging the psycho-existential complexes battered into them over the course of the colonial experience — a process of strategic *desubjectification* — but they will also remain so in that the Indigenous society will tend to come to see the forms of structurally limited and constrained recognition conferred to them by their colonial 'masters' *as their own*. In effect, they will begin to *identify* with 'white liberty and white justice' (Fanon, 1967, 221). As Fanon would later phrase it in *The Wretched*, these values eventually 'seep' into the colonized and subtly structure and limit the realm of possibility of their freedom (Fanon, 2005, 9). Either way, for Fanon, the colonized will have failed to reestablish themselves as truly self-determining: that is, as the creators of the terms and values by which they are to be recognized (1967, 220–222).

This leads nicely to my third and final problem with Taylor's politics of recognition. This time the concern revolves around a misguided sociological assumption that undergirds Taylor's appropriation of Hegel's notion of mutual recognition. As noted in the previous section, at the heart of Hegel's master/ slave dialectic is the idea that both parties engaged in the struggle for recognition are dependent on the other's acknowledgment for their freedom and self-worth. Moreover, Hegel asserts that this dependency is even more crucial for the master in the relationship, for unlike the slave he or she is unable to achieve independence and objective self-certainty through the object of his or her own labor. Mutual dependency thus appears to be the background condition that ensures the dialectic progress towards reciprocity. This is why Taylor claims, with reference to Hegel, that 'the struggle for recognition can only find *one satisfactory solution, and that is a regime of reciprocal recognition among equals*' (1994, 50, emphasis added). However, as Fanon's work reminds us, the problem with this formulation is that when applied to actual struggles for recognition between hegemonic and subaltern communities the mutual character of dependency rarely exists. This observation is made in a lengthily footnote on page 220 of *BSWM* where Fanon claims to have shown how the colonial master 'basically differs' from the master depicted in Hegel's *Phenomenology*. 'For Hegel there is reciprocity', but in the colonies 'the master laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is '*not recognition but work*' (1967, 220). To my mind this is one of the most crucial passages in *BSWM* for it outlines in precise terms what is wrong with the recognition paradigm when abstracted from the face-to-face encounter in Hegel's dialectic and applied to the colonial environment. Although the issue here is an obvious one, it has nonetheless been critically overlooked in the contemporary recognition literature: in relations of domination that exist between nation-states and the sub-state national groups that they 'incorporate' (Kymlicka, 1995, 1998, 2001) into their territorial and jurisdictional

boundaries, there is no mutual dependency in terms of a need or desire for recognition. In these contexts, the 'master' — that is, the colonial state and state society — does not require recognition from the previously self-determining communities upon which its territorial, economic, and social infrastructure is constituted. What it needs is land, labor and resources (Gordon, 2006). Thus, rather than leading to a condition of reciprocity the dialectic either breaks down with the explicit *non*-recognition of the equal status of the colonized population, or with the strategic 'domestication' of the terms of recognition in such a way that the foundation of the colonial relationship remains relatively undisturbed (Schulte-Tenckhoff, 1998).

Anyone familiar with the power dynamics that structure the Aboriginal rights movement in Canada should immediately see the applicability of Fanon's insights here. Indeed, one need not expend much effort to elicit the countless ways in which the liberal discourse of recognition has been limited and constrained by the state, the courts, corporate interests, and policy makers so as to help preserve the colonial *status quo*. With respect to the law, for example, over the last 30 years the Supreme Court of Canada has consistently refused to recognize Aboriginal peoples' equal and self-determining status based on its adherence to legal precedent founded on the white supremacist myth that Indigenous societies were too primitive to bear political rights when they first encountered European powers (Asch, 1999; Macklem, 2001; Tully, 2001). Thus, even though the Court has secured an unprecedented degree of protection for certain 'cultural' practices within the state, it has nonetheless repeatedly refused to challenge the racist origin of Canada's assumed sovereign authority over Indigenous peoples and their territories.

The political and economic ramifications of the Court's actions have been clear-cut. In *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*, it was declared that any residual Aboriginal rights that may have survived the unilateral assertion of Crown sovereignty could be infringed upon by the federal and provincial governments so long as this action could be shown to further 'a compelling and substantial legislative objective' that is 'consistent with the special fiduciary relationship between the Crown and the [A]boriginal peoples' (quoted in Tully, 2000, 413). What 'substantial objectives' might justify infringement? According to the Court, virtually any exploitative economic venture, including 'the development of agriculture, forestry, mining, and hydroelectric power, the general economic development of the interior of British Columbia, protection of the environment or endangered species and the building of infrastructure and the settlement of foreign populations to support those aims' (Tully, 2000, 413). So today it appears, much as it did in Fanon's day, that colonial powers will only recognize the collective rights and identities of Indigenous peoples insofar as this recognition does not throw into question the background legal, political and economic framework of the colonial relationship itself (Povinelli, 2002).

