



## MAPPING THE ANATOMY OF OTHERNESS: FROM INTERSUBJECTIVITY TO RACIALIZATION

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### Abstract:

Human reality incorporates an intricate matrix of subjects engaging in horizontal and vertical interactions within a spatio-temporal dimension. These human beings endeavor to assert their prominence in the surrounding world, seeking to achieve a sense of both wholeness and singularity. The Self manifests as an autonomous being determined by its own existence, confirming its presence through its essence. This self-aware entity establishes an existential actuality that reinforces its absolute dominance, negating the subjectivity of the Other. The latter, despite its marginal manifestation, stands as a self-conscious subject that manages to affirm its referentiality. It presents itself as an introspective ego that constitutes its potentiality through its transcendental difference. The Self and the Other, therefore, emerge as existential possibilities of one another, following interchangeable modes of being. This ontological indeterminacy discloses the indefinite nature of human relationality which is conditioned by the dynamics of power. The paper investigates the construction of otherness through several theoretical frameworks, tracing its development across existential philosophy and postcolonial theory. It, specifically, seeks to explore the politics of racialized discourses that define black subjectivity as the subordinate Other within Eurocentric epistemologies. By bringing these multidisciplinary perspectives into dialogue, the study demonstrates that otherness is not an inherently fixed condition but rather a discursively and ideologically produced construct that shapes human identity.

**Keywords:** being-with, intersubjectivity, master-slave dialectics, the look of the other, discourse, race, racialization, eurocentrism

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## 1. Introduction

The Self stands as a human subject that maintains a heightened sense of self-awareness, constructing its own existential potentiality through self-reflection. This self-conscious entity manipulates its surrounding world, peripheralizing other living forms, including the Other. Such a hierarchical configuration renders the Other an objectively present figure stripped of its referentiality, an objectified being disintegrating into a fragmented ego within a Manichean condition. The latter underpins an exclusionary system of categorization that eliminates human diversity, a taxonomic framework of identification that eradicates difference. This existential alienation disrupts the equilibrium of reality, generating an ontological tension between the Self and the Other. These antithetical poles engage in an asymmetrical dialogue governed by processes of power, a violent encounter that enables the Self to assert its singularity. This oneness, nevertheless, unravels within the complexities of the human condition, an indeterminate actuality in which the Self both subjugates the Other and embarks on an outward journey towards otherness. This transcendental passage allows the Self to achieve a state of psycho-physical fulfillment in reference to the Other. The latter, hence, emerges not merely as a passive object but also as an active subject, a fully constituted agent endowed with the same ontological essence as the Self. The paper investigates multiple philosophical paradigms that conceptualize the existential relationship between human subjects, revealing an indefinite state of being that oscillates between the immanence of the Self and the transcendence of the Other. Furthermore, it examines the discursive formations of otherness, offering considerable insights into the racialized construction of the Other. It, differently put, delves into the ideological structures that define racial difference in the light of Eurocentric epistemologies, exploring how white-supremacist discourses produce and normalize an essentialist Manichaeism between the white Self and the black Other.

## 2. The Self and the Other: An Existential Crisis

### 2.1 Being-in and Being-with

The human condition consists of a spatio-temporal structure, a two-dimensional framework which is grounded in the dynamics of time and space. This spatio-temporality establishes the ontological being of the Self. The latter sustains its agency and selfhood in the light of a chronological historicity. It constructs its presence within the dimensions of space and time, standing as a physical entity that manifests as a temporality. This time-conscious human subject partitions reality into differently separate segments, temporal bits that categorize space and location in consideration of a time-based hierarchy. Such temporal classification, as Heidegger demonstrates in *Being and Time*, “serves as a criterion for separating the regions of being” (16). It divides organisms, be they human or non-human, into two antithetical life forms: temporal essences and atemporal entities. The latter simply represent ontological categories, or more precisely, objectively present objects that lack human self-referentiality. These non-temporal beings form an objective presence that fails to incorporate Dasein, the being-in-the-world. They belong to an object-based actuality which is incompatible with the character and essence of human beings. In other words, they appear as objective occurrences, diverging from the being

of the Self. This subject depends on its temporality, existing as a being defined by its own essence. It, accordingly, *"is never to be understood ontologically as a case and instance of a genus of being as objectively present"* (40). It is a temporal entity that constitutes its inner being as its sole possibility of existence. It claims its distinctive existential potentiality, attaching to and detaching from the objecthood of objectified organisms. The Self, in brief, interacts with other objectively present objects in its everydayness while maintaining the capacity to transcend its objective presence. It is a being-in-its-own-being consciousness, a human subject that appears as both a who and a what, but *"not a thing like substantial beings"* (44).

