

The Good Infection

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Given the increasing influence of religious fundamentalism on politics (e.g. the Christian right in the United States or the Muslim fundamentalism associated with Al Qaeda), the question of how we can conceive of law and order, or society itself, without employing repressive ideals becomes more urgent. We need a way of conceptualizing the origin and process of idealization (which is necessary for meaning, signification and community) without recourse to the absolute moral ideals of 'Good' and 'Evil'. The current rhetoric used by the United States government against terrorism employs these moral ideals as does the rhetoric used by 'the terrorists' against the United States.

Since Friedrich Nietzsche's proclamation that 'God is dead' and Karl Marx's conclusion that 'religion is the opiate of the masses', religion is out of fashion in the academy to the point that religious studies departments are an endangered species. Scientists dismiss religion as so much superstition, but, with the upsurge in various forms of religion, especially dogmatic forms that kill in the name of Good versus Evil, there is an urgent need for intellectuals to acknowledge and analyze the role of religion in contemporary culture and politics. If there is to be any hope for peace, we need to understand how and why religion becomes the justification for war; and perhaps more importantly, we need to explore the possibility of ideals without idols, values without deadly dogmatism.

In a world where religious intolerance is growing, and the divide between the secular and the religious seems to be expanding, we need to attempt to understand the violence both contained and unleashed by religion, especially insofar as it employs the ideals of Good versus Evil.

Religious fundamentalism is dogmatic because it refuses all questions. When questioning our violent impulses is foreclosed, then acting on them becomes a dangerous reality. Instead of engaging in rites of sacrifice that return it to an imaginary or ideal realm, fundamentalists act out their violent fantasies in the real world, which, as Julia Kristeva warns, leads the members of one religion to sacrifice the members of another.¹ We see this today when Theo Van Gogh is killed for questioning Islam, while with support from Christian fundamentalists, George W. Bush is re-elected to continue to wage what he calls his godly 'crusade' against terror in Iraq and around the world.² These religious extremes share the unquestioned belief in Good versus Evil and that God or Allah is on their side. Such extremists see themselves on the side of purity and goodness fighting against impurity and corruption, the holy against the infidels or heathens.

Perhaps more than other discourses in the human sciences, Freudian psychoanalysis has addressed the dynamics of idealization and sublimation necessary to signification and meaning, particularly in relation to the ideals of Good and Evil. Freud's theories of the origins of idealization, and thereby society, can be helpful in diagnosing a contemporary political-religious discourse of Good and Evil, even while an analysis of them points to the need for an alternative conception of idealization that takes us beyond the guilt and punishment associated with moral ideals. Julia Kristeva's reading of Freud's account of the origins of idealization in *Totem and Taboo*, along with her theory of abjection, suggest alternative ways of describing the process of idealization and its relation to signification and the super-ego.³ Ultimately, however, in order to diagnose the use of the rhetoric of Good and Evil in contemporary political discourses, we need a psychoanalytic social theory that neither Freud nor Kristeva provide. As we will see, Fanon comes the closest to developing psychoanalytic notions of sublimation and idealization in the context of a social theory that diagnoses not only the psychic affects of racism, colonization and imperialism, but also the ways in which the rhetoric of Good and Evil operates within them.

In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud gives a provocative explanation for the origins of idealization and sublimation that inaugurate civil society. His now familiar story involves what he calls a 'band of brothers' who kill and eat what he calls their 'father', and afterwards totemize the father out of guilt and then develop prohibitions against murder and incest in order to prevent any one of the brothers from meeting the fate of the father. On this account, there was one superior male (the father) who hoarded the females and shunned the other males (the sons or brothers). Individually none of the other males could take on and overpower the superior male, but one day they banded together to kill the superior male and assimilate his power so that they too could possess the females. They do together what none of them could do individually. This act requires some sort of communication and societal bond. At this point, however, they are not much different from a pack of wolves who act together to attack their prey. What distinguishes them from wolves, however, is that they *idealize* their 'prey', the superior father or ancestor, to the point that '[t]he dead father became stronger than the living one had been'; and they not only assimilate his power but also restrict that power through internalized prohibitions or laws. These prohibitions are the result not only of their guilt over their deed, but also of their fear that they themselves could meet the fate of the father if they do not curb their newly assimilated power.⁴ In Freud's totem scenario, society begins through man's virility and his ability to control that virility, his assimilation of power and his ability to control that power. We could say that man turns his power against himself in order to control it and become social. In a sense, this is Freud's theory of sublimation: instincts turn inward and are then redirected outward in newly disciplined forms.