But the above examples confirm only one aspect of Fanon's insight into the problem of recognition in colonial contexts: namely, the limitations that this approach runs up against when pitted against these overtly structural expressions of domination. Can the same be said about the subjective or psycho-affective features of colonial power?

With respect to the forms of racist recognition driven into the psyches of Indigenous peoples through the institutions of the state, church, schools, media, and by intolerant individuals within the dominant society, the answer is clearly yes. Countless studies, novels, and autobiographical narratives have outlined, in painful detail, how these expressions have saddled individuals with low self-esteem, depression, alcohol and drug abuse, and violent behaviors directed both inward against the self and outwards toward others (Duran and Duran, 1995).

However, similarly convincing arguments have been made concerning the limited forms of recognition and accommodation offered to Indigenous communities through the law, self-government packages, land claims, and economic development initiatives. The recent work of Isabel Altamirano-Jimenez (2004), Taiaiake Alfred (2005), and Paul Nadasdy (2005), for example, have all demonstrated the ways in which the state institutional and discursive fields within and against which Indigenous demands for recognition are made and adjudicated can subtly shape the subjectivities and worldviews of the Indigenous claimants involved. The problem here, of course, is that these fields are by no means neutral: they are profoundly hierarchical and power-laden, and as such have the ability to asymmetrically mold and govern how Indigenous subjects think and act not only in relation to the topic at hand (the recognition claim), but also to themselves and to others. This is what I take Alfred (2005) to mean when he suggests, echoing Fanon, that the dominance of the legal approach to self-determination has, over time, helped produce of a class of Aboriginal 'citizens' whose rights and identities have become defined solely in relation to the colonial state and its legal apparatus. Similarly, strategies that have sought self-determination via mainstream economic development have facilitated the creation of a new elite of Aboriginal capitalists whose thirst for profit has come to outweigh their ancestral obligations to the land and to others. And land claims processes, which are couched almost exclusively in the language of property (Nadasdy, 2005), are now threatening to produce a new breed of Aboriginal property owner, whose territories, and thus whose very identities, risk becoming subject to expropriation and alienation. Whatever the method, for Alfred, all of these approaches, even when carried out by sincere and well-intentioned individuals, threaten to erode the most traditionally egalitarian aspects of Indigenous ethical systems, ways of life, and forms of social organization.

## Self-Recognition and Anti-Colonial Empowerment

The argument that I have sketched to this point is bleak in its implications. Indeed, left as is, it would appear that recognition inevitably leads to subjection, and as such much of what Indigenous peoples' have sought over the last 30 years to secure their freedom has in practice cunningly assured its opposite. In this sense, my line of argument appears to adhere to an outdated conception of power, one in which postcolonial critics, often reacting against the likes of Fanon and others, have worked so diligently to refute. The implication of this view is that Indigenous subjects are *always* being interpellated by recognition, being constructed by colonial discourse, or being assimilated by imperial power structures (Ashcroft, 2001, 35). As a result, resistance to this totalizing power is often seen as an inherently reactionary, zero-sum project. To the degree that Fanon can be said to have been implicated in espousing such a totalizing view of colonial power, it has been suggested that he was unable to escape the Manichean logic so essential in propping up relations of colonial domination to begin with (Scott, 1999, 2004; Ashcroft, 2001).

At this point I want to rescue Fanon, a least partially, from the charge that he advocated such a devastating view of power. However, in order to assess the degree to which Fanon anticipates and accounts for this general line of criticism, we must unpack his theory of anti-colonial agency and empowerment.

As argued throughout the preceding pages, Fanon did not attribute much emancipatory potential to Hegel's politics of recognition when applied to the colonial arena. Yet this is not to say that he rejected the recognition paradigm entirely. As we have seen, like Hegel and Taylor, Fanon ascribed to the notion that relations of recognition are constitutive of subjectivity and that, when unequal, they can foreclose the realization of human freedom. On the latter point, however, he was deeply skeptical as to whether the mutuality that Hegel envisioned was achievable in the conditions indicative of contemporary colonialism. But if Fanon did not see freedom as naturally emanating from the slave being granted recognition from his or her master, where, if at all, did it originate?