The human subject, in its being-in-the-world, is more precisely conceptualized as Dasein, a subjectively present organism that inwardly constructs its own essence. It is *"a being which I myself am, its being is in each case mine"* (Heidegger 108). This mineness, or rather ownness, annihilates the existential ambivalence that surrounds the human condition, eliminating the threads of uncertainty that besiege the being of the Self. The latter, therefore, manages to sustain and confirm its ontological subjectivity, transcending the ambiguous complexities of the objective presence. It manages to fabricate its internal entity through its oneness, configuring and manipulating its self-consciousness as well as its surrounding world. It emerges as an absolute being, a 'who' that *"is answered in terms of the I itself, the subject, the self"* (108). This Self, in its self-awareness and autonomy, engages in a constant encounter with the external world, interacting with several objectified organisms, or more accurately, objectively present objects that sustain a non-human mode of being. These dependent entities incorporate not only substantial objects but also human subjects, including the Other. The latter happens to be a Dasein, a self that is meant to maintain its individual temporality and self-affinity, structuring its surrounding environment as its subjective presence. It is an agent marked by its I-hood, an ego that shares the same nature and essence with the Self. This I-but-not-I Other develops into a human subject with a defined mode of being, a Dasein sustaining its subjective being and reconfiguring its physical appearance in the objective world that shelters the Other-Self. The latter enters into exterior dialogues with other selves, or Daseins, who reveal themselves as Others. These Others manage to rearrange their surrounding world, reconstructing their own existential presence in reference to their centrality and referentiality. They, consequently, emerge as *"neither objectively present nor at hand, but they are like the very Da-sein which frees them-they are there, too, and there with it"* (111). They are subjectively present entities that interact with the Self in an interdependent existence.

The Self fails to detach itself from its objective presence, a presence that encompasses subjects and objects defining its mode of being. It, accordingly, establishes its existential state of being in consideration of other beings, including Others. These Others not only exist in complete interconnectedness with temporal Dasein but also manifest as an embodiment of the Self. These self-resembling Others develop into 'in' distinctive Daseins that maintain their subjective being in the world as absolute Selves. They, differently put, *"do not mean everybody else but me - those from whom the I distinguishes itself - They are, rather, those from whom one mostly does not distinguish oneself, those among whom one is, too"* (Heidegger 111). This intersubjective indeterminacy eliminates existential asymmetries and hierarchies that grant the Self absolute centrality and prominence, forging a transcendental condition where the two poles merge into a unified entity. This harmonized world advocates an ontological withness, a mode of being in which *"being-in*

*is being-with Others*" (112). Such a with-world, or rather Mitsein, structures the human condition in the light of human interactions and dialogues, shaping the identity of Dasein in the inclusion of the Other. This with-being, however, dismantles, within the dynamics of Mitdasein, the being-in-world of the Other. This being-with-one-another not only destabilizes the structure of Dasein but also obliterates the significance of Mitsein. It "*dissolves one's own Da-sein completely into a kind of being of the Others in such a way that the others ... disappear more and more*" (119). Such existential uncertainty establishes the groundwork of the human community, the 'they' or Das Man. This impersonal mode of being reconfigures the regulations of existence, enforcing both the Self and the Other to act in accordance with its definite law. It "*maintains itself factically in the averageness of what is proper, what is allowed and what is not*" (119). Such absolute Das Man emerges as an anonymous appearance that happens to govern the everydayness of Dasein, molding its self-perception and mode of being. This Dasein, be it Self or Other, loses its oneness in the midst of an incognito world, existing according to the dictates of the 'they'.