What Freud's describes in *Totem and Taboo* is the origins of 'humanity' as the initiation of idealization and sublimation, which distinguish 'man' from 'animals'. Indeed, until the moment of the totemic meal, this horde is a group of animals. Only the prohibition after the fact, which is a result of the idealization of the strongest animal now become a totem or idol, and the subsequent sublimation of both aggressive and sexual drives into more socially acceptable forms, transform this group of animals into human beings. Before this moment, they are animals and the so-called father is no more than the

strongest of them. Only after the moment of idealization does their killing become murder and their eating ‘the father’ become cannibalism; only then do certain forms of sex become incest and bestiality.⁵ This moment is also the institution of prohibition that brings with it society and ‘human’ temporality; this scene is of the institution of memory and repetition required to idealize, represent, and ultimately, to become speaking animals who use symbols, animals who split reality and ideal. At this moment, members of the horde become split beings, animals who mean. No longer do they inhabit the timeless world of animality; now they have a memory of their deed that compels them to repeat it symbolically in order to remind themselves of their debt to their ancestor and their obligations to each other.⁶

Kristeva reads Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* not only in terms of mimesis, assimilation of authority and representation, but also in terms of memory, time and celebration. She suggests that the institution of memory in the totemic rituals represses a timelessness, the timelessness that I have been associating with the idea of animality. Her invocation of archaic timelessness gives us another motive for the repetition of rituals that assimilate the authority and power of the primal father. Rather than just repeating the crime as a reminder of lack and debt on the one hand and the mobility of power on the other, repeating the supposed timelessness of animal experience also frees us from prohibition and guilt and puts us in touch with the rhythms of the body and its sensation outside of linear clock time. Rather than merely repeat guilt and prohibition, idealization opens the space for a repetition of timelessness within linear time. This is a repetition of the excess of the celebration that is the feast rather than merely a repetition of guilt and prohibition. The story of totem is not just the story of taboo, but also the story of how bodily drives become meaningful through signifying rituals even as they exceed those rituals. Desire, then, does not have to be conceived of as the flip side of prohibition; rather, desire can be conceived of as a longing for the archaic timelessness of our animality, of our embodiment. We long for this timelessness, for pure bodily experience, for the absolute unity of being and meaning – what Freud might call the death drive, or the urge to return to a state of inorganic quiescence.

We can now describe sublimation not only as a process of redirecting sexual and aggressive instincts *à la* Freud’s totem and taboo, but also as a process of discharging the timelessness of the instincts into time, thereby denaturing (‘animal’) instincts and fomenting (‘human’) drives and temporality. Indeed, we can go further and diagnose Freud’s account of the killing become murder and subsequent guilt become prohibition as a displacement of this archaic timelessness into taboos – Thou Shalt Not – that take the form of universal principles, Eternal Truths or Divine (timeless) Commandments. This operation is the displacement of the timelessness of animality into the artifice of timelessness in the form of Absolute Good that becomes an unforgiving ideal opposed to its opposite Absolute Evil. These eternal ideals of Good and Evil are beyond the natural realm of the animal and are not of this earth, but rather deny everything earthly and finite in life, which of course is exactly what Nietzsche describes in his *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1966) as the basis for morality. In terms of psychoanalysis, this form of idealization becomes a harsh and punishing super-ego that makes extreme demands as a defense against contamination by its disowned and abjected otherness against which it defines itself as clean and proper. This cruel super-ego follows what Nietzsche identifies as the reactive logic of morality by defining itself against that which it is

not: I am not Evil, therefore I am Good. This kind of displacement of animality into Eternal Truths proves fatal when it enters the realm of politics. The Good justifies killing in the name of Universal principles of justice, democracy and freedom against abjected others who serve as depositories for unwanted animality, embodiment and affect, those reminders of our earthy and finite existence. The punishing super-ego demands ever-greater forms of punishment against ever expanding groups of abjected others.