In effect, Fanon claimed that the road to self-determination instead lay in a quasi-Nietzschean form of personal and collective *self*-affirmation (1967, 222). Rather than remaining dependent on their oppressors for their freedom and self-worth, Fanon argued that the colonized must struggle to critically reclaim and revaluate the worth of *their own* histories, traditions, and cultures against the subjectifying gaze and assimilative lure of colonial recognition. According to Fanon, this self-initiated process is what 'triggers a change of fundamental importance in the colonized's psycho-affective equilibrium' (2005, 148). For

Fanon, the colonized must initiate the process of decolonization by recognizing *themselves* as free, dignified and distinct contributors to humanity (1967, 222). Interestingly, Fanon equated this self-affirmative process with the praxis of the slave in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, which he saw as illustrating the necessity on the part of the oppressed to 'turn away' from their master-dependency, and to instead struggle for freedom on their own terms and in accordance with their own values (1967, 221). This is also why Fanon, although critical of the latent essentialism undergirding the work of the négritude poets, nonetheless saw their project as necessary (Kruks, 2001, 101). Fanon understood that the individual and collective revaluation of black identity at the heart of projects like the négritude movement served as a source of pride and empowerment, and as such helped jolt the colonized into an 'actional' existence, as opposed to a 'reactional' one characterized by *ressentiment* (1967, 222). As Robert Young has argued, in many cases, it was this process of critical self-affirmation that led to the development of a 'distinctive postcolonial epistemology and ontology' which enabled the colonized to begin to conceive of and construct radical alternatives to the colonial project itself (2001, 275).

I would argue that Fanon's call in *BSWM* for a simultaneous turn inward and away from the master, far from espousing a rigidly binaristic, Manichean view of power relations, instead reflects a profound understanding of the complexity involved in contests over recognition in colonial and racialized environments. Unlike Hegel's life-and-death struggle between two opposing forces, Fanon added a multidimensional racial/cultural aspect to the dialectic, thereby underscoring the multifarious web of recognition relations that are at work in constructing identities and establishing (or undermining) the conditions necessary for human freedom and flourishing. Fanon showed that the power dynamics in which identities are formed and deformed were nothing like the simplistic hegemon/subaltern binary depicted by Hegel. In an anticipatory way, then, Fanon's insight can also be said to challenge the overly negative and all-subjectifying view of interpellation that would plague Althusser's recognitive theory of ideology more than a decade later. For Althusser, the process of interpellation always took the form of 'a fundamental misrecognition' (Larrain, 1996, 48) that served to produce within individuals the 'specific characteristics and desires that commit them to the very actions that are required of them by their [subordinate] class position' (Scott, 2001, 10; also see Hall, 1996). Fanon's innovation was that he showed how similar recognitive processes worked to 'call forth' and empower individuals within communities of resistance (Larrain, 1996, 49).

This is not to say, of course, that Fanon was able to completely escape the 'Manicheism delerium' (1967, 183) that he himself was so astute at diagnosing. Those familiar with the legacy of Fanon's later work, for example, know that the 'actional' existence that he saw self-recognition initiating in *BSWM* would

in *The Wretched* take the form of a direct and violent engagement with the colonial society and its institutional structure. 'At the very moment [the colonized come to] discover their humanity', wrote Fanon, they must 'begin to sharpen their weapons *to secure its victory*' (2005, 8, emphasis added). In Fanon's later work, violence would come to serve as a 'kind of psychotherapy of the oppressed', offering 'a primary form of agency through which the subject moves from non-being to being, from object to subject' (Young, 2001, 295). In this sense, the act of revolutionary violence, rather than the affirmative recognition of the other, offered the most effective means to transform the subjectivities of the colonized, as well as to topple the social structure that produced colonized subjects to begin with. Violence provided 'the means and the end' of decolonization (2005, 44).

## Conclusion

In the end, Fanon appears to have overstated the 'cleansing' (2005, 51) value he attributed to anti-colonial violence. Indeed, one could argue that many Algerians have yet to fully recover from the legacy left from the eight years of carnage and brutality that constituted Algeria's war of independence with France. Nor was the Front de Libération Nationale's (FLN) revolutionary seizure of the Algerian state apparatus enough the stave-off what Fanon would call 'the curse of [national] independence' (2005, 54): namely, the subjection of the newly 'liberated' people and territories to the tyranny of the market and a post-independence class of bourgeois national elites. But if Fanon was ultimately mistaken regarding violence being the 'perfect mediation' (2005, 44) through which the colonized come to liberate themselves from both the structural and psycho-affective features of colonial domination that he identified so masterfully, then what is the relevance of his work here and now? To quote Homi Bhabha, is Fanon's contribution to anti-colonial thought and practice 'lost in a time warp' (2005, ix)?