## **2.2 Human Reality: An Intersubjective Being**

The ultimate Self constructs its individual reality by means of mental processes, perceiving its selfhood through self-consciousness. This self-conscious subject manages to maintain control over its inner being as well as its surrounding world. It, thus, approaches other external entities, including the Other, as peripheral figures or as trivial empirical appearances in its ontological environment. The latter happens to center on the Self, manifesting as a for-the-self actuality which is grounded in the structures of its consciousness. This self-reflection defines the psycho-physical essence of humanity, configuring the physical, spatial, and temporal dimensions of reality, a condition that incorporates both the Self and the Other. The former, empowered by its cogito, sub-objectifies the presence of the Other. It, as Husserl states in *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, "*experiences others as actually existing and, on the one hand, as world Objects, not as mere physical things belonging to Nature, though indeed as such things in respect of one side of them*" (91). The Self recognizes the Other not only as an objectified presence that maintains a neglected existence but also as an autonomous being. Such an ambiguous entity, despite its objective experience, emerges as a subjectively present subject with unity and integrity. It is a posited figure that possesses a distinct cogito. "*This second ego, however, is not simply there, and strictly presented; rather, he is constituted as 'alter ego', the ego indicated as one moment by this expression being I myself in my ownness*" (94). The Other, hence, is a self-aware alter agent that holds an ontological prominence. It is a self-referential subject marked by a singular identity, an ego characterized by its personal individuality and reflexive awareness. The Other, as Husserl clarifies, "*is a mirroring of my own self and yet not a mirroring proper, an analogue of my own self and yet again not an analogue in the usual sense*" (94). It is a fluid projection of the Self, shifting between sameness and differences, likeness and unlikeness, selfhood and otherness.

The Self and the Other, therefore, happen to exist as existential possibilities of one another as the former substitutes the latter and vice versa. This interchangeable state of being underlies a dialogically ambivalent reality which generates an infinite system of potentialities between the Self and the Other. The latter determines the 'non' physical structure of humanity, regulating the abstract and concrete being of the Self. This being, or rather reality, encompasses a multiplicity of egos, subjects manifesting in the form of two seemingly opposite and naturally

identical extremes, the Self and the Other. Such an overlapping, interwoven human condition begets a complex intersubjective community developed by indefinite subjects that both mirror and dismirror each other. Husserl postulates:

*"An Ego-community, which includes me, becomes constituted (in my sphere of ownness, naturally) as a community of egos existing with each other and for each other, ultimately a community of monads, which, moreover, (in its communalized intentionality) constitutes the one identical world."* (107)

This unified world defines the Other in reference to the existential system of the Self, interconnecting the two poles within an interdependent context of potentialities. This self-similar Other emerges as a metamorphosing human subject that occupies not only the position and status of the Self but also its identity and oneness. It is *"phenomenologically a modification of myself - which, for its part, gets this character of being 'my' self by virtue of the contrastive pairing that necessarily takes place"* (115). The Self, in this regard, operates within the modalities of otherness, standing as a single possibility among its infinite possibilities. It manifests as a dependent entity that derives its affinity in relation to the Other. It is a subordinated subject lacking self-governance and self-referentiality. This contingent relationality uncovers the ambivalence and violence of the Other, an identity-less figure that possesses limitless modalities of existence.

This dependent Self reclaims its fleeting selfhood through its primordial reality, or by means of its objectified state of being, which presents it as a bodily organism. This objective presence, deeply rooted in the configurations of physicality, cultivates an existential Manichaeism between the Self and the Other. The former *"has the central 'Here' as its mode of givenness"*, whereas the latter and *"every other body, and accordingly the other's body, has the mode 'There'"* (Husserl 116). This body-based categorization underlies an existential hierarchy that superiorizes the Self and inferiorizes the Other. This inferior subject, however, has the ability to reclaim dominance over its own presence and reality, destabilizing the pyramidal structure of being. Said otherwise, the Other manages to exit the marginalized realm of the 'there', fabricating its individual dimension of the 'here'. This ontological journey of self-realization renders the Other an absolute organism that establishes the foundation of human communities, an ego that sustains its ownness and hereness. Such a self-aware 'here' human subject, the Other, governs his surrounding world, developing into an *"ego of a primordial world, and of a monad, wherein his animate organism is originally constituted and experienced in the mode of the absolute Here"* (117). Both the Self and the Other, thus, form their hereness with the assistance of their bodily organisms. They assert their mode of existence by means of their bodies. This existential body is divided into separate but identical entities, one belonging to the Self, the here, and another belonging to the Other and referring to the there and the here of the Other. This body that oscillates between hereness and thereeness emerges as *"the identical body of someone else"* (121). Such physical indefiniteness constructs human physicality as a symbolically objective organism situated in the dimension of the unknown, the 'they'. The latter unveils the complexity of the human community, an intricate structure incorporating identical and non-identical egos and bodies that are marked by a transcendental intersubjectivity.