Paradoxically, even while perceived as closer to animal existence and therefore barbaric, those abjected others are seen also as unnatural, abnormal and evil. They are denied the possibility of sublimating the timelessness of embodiment – of bodily drives and affects – even while they are tied to the body. Without access to sublimation, for those othered through the oppressive and colonizing operations of the harsh super-ego, bodily drives and affects become somatic symptoms. But drives must have expression through sublimation as forms of signification or they become displaced into repressive, cruel and punishing super-ego formations or the super-ego's flip-side, somatic symptoms and bodily pain. At the extremes, either the body is denied in favour of Universal Principles and signification is emptied of its bodily motivation – drives and affects – which leads to the repetition of violence, or we remain stuck at the level of the body without access to signification and drives and affects are expressed only as somatic symptoms. Both extremes are pathological and undermine the ability to sublimate bodily drives and affects – those manifestations of animality – into signification: Without the ability to sublimate violent drives and affects, either we act on our violent impulses or they act on us in the form of somatic symptoms.

In the absence of forms of sublimation for violent impulses, religion, especially in its deadly dogmatic forms of fundamentalism, provides ways of acting out violent fantasies rather than sublimating them. Religious fundamentalism is one possible attempt to feel included in a group identity that protects individual identity against impurity or guilt. In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva develops a theory of abjection and its relation to identity that helps us understand what she comes to call the archaeology of purity in *The Sense and Nonsense of Revolt*.⁷ The abject is what is excluded in order to set up the clean and proper boundaries of the body, the subject and society or nation; above all, it is ambiguity that must be excluded or prohibited so that identity can be stabilized. This quest for the 'pure' through the violent excising of all 'impurity' is clearly seen in so-called ethnic cleansing, racial segregation and apartheid. The fear of ethnic or racial mixing threatens the clean and proper individual, group and national identities established through the process of abjecting difference. Although difference or otherness prompts exclusion, this is not because of the difference *per se*, rather it is because otherness is part of the very identity that defines itself against its own ambiguity.

And, when this excluded ambiguity returns, which is bound to happen, then it either can lead to sublimation – through which our fears of ambiguity and otherness are transformed into art, literature or philosophy, and even into revolutions in thinking about the world and our experience – or, this return of ambiguity can lead to violent attempts to destroy it through various forms of dogmatism, repression and oppression. This violent reaction is an attempt to purify or exonerate the subject or group of its own guilt over the exclusions that it perpetuates in order to set up its identity as whole or unified. So purity and exclusion through a process of abjection are elements of a primary libidinal violence that either can lead to the best in humanity, sublimation, or to the worst, murder.

As Kristeva says,

It is probably impossible to question the validity of this so-called purity – or to fight the various forms of fundamentalism and violence that appear to be the sorry privilege of th[e] end of the [20th] century – by looking exclusively at its surface and not taking into consideration what produces it, namely, the disgust with taint and the consequent contrition, repentance, and guilt that present themselves as qualities of religion but also profoundly constitute the psychical life of the being capable of symbolicity: the speaking being.⁸

But questioning the validity of this so-called purity is precisely what we must do, and we must do so by investigating its role in contemporary culture, politics, and in our own lives. How do our violent struggles for religious, ethnic, racial and national purity reflect our negotiations with our own ambiguity and guilt?

Many theorists (including Kristeva, Butler, Bhabha, and Spivak) have described the dynamics of projection and defensive identification that create abjected others, but, perhaps none have described the other side of this projection as well as Frantz Fanon. Fanon describes the effects on the mind and body of taking on the colonizers' unwanted affects. His analysis in *Black Skin, White Masks* turns around the diagnosis of affective aberrations caused by the colonial situation.⁹ There, Fanon diagnoses both what he calls the inferiority complex of the black man and the superiority complex of the white man as 'the result of a series of aberrations of affect'; 'affect is exacerbated' in the colonized caused by the inferiority complex, which leads to what he calls 'affective erethism'.¹⁰ This affective over-sensitivity is the counterpart to what Fanon calls the colonizer's 'affective ankylosis'.¹¹ As he describes it, the colonial situation causes 'hyper' affectivity in the colonized and 'desiccated' affectivity in the colonizer. In psychoanalytic terms, Fanon describes the colonized's neurosis as obsessional and the colonizer's as phobic. In both cases, these neuroses operate through a distortion of affect. The colonizers' unwanted affects are not so much projected onto the colonized, but are transferred onto or injected such that the recipient's own affects are transformed. Along with economic imperialism that divides the world into 'the haves' and 'have nots', colonization brings with it affective imperialism that divides the world into the civilized – those who have control over emotions – and the barbaric – those who don't; this in turn divides political and military actions into civilized clean violence and barbaric dirty violence.