Throughout this paper, I have argued that Fanon's insights into the subjectifying nature of colonial recognition are as applicable today to the liberal 'politics of recognition' as they were when he first formulated his critique of Hegel's master–slave relation. I also hope to have shown that Fanon's dual-structured conception of colonial power still captures the subtle (and not so subtle) ways in which a system of imperial domination that does not sustain itself exclusively by force is reproduced over time. As Taiaiake Alfred has recently argued, under these 'post-modern' imperial conditions '[o]pression has become increasingly invisible; [it is] no longer constituted in conventional terms of military occupation, onerous taxation burdens, blatant land thefts, etc.' (2005, 58), but rather through a 'fluid confluence of politics,

economics, psychology and culture' (2005, 30). But if the dispersal and effects of colonial and state power are now so diffuse, how is one to transform or resist them? Here I believe that Fanon's earlier work remains key. In that all important footnote in *BSWM* where Fanon claimed to show how the condition of the slave in the *Phenomenology* differed from those in the colonies he suggested that Hegel provided a partial answer: that those struggling against colonialism must 'turn away' from the colonial state and society and find in their own *transformative praxis* the source of their liberation (1967, 221). I think that today this process will and must continue to involve some form of critical individual and collective *self*-recognition on the part of Indigenous societies, not only in an instrumental sense like Fanon seemed to have envisioned it, but with the understanding that our cultures have much to teach the Western world about the establishment of relationships within and between peoples and the natural world that are profoundly non-imperialist. Also, the empowerment that is derived from this critically self-affirmative and self-transformative process of desubjectification must be causiously directed *away* from the assimilative lure of the statist politics of recognition, and instead be fashioned toward our own on-the-ground practices of freedom. As the feminist, anti-racist theorist bell hooks explains, such a project would minimally require that we stop being so preoccupied with looking 'to that Other for recognition'; instead we should be 'recognizing ourselves and [then seeking to] make contact with all who would engage us in a constructive manner' (1990, 22). In Canada, I think that the strategies and tactics adopted by a growing number of today's Indigenous activists — in reserve settings like Grassy Narrows and Six Nations, or in the urban centers of Vancouver, Winnipeg, and Toronto — have begun to explore the emancipatory potential that this type of politics offers; a politics that is less oriented around attaining an affirmative form of recognition from the settler-state and society, and more about critically revaluating, reconstructing and redeploying culture and tradition in ways that seek to prefigure, alongside those with similar ethical commitments, a radical alternative to the structural and psycho-affective facets of colonial domination discussed above (see Alfred *et al.*, 2006).

## Notes

2 In the Canadian context, I use the terms 'Indigenous', 'Aboriginal' and 'Native' interchangeably to refer to the descendants of those who traditionally occupied the territory now known as Canada prior to the arrival of Europeans settlers. I also occasionally use these terms in an international context to refer to those peoples who have suffered under the weight of European colonialism more generally. I use the term 'Indian' and phrase 'First Nation' to refer to those legally recognized as Indians under the Canadian federal government's *Indian Act* of 1876.

3 In the following pages, I use the terms 'colonial' and 'imperial' interchangeably to avoid repetitiveness. However, I do so acknowledging the important distinction that Edward Said (1994), Robert Young (2001), James Tully (2004) and others have drawn between these two interrelated concepts. In their work, a colonial relationship is characterized as a more *direct* form of imperial rule. Imperialism is thus a broader concept, which may include colonialism, but could also be carried out indirectly through non-colonial means. Following this logic, a significant amount of the world's population can now be said to live in post-*colonial* condition despite the persistent operation of *imperialism* as a form of 'political and economic' dominance (Young, 2001, 27). Canada, of course, remains a settler colony in which indirect imperialism has never typified the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the settler-state and society.

4 A number of studies have mapped the similarities and differences between the dialectic of recognition as conceived by Fanon and Hegel, but relatively few have applied Fanon's insights to critique the groundswell appropriation of Hegel's theory of recognition to address contemporary questions surrounding the recognition of cultural diversity. Even fewer have used Fanon's writings to problematize the utility of a politics of recognition for restructuring hierarchical relations between disparate identities in colonial contexts. For a survey of the available literature, see Gendzier (1974), Bulhan (1985), Turner (1996), Hanssen (2000), Kruks (2001), Oliver (2001), Gibson (2002, 2003), Chari (2004) and Schaap (2004).

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