### 2.3 Master-Slave Dialectics

The Self constantly aims to assert its singularity in the surrounding world, discarding the prominence of other subjects and objects. It attempts to create a self-contained reality that revolves around its own referentiality, excluding every other form of being, including the Other. This marginalized Other manifests as an objectified entity deprived of its agency, standing as an unessential object, a subject with a neglected, absent, and subdued identity. Such a negated figure, nevertheless, is a self in its essence, a self-aware ego maintaining absolute oneness and definite wholeness. It, as Hegel indicates in *The Phenomenology of Mind*, “is also a self-consciousness; an individual makes its appearance in antithesis to an individual” (178). This existential indeterminacy sparks a power struggle between the two antithetical poles, a contest in which each one aims to annihilate the other. Such a violent rivalry results in a hierarchical state of being in which an entity is superior and another is inferior. These oppositional forces, hence, “stand as two opposed forms or modes of consciousness. The one is independent, whose essential nature is to be for itself; the other is dependent whose essence is life or existence for another. The former is the Master, or Lord, the latter the Bondsman” (182). This stratified mode of existence bestows absolute authority upon the Self, constructing it as the arbiter of reality. It enables it to manipulate all the components of its surrounding world, subordinating its rival ego, the Other. This dominant master manages to assume control over its inner being as well as over outer beings by means of its self-awareness. In other words, it constitutes its distinct sense of being through a process of self-reflection, diminishing the significance of the external world. This inward reasoning renders the Self a consciousness which is “primarily simple existence for the self, self-identity by exclusion of every other from itself” (178). It allows it to fabricate its individual subjectivity, facilitating its recognition as a being in its own essence, an independent entity that controls such a conflictual and aggressive mode of existence.

The Other constantly aims to re-establish its autonomy and individuality, destabilizing the asymmetrical algorithms of human reality. It endeavors to stand as a self-conscious being, regulating its surrounding world and negating other entities and objects. This process of self-reconstruction faces challenges to materialize because the Other struggles to leave its subordinated state of being. It fails to exit the realm of its otherness, striving to annihilate its othered identity. This not-to-be-erased otherness not only defines the being of the Other but also determines the essence of the Self, attaching its subjectivity to the Other. It transforms the Self into “not an independent, but rather a dependent consciousness” (Hegel 184). Such a dependent ego is relegated to a peripheral status, emerging as an unessential consciousness. In contrast, the Other, the bondsman, appears to be an independent entity since its existence depends on itself. It manifests as a self-referential subject enclosed within itself, an ego submerged in its interiority. This inward agent reconfigures the consciousness of the Self, forcing it to perceive itself in reference to otherness, as Hegel indicates:

*“The self-consciousness finds its essential reality to be neither something other than itself, nor the pure abstraction of ego, but ego which has within it otherness - otherness in the sense of a thought - constituted distinction - so that this ego in its otherness is turned back directly into itself.”* (193)

The Self seeks to establish its ontological reality by means of conceptual thinking and inward reasoning. Instead, it manages to recognize itself and its surrounding world with the assistance of the Other, an alter ego that mirrors both selfhood and otherness. This Self-Othering forces the Self to transcend its internal abstractions towards external manifestations. It compels it to undertake exterior actions towards otherness. The latter appears as an immanent presence that establishes the existential references of the human subject. This being shapes its identity through intersubjective encounters or by engaging with alter egos, Others.

## 2.4 The Look of the Other

The Self loses control over its condition because of the existence of the Other. This tragic loss leads to a permanent rivalry between the two poles, an antagonistic encounter subjugated to the Other's look. The Self, approaching external entities as objective appearances in its spatio-temporal reality, lives in constant fear of assuming a subordinate position in relation to the Other. It exhibits a profound anxiety about the possibility of transforming into an object to be perceived and observed by the Other. Such a status of dependence dismantles the unified identity of the Self, rendering it an inferior being that experiences its subjectivity under the look of the Other. This impending look reveals itself as an existential reference, framing the being of all subjects, including the Self. The latter emerges as an unreflective entity, a defective figure subjected to Otherness. It becomes an absent appearance deprived of its self-consciousness. Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, affirms:

*"I am-this I am in a world which the Other has made alien to me, for the Other's look embraces my being and correlatively the walls, the door, the keyhole. All these instrumental-things in the midst of which I am now turn toward the Other a face which on principle escapes me. Thus, I am my Ego for the Other in the midst of a world which flows toward the Other."* (350)

The Other manipulates the surrounding world by means of its look. The latter enables it to exercise its authority over human communities, dispossessing selves, or rather monads, of their self-referential identities. Such an intimidating look forces human subjects to move *"beyond [their] being in this world and puts [them] in the midst of the world which is at once this world and beyond this world"* (350). It deconstructs their fully constituted actuality, changing them from self-aware monads to unreflective nomads. These non-introspective beings shape their internal and external reality in reference to the look of the Other, an ontological experience which is oriented towards otherness.

The look of the Other forms the reality of the Self, molding it according to its laws. This subjugated-to-the-look-of-the-other ego loses its existential contingencies, emerging as an objectified subject. It is deprived of its agency because the look of the Other objectifies and alienates its own possibilities. This existential dislocation fragments the psycho-physical wholeness as well as the spatio-temporal being of the Self, devastating its structured surrounding world. Such look-based annihilation disintegrates within the impersonal threads of human existence, an anonymous condition where the Other is subjected to the self-same terrifying look by another entity. This process of objectifying Otherness allows the Self to reclaim its agency and autonomy. It, as Sartre explains, is *"a defense on the part of my being which, precisely*

by conferring on the Other a being for-me, frees me from my being-for the Other" (359). The Other simultaneously constructs and deconstructs the objectivity of other subjects. It both objectifies and subjectifies them, rendering them present, albeit objectively, through its look. This ambiguous look, which configures both the subjectivity and objectivity of human subjects, fabricates a floating state of being in which the Self fluctuates between presence and absence. This figure appears as "*a slave to the degree that [its] being is dependent at the center of a freedom which is not [its] and which is the very condition of [its] being*" (358). Its absence, triggered by the look of the Other, appears to be an active modality of presence. Such a look-based presence is a constitutive element of human reality, a condition that 're'configures the 'un'consciousness of the human subject. The latter asserts its being in reference to the Other's look, acting as either a looking subject or a looked-at object. In other words, it is "*present or absent on the ground of an original presence. This original presence can have meaning only as a being looked-at or as a being-looking-at; that is, according to whether the Other is an object for me or whether I myself am an object-for-the-other*" (373). The Self, thus, exists as a looking-at subject or as a looked-at object, establishing its essence in consideration of perspective relations and meaningful connections which are subjected to the immanent look of the Other.

### 3. The Racialized Construction of Otherness

Language is an intricate matrix of representation, a system of signs that articulates human reality through coded meanings. It is a linguistic framework that operates within the dynamics of difference, conveying meaning by means of a binary scheme of signification. This dichotomous symbolic model manifests as a representational paradigm deeply rooted in otherness. It is, as Saussure states in *Course in General Linguistics*, a signifying structure in which "*there are only differences without positive terms. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system*" (120). Language, thus, derives meaning from the dual formation of the sign, oscillating between the signifier and the signified. This difference, or more precisely binarism, establishes the foundation for linguistic representation, configuring the polarized nature of discursive practices across textual or visual forms. Such difference-based language, in this sense, emanates from and directs toward otherness, be it linguistic, cultural, or existential. It functions within human interactions and exchanges, dialogic encounters that produce meaning. It, as Bakhtin clarifies in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, includes "*two consciousnesses, two language-intentions, two voices and consequently two accents participating in an intentional and conscious artistic hybrid*" (360). This complicated network of communication underlies a floating dialogue between the two opposite poles. This dialogism destabilizes the notion of language as a self-contained system of meaning, introducing it as a fluid and relational framework. Such an unsettled nexus of symbols endures constant transformation as it is continuously negotiated between the speaker and the listener, or more precisely, between the Self and the Other. This roaming meaning, however, is subjected to balance within the essentialist threads of representation, developing into a fixed mode of articulation. It undergoes a process of stabilization, an ideologically driven mechanism that both originates from and generates a racialized form of difference.