The 'civilizing mission' of colonization could be said to turn on the repression, even foreclosure, of affect. Gayatri Spivak says that 'this rejection of affect served and serves as the energetic and successful defense of the civilizing mission'.¹² On Spivak's reading, the foreclosed affect is excluded from the 'civilized West' through a projection onto what she calls the 'native informant', the voiceless figure both excluded from, and necessary to, the civilizing mission.¹³ Spivak argues that in the texts of Kant, Hegel and Marx autonomy, consciousness and normativity are defined against their opposites projected onto the native informant, who is then denied a voice by virtue of that very projection. The native informant is constructed as heteronomous, unconscious and abnormal, as dependent, irrational and pathological. The civilizing mission, as Spivak describes it, relies on the rejection of affect as barbarous in the name of civilization, a name that she points out has its underside in the necessarily nameless native informant.

As we will see, the native is figured as an abhorrence of nature, between animal and man, whose ambiguity is precisely what makes him so threatening.

Fanon poignantly describes the affective aberrations of colonization, occupation and domination when in *The Wretched of the Earth*, he explains that 'In the colonial world, the emotional sensitivity of the native is kept on the surface of the skin like an *open sore* which flinches from the caustic agent; and *the psyche shrinks back*, obliterates itself and finds outlet in *muscular* demonstrations which have caused certain very wise men to say that the native is a hysterical type' [my emphasis]. 'The native' converts his emotions and psychic tension into somatic symptoms; he experiences colonization in his muscles, which remain tense and paralyzed during the day and run free only in dreams at night.¹⁴ The affects of the colonized are on the racialized skin like an open sore, while the white man's values are caustic agents that cause pain that can no longer be divided into the neat categories, physical, emotional, psychological. The caustic agent burns through the skin to the psyche itself, which shrinks back, obliterates itself and becomes somatized as hysterical symptoms lodged in the muscles. The circular – or perhaps dialectical – movement between skin, emotions, psyche, muscles, sores and values undermines any 'black and white' distinctions between the rational and the visceral or between economic and psychological oppression and suggests that the colonization of the body and of the material world is also always the colonization of psychic space.¹⁵

For Fanon, values are *secreted, injected, born of the blood, amputated* and *haemorrhaging*; they are analogous to bodily fluids. He describes this process as the *injection* of white values, which he refers to as *dangerous foreign bodies*, into native culture. As such, they are dynamic and mobile; and more importantly they move from body to body and can infect entire populations. With his notion of epidermalization, Fanon revises the notion of internalization of oppressive values. He insists that the colonized does not internalize, but rather epidermalizes racist ideology. The values of racist imperialism enter the colonized through the skin. Fanon suggests that when the black man encounters a racist culture, this causes changes in his bodily fluids/psyche: 'in married couples a biochemical alteration takes place in the partners, and, it seems, they have discovered the presence of certain hormones in the husband of a pregnant woman. I would be equally interested – and there are plenty of subject for study – to investigate the modifications of body fluids that occur in Negroes when they arrive in France. Or simply to study through tests the psychic changes both before they leave home and after they have spent a month in France'.¹⁶ Like others analyzed here, this passage suggests that affects and values are like bodily fluids that are capable of dynamic movement between people and groups of people. For Fanon race is a by-product like bodily waste that is *secreted* in response to colonial occupation: '[T]he other's total inability to liquidate the past once and for all. In the face of this affective ankylosis of the white man, it is understandable that I could have made up my mind to utter my Negro cry. Little by little, putting out pseudopodia here and there, I secreted a race'.¹⁷ This passage suggests that the black man is forced to secrete the white man's waste, something that the white man can't (or won't) do on his own because of his affective ankylosis or rigidity and displacement of affect.

Fanon's work suggests that there is a transfer of affect in the colonial situation, that the white colonizers 'inject' or 'deposit' their anger into the colonized who are then forced

to expel it in self-destructive ways, secreting the waste product race that perpetuates and justifies racism, or doing violence against themselves either individually or in tribal or gang wars:

The settler keeps alive in the native an anger which he deprives of outlet; the native is trapped in the tight links of the chains of colonialism. But we have seen that inwardly the settler can only achieve a pseudo petrification. The native's muscular tension finds outlet regularly in the bloodthirsty explosions-in tribal warfare, in feuds between sects, and in quarrels between individuals.¹⁸

The colonizer deposits anger into the bones of the colonized and then keeps this anger alive through oppression. As we will see, it is not so much that the colonizer's violence against the colonized is internalized, as it is deposited or injected into the colonized in the form of a cruel superego.