Discourse stands as an act of fixing the floating meaning of language, a complex system of signification that operates within the dynamics of power. The latter incorporates symbolic and non-symbolic formations. It, as Hall clarifies in *The Spectacle of the Other*, includes “knowledge, representation, ideas, cultural leadership and authority, as well as economic constraint and physical coercion” (261). This hegemonic narrative constitutes a radical model of difference that establishes the foundation for a racialized conception of otherness. Said otherwise, it generates representational practices that produce essentialist knowledge about the Other, be it social, cultural, racial, or ethnic. Discursive difference, consequently, both stabilizes and destabilizes the signifying chain of language, as Hall claims:

*“Difference is ambivalent. It can be both positive and negative. It is both necessary for the production of meaning, the formation of language and culture, ... - and at the same time, it is threatening, a site of danger, of negative feelings, of splitting, hostility and aggression towards the Other.”* (238)

This well-founded relationship between knowledge, power, hegemony, and difference underlies the structure of racial discourse. The latter constructs a race-driven antithesis between human subjects “by integrating them in two kinds of hyper-identities: the identity of the self and that of the other, which are necessarily posited in two different sites, a here and a there” (Baider et al. 29). It forges an existential Manichaeism between the white Self and the black Other, creating a hierarchical state of being grounded in ethnocentric white-ism. The latter emerges as a Eurocentric narrative that associates non-whites with “a lack of civilized refinement in sexual and social life, a reliance on custom and ritual, and the lack of developed civil institutions” (Hall 243). Conversely, it defines white people in terms of “refinement, learning and knowledge, a belief in reason, the presence of developed institutions, formal government and law” (243). This white-supremacist metanarrative legitimizes systemic hierarchies, advocating racial segregation, cultural alienation, and social exclusion.

Racial dichotomies underlie the structure of ethnocentric discourses that function through an exclusionary system of identification, dividing human reality into two antithetical categories, the Self and the Other. These essentialist narratives configure the world according to a Eurocentric epistemology that deprives non-whites of their selfhood and agency, while reinforcing the symbolic and non-symbolic centrality of whiteness. This white-supremacist ideology, specifically, territorializes the black Other, reducing him to essentialist stereotypes. It constructs him as a dependent being who perceives his wholeness in reference to the superior white Self. This inferior subject manifests as an objectively present entity devoid of human dignity, standing as neither a human subject nor an animalistic object. He, within racialized discourses, appears as an undefined being, a distorted reflection of the idealized white man. Such a stereotypical narrative, as Said clarifies in *Orientalism*, constitutes “the enormous systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage - and even produce - the Orient militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period” (3). It, in this sense, manages to reconfigure black subjectivity in the light of white-normative algorithms that fragment the reality of the black Other, reshaping his social, cultural, economic, and political experience through hegemonic structures. The latter reinforce racial barriers and cultural

boundaries between the West and the Rest, positioning non-white people in a distant world. These alienated subjects, as Hall postulates in *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, “belong to the marginal, the underdeveloped, the periphery, the Other. [They] are at the outer edge, the rim, of the metropolitan world - always South to someone else’s *El Norte*” (228). Such race-driven categorization, in brief, fabricates an essentialist Manichaeism that identifies Europe as a site of rationality and civilization, whereas the non-West stands as a peripheral realm marked by wildness and primitiveness.

Racial discourse is a culturally constructed system of identification that originates from difference, an exclusionary network of markers that partitions the world into two binary extremes, the Self and the Other. It, as Stuart Hall maintains in *The Fateful Triangle, Race, Ethnicity and Nation*, “establishes a line of binary distinction in the classificatory system between two mutually exclusive creations of the human race” (54). This existential classification differentiates between human races, specifically between whites and blacks, in terms of their developmental state of being, or more precisely, in reference to their stages of civilization. Race, in this respect, manifests as an ethnocentric paradigm that defines human interactions and practices. It is “a cultural and historical, not biological, fact – that race is a discursive construct, a sliding signifier ... Race, in this sense, is the centerpiece of a hierarchical system that produces differences” (33). This culturally structured framework springs from a physical structure of signs, a signifying schema grounded in the biological differences between human communities. Such bodily distinctions form the master signifiers of racial otherness, continuing “to be so necessary to, and so difficult to eliminate from, the discourses of racial difference” (60). They, accordingly, function as a key element of racialized discursive practices, serving as empirical evidence that reveals the physical distinctions between the white Self and the black Other. These race-based biological regulations stabilize the floating meaning of race, materializing racial difference. They constitute human physicality as a fundamental sign within the signifying chain of race, establishing “the black body itself, and its physiological characteristics, [as] the terminal point of the will to truth” (62). In conclusion, race is a Eurocentric discourse that operates within the dynamics of physicality, an ideologically constructed narrative that produces systemic categories and reinforces racial lines and cultural boundaries.