On Fanon's analysis, the specific affective aberrations of colonialism express themselves as obsessional and phobic neuroses. The colonized is obsessed with gaining the white man's love and recognition even while becoming infected with the white man's superego that designates the colonized black and evil. Conversely, the white man's projection of evil onto, or abjection of, the black man is a symptom of white phobia, a phobia that Fanon describes as sexual: 'The civilized white man retains an irrational longing for unusual eras of sexual license, of orgiastic scenes, of unpunished rapes, of unrepressed incest [...]. Projecting his own desires onto the Negro, the white man behaves 'as if the Negro really had them'.¹⁹

In traditional Freudian psychoanalytic theory, both obsession and phobia are considered affective disorders insofar as they operate on the affective level.²⁰ Obsessional neurosis is associated with the 'internalization of a sado-masochistic relation in the shape of tension between the ego and a particularly cruel super-ego'.²¹ The self-reproach typical of obsessional neurosis is the result of the internalization of – or more accurately, the infection with – the particularly cruel super-ego of the colonized, a super-ego that abjects the colonized as racialized others. Fanon suggests that the strong affects engaged by the inferiority complex of colonization become associated with gaining the recognition and love of the colonizer. Anger directed towards the colonizer turns inward and becomes anger and shame directed towards the self, which in turn flips over into the desire for recognition and love from those very same people who have rejected the colonized as barbaric in the first place. Elsewhere, I have argued that the need for recognition from the colonizer is a symptom of the pathology of colonization.²² The colonizer's violent and cruel super-ego is forced onto the colonized to produce an inferiority complex, which in turn leads to the obsessive need for recognition from the 'superior' white colonizer. The colonized's anger at the violence and degradation leveled against him by the colonizer is transferred to the idea of his own inferiority. The colonized suffer from an obsession with gaining love and recognition from their harsh dominators.

Insofar as the super-ego of racist imperialist ideology takes over culture, the phobia or fear of racialized others becomes what Freud calls a common phobia, a phobia accepted by dominant society.²³ Fanon insists on investigating for whom the black body, especially the body of the black man, is a phobic object, and why. Within the colonial ideology, the black

body is abjected, which affects not only the treatment of 'black natives' by 'white' colonizers but also the psyche of the colonized who are forced to negotiate their own abjection within the dominant culture. Here Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection may be more useful than Freud's theory of phobia precisely because it emphasizes the social aspects of phobia, particularly what Freud calls common phobias.

In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva says, 'to each ego its object, to each super-ego its abject.'²⁴ For Kristeva, the abject is not yet an object but rather that which calls into question boundaries. The abject is the in-between that challenges all categorization. She maintains that on the social level the abject and abjection are ways of negotiating our relationship to, or separation from, other animals and animality; while on the personal individual level abjection is a way of negotiating separation from the maternal body.²⁵ Phobias always take us back to the abject with its questionable borders. In other words, it is ambiguity itself that is the phobic 'not-yet-object'. Phobia is a type of defense against this ambiguity. What we exclude as abject recalls our own ambiguous borders in relation to animality and maternal origins. Phobia, then, is the result of the subject's own fear and aggressivity which, when projected onto others, seem to come back to him from outside: 'I am not the one that devours, I am being devoured by him'.²⁶ This is precisely what Fanon describes when he discusses what he calls the white man's 'Negrophobia'.

Although Fanon's analysis of 'Negrophobia' is provocative (for example when he suggests that negrophobic white women fantasize about being raped by black men in what turns out to be their desire for sexual fulfillment), it points to the threat of ambiguity associated with the abject. Fanon proposes that Negrophobia is the affect at the root of the white man's world; and all evil and malefic powers are associated with the abjected black body. The white man's bodily schema is determined by this abjected black body.²⁷ In this sense, the white man's image of himself as good and civilized is defined against the black body, which he abjects as evil and animal. This abjection follows the logic of shoring up borders as a defense against ambiguity. Recall Spivak's analysis of the foreclosure of affect upon which the civilizing mission operates. Fanon's text suggests that there is a fear of ambiguous borders – orders of animality and racial borders – behind Negro phobia, which is primarily a fear of the black man's imagined sexual powers.²⁸ Parodying phobic stereotypes of Negro animality and miscegenation, he says 'As for the Negroes, they have tremendous sexual powers. What do you expect, with all the freedom they have in their jungles! They copulate at all times and in all places. They are really genital. They have so many children that they cannot even count them. Be careful, or they will flood us with little mulattoes'.²⁹ This passage suggests that the real fear is of the breakdown of borders between civilized and barbaric, human and animal, white and black.

Colonization and occupation attempt to force the colonized to take on the white man's anxiety over his uncertain and ambiguous borders (both physical and psychological). This anxiety is manifest in the white man's phobia, which acts as a defense against unwanted affects that are projected onto racialized others. The success of the colonization of psychic space can be measured by the extent to which the colonized internalize – or should we say 'become infected' by – the cruel super-ego that abjects them and substitutes anger against their oppressors with an obsessive need to gain their approval. In other words, the colonization of psychic space is dependent upon

internalizing the inferiority/superiority dichotomy that sustains the colonizer's self-identity. This logic, however, is full of self-contradictions that insure its failure. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, the logic of colonization is paradoxical because it requires the colonized to internalize the lack of an interior, soul or mind.³⁰

Reading *Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks*, Juliet Flower MacCannell maintains that colonization is effective because it infects the colonized with what she calls the 'White Man's Thing': 'the colonized body is one that has been exposed or invaded by drives other than its own.'³¹ The colonization of the subject arrives through the White Man's Thing. The signifier that had granted one person his humanity is displaced by a dehumanizing Thing not his own. The signifier *white* carried its own traumatic Thing in its wake and invaded the colonized with it'.³² Resonant with our analysis, Flower MacCannell maintains that the colonized are infected with the colonizer's sadistic superego, a superego that protects its own humanity by dehumanizing the other as foreclosed phobic 'object'. She says that 'the proper name of the White Man's Thing is "the Good"'.³³ The White Man's fantasy of the Good displaces the colonized's own fantasies; and the White Man's unconscious invades the unconscious of the colonized. Colonization is not just an invasion of physical space, but also an invasion of psychic space. The ideology of colonization centres on the notion that the civilizing mission is driven by an ethical imperative to bring the Good to the 'barbarians'. As Flower MacCannell describes this operation, it turns on the contradictory function of the Good in the psyche of the White Man: 'colonialism provided the perfect outlet for both the guilt of enjoyment and the imperative to enjoy the colonizer's own superego imposed'.³⁴ The bad good – enjoyment, bodily pleasure, affect – is projected onto the colonized who are seen to laugh and dance without regard for the common good, while the Good – civilized restraint over pleasure and affect – is reserved for the White Man.

The colonized are infected with the cruel superego that sets up an impossible desire by both demanding and prohibiting it at the same time. Whereas this perverse superego constructs and protects the White Man's subjectivity and defines the place of his ego, Fanon maintains that in the colonized, it becomes a mass attack against the ego.³⁵ As Fanon points out, the effects on the colonized are the opposite of the effects on the colonizer. Most simply this is because while the perverse operations of the cruel superego make the White Man, they can never make the black man over (fully) into the White Man. The pathology of colonialism takes place on the level of deepest desire and affect, the very construction of the psyche with its unconscious and conscious desires. The colonizer infects the colonies with his perverse and paradoxical desires and affects, which attach to the surface of the bodies of the colonized, in whom they often appear as somatic and psychic symptoms or what, as we have seen, Fanon calls 'the emotional sensitivity' that is 'kept on the surface of the skin like an open sore'.³⁶

Flower MacCannell's analysis suggests that because the body seems to inhabit the realm of Nature or the Real, it is supremely susceptible to a Good that divides the world into Nature versus Culture, Barbaric versus Civilized, Animal versus Human.³⁷ Within the logic of this civilized Good, the body always falls to the other side. And insofar as this good must insist that it is universal, all differences, including different notions of good, become nothing more than justifications for the civilizing mission and evidence of the need for colonization; all other goods become lesser goods in need of

the lesson of the universal Good. Nothing short of an alternative universal good can compete; anything 'less' is at a disadvantage when faced with the White Man's claim to the Truth and the Good, but, when two fundamentalisms with their own notions of the universal good collide, the result is disastrous.

What the Good versus Evil, Us versus Them logic attempts to conceal is the ambiguity at the heart of identity and subjectivity. Universal Principles are defense mechanisms against this ambiguity that threatens the clean and proper borders of all identity. Once we become beings who mean, animals who signify, we necessarily inhabit a world of ambiguity. The Good is a tourniquet of sorts that attempts to stop the haemorrhaging of the animal into the human. It is the place where the animal is sacrificed for the sake of the human;³⁸ but, repressed and abjected animality always returns; and the more violently it is repressed, the more violently it returns. The more forcefully the super-ego attempts to set up defenses against ambiguity in order to protect the borders of identity, the more haunted the ego becomes. 'Evil' and the 'Monstrous' are nothing more than defenses against the otherness within – bodily drives and affects that hearken back to the timelessness of animality.