Race is an ideological system of identification that defines human reality in terms of Manichean dualities. Such a dichotomy-based discourse establishes the foundation for Eurocentric societies, communities that are characterized by violent racism. The latter forges a classificatory state of being in which the white Self is superior and the black Other is inferior. It, according to Ngũgĩ’s *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*, creates “a social pyramid with the people divided on racial lines and occupying different zones” (108). This social order upholds the preeminence of the white race over other racial groups. Such secondary, subaltern races are allowed to move upwards and downwards in the aforementioned existential ladder; nevertheless, they are forbidden to reach the sacred zone of the white Self. The latter never abandons its prestigious status at the top of the hierarchy or descends to the subordinate position of Otherness. The Other, in this sense, “could climb up the pyramid, to the middle and top zones, but there was hardly any mobility downwards” (108). This to-be-at-the-bottom black Other emerges as a neglected object that sustains a marginal existence, a dehumanizing mode of life which is immersed in the formations of racism. The latter, “whose highest institutionalized form is apartheid,

*is not an accident, an ideology of control through divide and rule, obscurantism, weakening of resistance through a weakening of a sense of who we are"* (95). This segregatory ideology manifests in both symbolic and non-symbolic forms, functioning not only as an abstract framework that underlies racial discourse but also as a concrete paradigm governing human actions. Said otherwise, *"racism, though an ideology, is not felt as a mental or spiritual abstraction. It is felt in the flesh, in the very practice of daily living"* (139). It shapes the everydayness of the black Other, framing his lived experiences, including his emotional encounters and social interactions. Racism, thus, establishes the reality of black people, placing them in social, cultural, political, and economic structures deeply rooted in segregation, marginalization, and violence.

Race is an intricate matrix of stereotypical practices as well as violent actions towards difference. In other words, it is a radicalized system of identification that incorporates both symbolic subjugation and physical oppression. These two strategic mechanisms are meant to sustain white supremacy, reinforcing the hegemonic geopolitical policies of Western powers. These 'neo'imperial agencies aim to promote Western advancement, maximizing economic and cultural exploitation of the land of the Other, particularly Africa. Such strategic manipulation, or more accurately appropriation, of the Dark Continent and its residents is grounded in racial prejudice towards blackness. This racism manifests as a tactical instrument that fosters Eurocentric hegemony, enabling the white Self to perpetuate its authority and control over other racial groups. It is, hence, *"one of the most devastating of all the ideological weapons wielded by imperialism today, and it is meant to safeguard the entire system of exploitation of the many by the few in one nation and among nations"* (Ngũgĩ 135). It, within the complexities of the 'neo' colonial world, manifests as a white-supremacist ideology that aims to normalize the socio-economic dominance of a race, the white race, over other races. This discriminatory framework legitimizes the marginalization of subaltern cultural groups and communities, negating their identities, rights, and liberties. To sum up, race is a radical system of thought that generates a hierarchical state of being, promoting white superiority and black inferiority. It, as Mbembe stresses in *Critique of Black Reason*, *"is the mechanism through which a group is reified. On the basis of this reification, someone becomes their master, determining their fate in a way that requires neither explanation nor justification"* (35). It is an essentialist paradigm of identity formation ingrained in white-ism, a Eurocentric discourse that categorizes, stigmatizes, and expels the black Other. The latter, within this racial framework, is reduced to an object of domination. In contrast, the white Self acquires the authority to control and regulate the human condition, monopolizing the resources of the entire world by physical and non-physical coercion.