Even now as the United States engages in a war on terrorism in order to protect its (*clean and proper, civilized*) way of life against those who harbour terrorists (*monstrous, evil barbarians*), this projection of terrorists in *Third World* countries merely covers over the existence of terrorism in our midst. We find out, for example, that the 'terrorists' have been trained in the United States or armed by operatives of the CIA abroad; that *they* use *our* airplanes and technology to kill *us*, which of course is what *their* rhetoric of the Evils of Western Culture or American technology conceals. We are terrorized by the media and the government's constant warnings. Moreover, and more importantly, we engage in killing and torture in the name of freedom, justice and democracy, which become clichés that civilize violence in order to distinguish it from terrorism. *We* use 'smart' weapons for 'surgical' strikes to fight a 'clean' war now called 'freedom fighting' and 'liberation', while *they* use 'dirty' bombs for suicide attacks that are called monstrous and evil and are seen as unnatural and therefore (paradoxically) outside of the realm of the human.

Fanon's insight regarding the rhetoric of terror in the context of the Algerian revolution couldn't be more relevant today: 'The European nation that practices torture is a blighted nation, unfaithful to its history. The underdeveloped nation that practices torture thereby confirms its nature, plays the role of an underdeveloped people. If it does not wish to be morally condemned by the 'Western nations', an underdeveloped nation is obligated to practice fair play, even while its adversary ventures, with a clear conscience, into the unlimited exploration of new means of terror'.³⁹ If they don't practice 'fair play' – as defined by the dominant government or culture – then they confirm their 'nature' as deceitful, manipulative, cheaters and criminals, or worse, unnatural pathological terrorists, monsters and evil. The ideal of 'fair play', then, is already loaded such that those othered are defined as incapable of it.

As evidenced by fundamentalists engaging in holy wars from Washington to Baghdad, from Gaza to Amsterdam, we have lost the ability to tell art from reality, the world of ideas from the real world: A filmmaker's or novelist's depiction of violence is taken as justification for literal violence; think of Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh who was brutally murdered for making movies critical of Islamic fundamentalism, or the death

threats against Salman Rushdie after the publication of his novel, *Satanic Verses*. As reality becomes spectacle, we are losing our ability to distinguish between the depiction of violence and the real thing. Images of war – so many video-tapes of beheadings, of prisoner abuses, or computer generated images of high-tech warfare-turn war into a form of reality TV. Modern culture confuses images with reality and therefore cannot maintain the distance from violent impulses necessary to sublimate them into some form of representation. Even as I am writing, the headline news is about two videotapes: one of a US Marine shooting an unarmed wounded Iraqi in a mosque and another delivered to Al Jazeera of CARE director Margaret Hassan's execution at the hands of her kidnappers. The technologies of media are used in the service of war on all sides. And terror is distributed if not produced through the spectacularization of violence. We are both fascinated and horrified by this violence become spectacle, that is to say, until we get bored and change the channel, fall asleep or go to the kitchen for a snack.

'Violence, addiction, criminality, or psychosomatic suffering', the 'new maladies of the soul', as Kristeva calls them, are sicknesses of the imagination.⁴⁰ We have lost the ability to imagine – to sublimate – most importantly, the ability to imagine the meaning of our own lives. Without the ability to sublimate, we end up acting out our violent fantasies – confusing fantasy with reality – or stuck at the level of the real, we somatize rather than fantasize. This is to say that without the ability to sublimate, to idealize without idols, the death drive leads to either murder or suicide. In order to negotiate the death drive – the timelessness of animality – that is the powerful underside of the cruel and punishing super-ego that demands an investment in the ideals of Good versus Evil, we need an alternative form of idealization that allows the sublimation of the death drive and thereby prevents killing, on the one hand, or somatic symptoms and pain, on the other.⁴¹ Without the sublimation of drives and affects (including the death drive and aggressive or hostile affects) into signification, we risk either universal goods that demand the cruel punishment of what they deem evil, on the one hand, or the internalization and repression of drives and affects deemed unacceptable on the other. The former results in the cruel punishing super-ego as a phobic reaction to the ambiguity that is our own animality, while the latter leads to being stuck in the body unable to discharge drives and affects except as somatic symptoms. As we have seen, these are two pathological consequences of the colonial and imperial mission to 'civilize' or 'liberate' the so-called Third World.