White-supremacist ideology underpins a racialized process of identification that erases the significance of subaltern identities. It establishes racial difference as a fundamental principle that frames social and cultural organization, advancing, as Said stresses in *Orientalism*, *"a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and (most of the time) the Occident"* (2). This essentialist logic simplifies reality by categorizing human beings into two oppositional extremes. Such an ontological taxonomy separates whites from blacks, placing them in antithetical locations within a hierarchical system. This classificatory structure forms the basis of 'neo' colonial discourse. The latter forges an exclusionary network of markers rooted in racial exclusion, an othering paradigm that reinforces racial boundaries. It, following Hall's *The Spectacle of the Other*, constitutes *"a symbolic frontier between the normal and*

*the deviant, the normal and pathological, the acceptable and the unacceptable, us and them*" (258). This existential fragmentation produces distinct identities, oppositional subjectivities marked by radical difference. It perpetuates racial distinctions between Westerners and non-Westerners, or rather between the colonizer and the colonized. This hegemonic relationship privileges the white man who, as Memmi states in *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, "*finds himself on one side of a scale, the other side of which bears the colonized man. If his living standards are high, it is because those of the colonized are low*" (52). This 'neo' colonial Manichaeism sustains white-driven ideological formations that define human interactions within the politics of racism. These race-driven metanarratives not only fragment the world into separate polarities but also create a reality that legitimizes white supremacy. This racialized setting emerges as a white-normative realm where, according to LeMelle and Shepherd's *Race in the Future of International Relations*, "*virtue is assumed to exist primarily in what is white and Western, whereas evil is equated with blackness and the assumed irreligious ways of non-white societies*" (304).

Eurocentric discourses, in this regard, partition human reality, subjecting it to the dynamics of apartheid. The latter emerges as a complex network of social, cultural, economic, and political white dominance. This Western hegemony fabricates hierarchical formations which are immersed in racial violence. It, as Du Bois emphasizes in *The Souls of Black Folks*, creates stratified societies where "*best of the whites and the best of the Negroes almost never live in anything like close proximity*" (166). Such segregation is a metamorphosed form of black subjugation, operating as a manifestation of legalized black enslavement. This reconfigured subordination emanates from 'neo'imperial discourses, culturally ideological narratives ingrained in white-ism. The latter, following Cable and Mix's *Economic Imperatives and Race Relations: The Rise and Fall of the American Apartheid System*, "*endorses racist ideologies into other institutional realms*" of society, leading to "*a wider, deeper racial segregation*" (193). The legitimized stratification deprives black people of their fundamental liberties, minimizing their social and cultural presence. It positions them in the marginal peripheries of society, eradicating their social, economic, and political privileges and advantages. The 'post' apartheid system, hence, represents an exclusionary framework that polarizes the symbolic order, dispossessing black people of their basic rights. "*It is an extreme form of legal, political-economic, race-based stratification in which the non-White minority are by law spatially, socially separated and kept from equal opportunities in occupation, political participation, and education*" (Cable and Mix 193-194). This institutionalized segregation shapes both the physical realities and the psychological experiences of the two races. The latter follow detached modes of existence, maintaining disconnected identities, cultures, and lifestyles. These segmented structures produce a fractured mode of being where "*there is almost no community of intellectual life or point of transference where the thoughts and feelings of one race can come into direct contact and sympathy with the thoughts and feelings of the other*" (Du Bois 183).

#### 4. Conclusion

Human existence constitutes an interconnected network of beings, encompassing both subjectively present entities and objectively present figures. This ontological complexity frames human dialogues, unsettled exchanges which are articulated within the dynamics of hegemony.

This hegemonic logic induces the Self to impose its dominance, diminishing the prominence of the Other. Such a mastery-seeking subject attempts to claim agency through self-awareness, subjugating external agents, including the Other. The latter, despite such processes of marginalization, remains an ambiguous organism. On the one hand, it appears as an objectified being deprived of its selfhood, an inessential entity relegated to the peripheries of existence. On the other hand, it stands as a reflective subject that recognizes its essence in its own being. It is a self-conscious ego that controls its surrounding reality, a presence that maintains autonomy and referentiality. This indeterminate interaction between the Self and the Other reveals the unstable and contested nature of human subjectivity which is configured by relations of power. The paper probes the ambivalent encounters between the Self and the Other, delving into the existential complexities of the human condition. It investigates diverse philosophical frameworks that analyze the ontological construction of otherness, an unfixed category that oscillates between inward egocentrism and outward intersubjectivity. Furthermore, the article examines the binary structure of language and explores the mechanisms of racialized discourses. These white-normative narratives produce an essentialist system of identification that dehumanizes and exoticizes the black Other in the light of a Eurocentric epistemology. This white-supremacist ideology establishes an exclusionary reality that generates a profound rupture between the white Self and the black Other. The latter, as the study concludes, is not a biological category but an ideologically constructed subjectivity sustained by racist systems.

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### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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