Notes

¹ Julia Kristeva, *The Portable Kristeva*, ed. by Kelly Oliver, 2nd edn (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p.428.

² See Ron Suskind, 'Without a Doubt', *New York Times Magazine* (17 October 2004), p.47.

³ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* [1913], in *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (New York: Norton, 1989).

⁴ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p. 501.

⁵ For a powerful analysis of Lacan's reading of Freud's *Totem and Taboo* and an inspiring examination of its implications for thinking about the binary human/animal, see Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks,

'Being Human: Bestiality, Anthropophagy, and the Law', *Umbr(a): A Journal of the Unconscious* (2003), p.97–114. Seshadri Crooks argues that 'the totem memorializes the time before the law, before the moral prohibitions against incest and murder, before species difference', p.103. She concludes that 'the concept of the animal, is constitutive of the human, and [of] his or her access to the moral law and the paternal function [...]', p.112.

⁶ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, pp.500–501.

⁷ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, trans. Léon Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); *Pouvoirs*,

de l'horreur (Paris: Seuil, 1980) and Julia Kristeva, *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt*, trans. Jeanine Herman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); *Sens et non-sens de la révolte* (Paris: Fayard, 1996).

⁸ Kristeva, *Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt*, p.22.

⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* [1952], trans. C. L. Markmann (New York: Grove, 1967).

¹⁰ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, pp.10, 50 and 60.

¹¹ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.122.

¹² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p.5.

¹³ Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, pp.6 and 49.

¹⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* [1961], trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove, 1968), pp.56 and 52.

¹⁵ For a sustained analysis of the dynamics of the colonization of psychic space, see my *The Colonization of Psychic Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

¹⁶ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.22.

¹⁷ This passage appears in the chapter entitled 'L'expérience vécue du Noir' ('The Lived Experience of the Black') in which Fanon critically engages the Negritude movement. He suggests that the Negritude movement and the acceptance of 'the lived experience of blackness' are themselves responses to the fixity and rigidity of the white man's values, particularly as they are manifest in his affects. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.122.

¹⁸ Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, p.54.

¹⁹ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, p.165.

²⁰ Cf. Sigmund Freud, 'Obsessions and Phobias, Their Psychological Mechanism and Their Aetiology' [1895], in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols, ed. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth and Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1962), III, pp.74–82.

²¹ J. Laplanche and J-B Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Norton, 1973), p.281.

²² For a detailed analysis of the pathology of the demand for recognition, see my *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2001).

²³ Sigmund Freud, 'The Neuro-Psychoses of Defense' [1894], in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols, ed. by James Strachey

(London: Hogarth and Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1962), III, pp.43–61.

²⁴ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p.2.

²⁵ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p.4.

²⁶ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p.39.

²⁷ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, pp.155 and 160.

²⁸ Fanon's analysis of the sexualization that accompanies the racialization of the colonized might help to interpret the sexual nature of the abuse at Abu Ghraib prison in US-occupied Iraq, at least as that abuse is portrayed in the media. Sexual abuse of male prisoners by female guards captures the imagination of US media in ways that other sorts of abuse has not. Indeed, even Fanon's diagnosis of Negrophobia in white women as their own sexual fantasies of rape, which until now I have read as an unfortunate sexism in Fanon's text, seems incisive in diagnosing the women guards' involvement in sexual abuse in Abu Ghraib – e.g. forcing prisoners to masturbate while writing 'I am a rapist' on their naked bodies.

²⁹ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.157.

³⁰ See Chapter 1 of my *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2001) for development of the argument that colonial dependence upon internalization of values is contradictory.

³¹ Juliet Flower MacCannell, *The Hysteric's Guide to the Future Female Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

³² Flower MacCannell, *Hysteric's Guide*, p.65.

³³ Flower MacCannell, *Hysteric's Guide*, p.66.

³⁴ Flower MacCannell, *Hysteric's Guide*, p.72.

³⁵ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p.252 and *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.143.

³⁶ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.52.

³⁷ Flower MacCannell, *Hysteric's Guide*, p.73.

³⁸ Flower MacCannell, *Hysteric's Guide*, p.89.

³⁹ Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* [1959], trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove, 1965) p.24.

⁴⁰ See my *Noir Anxiety: Race, Sex, and Maternity in Film Noir* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), pp.203–209.

⁴¹ For a more developed account of alternative forms of idealization and sublimation, see my *Colonization of Psychic Space*.

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